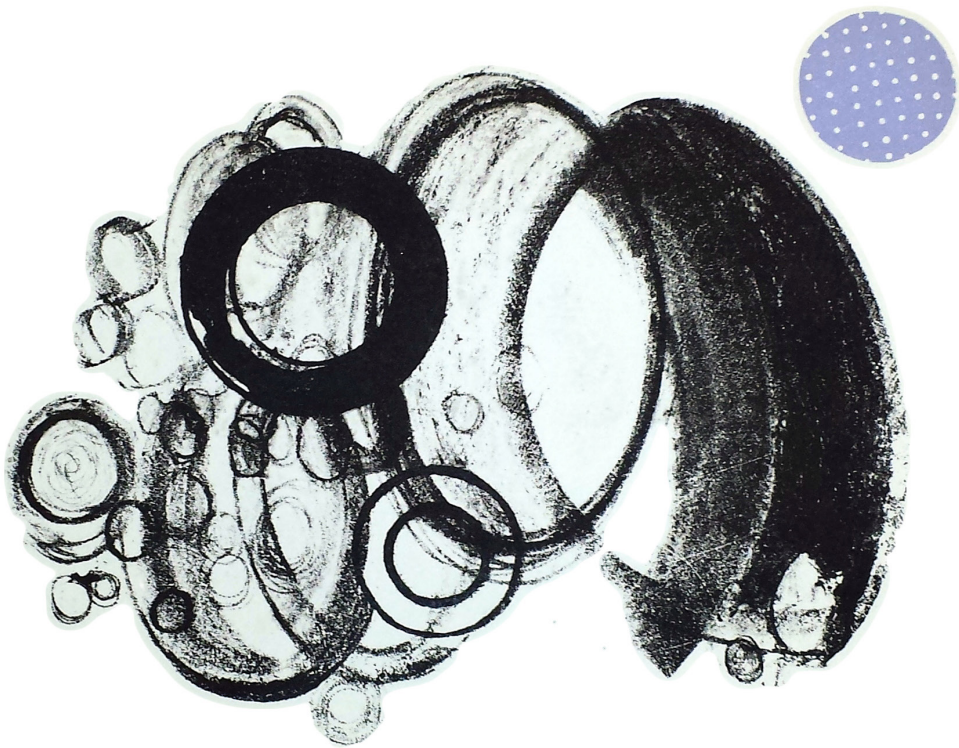


RUMBLE FISH QUARTERLY



Fall 2019

EDITOR'S NOTE

We didn't set out to create a poetry issue.

In Rumble Fish Quarterly's still-nascent existence, one of the lessons that we've come to learn is that, more often than not, the issue finds us. It's the reason we no longer put out submission themes, and it's the reason that, while we are stupendously excited about the next 38 pages of your life, we have no comment on when we'll do this again.

So what led us here this time? For one, Ana Jovanovska's artwork. With deliberate lines, careful use of space, and omnipresent sense of craft, these images feel like poems. They've got that aura.

For another, the range of poetry we got this cycle would take an ocean liner to cross. These poems dwell in the confessional, experimental, traditional, mythic, and ecstatic. Some of them touch the ends of the page like Olympic swimmers, others are so atomically consistent you could ice skate on their edges. Finishing them in sequence, we hope you'll feel confident of two things:

