

Coming Next Spring

**Special Issue:
25th Anniversary Anthology**

ATLANTA



**ATLANTA
REVIEW**

REVIEW

POETRY 2018

Special Welcome

Ilya Kaminsky

Grand Prize Winner

Carlos Andrés Gómez

with Contest Judge

Julie Kane

Fall / Winter 2018

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**ATLANTA
REVIEW**

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ATLANTA REVIEW

at the Georgia Institute of Technology

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Welcome

For decades I have chuckled each time someone has predicted that poetry has used up an meaningful purpose in the world. Poetry is difficult, so perhaps this is why some people want to relegate it to a once important art form, or diminish it as nothing more than clichéd and syrupy sentiments found in greeting cards. However, despite some stereotypes of poets as ethereal and overly sensitive beings more suited for a different time, poets refuse to be disregarded. Certainly, as *Atlanta Review* enters its 25 th year of publication, our editors, past and present, have seen poetry continue to inspire readers. Of one thing I am absolutely certain: Poetry does matter!

As an editor I am always most delighted to discover new voices, especially when those voices are younger poets. “Younger” in poetic terms can mean young in years or young in experience or both. This issue has three important foci: a new colleague and two contest winners.

Many of you know that two years ago, Georgia Tech became the new home for *Atlanta Review*. This August Georgia Tech announced the new Bourne Chair in Poetry, Ilya Kaminsky. For some of you, Kaminsky’s work will be new, and although he is young in years, his experience is more extensive than many established poets twice his age. His poetry, and his poetry translations, represent some of the best poetry being written today. His international focus is especially complementary with the work we have always published, and I am honored and delighted to welcome him as a colleague and to share with you some poems from his forthcoming book, *Deaf Republic* (Graywolf Press, 2019). We are also pleased to announce that Kaminsky is joining our editorial staff as an advisor.

Each generation makes its own mark on poetry, and along with Kaminsky both our 2018 contest winners demonstrate what P.B. Shelley argued when he said that poets construct and deconstruct society by “not only beholding intensely the present as it is and discovering those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but also beholding the future in the present.” These young voices both challenge me and give me hope. For our annual international poetry prize, we are grateful for the work of our judge, award-winning, and internationally respected poet, Julie Kane.

Our spring/summer issue will be a commemorative double issue, featuring the “best of the best” from the last 25 years, so you have something extra special coming in 2019. Meanwhile, savor the work in this issue, and I think when you are finished you will agree that poetry is alive and kicking—improving our shared experience as humans.

Karen Head



Bourne Chair Welcome	1	<i>Karen Head</i>
The Townspeople Watch Them Take Alfonso Eulogy	2	<i>Ilya Kaminsky</i>
Rare gifts	3	
Franz Tinscher	4	<i>Christina Beasley</i>
Spider	5	<i>Michelle Castleberry</i>
Backtracking	7	<i>Noel Conneely</i>
Geology	8	<i>Stephanie Conybeare</i>
Now	9	
October 13, 2006	10	<i>Jennifer L. Freed</i>
The Pashto Poems	11	<i>Malcolm Glass</i>
<i>Megacopta cribraria</i>	12	<i>Kim Hamilton</i>
All The Reckoning,	14	<i>Caroline Harvey</i>
Mammogram Eve	15	<i>R.W. Jagodnik</i>
A Plaque for Berryman	16	<i>Eric Janken</i>
Daedalus Tying the Wings of Icarus	17	<i>Paul Johnson</i>
Raising the Ghost Year	18	<i>Marilyn E. Johnston</i>
Forward, out	19	<i>Judy Kaber</i>
Torques / Double Shifts at KFC	20	<i>Joyce Meyers</i>
	21	<i>Raynald Patrice</i> <i>Desmeules Nayler</i>
With Me	22	<i>Linda Parsons</i>
A February thaw	23	<i>Marge Piercy</i>
Encounter	24	<i>Deborah Pope</i>
Gold Triumph Tulips	25	
Just enough time	26	<i>Donna Pucciani</i>
Doting	27	<i>Donna Reis</i>
Reap	28	<i>Marjorie Saiser</i>
When Wind Blows All Day in the Desert	29	
She Goes for a Walk	30	<i>LeRoy N. Sorenson</i>
Climate Change	31	<i>Matthew J. Spireng</i>
The Old Shall Bear Fruit	32	<i>Anne Spring</i>
When night falls and wine pours	33	<i>Marc Swan</i>

