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**SOUTH AFRICA:
WOMEN POETS**

ATLANTA



**ATLANTA
REVIEW**

REVIEW

POETRY 2017

Grand Prize Winner

Mary Makofske

with Contest Judge

Cecilia Woloch

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**ATLANTA
REVIEW**

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Welcome

Since I took over as editor a year ago (time really does fly!), we have been making changes to some of the ways we work as an editorial team. Atlanta Review now has a review staff, and all submissions are read blind by at least three readers. We believe this strongly supports our longtime commitment to publish poems, not poets.

This fall we also decided to solicit the aide of an outside judge, who we sent our short list of poems from our annual poetry prize. Our judge for the 2017 International Poetry Prize was the award-winning and internationally known poet, Cecilia Woloch. We didn't make it easy for Cecilia; she had to make the tough decision about which poem was the very best of a great slate. Cecilia was eager to take on a task—one for which she received no payment other than our thanks. Now would be a good time to say this: Thank you, again, Cecilia! You will find a short introduction about the poem she chose, Mary Makofske's "Nasreen's Story" at the beginning of the contest section.

We are also delighted to announce the second annual winner of our newly established Dan Veach Young Writer's Prize. For that award, we sent the short-list directly to Dan because we couldn't imagine anyone better to make that final selection. Congratulations to the 2017 winner Brian Czyzyk for his poem, "Pig of Passage." Having Dan's continued presence in the journal is both an honor and a joy—although we do envy his freedom to travel the world and focus on his own excellent writing projects. At least Dan is kind enough to send us his amazing photos.

Next year we begin the celebration of an important milestone: 25 years of publishing some of the world's best poetry! We are already making plans for a celebration, which we hope will include a conference of writers here at Georgia Tech and a special 25th anniversary issue. To help us realize those goals, we launched a 25 for 25 fundraising effort. We are looking for 25 people (or groups of people) who will support our anniversary with a \$1000 gift. We are fortunate to have already received three of these gifts. Even if you can't support us at that level, please consider us for your annual charitable giving. Small gifts matter—just like poetry matters!

We are indebted to every writer, every subscriber, and every donor for all of your support. Thank you for supporting our writers and our journal, and, as I always say, "If you love what we do, please tell a friend!"

Karen Head



Elegy for Florence Ms. Schadenfreude Gets Hit By Hormones An irreverent calling Letter to Elizabeth Away Again in France Because I love you, I love the world Electric Windows Purr Down Like Cats, We Argue Whether The Green Stuff Is Bamboo Or Poplar Or Yew; I Hate This Place Last Morning at the Farmer's Market in San Ramón, <i>una Oda a las Frutas</i> Monster Living on the Light Mapparium Havana May 23, Cizur Menor Flâneur My Mother Considers Her Death During Cocktail Hour A Roost of Turkeys New Grass Nursery Log Moon Heart, Heart Stay The Button Jar deer elegy Medusa as a Vampire I Brought Home a Hermit Crab in His Shell Zen and the Art of Blowing Off Friends	1 2 4 5 6 8 9 10 12 14 16 17 18 20 22 23 24 25 27 29 30 31 32	<i>Kathleen Balma</i> <i>Grace Bauer</i> <i>Michèle Betty</i> <i>Jonathan Blake</i> <i>Mark Brazaitis</i> <i>Sean Brendan-Brown</i> <i>Gaylord Brewer</i> <i>Chris Bullard</i> <i>Mark Burke</i> <i>Brad Clompus</i> <i>Peter Neil Carroll</i> <i>Sean Denmark</i> <i>Robert Daselar</i> <i>Gregory Djanikian</i> <i>Jeff Fallis</i> <i>Tyler Friend</i> <i>Jan C. Grossman</i> <i>Lukas Ray Hall</i> <i>Danielle Hanson</i> <i>Alexis Ivy</i> <i>Brad Johnson</i>
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Elegy for Florence

Before the horrid caving in of Brunelleschi's Duomo
and the subsequent plunk of that romantic perch
Ponte Vecchio—the Florentines' only
pre-World War bridge—its jewelry stores
dropping gold in the river Arno,
secret passageways spilling out tour guides and rats;
before the great Uffizi museum collapsed
to a dune of rocks and Botticelli rags
(They now sell these for a pittance in Pisa.);
before the David had been reduced
to a cracked and glued affair
in the Louvre basement; before Via Ricasoli was more rubble
than flare, and flames had destroyed San Lorenzo;
before you and I knew a word like “divorce,”
you were my *paese*, your city my home.

Kathleen Balma

Ms. Schadenfreude Gets Hit By Hormones

As if life weren't tough enough
at thirteen without this clusterfuck
of feelings, without her body insisting
she pay attention to it, to other bodies,
to urges she does not understand or welcome.

Her breasts take on a life of their own.
Her blood tides with the phases
of the moon and her mom says she, too,
is *only going through a phase*, but
the skin she is in feels like a new suit
she must now find a way to grow into,
though it's not the one she'd have pulled off
the rack if she had been given a choice.

Some nights she dreams she wakes up
to find herself an invalid, pale and *wan*
(a word she learned from Jane Eyre)
and too weak to rise from the bed
that will now be her sole abode.

No more school
with its gauntlet of clanging lockers,
its word problems and three page themes,
its conundrums of chemistry and torture
of phys ed – just bed, and no one but her
in it, sipping weak tea and the clear broth
they serve her on a tray.

But then
she thinks of that boy from home room—
the skinny dude with the shaggy dog hair
who she'd never given a second glance
until last Tuesday when they collided
at the door like one ship that had left Mars
at 7:00 a.m. traveling at the speed of desire
and another that had departed Venus
traveling even faster, and though neither
could do the math they both managed to arrive

there at that moment, proof that fate
will trump first year Algebra every time.