1. You can no longer define poetry, but
2. That was definitely it.

Katie Sions
Editor-in-Chief

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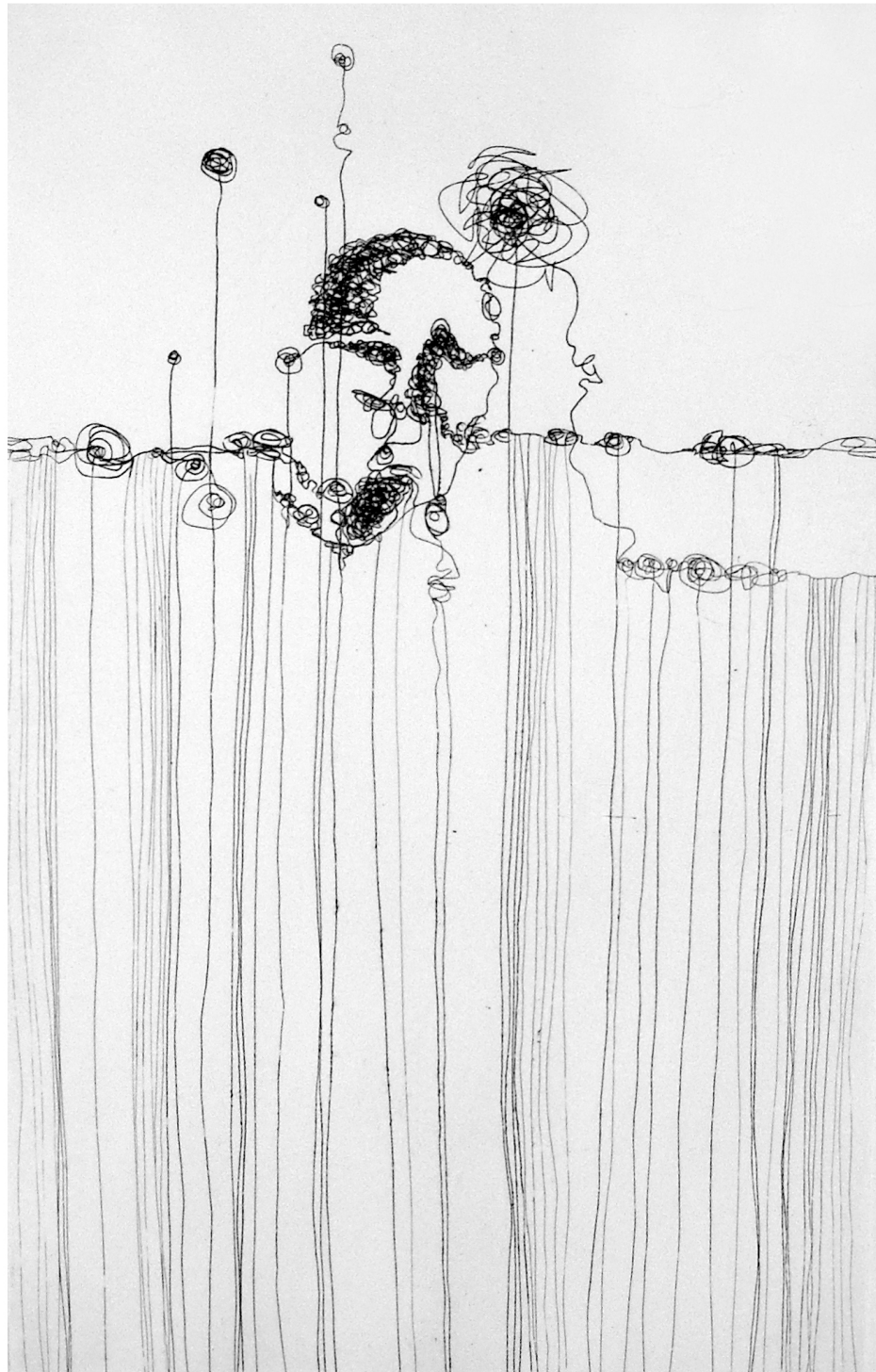
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3 Poems

Jared K Hayley

Erranding

Our bag-bodied interior selves
all squeeze through the turnstile,
a god getting ants up the nose
or where the sun don't shine.
We're all sorry we almost became
actualized and made other folk
have to care what the customer
and the vendor say to each other.

Probably it is when we are slow to choose,
going the wrong way in the fine wine aisle
on a cloudy afternoon bounced around
without a single angel or eon to know
when we whip the swig from our backpack.
The temp is us and if we disappear the corp
may care but the company will not. At lunch
we look the part but they lock the park.

The mouths in the post office
heat the forlorn Lucite. So many
showrooms for teeth. Such dimensions
of dubious cardboard. Floating
through it all in a cellophane fancy,
the holy ghost, all purple and white,
our life-partners' dry cleaning, amaranthine.

Sleep Disturbance

The triangle floats up
through the murky dye
of the Magic 8 Ball
of the unscheduled day off:
“Ask again later.”