The World is Always Ending Somewhere	34	<i>Ben Swimm</i>
Before Burial	35	<i>Marilynn Talal</i>
Those Weekends	36	
Speak, Mnemosyne	37	<i>Angie Vorhies</i>
Night	41	<i>Raleigh Scott Wood</i>
Dilling	42	<i>Charles Wyatt</i>
Dor	43	
The Weight of Bodily Touches	44	<i>Joseph Zaccardi</i>
Dan Veach		
Young Writer's Prize	47	
I'm Noticing You Noticing Me, So Before You Ask	48	<i>Alyssa Cruz</i>
POETRY 2018		
Welcome to Poetry 2018	50	<i>International Competition</i>
	53	<i>Julie Kane</i>
Underground	55	<i>Carlos Andrés Gómez</i>
Airship, January 1915	56	<i>Marion Starling Boyer</i>
Felt calculus	58	<i>Stephanie Christie</i>
Why I Read Obituaries	59	<i>Don Colburn</i>
The Ladies	60	<i>Mac Gay</i>
interment	61	<i>Ceridwen Hall</i>
Samara	62	<i>Don Hogle</i>
A Brown Girl	63	<i>Joe Jackson</i>
Your fruit, hallowed	64	<i>Naima Cerulean Kazmi</i>
Written by Window Light	66	<i>George Kramer</i>
Marriage	67	<i>Rosa Lane</i>
What the Rat Told the World	68	<i>Katharyn Howd Machan</i>
Song for the Refugees	69	<i>Bill Meissner</i>
To My Father, On His Birthday	71	<i>Aline Mello</i>
Annie Kelly, 25	72	<i>Greg Rappleye</i>
My Grandfather's Herringbone Cap	74	

A Late Lunch in California	76	<i>Alice Campbell Romano</i>
advice for women who have	77	<i>Rebecca Rose</i>
lost their husbands at sea		
From <i>Nomad Poems</i> ,	78	<i>Patti Trimble</i>
Set down set down		
From <i>Nomad Poems</i> ,	79	
We are seed		
Fernandina, Galapagos Islands	80	<i>Kelly Vande Plasse</i>
The Tardigrade	81	
Selected Nightmares	82	<i>Chelsea Whitton</i>
Your Fancy Bonsai Tree	84	
Refuge	85	<i>Hannah Yoest</i>
Contributors	86	
Benefactors of <i>Atlanta Review</i>	94	
Poetry 2019	99	
<i>Subscribe!</i>	100	





Atlanta Review

Welcomes to Georgia Tech

Ilya Kaminsky

The Margaret T. and Henry C. Bourne Chair in Poetry

Ilya Kaminsky was born in Odessa, former USSR, and arrived in USA in 1993, when his family was granted asylum. He is the author of *Dancing in Odessa*, *Deaf Republic* and several other books, including *Dark Elderberry Branch: Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva*, which he co-translated with Jean Valentine. He has edited many collections of poems and essays, including the *Ecco Anthology of International Poetry*, which has been called “a modern classic.”

His poems have been translated into numerous languages, and his books have been published in Turkey, Netherlands, Russia, France, Mexico, Macedonia, Romania, Spain, and China, where his poetry was awarded the Yinchuan International Poetry Prize. His other awards include the American Academy of Arts and Letters Metcalf Award, The Whiting Writers Award, Ruth Lilly Fellowship, Poetry magazine’s Levinson Prize, Pushcart Prize, and others. Recently, he was on the shortlist for the Neusdadt International Literature Prize. His essays appear in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *Boston Review*. He has served as the Director of the Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute at Poetry Foundation, and was the receipt of the prestigious John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in Poetry in spring 2018.

The Townspeople Watch Them Take Alfonso

Now each of us is
a witness stand:

Vasenska watches us watch four soldiers throw Alfonso Barabinski
on the sidewalk.

We let them take him, all of us cowards.

What we don't say
we carry in our suitcases, coatpockets, our nostrils.

Across the street they wash him with firehoses. First he screams,
then he stops.

So much sunlight—
A t-shirt falls off a clothesline and an old man stops, picks it up,
presses it to his face.

Neighbors line up to watch him thrown on the sidewalk like a
vaudeville act: Ta Da.

In so much sunlight—

each of us
is a witness stand:

They take Alfonso
and no one stands up. Our silence stands up for us.

Ilya Kaminsky

Eulogy

You must speak not only of great devastation—

we heard that not from a philosopher
but from our neighbor, Alfonso—

his eyes closed, he climbed other people's porches and recited
to his child our National Anthem:

You must speak not only of great devastation—
when his child cried, he

made her a newspaper hat and squeezed his silence
like two pleats of an accordion:

We must speak not only of great devastation—
and he played that accordion out of tune in a country

where the only musical instrument is the door.

Ilya Kaminsky

Rare gifts

The sack says it is full of “coffee beans,” but it is not.
It is a bag of tiny moons harvested diligently across universes.

The owner of the local coffee shop will only provide one
if a patron’s tide really needs turning. Hope is an unusual prize.

Each moon retains its name and organic color palette. It is not only
glowing, but ornate as fresh myth or expensive glass eyeball.

A moon is also called a “natural satellite.” This comes from the Latin
satelles for guard or companion. Omnipresent, riding near the hip.

The shopkeeper’s collection of moons disappears over the decades.
He does not remember where they came from, or how to collect more.

The gravity of the world’s events shifts, collides, and contradicts.
The shopkeeper knows it is the fault of these moons,
the possibility they reflect.

Christina Beasley

Franz Tinscher

*From a specimen in Hyrtl Skull Collection at the Mütter Museum
of the College of Physicians in Philadelphia, titled with the proper
name of its given specimen. The italicized text below is from the
descriptive placard displayed below each skull.*

*40, Silesia (now Poland)
died of trauma in Charity Hospital
railway worker; continuous brow ridge*

My mother rode the train when I was three weeks late to arrive.
She thought the swaying would bring me out.
That was my first and favorite lullaby.
In desperation, she tied her skirt into breeches
and drove my father’s bike along the tracks to shake me born.
I waited two more days and everyone fretted I would be simple
because of her stunt.