Ms. S feels a stirring in what some might call her
loins, but she will name *clitoris, vulva, vagina*—
having poured through an old copy of *Our Bodies*,
Our Selves and, like, totally aced her health midterm.
Suddenly she feels all Pollyanna,
ready to rise and shine and face the world,
embrace the world, even Mr. Knight droning on
about the Civil War, Mrs. Silva preaching
the Spanish subjunctive—but first a cold shower, a banana
for breakfast. A great big bowl of *Lucky Charms*.

Grace Bauer

An irreverent calling

It was the wind that woke me,
buffeting the walls of the house,
bang...bang, bang,
and I walked—no stumbled—
down the passage, the air dense
in expectation of rain—
but there was no culprit
in this half-wakefulness,
and restless in bed,
I listened again
to the inconsolable
bang...bang, bang.
And it was only in the morning,
harbouring a headache,
the sound reverberating,
when I heard the news that
he was gone, and I wondered
if the banging, was never really
a windowpane loose-hinged,
but more a calling, a cymbal,
a clanging announcement
of Time that is up.

Michèle Betty

Letter to Elizabeth Away Again in France

Cantaloupe and coffee and the perfection of June.
The morning sun lights the trembling
Geraniums you pruned weeks ago.
Night's quiet remains in the shadows.
I sit on the porch and look out
Across the valley: red tails circle
And scree, circle and scree
Above the wide canopy of green.
This morning the wind is free
Of the humidity we have known
These last days; makes music softly
In the young oak and maple beyond
The cracked road; stirs the chimes.
I have come to morning with books of poems:
This pad; this pen. I am trying again
To find my way to one more beginning.
There is no confusion in my missing you.
Strangely, each winter these are the days
We long for: the weeks of sun and separation
Before the wild music of the flesh
Begins again. Your absence is everywhere
Except in the soft voice of my heart;
The sweet taste of melon on my tongue.

Jonathan Blake

Because I love you, I love the world

I love my friend who complains
about his two-faced colleagues, then cheerfully
pats a man he despises on the back
and gives him a hearty "Good to see you."

The neighbors' Lab who sees me every day
but always barks at me as if I smell like Satan—
I love this dog with his big square head
and his faithful fury.

I love the young woman with the sad mouth, the nose ring,
and the tattoo, on her forearm, of a bleeding rose
who, at the grocery store, scans my spinach and my ambrosia
apples
and, now, my face. She smiles. Maybe she knows
I love her.

I love the music I don't love,
the sentimental pleas to lovers leaving,
the factory-like sounds of despair and ennui
hammered by young men whose long hair will gradually fall
from them like wild-flower petals or

leaves in autumn, which I love,
although the season smells of everything I've lost.
I love what I've lost: the children
I taught twenty years ago in Guatemala and their voices—
I hear them now as if from another room—shouting their first
English words: Hello, hello, hello,
goodbye, goodbye, goodbye;

the South Carolina waves I rode as my grandfather, white hair
like a beacon, stood on shore, scanning for sharks;
my father's hand on my shoulder.
I love the days I didn't know you,

when you waltzed with butterflies
in your grandmother's Cape Town garden
and spoke to them in an accent, forty years diluted now,
as sweet and light as a piccolo's pitch.

I love today, and the light

that pours from the east window onto your hair
as you brush it before your mirror, which I love
because it gives me another of you. You say, "Goodbye, love,"
and you are gone, although not entirely, because your scent
lingers, defying the haste a workday demands.

I love all the days left us,

even the days when, in some minor manner,
I will have failed you and you will tell me so,
even the days—few, I hope—when, in frustration at me,
in exasperation at the world, you will point me toward the door,

which I love because it isn't the door
through which I will leave you.

Mark Brazaitis

Electric Windows Purr Down Like Cats, We Argue
Whether The Green Stuff Is Bamboo Or Poplar Or
Yew; I Hate This Place

but smile as crows shout a Siamese
into a jumble of blackberry
and chicken wire. Dew shimmers
old marble, the broken shoulders
of statuary; near the gated
mausoleum the best graves
sport weeded cinctures
of fresh-mown rye, red fescue,
bluegrass beckoning *stop here*,
you'll get your money's worth.

The pretty yellow creek behind
the hill reeks of stone, leaf,
iron, the semen ichor of death; I wash
my hands then eyes now my face
stinks of the stinking water.
When it's my turn cremation's
fine, never a mud sepulcher, stricken
widow gasping over a hole—lean
back in my arms, baby; it's a long way
home by the same river they call Styx.

Sean Brendan-Brown

Last Morning at the Farmer's Market in San Ramón,
una Oda a las Frutas

Adiós to the buttery indulgence of the *aguacate*,
the sweet milk of the *coco* mined from its hairy shell,
adiós moreover to the sultry curves of papaya,
golden star of *carambola*, to everywhere tables heavy

with sharp-bladed *piña*, bright globe of *mango*.

Adiós to the crisp tartness and rough complexion
of the *castaña*, puckering argument of forceful *limón*,
sweet slick gelatin of the *rambutan* undressed

from its spiky armor. We walk the aisles among you,
we devour you with our mouths and eyes,
laden stalks of fat *plátanos maduro y verde*
in hugging rows, and not at all to forget

the stubby-thorned *guanábana*, enormous, impressive
in its deformity, but inside above the heart
the unmarked white flesh and glossy necklaces of seed,
nor overlook the curling fingers of *guaba*,

pulpy coolness sucked from each violated pod.

Tart wild *moras* in season, cures of *cúrcuma* root,
and oh, on and on, countless more, names unknown,
row upon row of earth's dowry on display,

parading amazed and heartbroken among you
a last time, your plenitude, boundless rich reward
of sun, branch, and flower, touching you, opening you,
taking you on the tongue, in love, in parting, goodbye.

Gaylord Brewer

Monster

Igor must have lifted a brain from a loser.
The one he gave me doesn't like being stuck in this retread corpse.
Whine, whine: the rusty bolts, the mismatched parts.

My head hurts just thinking about it.
So I don't.