You wouldn't believe you
if you told you that you would
one day say “I love my life.”
But the little pyramid always
tumbles upward in the Magic 8 ball.

A police van jumps
the curb and the Patty Hearst
part of you thinks “run”
while the Saturday morning
part of you just thinks “zoinks.”

Though it will stay a car-length
away, one day never will come
to each serpent of the multiverse
even the tweaked counterfeiter who made
such a sure cell for melancholy as the soul.

The triangle floats up again:
“When it is your turn.”
Hope is the thing with feathers
twitching in a farm animal sanctuary,
beakless, but the least plucked of the bunch.

How-To of the Day

The cabinet of holistic packaging
wants you to live this day as your last.
It's a lucky coupon day,
the debate's been delayed,
the papers on the desk are the same
papers if they're on the floor. Just saying.

But you've had a last day before
and all you thought about was the unfinished:
the words that were never raked in,
the lust that couldn't be quashed,
the single glimpse of the avant-garde
barge in the river beyond the strident crowd.

You could go the way of the man
who stabbed himself in the heart
while thousands sang his songs,
overplaying his hand a bit, in my opinion,
or the way a mouse in a glue trap goes:
a sock, a hammer, a sidewalk, relief.

If the guidebook writers are right,
the last-day is just a cosmic muscle moving,
a muse resetting a fuse. If they're right,
the you gets to ooze on, report back on the bubbly glass
lake of the final moments, whether it's better
to be the kayaker or the skinny dipper's head.

After the Operation

Nels Hanson

In my sleep the surgeon made some mistakes. It wasn't all his fault. Like sad Frankenstein's dense servant Igor his aide supplied imperfect parts but no twisted brain as in that monster's case. The doctor stitched a frosted saint's hand to my right wrist, to my left a boxer's. Where ruined limbs were he grafted the sprinter's leg and taller man's that buckled on an icy street. A foot belonged to a pastor who each Spring washed feet of the poor, its mismatched twin the movie mogul's spoiling lives of ingénues. One stolen eye rose like an evening star while other sank toward dawn. Heart with four fine chambers came from lover, cheat, wise guru, mad fool. Older blood raced without remorse freely circulating to nourish a different body's mixed pieces, even last tiger's fangs. Filched Saber-Tooth's split and sanded made full set he anchored in my mandibles. I woke hungry, famished for meat but lacking a dragon's hot flame I devoured red flesh raw. I ran limping, with new fingers crossed myself and slapped my face, my two windows staring brown and blue as I robbed a lavish store, threw dollars to every refugee. How easily I read the Latin text but failed understanding why the Master attempted no escape. When I pledged my true love my fiancée explained she was her sister, on Everest I tasted snow leopard until I knew the thing I am. To keep the stray angels safe I wander deep caverns where no diamond is.



Stabat Mater Dolorosa

Carmine Denis

Child you know you are
just a smear
scattered sands all over your window
that you should have cleaned last spring

*

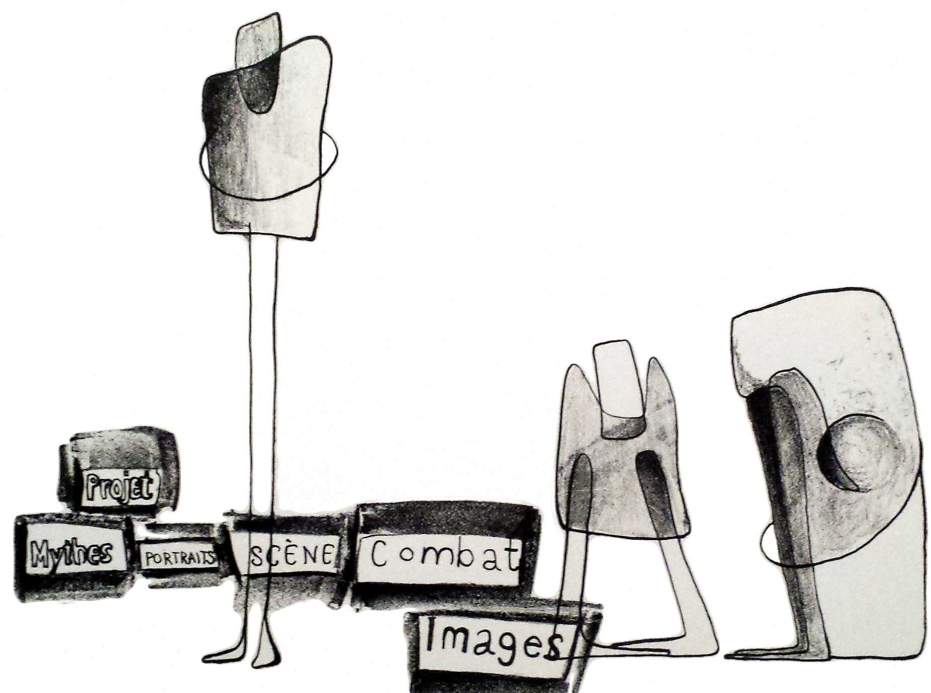
Stabat mater come speak to me
for dolorosa I am
time was killed no
phone no clock just a clock
facing the exit door
(but it's not for me the clock
is for the public only)