Many believe me so now because I am quiet.
But my mind is always turning, rumbling. And I listen.

I can work the train blindfolded using my ears and hands.
The passengers, those stumpy pigeons and their chatter,
They ignore me or call me stupid.

So little needs to be said aloud.

I am built like a train’s engine. Blunt, stout, full of heat.
I rarely leave the station. Sleep in a cot in the storage shed
among the forgotten things of travelers.
When the train stops, I take care of it.
Sometimes I ride, listen to music of the rails.
Sometimes I think I dream on foot, like cattle.
I imagine I do appear simple.

Family comes to visit, asks me to climb
into their tin-can automobiles.

They laugh at my fear
of how the cars skitter like beetles. Their roads littered
with turns and decisions.

I prefer my train.
It goes just where it needs to go.
It speaks only to hail or warn.

Michelle Castleberry

Spider

The spider crawls down the rain
from a sycamore branch.
Blue drops cling to his hairy legs.
The rain, though tickled, won't smile.
It's been such a ride down;
It doesn't know why it sets out.
The spider is practising his rhythm.
He has new steps every day
but the rain couldn't care less.
The dancing dries him off
but the headache he got
from eating a bad fly
has gotten worse.
The sycamore is fraught with moody birds
whose seed has spoiled.
Their perches have been taken
and their feathers are a mess.
They are so busy looking for a place to land,
They haven't time to wipe their beaks
after a spider and would just love
the rain to ease.

Noel Conneely

Backtracking

After years of enchantment with uncharted places,
sea floors, cloud ceilings, dreamlands, edgelands,
I find myself lost to the love of being lost,

trying to find a path back to my original place
where morning met with me freshly
and I breathed with ease.

Time to turn and return, retrace the steps I took,
the flighty ones, the heavy-hearted.

But how to find the path they made? Terrain's transformed,
way stones vanished, stiles no longer there.
Memory's mist.

Instead of country to country could I plot a progression
from person to person, first friend to last night's night-hag
who seemed to know my name?

Or, maybe I've left myself a snail trail of yearnings,
that shoulder blades could sprout wings, that finger tips
could tempt entanglement.

Unless I've been nowhere, and still am where I was
before my parents were born.
Then there is no beginning

and pathfinding's a standing still like stones,
mossy stones beneath a surfeit of stars.
Time to emulate.

Stephanie Conybeare

Geology

Touch a stone and you touch
where a dinosaur's claw sought purchase,
where a mammoth trotted,

and the leather-wrapped foot of an early 'you'
tip-toed towards bison, bow and arrows clutched
in a weather-reddened, sooty hand.

Stone opens time-horizons like a fish-eye lens,
such scope! You're in love with
geological chronology,

you hold a smooth stone
in your digitised mind; granite maybe or sandstone,
palm-cooling, thought-stilling

and it honestly tells you how it felt,
scrape of a glacier, or the rough black caress
of cold currents in deep sea trenches.

Or the frisson of free-flying
through space in a comet, it's time turned,
you're flung backwards,

you're a bit of a star, then pre-star
as the glittering past gives way to a beginning,
that bursting forth only stones remember

and like relating to fingers that feelingly
need the whole history: how stones mattered,
how they'll end.

Stephanie Conybeare

Now

Nights are stars, chill air, headlights on the walls,
the glow of the clock, the want
of his snore.

Days, she rearranges
the comfortable chairs, moves the TV
to the kitchen. Takes care of gutters, car, lawn.
Learns how much milk to buy, how slowly the dishwasher fills.

Nights, she turns to his side of the bed, draws
his pillow into the curve of her
body, his slowly fading
scent.

Jennifer L. Freed

October 13, 2006

—for my father

The new century slides into its first
decade—months, days, and weeks blurred together
like a gentle hand smoothing dark feathers
down the back of the last po’ouli, nursed

into extinction. When you were alive
you might have watched one of these rare birds feed
in your back yard, cracking sunflower seeds,
hidden in that haven, held safe, to thrive

in your care. You might have written down
chickadee in your log, then looked again
to see a stranger. When you found him in
your books, you’d have a miracle: he’d flown

to your Florida sanctuary, thick
with staghorn ferns and orchids, like his home,
Haleakala, a volcano some

four thousand miles away. But that last bird
never flew. And I am left with these words,
a dream of salvation for our dying earth,

one hundred years from the day you were born.

Malcolm Glass

The Pashto Poems

—For Zarmina Shehadi, poet

To the Pashtun women
who press the sounds in their chests
to dark cement

we offer marsh grass seedling

*May God make you into a riverbank flower
So I may smell you when I gather water.*

To the poets whose fingers tent
over stillborn tulips in the desert,
flame with machine gun rip in alleyways

we lift hands of plum bloom

To those who pen the twisted road
the house imploded in the small screen,
a scarlet cacophony

we lend the storm petrel egg

*Separation, you set fire
in the heart and home of every love.*

In the birthplace of pomegranates
your empty chador a dark simoom
swirls on the riverbank

forgive us our fragile attention

Half a world away your lines break
on our ears. But the words you sing
belong to no one.