My body is sick that I pay my brain so much attention.
It feels restrained by that grey slug up in my skull.
No wonder I can't find a mate.

Their contradictory wants get me into so much trouble,
I try to pretend I don't really exist.

I can't favor one over the other.
It's like your parents asking you which one of them you want to
live with.
I'd have to lose them both to start being normal.

If we all worked together I know we could be some sort of heroic
ideal.
Instead, it's just one social disaster after another.

I said something stupid to that girl at the pond.
I gobbled down that blind guy's soup.
My best friend didn't even want me at his wedding.

Monsters are built from human parts.
How I am is how I was made.

When the villagers show up with torches I try to blend in,
but all I can do is mumble, "Smash, kill, destroy."

I'd probably be better off alone.
Out on the ice, for example, I could contemplate the sublime.
Maybe, I should give up on my dream of living in a castle.

I'd like to undo the threads holding me together.
I'd like to find some part of me that could live outside of me
as an object, red and bleeding and representing my true self.

Chris Bullard

Living on the Light

for Ed Rempel

The wax-wings have begun to go south
and each morning more jars line his porch stairs,
gold beacons cooling in the dark,
peaches held in glass,
pears floating pale sugar baths.
There is a comfort in this alchemy,
saving what the light tempts from the branches.
Red, blue and the deep navy of blackberries
line his shelves, shades of green,
beans and asparagus all in an order
set by each ripening.
She left him years ago,
left to live in town, gone to where,
there are more voices to fill the silence.
He stayed, doing what he has always done,
scalding the jars and lids,
saving what he's grown, the gifts of light
a cure for the months of snow.
What we learn to make from the world
brings a kind of solace.
The only lamp shining in the dark woods,
miles up the Nickelmine road,
he performs the old sacraments.
Nights in the kitchen, he talks to the dogs by the fire,
tart-sweet scent of plums
riding the wood-fire smells.
He works, ladling the compotes into jars,
steaming out the moist air
so the weight of the world
will press the lids tight for years.

In the cold wet of early morning,
after the cucumbers are stacked
in jars of dill-tinged brine,
he walks to the barn favoring his right knee,
labors up the loft stairs
and pushes a bale down for the sheep,
doing what must be done.

Mark Burke

Mapparium

*(this poem is based on a three-story, stained glass globe
displayed at the Mary Baker Eddy Library in Bos-
ton)*

The angelically thin guide
warns us not to drop anything—
be aware that you're inside
a glass planet. Consider
the consequence of letting
an object fall—a key, a coin,
whether aimed or unconscious,
might break off a transient
slipping shelf of Antarctica.

This world's frozen in 1935—
those countries you now see,
fixed above, below, in warring
oranges and reds, lulling
greens and blues, are waiting
for sin to come again, again,
the churning, acrid clouds
hovering behind us, ahead.

Entering, first I was sad
that such a gorgeously
crafted, lambent sphere
could be so cheaply
surveyed. Yet while
scanning north to south,
east to west, burning
up the allotted minutes,
it came to me suddenly
in a flare of cosmic rays,
a shower of galactic dust,
that apprehension of space
is an unmapped providence.

We were ushered from the world
before we could take it all in.
Others were waiting—a new
line of migrants who also
must pay. The thin angel
man smiled cryptically
when I lamented how
little time there was.

Brad Clompus

Havana

Here comes my father's black '52 Chevy DeLuxe,
virtual reality, how time warps whenever I see one.

Sea breeze casts a salt spray over the stony Malecon,
a lovers' lane famous as the longest couch on Earth.

Before sunset, I'm sampling frozen *mojitos*, blends
of rum, lemon, ground ice, soothing the sky's fire.

A baby blue Ford races behind a guzzling Pontiac,
top down, fumes mixing with the drivers' cigars.

This embargoed island forced to make do, every old
thing survives, thrives. Scarcity compels nostalgia.

No pesos for luxury: palm trees sag, winds topple
limbs, gardens grow to jungle. Not enough to eat.

Weather bleaches every dwelling: on every street,
unpatched concrete, crumbled wood, broken tile.

I savor a bowl—chorizos, black beans, and rice,
the old cook asks truly for the shirt on my back.

I'm helpless in pleasure, helpless to assuage grief.
He measures my eyes, reaches out to my hand.

Peter Neil Carroll

May 23, Cizur Menor

These giant (by my
standards) slugs
ever crossing the trail,
never arriving, glittering
black, with ridged
lower halves, dragging
something behind them,
shit, I guess, but not sure
& don't want
to get too close to see,
mostly because of
what passersby would think.
I've stepped, I'm sure,
on a few unknowingly:
though I look down a lot,
flowers still do catch
my eye. Judging
from their remains,
half-smashed slugs
continue to crawl,
leaking themselves
behind, till they stop
to shrivel. Except
that one, which was
reversing, the defiant
reach for shore
of the breaking ship,
turned back against
the immobile self.

Sean Denmark

Flâneur

For anybody with your gifts, it might
Be noble of the heart to roll around
This city endlessly and let your eye
Interrogate the forms it sees and guess
How far into the springy depth of time
The boulevards can press. Please forgive
The airy way of speaking I employ.
There is a city here, and it is wide,
Extensive in dimension, as you see,
And speaking of it over-fills the lungs.
This is a city with a river and
Some chestnut trees, and here and there a park
With chunks of ruins scenically arranged,
And squinting tourists on their louche bateaux.

The yeomen of the fancy wander here,
Much wondering at all they see and hear,
For here is ground for planting of the heart
Where it could savor soil through centuries,
The sluggish mud in Merovingian veins.
Descend a hill at twilight as the lights
Converge in front of restaurants, and you hear
The sounds of cutlery as it is laid
On tables out of doors, and once again
Some questions may be asked about the plums,
Where have they been harvested and when?
Pears also are served in their liqueur
And fresh bread in straw baskets with a wine
That shivers in the leafy autumn light

You pass from streets to zones the less defined
By modes of transportation or their trees
Than by the interpenetration of

Bright symphonies, roulades of marbled sound,
Encircling and loud, competing here,
Commemorating armies left in leaves,
And through the noise a river bears away

The ashes of the explanation, all
That everyday events could organize,
While you again are standing on a bridge
And see it borne away; you watch it drown:
Inconsequential banners and the leaves,
The colors of October as they fade,
The masonry immense with what it knows.