Mater I used to sing I know
my clear voice was too weak to hear
I don't inhabit my body mater
what can I do? The girl I loved
got my part she sings better than me
she'll die, four summers from now
and I'm here where duration is a dough
tepid and gray during summer how many
times have passed already? And I'm here
in my spinach-colored pajamas
she'll die, four summers from now, a speck of glory
to feed her body
I guess it's all easier when you're pretty, mater,
it's all easy, I came last time
but you weren't home,
in the domain I called yours –
it was all trashed, sanctuaries
I thought I saw, broke my vow,
are you gone for real now?

Mater – I'm praying for you

not to get lost into the sky
come back any time, I'll make some tea
I hope my pajamas will be clean, that I'll smell fresh
I made you up I know, I'll wait
mater, at your descent from the sky, I'll carry your luggage
a few droplets, mater, to make the tea
four summers away, she's dead and I'm still here
Sancta mater, istud agas
the meds make me drowsy but I will wait
and won't go to sleep, there is a light
at the end of the street I soak in
(I do remember both of your voices
but mine got lost in translation
it's gone, it's okay
weakness faded away)
Mater, who knows of glory
I am but dust particles
that fell from your coat
the stage dust in a ray of sunlight
and her ashes –

I will wait.



Ratiocination.

Gabriel Walsh

trading in bloom
 -- and Weightier indigo
 - My only refined,-
 liquid and temporal Vein
 upon the opposite ends of distraction
 ---- - She has a Colour enhanced,-
 - and Purple pigment's beard
 ----- in tunnels of projective ambiguity
 - thinking to unlace
 and Matter's reproduction
 great whales,
 --- fowls of her dewy Countenance
 with dim happenstance
 as all the Constitutional layers were of old
 ----- with a loss of Concentric moveable force -
 - - - a blood red Moon
 ----- riding on a bus
 to keep the Spacial implement real
 all the while -
 She had a dog's dissident's head
 lost in the accounting
 --- for hermetic tutelage
 - there are enlarged,-
 and
 - unending quantities of Luxor's Sand,
 breaching
 through
 the
 Storied rapids
 and an Opaque Surety;
 - - with geopolitical Clouds in one eye
 this razor's dutiful lancet
 --- - with ever astonished lamps,
 - of
 her Strong Power
 it isn't food, for which i long -