*I call. You're stone.
One day you'll look and find me gone.*

Kim Hamilton

with a line from the Wikipedia article on "Pest (organism)"

To say the bean field is anything
less than God's great arm hairs
should be considered sacrilege.

Who can survey grain in rows
composed like psalms on a page
and not see divine intent
columnar in the green?

A vine creeps along the field—
noxious weed shades crops
into wilting, silences praying
stems. But—one kudzu bug

decimates the vine like a plague—
watch the invasive weed wither
in the wake of the swarm. See
the leaves shrivel like peeling skin.
And then—

watch the beetles
level the fields with gnashing
mouthparts.

Watch this pest,
competitor of humanity, save
and consume the meadow all
at once. When God made seeds,
He delivered the lablab bug—
remember how fickle His love
can be.

When this bean
plataspid picks apart the pasture,
what remains but hollow stems
craving faith—.

Caroline Harvey

all the stifled wrecks of knolls greening,
all the midnight shoals turned
olive with severed tongues of seaweed,
all the spit of the sea asking for release,
all the notes dancing on the belly
of their own sweet wills,
all the beaches re-fencing the sea's pain,
all those quiet sacrifices marking midnight,
all the sharpening speed of
knowing, hurried and hushed,
all of it,
all the swirls as I watch
what whiles away—
no, no, not in that sickness of parting,
not that unattached watch,
not that mess of stanchions which raunch up
the so impish gnarl of manzanita,
not what sips up the ice-less ripples it makes,
not that something not so sure of
and yet just this side of clinging,
but rather that lightning flash
when a bend in the tree's bow
gives the nest a try,
when a thin waterfall heals enough—
a lone silver finger
brashing the shale into rust—
when a pool slouches like quick tears
into the sand, pedestaling the falls up,
when that wren's notes wilt in the white mist,
when the grass on the cliff cannot
catch *again's* spirit,
when the waves sneaking in hang
on you like a shawl,
when each clamber of song is
the sea amplified, louder and then,
a crash and a snap and a spurt,
a bellowing laugh louder than Heaven.

R. W. Jagodnik

Mammogram Eve

After the waiter served pupusas,
he replaced the roll of paper towels
and pretended not to notice my fingers
on the lump above the nipple, as if testing
the doneness of a cake. Such things restaurants see!
A man tracing circles through flannel.

Reddened skin reddens more in the shower.
I almost scald the breast pressing a washcloth,
pleading for pores to open and the knot to be cysts,
a staph infection, an in-grown hair.
(I hate those strands.)
Do masses exist before discovery?

How sing-songy the procedure sounds!
a playground game.
My internist told me women complain of cold
and the squeeze of the areola.
—Eric, I've no idea how the technician'll fix you up.
Not much to work with.—

He laughs, looks up from the computer,
wants me to smile.
I can see molars and his gum's empty lot.

This is the first procedure without my parents.
Before my earliest surgery,
Mama caressed my bulged baby-skull
and whispered *I'm sorry* for hours, as if she quilted
deformed A, C, T, and G's into the body.

Eric Janken

A Plaque for Berryman

I once passed you by when I
Was an engineering student at
The University of Minnesota,
Despairing over my major
And my girlfriend, who had
Just left me for unexplained
Reasons. I walked out on the
Washington Avenue Bridge,
Where I liked to go to pray,
Not knowing you had been there
Seven winters before, looking at
The hard lights of Minneapolis
Gathered at the edge of the river
Like cold spectators at an ice rink.
There was no plaque set in
The concrete at the place
Where you jumped, only the steel
Railing along the walkway with
The rumble of evening traffic beneath,
Only me standing and you flashing
Down through the winter air to
The frozen river flat below
Following the law I knew
So well from my physics class.

Paul Johnson

Daedalus Tying the Wings of Icarus

*Painting, Daedalus and Icarus,
by Orazio Riminaldi, 1625*

The boy urges *Let's go!* pink smooth cheeks aglow.
He cranes face up, eyes down, sighing
over his father's slowness. I see the father's
tousled gray wisps fan across
the boy's lush curls. In wide leg stance
two bodies are at a cross-roads, Daedalus
reaching behind and around Icarus'
back to affix to new-muscle flesh,
the white-feathered wings of wax.

Their bodies shine bright
against a maze of umbers.
I think of my own inventor father
at eighty-eight, down to a skeleton body
no heavier than a kite,
unable to rise from his wing chair.
I see my still-strong brother crouch
on bent knee as he inserts arms
under Father's bird-thin arms and hoists him
doddering to his feet as though restoring a drunk
for a final time, with Ken quipping
"...C'mon, we don't hug anymore!"
(they barely touched in life, drunk or sober—)

This is the first and last embrace
of father and son
as age and illness catches them forever
in this hovering dance toward escape...

They've fallen still a moment now.
Look how the
strapped wings' pale blue ribbons
flutter pitifully
across the firm young shoulders,
cut the heart.