Robert Daselar

My Mother Considers Her Death During Cocktail Hour

It will be a sleep without dreams, she thinks.
Or someone ushering her into a plush limo.

No other alternatives for her,
though she'd like the limo
to carry a full bar.

Nothing about becoming pure light
or hearing a birdsong at the edge of a field
and wanting to *be* the song.

"I'd rather hear something heftier," she says,
"a coffee grinder, a deep-muscle massager,
something to keep me rolling."

She's stopped waiting for her father
to unhook the swinging door.
The sound of wind in the chimney
has been nothing but wind.

"My turn," she says, "all the lights are green,
I'm almost at the exit ramp."

Outside, the cumulus clouds
are silently scudding away from all the ruckus,
geese are writing the sky with invisible quills.

Tomorrow, she might recite the poems
she's loved, haply remembering
the violins of autumn that wound the heart
and evening slowly latching the garden gates.

But now, she's after a dollop of Bourbon,
it's cocktail time, we're clinking to the great beyond—
stars, galaxies, rocketing our imagination
toward what may last or fall—

and here's to the sheer improbability
of being where we are, making
a small place in the world
where a history of our loves and losses
shapes us into who we are.

"Here's to forgetfulness, too," she says,
turning on the lights, "give me an absence
that stays absent without any trouble."

Sometimes, there's nothing the world can add
to make itself more than it is.

Outside, we hear the wind howling
in joy or anger, what a mystery
we make of it, and looking out
onto the steepest darkness,
our lit windows
are like large unblinking eyes.

Gregory Djanikian

A Roost of Turkeys

They are dropping down from the apple trees
some twenty of them wild turkeys
in the early morning winging softly to the ground
feathery air-lightened becoming such awkward
trekkers of the earth their vulturey heads
bobbing with each step as if to say *yes yes*
to the copious world omnivores gobbling
salamanders seeds blueberries worms
moving in a line toward tall grass or woods
in whose shelter they'll disappear before
the sun unleashes its depredations hawk's talons
weasel's jaw gunshots spiking the silence
but how heartening to see them now
votaries of the in-between gravity-bound
bird-embodied rising above us only to fall
like ragged angels we meet in our dreams
half-hoping they will keep scouring our fields
half-hoping they will vault the sky.

Gregory Djanikian

New Grass

for Albert Aylar

I'll tell you about love.
It will cook your lazy ass in an immortal skillet

and snort and gargle and laugh
until you are churning in grease and singing the thing

everyone and no one has always and already sung:
why it is so necessary to be so shattered and so open.

A conversation of singing into again.
Cool drink of water, cherry pink and apple blossom white.

Why the eclipse upsets all the animals in the ocean,
how the heat burns away the ring of matter around the airy core,

the violated heart of violent apple. And despite all odds
there is indeed a moon out tonight,

and we and the fish swim forever
in the unpasteurized blue milk of its orbit.

Jeff Fallis

Nursery Log

An ecological facilitation,
a slowly decaying

seedbed, sweetly
temperate: sexless reproduction.

Moths and smoke,
a humming like the mind

of a fish from empty
skies: bees—well, a bee

bearing rootbeer-colored
pollen. Potato chip leaves

hugging other leaves: crunchy.
The wild sensitive-plant folds

when touched. It's
so cute I want to kick it.

The familiar nest-smell
of you, smeared

with a little honey
heredity. Ethnobotany:

the harmony and direction
of the fondue coast,

of sun on skin on
uneven soil. Black

tea and green tin
granite. Kudzu helps with

headaches and induces
sweating; skunk cabbage

can cure cramps, coughs, and
convulsions: things like desire, snow.

Tyler Friend

Moon Heart, Heart Stay

The katydids are all saying
Katie did Katie did Katie did
only they won't tell me what you did
and the damselflies love
their damn selfies, and so do I

because I love
when you lean over
in front of my face
and I can feel
your breath on my skin, creating
a thin layer of atoms
that were once inside of you.

Tyler Friend

The Button Jar

My grandmother kept her top drawer neat,
folded handkerchiefs and curlers, lotions and pins.
The powder puffs were dream colors,
nightgown blues, softest greens and wistful pinks
made of silk-like cotton,
nearly fragrant,
a young girl's idea of almost perfect objects.
But not more perfect than the button jar
in which buttons of all sizes, hues and age,
some silver or beaded or made of cloth,
were tightly sealed.
They were for mending when I was not there.
When I was, the jar was for sailing and sinking,
a bath toy of such practical beauty,
brimming and colorful and buoyant,
a tailor's trove,
under water, under glass.
Then, wearing nothing but towels,
I opened the lid
to sift buttons through dry fingers,
choosing a few to look at and balance on my palm,
or toss through the air from hand to hand if I dared.
As I grew a little older
I sat on the white bedspread
to sort and add them
and write the numbers down in careful columns,
for the buttons were just for counting.
But then I was older still
and poured the buttons on my skirt and studied them,
wishing that this was how the past could be attached,

a spill of familiar buttons,
a needle, a knot, and threads,
eased and pulled, through quartets of round and open spaces.

Jan C. Grossman

deer elegy

The stag
appears,

from behind a row
of jack pines.

It walks, hooves
marking the wet

ground,
to the middle

of the meadow.
Its antlers

an anchor
holding

the moon
in place.

Its breath,
just cold enough

to see.

Lukas Ray Hall

Medusa as a Vampire

Medusa is not a good vampire,
despite the fangs in her hair.
With a look, she turns men into stone,
impenetrable necks, frozen blood.
She has tried closing her eyes,
But no one stands still
and waits for a vampire.