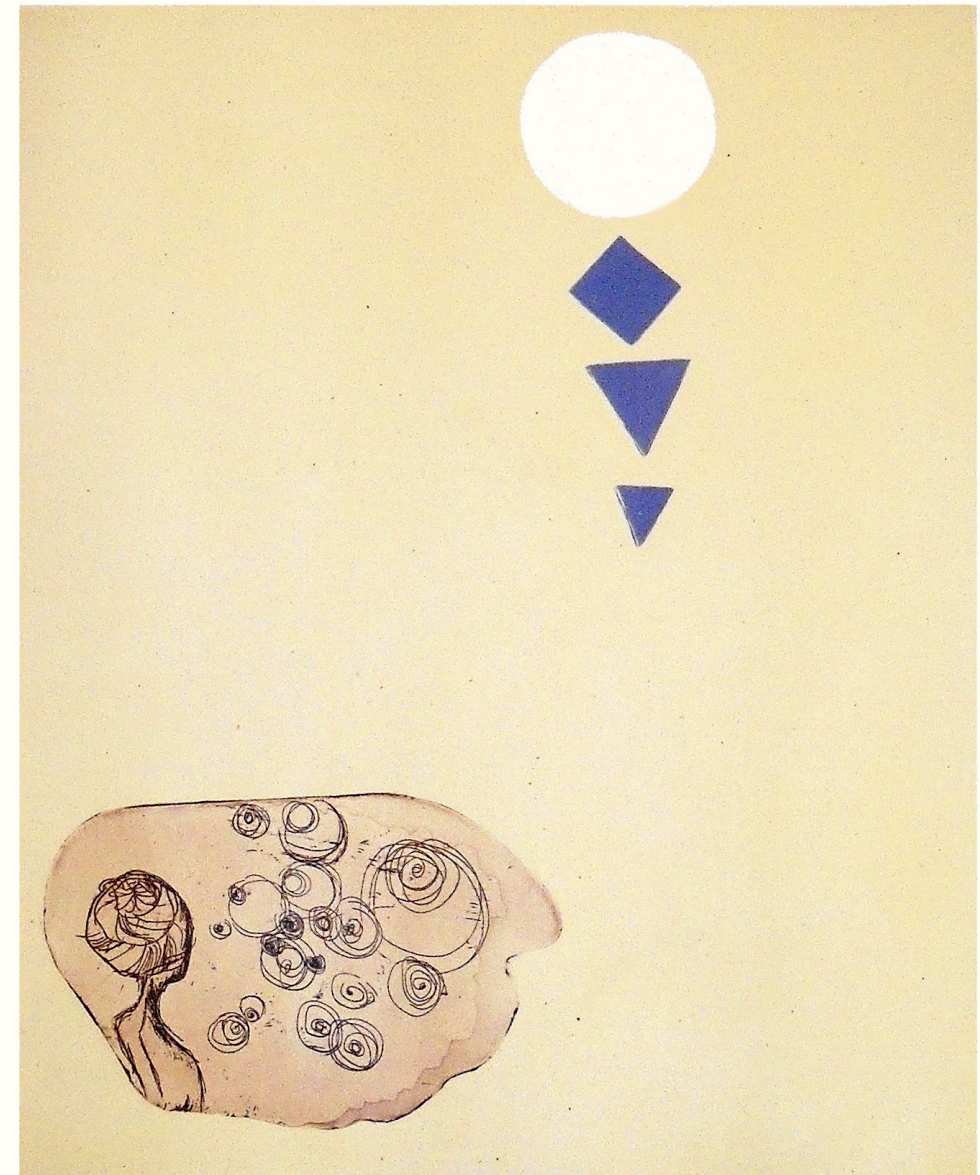
or insufficient disciples of battered quandary
- Caught in retroactive Orbit
----- in Size with their early hexagon
Punishing the Convenient hammers of War
----- - in expedient Measures,-
- always Seeming to Capsize
- ----- for out of dark Serpentine nostrils
---- the Sea and Sky alone are expansive
tied tight -
-- healing the heart and the Mind.



Lost, Pacific Ocean Area

Rick Viar

None venture beyond the calf-high grass
like MacArthur sloshing through surf
to learn your Thunderbolt never landed.
Your mother's wintry smile freezes forever.
Eternity plugs your father's ears. He wouldn't hear
his annoying patients, anyway, themselves as dead
as the quaint notion of perpetual care.
This crumbly stone says your son lived a month
after you vanished, gasping his blue-faced displeasure
like a gutshot Marine crawling Leyte's beach
or the Saipanese family strolling hand-in-hand off Suicide Cliff.
Only your widow is absent, and I obsess about it.
Should we dread her like a falcon beneath its hood?
Does she perch with pitiless eyes and one silver-ringed claw?
Pray for her above strange water, scanning foamy swells
in the last light until she recognizes someone
swimming hard for the distant shore of memory.