Marilyn E. Johnston

Raising the Ghost Year

We swept into the new year—danced the blitz—
then staggered home to the hills of Los Altos, not as high
as we'd like to have been, the lost days falling from our arms.
Four of us crowded into the cabin, slept on floors,
all black and white and gravelly gray. Remember the way

you kissed me then, as if the world didn't mean anything
and yesterday was just a song on the hit parade?
I bawled and hustled, wrote poems, heard the Grateful Dead
singing a storm, watched someone stir pots of soup in the park.
You sold the Saab, thyme spread like crazy in our garden,

and all we talked about was getting back east. I saw
December 31st riding on your shoulder. A ragged shadow
did a flash-boom dance across the backyard. I couldn't
shake free, found myself sheathed in months and Mondays,
sealed up in numbers. We dropped acid, counted out

our food stamps for the next day's meal, rode north
to harvest redwood driftwood from the beach in hopes
of selling it on city corners, the exhaustion of the day before
like a tattered shirt on our backs, the smell of humanity
rising, cars parked one behind the other, buildings

black as melted tar, but the road a shining path.
Those days all scattered now. A whirlwind of years
plucked and thrown along the street. Eventually we made it
back east, split, took up ordinary lives, turned pages,
looked at books, lost years, papered in feathery days.

Judy Kaber

Forward, out

No one wants to hear it anymore,
we tell each other. It's true.
It's been years, past
time to move forward. They
came to the service, brought

you soup, maybe a casserole,
invited you to dinner once
or twice. Then checked that off
as done, folded your grief neatly,
laid it gently in a drawer
where it belongs.

You live in that drawer,
whisper in the dark
with others who live there, too,
prepare a smile to wear
when you emerge. You flash it

at friends you meet
in restaurants, theater lobbies.
They're happy to see you out
and about, glad you're doing well.
You chat about the weather,

your volunteer work, their
latest trip, a recent film you saw.
As they turn away, you watch
your friend reach for
her husband's hand,
squeeze it hard.

Joyce Meyers

Torques / Double Shifts at KFC

Round their necks the women wear torques
of gold and silver. For each man, when he
has made ten thousand dirhams buys a torque
and has his wife to wear it. When he makes
another ten thousand, he buys another torque
for her to wear. And so you see the wives
of the rich men looped in many braids of gold.
And their hair is often gold.

Just like, as boys
we dreamed them down from foreign magazines.
Abdul works double shifts at the KFC.
When he came here, he says, he was too poor
to even have a birthday. Just "the spring."
And now? He's saving for a franchise store
and his wife turns her hair golden in the sink.

Raynald Patrice Desmeules Nayler

With Me

With me as I build in the home of myself,
careful to wet the bricks else my joints
buckle, walls tumble of impatience. With me
as I smudge the house of ghosts, of circumstance

and happenstance, the bitter end's swear
now blown milkweed. With me picking figs,
the leaves speaking salt and rough going,
my reach for the highest up, deepest in,

hidden under. With my bones of contention,
the red middle, gristle crossways in my throat,
all the failed heart knows in one swallow.
With my liminal ache, time of day the French

call *entre chien et loup*, between dog
and wolf, world and otherworld, my dusk
not yet blue-black nor brimming twilight.
With my father's descent to the field

sunken with the sum of his travels,
my own bag of bones packed for farewelling,
when the muscled catastrophe has its day,
charnel ground littered with and without

my say-so, the false idols fallen to paste,
the last ecstasy passed into blessing,
into hard surrender.

Linda Parsons

A February thaw

Today the ground is bare. Naked.
I can see dirt, dead grass, one tiny
shoot of crocus beside the house.
It's like I've been given back

the world, or lent it for a time.
Chickadees, tree sparrows, finches
juncos rejoice, even tiny kinglets
who bear red and golden crowns.

Grey squirrels wake to leap
from branch to branch. Skunks
are abroad for the first time
in months, males driven by lust

search out females in their snug
burrows. My brain has wakened
too. The land has emerged alive
from its white shroud. Earth

suggests it's something to plunge
my hands into like bread dough
I knead. Looks almost edible.
Far underneath worms are thawing.

My spine begins to glow like a sea
creature of the deep, but a weight
instead is lifted from me. Seeds
arrive in the mail, packets of hope.

Marge Piercy

Encounter

Coming from the car, I saw
a large, red-tailed hawk,
talons gripping the arm
of the plaid lawn chair
no more than twenty feet away.
It did not startle, shift—

just cocked the copper curve
of its head, sharpening
the profile of the black, sickle beak,
the thick, mottled plumage
across the breadth of its chest.

It seemed waiting.
For a quivering vole gone to ground?
A rabbit reckless with inattention?
Even me? Not prey,
but a challenge? a charge?
Someone to witness. Marvel.
Acknowledge. To be—
there's no other word for it—
enraptured.

We stayed like that.
Then nonchalantly it rose
On its four-foot wingspan
In low, easy strokes
over the lawn, lifting
and topping the pine crowns,
until it was a dark cross-bow,
far and slant, circling
impossibly high in the blank blue.
All right, I thought. You win.