Medusa never looked sexy in a cape,
even when she wore nothing underneath it.
“Hey, my eyes are up here,”
but she meant it as a failed warning.

Medusa’s head is on Athena’s shield,
although she’s undead.
A bat has flown from her severed body
in the form of a winged horse.
Laughable monster, pitiful really.

Danielle Hanson

I Brought Home a Hermit Crab in His Shell

I set him up in a fat glass jar
with other shells he can move
into. Serve him cut carrots
and kale. I figured he was

having the time of his life,
feeling nothing
of winter in my bathroom

with the heat cranked.
Tacked a map of his island
behind his jar. Named him

Boston so he might not be
homesick.
It was my say-so,
my playing God.

I’m the gull he hid from.
Put in sea salts which
only made him scratch
at air. I tried dirt

from my tomato plant
he didn’t seem to care.
I suppose he needed
the very island I took him from.

Alexis Ivy

Zen and the Art of Blowing Off Friends

We aren't climbing Everest or hiking
Calcutta or dropping out from the door
of an open plane, just off-road biking
or loitering inside the Apple store.
But when Harold joins, he always complains
about the heat or his health unravels
which happens whenever we're hit with rain.
Harold says he never needs to travel.
He'd rather stay home sipping chianti
than go out for a beer or a game. He
swears Heaven's his porch in Ypsilanti,
and if he found heaven why would he leave?
"We're all going to die," I once tried to push.
"You're right," he replied, "but there is no rush."

Brad Johnson

Winter Nova

Last sun cuts through broken
branches, turns leaf beds
to coals, forest floor pulsing
amber and gold, glass splinter
glimmer from low slanted light—
constellations born in full
burst from dry veins and dirt,
doused by the first stroke of dark.

Robert Lee Kendrick

How We Knew It Was Winter

I.

Neighbors' houses grew lights like ivy
because they needed them and thought we needed them too.
They didn't know the forest of our home grew enough lights
to outshine their displays. We preferred to keep
the lights to ourselves, not because we were greedy,
just because we thought they would last longer that way.

II.

Flirtation became more acceptable. The people knew warm bodies
were in high demand, and the women kept their mittened hands wrapped
around their husbands' a pinch tighter. The men,
seldom aware of such subtleties, thought this merely had something to do
with the cold. They sensed the change in temperature and noticed
nothing else. They measured whole feet of snow and left the decorating
to the women, whom they said, liked to adorn things.

III.

The homes of the townspeople grew an average
of a hundred and twenty pounds that winter. The people
kept themselves inside for long hours with cups of tea and scones,
which led to a thickening of their waistlines. Books
became longer, some were piled so high you couldn't see in
through the windows, the old shelves not worth expanding,
already ruined by small cracks in the maple.

IV.

My brother told us it became winter less by a change in temperature
and more by the smell of the air. This was the winter
the world was supposed to end. It did not, and we supposed it would not
in our time. We went on ice skates, wearing only sweaters.
Later, the blackbirds flew from branch to branch, not noticing
the mitten left by the edge of the pond, an artifact of the winter.

Carlene Kucharczyk

Daylight Saving Time

Orange sun drops behind trunks of an elm,
down the road two dogs bark back and forth,
up in the woods two barred owls call all night,
eight hoots then eight more in reply.

Today we saved time and daylight, changed all
the numbers on the clock, made the sun
set an hour later than yesterday—
but tomorrow dawn will come an hour later.

Down the road the same two dogs howl,
in the woods barred owls still call,
burnt orange sun slips behind elms
a few minutes later and we're
24 hours older. In the autumn
we'll give it all up, set the clocks back,
knowing that we're losing time.

George Longenecker

After the New Age Fair

It is nearly midnight when I walk out on my back porch
placing agate topaz moonstone along the wooden deck railing

at just the right angles so that positive moon energy may be absorbed
like the woman at the New Age fair suggested. I think about the healers there

who read my aura and massaged my hands while predicting
what life had in store for me. I had my cards read by Steve

who scanned my palms then saw my energy as bad. His rings of garnet
glistened. He offered to burn candles, one a day, everyday, for seven weeks

to dispel such bad energy. He wore heavy stones of topaz
in his ears. Brown stones, reminding me of my mother.

How she and I would stand together at her kitchen sink
washing dirt off fresh potatoes, their dark skins pulled

tightly round the sweet cool flesh we knew was waiting
underneath, our hands would smooth away each fleck

of dirt as water from the faucet trickled down like Erie Street lamp light
pouring through her bedroom on that last September night

when I was kneeling at her bedside, in my father's place, soothing
her pained, bloated feet, in a pan of cool clear water.

She was crying. I was careful not to further irritate the splitting skin
around her ankles at her heels between her toes any further than the

fluid build up had done by now. My fingers moved slowly
and I was crying too because my mother's failing heart had turned

her feet to stones that shimmered swollen hardened in the water,
catching light. *How could we have known her death would come so soon?*

I could not imagine then this night placing topaz moonstone
agate in the moonlight to gather energy to heal myself.

J. Adams Lagana

Porch

Proverbs 25:28: *Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.*

Put, again, your hands in your lap,
knitted together, and send up instead
all the thank yous for what will come.

You have your Word, mother, home,
your tiny virginity. Sit down. Poor thing
in your shining hair and baggy shirt.

11 or 13, some appropriate age,
fearing retribution and having faith to sustain it.

I'll never...so terrible, unworthy pacing
and praying and shamed at the loose wet
in my underwear. On the porch,

I am not alone, cannot flee
the abiding, hardy eye of the Lord in summer.
Azaleas fuchsia under the dogwood.

Autumn McClintock

View of Earth from Space Through the *DSCOVER* Telescope, and a Few Words About Gun Violence

From a million miles away, it looks too blue:
perfectly rounded, haloed with graceful spirals of cumulus,
its continents drifting away from each other
like lovers that long to touch again.