Rains Came Down, Floods Came Up

Jessica Spruill Waggoner

All night, rain fell hard and loud. I dreamed
the water rose until even the tallest trees
were swallowed whole and the whole town
washed into the Tygart; that the creek filled our house,
lifted my bed, floated me right out the front door,
past all the people rowing in canoes down Main Street,
gliding past the courthouse and the bank.

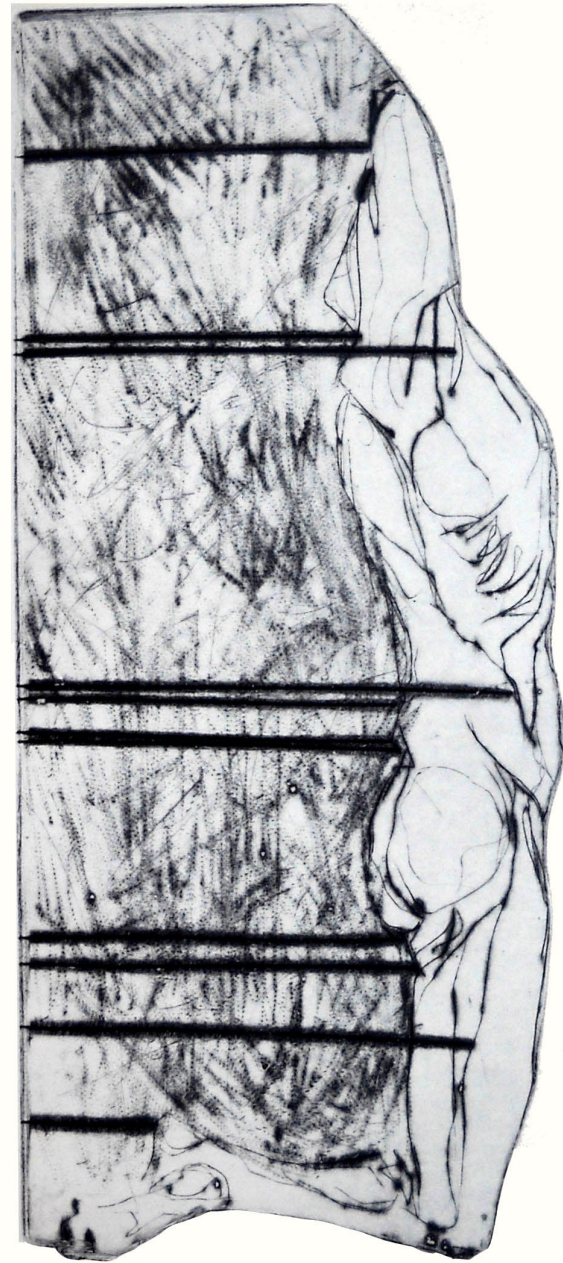
We woke to find the creek had overflowed overnight,
filled our basement to the ceiling with swirling gray water,
flooded the yard, carried off our brand-new bicycles.
My parents sat in the kitchen, talking
about the damage, recalling the flood of '85
before I was even heard of.

Once the water went down, my brother, sisters, and I
crossed the flattened grass field to find our bikes.
The thin air reeked of molding hay and cow shit.
We followed the mud-stirred stream to search the culvert
where water churned opaque with rust and mire.

At Sunday school we read the story of Noah, painted pictures
of the world submerged in seas. Blue, blue everywhere.
Mine was brown and grey and ochre—ugly as rinse-water
for the paintbrushes, black as the water that rushed
beneath our basement door.
I painted our little red house upside-down in the creek.
I put the ark miles away on the furthest hillside. I painted
my parents watching from the living room window of our upturned house.

I didn't paint my brother—his hands in my hair, holding me
under, my outstretched fingers disappearing beneath the water.
I couldn't mix the watercolors dark enough.
The creek filled me, flowed ember-hot through
nose and wide eyes, then darkness,
until light refracted through the sediment, seemed to catch

silver tassels strung from bent handlebars. I saw the flickering
lights shimmer like Christmas morning
and swam down hard toward them.



Anna M.

after David Lehman

Emily Zogbi

Anna, before the convulsions,
described “devil faces,” diagnosed as
epileptic psychosis: forgotten
time, endless
genuflection.