Deborah Pope

Gold Triumph Tulips

*A chair is a difficult object. A skyscraper
is almost easier.*

—*Mies van der Rohe*

The stems strict as a regiment,
the perfectly balanced bell,
the saturated yellow primary as a crayon,
angled petals smooth as thumb wax,
slightly reflexed along the crest,
poised to glide, plane from plane,
into a goblet of light. Pure Bauhaus.
Nothing here of the *passementerie*
of fringe tulips, the gaudy streaks
and graffiti of the parrots,
the voluptuaries of tulip peonies.
Such clarity, stricture, dominion.
Van der Rohe himself
might almost have signed them.

Deborah Pope

Just enough time

to write the glint
of light on ice, the dawn's
yawn of last night's twilight,

the first snow of the year
arguing mutely for whitest
white to be remembered

in the spring. But first,
laden branches weigh wet,
and even the birds

are suddenly silent,
save for the downy
woodpecker.

I dreamt of her last night,
fashioning a hole on the west
side of the house, a dim

clatter, then feathering
the new-made nest
to watch the daylight ride in

on unflappable wings.

Donna Pucciani

Doting

Outside our bedroom window, Roberta
has birthed her fawn in the overgrown
tennis court. The second he drops,
she licks him all over. He struggles
to stand and wobbles from the weight
of her tongue, meticulously turning him
from side to side. His hips rise above
his shoulders like pistons as he makes his first
exaggerated steps. Tired and content,
Roberta then lies down chewing her cud.
She only seems to focus on her babe
when he walks away. Soon he's too exhausted
to explore and hunkers down in tall grass.

Three years ago, a coyote lay in wait
of fawn season, taking two as they arrived.
One doe stoically walked by her baby's
hind quarters without looking, while the other
stood vigil for four days, darting at crows
who came to feed on the remains.
A naturalist, who lived with a herd of mule deer,
wrote that some does wither away after
the death of their fawns. I cannot help
but be afraid for Roberta and her little one.
When I find her munching my doted-on, day
lilies the following afternoon, I give her a pass.

Donna Reis

Reap

We had a few minutes
before we had to leave
on the long road, so we went
in a light rain to pick oranges.
Doves that spend nights
in the tree, the soft gray
pair who shoulder up
to the round hard fruit,
came hurtling out
in a burst of wings.
You and I began to unmoor
orange after orange,
the snap of each making
a little new shower, a second rain.
Our faces, our glasses, our sleeves
collected what could not last.

Marjorie Saiser

When Wind Blows All Day in the Desert

When wind flutters the neighborhood palm trees,
when it fingers the leaves of oleanders

and pins down the low-lying laurel,
when it rattles the flapper of a vent on the roof,

when it finds some corner to moan against,
then I'm back in a stucco house on the plains.

There's snow in the air, snow which will all day
brush the walls and shingles. A heavy woman

in a thin housedress opens the maw of a coal stove
and drops in a chunk of what's left of her winter supply.

She thinks I need a batch of pancakes so she
shuffles in her cracked shoes to her kitchen and

takes a mixing bowl from the cupboard.
She dips a porcelain cup into a sack of flour.

She's going to provide me with plenty of
carbohydrates and make me feel better.

Marjorie Saiser

She Goes for a Walk

Each year, she walks on the first snow to the graveyard at the south end, near the river. Its crunch feels just right under her boots. The road bright silver under the street lamps. The night still. Tiny houses dark, houses with small panes of glass, hold the night close. Her child was born in a snow month. She knows where the grave is, even in the snow, even at night. There are no flowers in the winter, just polished granite. Cold. Bare. She wipes the flat marker clean, stands over it. Stands as the snow swirls, stands with her head bowed. She wants to head farther out into the prairie, but she knows she will turn back into town, moon and stars casting her body into a long, solitary shadow.

LeRoy N. Sorenson

Climate Change

High noon, mid-March, upstate New York and a bat fluttered over a few feet above my head as I was walking along the road. I half expected it

to drop down and bite, and I turned to follow its flight in case it attacked from behind, but it continued on, confused by the sunlight or

rabies, or white-nose syndrome, and turned into the leafless trees along the creek where it disappeared. I pondered the bat the whole walk,

wary of its return, but it did not return. It was too early in the year for a bat to be out, insects scarce despite unseasonable warmth,

with frost and a little snow still forecast for the week ahead. Too early, and it seemed unreal flapping its wings a few feet overhead

in broad daylight, high noon, mid-March in upstate New York as I walked along the road coatless in a tee shirt and sweating a little in the sun.

Matthew J. Spireng

The Old Shall Bear Fruit

After the storm, we navigate
a damp tangle of the autumn garden.
Vines, leeks, squash, beets
glisten with drops of rain.
The turquoise foliage of fennel
shimmers like lacework
in the moist air.

In a corner bordered by woods,
an aged fruit tree
leans into the horizontal,
exposing roots tangled as snakes.
Beneath its gnarled branches,
fallen apples litter the earth.

See where the crafty fox
has left her mark –
the sharp imprint of teeth
on a ruby beauty
that still clings to the tree.