But on its surface,
someone lifts a weapon,
cradles it between a thumb and index finger,
contemplates the black hole
at the end of its long, sleek barrel.

The motive is always a little cloudy, yet the incidents repeat themselves:
in malls, in theatres, in schools.
No one can explain why. It's something
to do with whatever it is that spins,
so red and angry, inside the skull.

There is no sound in outer space.
But here, some days, you can hear it, so close to you,
in the electronics aisle of a Wal-Mart.
Employees in the stock room look up,
startled by what sounds like a box falling from a shelf.

Blue as gunmetal it is from a million miles away—
it's that same color we see from our back yards
when we tip our heads to the afternoon sky
and stare beyond those swirling clouds
that hide so much pain.

Bill Meissner

She was always taking pictures of the ugliest things:
oil stains on asphalt, peeling paint, bark, dead fields,
and she'd remark, "Isn't this beautiful?"
She loved Indiana, which was something we never agreed on.
Once we drove out to a rundown farmhouse her uncle owned,
and she cried for wanting to move into that house,
pale gray wood striped with white where paint held fast.
We went around like that quite a lot: collecting yarrow
and ironweed, sneaking onto private property, Wildwood,
finding old covered bridges and pebbled banks.
I called her the Little Red Hen, and I followed her as she went.
She always wore a tan trench coat and leather boots,
long A-line skirts, belts, scarves, and a picnic basket
equipped with wine glasses, like a fifties housewife
on an adventure. She lived in a world I could not see
like a filter that made everything look like a Wes Anderson
film.

She was all the things that made a person nostalgic.
She had a hot breakfast waiting when you woke up:
coffee with honey, Irish oats, turkey bacon, oranges.
It was the quiet things she did when you were gone—
how she made your bed after you had already made it
that morning, or cleared out a shelf in the bathroom
for your things, or put fresh flowers on your desk,
or walked down to the coffee house to buy the weekend edition
of the New York Times and read it on Saturday mornings
the way your grandfather did before that one time
they wouldn't let you into the hospital room,
and you couldn't remember what he looked like,
only that he fell asleep watching the World Series
on your couch and missed the last game.
She darned socks, hemmed dresses, and sewed on buttons
the way your grandmother did, watching television
in the kitchen after dinner while she scolded the cat.

She listened to records made before your parents were born
and drank Manhattans and threw Prohibition parties
and climbed out the window onto the fire escape
lit with Christmas lights to smoke cherry cigarillos.
She taped locks unlatched on doors and windows
so we could sneak into that second floor chapel,
and if we were lucky, she'd Irish stepdance
(the tinge of red in her hair made her ornery at times)
until two in the morning, and we'd walk back
arm in arm through the funeral home parking lot
(because it was shorter than walking around the front
and we didn't want to wake her parents up:
her father in front of the television, hair falling to one side,
her mother next to an empty bottle of wine.)
and sometimes we'd fall asleep together in her bed
because the last renter of the third floor apartment hanged
himself,
which I think is why her parents stopped renting it out,
and sometimes you could feel him passing through
the rooms in the dark.

It was January when she asked me to find somewhere else
to sleep, for she had given my bed to an unemployed
Harvard graduate with an unruly beard. I had no bed
so I slept in my car outside the theater building
with a towel over my face because it was too cold to breathe.
It was February when she put my toiletries in a bag,
so he could use my shelf. She had fallen in love
with the conversations she had with him in her head
when he was ignoring her, and his parents' four story house
in the Chicago suburbs. And he would propose *any day now*,
and when the Little Red Hen baked bread he was there to eat it.
Oh and if he asks, my mother has the ring, *any day now*.
And when he sat in his locked room, the Little Red Hen
cleaned.
He was moving in *any day now*. But he moved an hour away,
and when the Little Red Hen had no money, she paid his rent.

And when she did not hold the bouquet on my wedding day,
I knew I had lost my Little Red Hen.

I used to watch her paint here; blues, purples, greens
dripping one abstract landscape into the next—
All I see are empty wombs, she said.
For she was so afraid she could not bear children
she made it so.
And ever so often, she'd stop. Did you hear that?
That is the greatest sound known to man. I just created a color.
I loved her most for the things she did in silence.
The way the negative spaces were never empty
and two people filled up a room to hold a hundred.
Where did you go, Little Red Hen? Where are you hiding? Where
are the maps that lined the walls and the table
we set for dinner? For your paintings are harsher
than their subjects, and the third floor lights are low.
Where are you hiding, Little Red Hen? Where did you go?

Amanda Murphy

Dutch Moon in March

The moon's spun in from a Dutch painting, heading
for the shoulder of South Mountain this morning.

Last night Karen turned me toward the kitchen window
and we watched it rise behind the ornamental pear

and beyond, the blue spruce. If this had been Brabant
in the Golden Age, there would have been peasants

threshing wheat by its light. I've tracked these landscapes
in my old black notebook from the Rijksmuseum

to the Metropolitan, the same arc Hudson's *vlieboot*
took to the mouth of the eponymous river,

the same moon as in the *River View* of van der Neer,
on the cusp of full, moving westward as we slept,

past Venus, past Jupiter on her left, now come
to rest in our wild cherry. Briefly, the silence

that usurps silence, as when a child leaves home, then
Karen's light breathing, the *click* of my espresso cup

against the porcelain saucer, the Great Horned Owl's
rough wooing, the Emmaus train, the furnace firing.

The lonely midwives rouse themselves; the infants
turn their moonlike heads to many birth canals.

Steve Myers

Our Pottery

Most of them are intact,
the pottery stacked on our kitchen shelves,
bought twenty years ago
from women in warehouses.
My husband and I followed the signs
Miaskto Ceramik along a dirt road.

The pottery is from the earth, they said,
clay upturned and churned, fired to almost
burning, until it becomes useful to the hands
that mold, shape the curved rims
of bowls and platters, paint a bouquet
of colors—yellow dusk, blue night, pink love,
each adorned with dots, petals, and peacock eyes.