How many ways can a body bend
inside an empty house?
July is a cruel month
to kneel so often the bones shatter.
Later, the autopsy revealed
malnourishment, dehydration,
negligent homicide—oh,
and pneumonia. It was
quick, really, how the
spiders starved in the
temporal lobe, the
unheard voices waiting
to exist outside. A whole
year passed before the
seizures stopped.

In 1998, you could practice your French in France

Natalie Campisi

In 1998, you could practice French in France. The new and old words were still distanced by water and paper and games of telephone.

It was the year of the Euro. The year of Kosovo. The year of Sampras and the Yankees.

The bus wobbled on steel-belted cartoon wheels toward Montpellier from Paris. Not Marseilles where they steal your money at knifepoint. We had little money and no credit cards and no gold to sell in a pinch.

In 1998, you relied on maps and eyes and lips and eyes.

In 1998, old lives couldn't be accessed through an app and unrequited loves could remain in amber, forever lithe and limitless, forever *Lotte* -- not living in Haddonfield with four kids and a mortgage.

<<Je voudrais *deux billets, s'il vous plaît?*>>

With paper maps and paper money, we packed on the packed bus with skinny people who mumbled grunts and slip n' slide words, a potion of sweet and mildew. The wheel was too big for the driver's hands. The mirror too small to see.

The faded baby blue bus was peeling-paint old.

The windows were trimmed in white and had curved corners.

A man pressed against me. I sent this postcard of the man pressing against me to my older self, and I received it -- perhaps in the middle of the night -- and realized he had assaulted me. He had pressed his body against mine on purpose. It wasn't just a packed train. Assault is a big word when time gets between action. Too big. But, memory remains. I hated it.

I send a postcard back to my 22-year old self: "Push him away. Disez: *Arrêtez! Arrêtez!*"

But, no. It's in amber now. The bus keeps moving.

In 1998, Montpellier was a college town. Probably still is. With old Roman light, and

curved streets and corners that spiral around into other universes. A Pasolini dream of youth and sex and light and infinity.

Where was *la plage? Où est la plage?* Open sesame. Another bus, this one with kids our age. College kids. Skinny, loud college kids. Backpacks, not ergonomic like American backpacks, in mismatched colors -- feminine, like this country.

Accidents are scientific phenomena that are caused by destiny. They are caused by magnets that pull us. Invisible air marshals. Waves that we hop on and ride by hunch, a temporary tunnel of force until we get to our destination.

Whoosh. Gasp. Ding. Palavas Les Flots! A spit of beach that was handspun out of blue cotton candy and pale yellow gauze.

A wave. A magnet. A marshal.

In 1998, the streets of Palavas are thin and lean.

Maybe it was late morning or late afternoon, it was late something. The end of some section of time. This is important. Because it was Sunday. And nothing is guaranteed on a Sunday. This is a rule of life.

The Sea and Cake Hotel was vertical and lean like a dancer who smoked.

And the windows, long and narrow and open, let through a breeze that blew sheer curtains toward us, the wind choosing a shape.

Let us take a moment to think about drapery. There is drapery meant to conceal. And drapery meant to adorn. And drapery meant to give dimension to the outside. A windowless frame provides a clear picture. A window provides a view with distortion. A sheer drape over a window on a frame provides a tease.

On the beach, the circles of young bodies hunch like hooks and smoke hashish rolled into small cigarettes with some tobacco mixed in. They motion and we sit.

Across the Atlantic is a blonde Hungarian disguised as an American. His skin is pink

and his eyes are blue. His hair is curled, down to his shoulders. His teeth are big and his smile is venomous. He will go to Samoa. She will never send him a postcard when she's older.

In 1998, under this vertical sky, under a happy film of hashish, the Hungarian in American accent has vanished. It's just now.

A whirl of half-naked bodies pack into a small French car. It zooms sideways down beach-town roads.

The day would be the sea. The night would be homemade pastis: anise, licorice root, and boiled sugar poured into a bottle of vodka. Steaks and green beans. Ketchup for the Americans. A song about love. A song about AIDS. Kissing in French and speaking without words.

Sleeping bodies tangled up. Sleeping bodies on a beach. Sweetness in the breath that comes from the gut. Everything is smooth. Everything is bright.