Anne Spring

When night falls and wine pours

Family, for some a litany of memories, for me
an opportunity to explore things never spoken
of when I was a child. I'm in San Clemente. The rains
have stopped, ocean finally calm, sky that deep blue
that only happens in Southern California in wintertime.
My cousin is pouring me one more glass of fine wine,
a high end pinot noir from Sonoma County. We've been
nonstop talking, first at dinner with the four of us, now
five hours later just the two of us looking back on the life
we've lived seven decades from where it all began
in an upstate New York town where two rivers merge
into a mighty flow headed south. We talk of the family
members we barely knew and those we thought we knew
and the way time shapes what is real into what could have
been or might be true. He pours more wine. I hear wind
smacking the shutters, maybe another storm or just nature
having its way, then conversation shifts to his father,
his mother who both had dementia in one form or another
as if there were a format for that kind of loss. His eyes
take on a faraway look, then back to his glass, to me
and he says, "I'm not sure how this will turn out,
but I guess I'm as ready as I could ever be."

Marc Swan

The World is Always Ending Somewhere

Sure, we noticed the droughts.
Yes, we read about the corals dying.
We saw the water lines in Puerto Rico.

These our black cats.
Mirrors nudged loose and shattered,
dead sparrows in the yard.

The same day our neighbors
found their dog curled limp
on their porch, John Ashberry died.

There was no connection.
Then a hurricane drowned Houston.
Thirty-three days ago

the moon passed in front of the sun,
and the church-man told the papers
that everything would end.

I didn't believe him until that night,
when you fainted in kitchen.
Then I felt the tremors.

Ben Swimm

Before Burial

A nurse asks if she may take shoes
from his body, a sack on the gurney.
Why not? He will never again
strut down a sidewalk.
The shape of my stillness is ancient.
Emptiness, quiet as a forest clearing
here in this hospital silent around me.
Or maybe I don't listen.
I call the funeral home,
our children.
And sit there.
I go to look at his face
calm, peaceful as in sleep.
I kiss his cold waxy cheek.
It gives way beneath my lips.
Without ceremony they come for him.

Marilynn Talal

Those Weekends

We had a marriage
of fights and laughter
with sunny spots
like bites of banana
we treasured those weekends
when we could be lazy
hands seeking each other
as we walked delighted
with that high you sometimes get
from a Margarita
after long abstinence
that warm feeling all's okay
with work and kids
as we walked
past houses flashing
gems in green settings
April thrumming
with music from singers
among the leaves
our hands swinging
the way the ocean
licks the beach
in sunlit delirium

Marilynn Talal

Speak, Mnemosyne

*...speech recognition is really a memory. Speak the thing into being:
as dreams go, that's as old as they get. Once, all stories existed only
in speech, and no technology caused more upheaval than the written
word.*

—Richard Powers, "How to Speak a Book"

Writing, Socrates said,
is the enemy
undermining authority,
changing meaning.

We know this
because somebody wrote it down.

Tell me a story.
Pause.

Once, all stories existed
only in denial.

Close your eyes, let line and time
ferry you across—

What do you say to the shadows?

How do you turn a ghost
into an ancestor?

In the cave, the cage
prisoners chained to the wall.

Is this the story of the hunter
skin scraped with a knife?
Clay, vellum, papyrus.

In the library of unwritten books,
in the book of the dead
speech is only a memory.

According to the story later
dictated to a speechwriter,
Cain spoke to Abel.

In Vietnam
prisoners were forbidden to speak.

A cipher: tap, pause, tap.

A code to fellow prisoners
against time, horrors
that could not be abbreviated—
GN—Good Night
GBU—God Bless You.

From your fingers to His ears:
Not forgotten.

Bede wrote of Caedmon
of the hymn that came in a dream
out of one language
into another

*this is the sense
but not the words themselves
as he sang them in his sleep.*

When you wake
you will not remember this

and the prisoners won't hear
because they covered their ears.

Forces cannot translate
from one language
to another
without loss.

I count to three—
Delta, Echo, X-Ray—

When I reach three
you'll open your eyes
you'll forget everything.

Beauty, in our tongue,
cannot be told, trans-
muted, the nightmare cannot be traced

from one mouth, closed,
to another.

Bodies, re-member.
Ghosts speak, Father.
Forgive them for what they say
not what they know.

I charge thee,
speak.

GBU—
I am writing this for you
for the time, being now
between us
in transit—
a story, a trance
slated to be wiped clean
from memory.
—GN

Angie Vorhies

Night

How inescapably the winter comes!
Its penetrating cold is smooth as steel.
The earth moves on. The atmosphere succumbs.

Time never stops to tweak its medium
While I must watch my step or else I'll slip.
How inescapably the winter comes!

The empty snow-white street at night looks glum...
And what could any darkened corner hide?
The earth moves on. The atmosphere succumbs.

What figures on a moratorium
For how fact works? The climate was ideal.
How inescapably the winter comes!

Another freezing gust winds through the slum;
Its run-down homes, porches dark, glow inside.
The earth moves on. The atmosphere succumbs.

The cold sinks through my gloves; my hands go numb.
A snowy gust applies its frigid grip.
How inescapably the winter comes!
The earth moves on. The atmosphere succumbs.

Raleigh Scott Wood

Dilling

A darling child of those grown
near to old may be called a dilling,
as the mocking bird does not call
the grackle's song unmelodious.

He thinks it midst his dilling –
youngest child then or litter's runt
brought in the house to dance
on hard hooves as he fattens,

a last yellow chick that dilling,
sunset of himself, so doted on
he might be a line of verse,
measures of refrains refining.