We traded coins from our pockets
for their beautiful labor,
brought home each piece,
wrapped in socks and blouses,
to protect every cup,
each a memory we could hold,
as though a chip would follow us
like a wound.

And when a mug shattered
in my haste on the driveway
many years later,
broken petals,
shards of pale leaves at my feet,
I knelt to gather the pieces,
as though I could undo
what had been done,
as though I could return
to those dirt roads,
walking with you,
our arms filled to overflowing.

January Pearson

FED

near the Black Sea coast, in Turkey

A bird, I would have to be the only
one-footed Turkish sparrow
among these I feed with bread saved
from the hotel's breakfast table.
Plain, hopping, atilt. I wouldn't be
the bird a bit smaller than the rest.
Not that petit dark-headed stranger
whose name, in even my own tongue,
I don't know. Not the one
who flies to this garden's edge
and stays for a minute or two—
scarved in sleek black,
tail in a constant
flit and shimmy.

More of a wren,
though not that small, it shifts this way,
then that, not even trying to reach
the crumbs scattered on stone paving,
keeping an eye on the lesser types who,
if they can—and the hobbled can't—
grab too many pieces at once.
Then, out of puddles left from someone
hosing the terrace early this morning,
they scoop water
into their throats.

I'd be a female sparrow,
of course, so even plainer—lacking
the sooty eye-swath and ascot
of my brothers.

My swollen ankle will heal.
I'll forget this one-footed, clumsy hopping.
Walking again with even steps, I'll eat—
from the hands of strangers—
the dark

bread of what I can reach.

Paulann Petersen

Bonfires

When in autumn I stack
the browned stalks
in a pile and set fire
to spring's covenant, smoke
rising as I rake the ash,
what then is left of that spring,
or anything?

This is still the garden
where we walked,
eyes shaded
beneath straw hats,
filling baskets and
our mouths with the early
abundance
of strawberries
and cherry tomatoes,
while lilacs burst
into bloom and jasmine
scented the air.

Now the smoke stings
my eyes and burns my nose.

What now of
our darting glances,
grazing each other's eyes
beneath half-lowered
lashes, will they be
more than a glowing
moment, bright
in the string of
gray moments
before
and after—

a subtle gleam
where the spirit rises,
echoing like a song
over waves on a sea
calling to us, even
as the remembered moment
spirals upwards
like the smoke
drifting in the air.

Hope Hart Petrie

Ocean Grove, New Jersey

Drawn to arctic lakes in New Hampshire,
where loons haunt the night,
you were never big on the shore.

But this time I booked two nights
in a funky rooming house. You fidgeted
and crabbed all the way there,

even though we were driving to
your home state. Yet, when you dove
in the ocean, your resistant rambling

rinsed away; when we ate at a sidewalk
café, you tried to teach me to sip
my wine rather than toss it back,

but I feigned failure and asked for more.
Back in our room, you confided you'd
dodged a message all day

about your latest biopsy. We listened
to the waves echo our fears, knowing
they could take us at any moment,

and the stars, the stars wouldn't say a word.

Donna Reis

Market Thief

Zinder, Republic of Niger

The sky stayed too faraway to see, everything I knew
stolen in a land of sand without sea.

The town filled with goats and motorcycle exhaust.
Men covered themselves in blue cloth. I knew nothing

mattered here but human gestures—hand to
the heart, eyes averted, half bows.

I remember the thrust of his hips, the carelessness
it seemed, as he faced me.

At the market, stalls with odd-shaped fruit,
pyramids built with ill-gotten jeans. Marche women

demanding, *Madame!* Their torn shawls of hard
mangoes, yellow limes. What did I know?

I remember the muscle of his jaw line,
my eye catching him by the tomatoes in a language

I could not understand—misplaced fury
layered upon the his millet-tall body—

the force of it on mine. Then his fingers tripped
my full wallet from the half-moon pocket—

not unlike the way you would later lift
the blue scarf from my almost gorgeous life.

Susan Rich

Entanglement

There is another world, in this one. —Octavio Paz

somewhere off the coast of orange county california,
the greatest creature that has ever lived swims tangled
in a fishing line.

in a parallel universe, khalila, a blue whale, swallows krill
without joy. something in her whispers mississippi, feeds
disenchantment with the ocean and hostility to her mate.

her moby wears crown and envy of all the pods in the low seas.
alarmed by the baseless nature of this disquiet,
unsure of her options, she wanes in despondent drift.

somewhere, an emotionally distant father enjoys
a crab-salad sandwich. he does not wear a wife-beater;
he's armoured in a crisp oxford—white with blue lines.

in ottawa, on the fourth floor, near the rear atrium
of the canadian museum of nature, i sit
in the stricture of a blue whale's heart, weeping.

a distress call sounds on repeat tugging bone tearing me apart;
maybe it's khalila or a nameless whale of our own making;
maybe it's the crab man's son.

somewhere in front a vintage smith corona, my love
composes
a poem on the tinkering of spiders and the freedom of flight.
the word clutch nestles painfully in him with unfathomable
hope.

we spin the same careless speed in opposite directions;
we tunnelled ambivalent barriers that should've kept us apart;
we are leashed in our longing by the ocean of forever.

stephanie roberts

Oxblood

I squeeze into nine pounds of my dead father's
Brooks Brothers wingtips,
heels worn down from running between women.
Slip on his herringbone suit coat, flash on him
snapping his fingers, popping his Dentyne,
swinging along to "The Great Pretender."
The suit's too big, it can go to Goodwill.
But they don't make shoes like these anymore.
The old tin of oxblood I prize open,
shift to my nose and remember
all he ever needed was Nat King Cole,
a slice of phosphorescent moon
and a blonde in the passenger seat
down Wainwright Road to the quarry.

Andy Roberts

I stop somewhere waiting for you

Gravel crunching under hot tires, the big engine of the
Crown Vic straining against the low gear as he inches up behind
her. Turning, she spots first the blue and red lights on the top of
the car, hears the slamming door and the creaking belt and holster.
How frightened she is, wondering what she's doing wrong, what
code she's breaking in this crazy country where rules are printed
in straight, sharp lines she cannot read or write. His face, rigid and
red with what she takes for anger, green eyes fixed with some
purpose she cannot fathom, suggests to her just what she's been
thinking: she shouldn't be walking alone on this country road, a
stranger in a town of white faces, hers the first blue-black head
and lidless eyes they've ever seen. Taking long strides toward
her, he asks her something she cannot hear at first, so he repeats it
loudly a second time. Are you Korean? And when she realizes
that she understands the words she mumbles yes, and his face
relaxes as he stammers out the syllables he'd learned in Inchon
when he was a soldier. *Urdee manura hang-gook sahdom e-eh-
yoh*. My wife is Korean. This is the woman we call Auntie who
comes to our house every Saturday night to play *hah-toh* with our
mother, the tiny plastic cards slapping together on the hand-sown
blanket they crouch on as they play, small knees drawn up around
their ears, their laughter stretching and contracting into the night
like fingers. This is how he saves her.

Leona Sevick

“george bailey, i’ll love you till the day i die”

yesterday i posted a photo of my hair on instagram
and two ex boyfriends liked it
and my old college advisor
and my mom

did you know:
somewhere in australia there is a disease
that causes starfish to rip off their own arms

and in new york city, there’s a snapchat filter
for everywhere you go,
so you always know
exactly where you are

well, i sure hope someone comes
and plucks the hairs off my chin
when i’m dead

in the meantime
i keep myself very busy
telling stand up jokes to my mirror
the punch line always is:
i still wanted him to call the next day!

but he had a copy of mein kampf on his bookshelf
but he doesn’t like condoms
but he gave me a yeast infection
but he goes to crossfit
but

he told me my pussy was like a porcelain doll!

you know, i pet every stray cat i see on the street
and i haven’t gotten fleas yet

i have dreams about eating strawberries
out of season. have dreams about

all of my fingers falling off.

no one has touched
the back of my neck in five months

my therapist says
that must be hard for you
and i think to myself
damn right,
it is
hard for me

Lindsey Siferd

The Old Guitarist

(Picasso, 1903)

Confined by blindness, poverty and pain,
he sits downcast, caressing his guitar.
He fills a space he barely can contain
and plays a tune that touches every star.

His head is bent. His body, long and gaunt.
He's strangely bathed in luminous shades of blue.
Excluded and expelled, he's forced to haunt
the corners of a world he never knew.

His hands express an elegance and grace.
His countenance recalls a face of old.
He holds his very soul in his embrace.
An instrument of softly burnished gold.

Who hears the song of loneliness he shares?
Who knows the burdens of the world he bears?

Alan Sugar

Guest

Once near a sea there lived a wind. The wind fell in love with the sea and its constant graces, the way it slept and heaved and reflected, the way fishes and moonlight swam in its generous graves. The wind wanted to share with the sea some of its own delights. Small towns and their steeple bells, the skirts of lovely women, and of course, the roads of the black whale, who always leapt to say hello. So the wind swept up armfuls of droplets and carried them to the small towns, where some atomized over the bells, evaporated at the sight of the women, or arced back to the sea to greet the whale roads. But each time they returned, the remaining droplets huddled and fell. The wind grieved and repeated its attempts to clutch the sea until the sky was filled with clouds.

And in this way the woman in the boat scattering ashes could not tell which were tears and which were rain.

Joanna Solfron

Juáncana

I planted a witness tree
among the oaks in Cantabria

after feeding you leaves
of yew and turning your body

back into earth. I closed
your eye and summoned

the horses. Blue-tailed
damselflies circled the trees.

You never moved for me
in fog, tenderly like the dead
as they rise in stillness.

Angela Sundstrom

Obtaining the beloved

I twirl a butter knife on the ouija board, read the grounds
in my french press, cast runes in the bathtub. In order
to escape the anguish of identity, one can either die
or attempt momentary erasure with unabashed
eroticism. A third resort is to find continuity in God. I tattooed
my inner thighs last week, stick and poke, screwed a shaman,
but I still cannot bring you to life.

Angela Sundstrom

Woman with Parrots

Only when you are wearing a white dress,
And only when you are reaching down,
smoothing silk fabric against your thighs,
and only when your legs are crossed,
and only when you part your hands to reveal
your golden ring, only then do you draw
the attention of the birds, three red macaws
that gather around you. Their tails cut across
your profile, bisecting the horizontal outlines
of your arms and legs. Only in their underplumage
Do you see the same orange hue of your hair.
The parrots surround you, framing you in place.
And suddenly, you realize you are stitched in thread,
and you cannot stop looking at your fingers.

D.E. St. John

Leaving Assateague Island

Our damp feet stamped exclamation points
across boardwalk planks. In dribble
from a shower head calcified and pocked
by salt air, we rinsed Labor Day
off our legs and watched it splotch
in muddy clumps through slats, down
to dunes below. We limped, hefting
the aftermath of castles in mesh bags,
our burned skin tightening in shore breeze.

Chair wefts slackened as we slung them
into the trunk, where a dim bulb
shadowed orange rust ochre on their frames.
When I slammed it shut I saw the halo
blazing a blood-soaked Christ who stormed
a rapture flyer some soul slid beneath
our wiper. It joined a hundred others, skittering
like crabs toward a wild pony, studded
with burrs, plopping golden stones on the lot.

In December, in a white dawn obscured
by plumes of gray exhaust, I popped
the lid, groping for the scraper half-awake.
Sand flecks fell from its handle
into the lopsided angels I scolded
my sons for making by the driveway,
though I stood there, a frigid grin,
coaxing them to swing their arms before
I stooped to pull them from their wings.

Adam Tavel