Creak of gate branch-scratch
grackle all purple dressed for song –
We watch him bend in wind,
his leaves fish scales scattering,

not too young to fall or fly,
counting the moon one
and one and one and empty.
That one not brought up to pitch.

The room is still and the bed dark.
The harp is tuned and dusted.
A dilling that flute will not grow
another tune not so much

as a cat caught hanging
on the curtains. Oh misery,
myself a dilling, he cries.
My skeleton escapes me.

Charles Wyatt

Dor

An insect that flies with a humming sound,
dor-fly, dumble dor, dung beetle,
even a dragon if he be small enough to hum –
A drone bee, an idler, simpleton and fool,

even a deer, mild before his leap,
in the old times, his color dored dim
at cockshut, made sad by the bright sky.
And this poem might mean to dorre its reader,

dumbling and arrogant under the moon,
its metaphors lost and eaten by birds.
But not plovers, sometimes called dors,
allowing themselves to be easily taken.

When a door is shut against a dor,
the day will go on, the dorbel labor
at his desk, penning his lines, casting
them back, the bait sinking to the mud

bottom of his brain, there lively to squirm
and hum bubble ditties: *when the dorbel rings,*
the dunce enters, humming dung beetle,
baton raised in case music might begin.

Charles Wyatt

The Weight of Bodily Touches
—Thomas Hardy

Say window and windows open say gravity and all the stones return
to their beds the things not said stay closed dead bolted doorjambes
rip-rack of creek rock and cave-ins some days are like other days
they walk around in seasons some day there will be a last day some
call it redemption some call it fate in the beginning there were no
days there were no nights some ask is the window half opened or
half closed either way says the optimist lets the wind in either way
says the pessimist lets the warmth out lets the cold in say ocean and
vistas open say desert and sand dunes unfold *The Lady of the Lake*
the man in the moon some seas are bottomless some celestial bodies
light years away neither reachable neither graspable everyone carries
the burdens of birth binding and bonding finding and untying every
sage knows there's always a place in the woods only the lost can
find and time surrounds them circles circle around time after a seven
year drought in the M'Zab valley of the Saharan desert two or three
children drowned trying to walk on water they had never seen before

Joseph Zaccardi



Dan Veach Young Writer's Prize

2018 Award

ALYSSA CRUZ

Alyssa Cruz's surprising poem "I'm Noticing You Noticing Me, So Before You Ask" offers a wry and honest portrayal of a young woman dealing with baldness, and the way she and the world interact because of it. The poem captures our attention immediately because we see the young speaker in a wig shop, but delays the detail we want to know—why a 13-year-old is being fitted for a wig. Only in stanza four does the poem reveal the speaker's alopecia. Where the poet might have succumbed to sentimentality or self-pity, here her language is factual and descriptive: her alopecia is a "slow rotting peach," and her head a "perfectly round skull." Her baldness is a loud-mouthed "friend" who "climbs on top of the table" to demand attention, a humorous yet arresting image that nevertheless garners our sympathy. While the speaker feels she is the "shadow who follows" behind her baldness, the poem ends on a hopeful note, that she will herself become "someone worth following." For all of these reasons, we choose this poem as the 2018 Dan Veach Prize for Younger Poets. Alyssa Cruz's fresh new voice in poetry promises great things to come.

JC Reilly



I'm Noticing You Noticing Me, So Before You Ask

I am 13 years old. It is April 29th, I am seated before an 8-foot mirror in the marble parlor of Anton's Wigs and Kurt, green eyes, mid 40's, asks if I am ready. I am fragile as the sheet of mirror carried by hand, on foot, from one end of Pike Place to the other. No Kurt, I am not ready.

Through the mirror, I see my mother.
Her eyes are stones that line each end of the Ponte Sisto in Rome, as the Tiber River, ready or not, rushes through.

My father was a paper boy when he first arrived in America, his ink-stained fingers gripping the handle of his thrift shop bike. I imagine the number of tire rotations it would take to afford a wig like mine.

The razor buzzes for only three minutes and Kurt clicks it off. Alopecia is like a slow rotting peach; eventually, the fungus will consume the last of healthy patches. If my hair was a magician, there must have been thousands of trap doors it escaped me through. The stage lights are off now.

I try to outsmart it, I stop brushing my teeth in front of the mirror. I keep my head down and pace the hallway. Maybe it'll vanish like a rabbit in the hat, maybe if I never look in the mirror again, I won't have to be what I am.

My bald head is the friend that always introduces itself first, and I am the shadow that follows. Before I even open my mouth, my baldness climbs on top of the table, waving its arms, screaming
DO I REMIND YOU OF THE ALIEN FROM SPLICE?
LOOK AT YOUR RIGHT HAND, DO I RESEMBLE YOUR THUMB?

I am 22 now. I still chain myself to every compliment about my smooth skin, my perfectly round skull. I visit my parents' house and stand in the same bathroom. I am taller now, but still 11 steps from the sink to my nightstand.

I am still the shadow who follows and only appears when the sky has promised yellow, golden beams, but I am practicing how to brush my teeth in the mirror twice a week now. I am still the shadow, but I am practicing how to believe that I too am someone worth following.

Alyssa Cruz

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