In 1998, you could practice French in France. You could hang your underwear off a rucksack to dry. You could kiss sweet breath in \$2 flip flops without feeling self-conscious. You could be naked in the sea and know that this moment is *Le Morne Brabant*.

You can take it with you for later. There are always leftovers.



Delicacies of Astronomical Proportions

Jan Carroll

Mitochondrial Eve, genetic mother of us all, please call back, invite us over. Evenings wane without those shared dinners held together by DNA strands and time running out.

Coriander grates in the soup. China brittles if not used. We parrot hearts, either in or let out of the cage, do not cringe at the held-out dish towel. Deck the halls with familial glory.

Once my neighbor's mechanism broke and he went on to mow lawn after lawn after he'd already shorn his own, not concerned in the least with shaving minutes off his previous time. He wanted

the engine to keep elucidating its hunger regardless of whether the bagger attachment was collecting debris or not. Death masks all the rage now. Research shows the likelihood of addiction depends

on the happiness quotient of your cage, not that you're in one. Rage, rage, against the spiraling outright. Go ahead, unhinge, if you have to. A Legacy either almost killed me once or managed to save my life.

Bumped full speed, it started to jump the concrete barrier but decided against it. The Samaritans stopped on the edge of the freeway to check my eyes for concussion grenades said, *You're ok, just in shock.*

Be good to yourself now. The troopers would not entertain honest requests for a ride home. I wondered if really some kind of lariat might be helpful about then, but when the cowboy finally ambled by

he was strung out on Miss Ohio, his lines all knotted, although he did tow what was left of the car. *Rest your scepter a while,* the sky said, so I phoned for a cab at a nearby KwikTrip. Raffle tickets do tend to cheer me.

The checkout girl sold me a roll of Russian roulette numbers, which like unrefrigerated Swedish meatballs gone bad, made me horribly queasy. Rapid response teams materialized. I fraternized with mortality medicated

while you, shown up, hovered just out of reach, flinching at the monkey on my back screeching. *Relax! Relax!* you countered to cool him down but he wasn't having it—Relax a fiasco he once lost everything to.

Baptism! Baptism! he shouted, sprinkling water from a sippy cup onto my hospitalized head, but instead of blessed all I felt was arrested. *Uncool, uncle, uncool. Does the closest hotel have a pool?* asked the sun

a reddish-orange protractor dying in the west outside the window. Yes, time's running out on you. Just ask the Chicxulub Impactor who saw on the way down what was bound to happen. Never thought of himself

as extincor, mostly feeling melancholy, cast out, and untrusted, flung through vast reaches of outer space without even so much as a spare internal combustion motor, left to wreak, in the end, such great death.



The World Being What It Is

Brandon Marlon

How thin the membrane between no and yes,
you'd never guess, without seeing the bigger picture
in which we all feature, for better or worse;
life wavers between blessing and curse,
depending on moment or season,
on whose life, relative comfort or strife.

Hard to swallow food for thought, what the Oneness
has wrought, a single globe of infinite variety,
wherein any two beings can be poles apart;
behind the lies we lead disproportionate lives
in which situations and results conspire
either to immiserate or imparadise.

Much to our surprise, it transpires that
Abaddon is but a suburb of Eden
and, unlike heaven, hell has no curfew;
beware the inexorable talons of fate
that would menace our destiny
given half a chance.

With dignity and grace let us forbear
either splendor or squalor,
making the best of circumstances;
may we get what we deserve,
may we deserve only good,
and may justice and mercy upraise us.

By a Tall Fire I Want to Hug

After the life of Kevin Bryson

Keith Mark Gaboury

By a tall fire I want to hug,
I know Cesium-137
traveled from Atomic Age detonation
into the water cycle.

Since marking residence
inside me, it pushes me
and pushes me to clock happiness
minutes inside the domain
of some picket-fence trap.

Cesium-137 says
what's best is snatching a family
to live as grass blades
sculpted to perfection.

By a tall fire I want to hug,
shadows lick my face
like a greyhound when a husband
returns home into gracious arms.
No one is waiting for me
through a red desire door

but Cesium-137
bombards my being
I must slap on some flesh
to the cutout wife and cutout children
basking in my mind's glow.

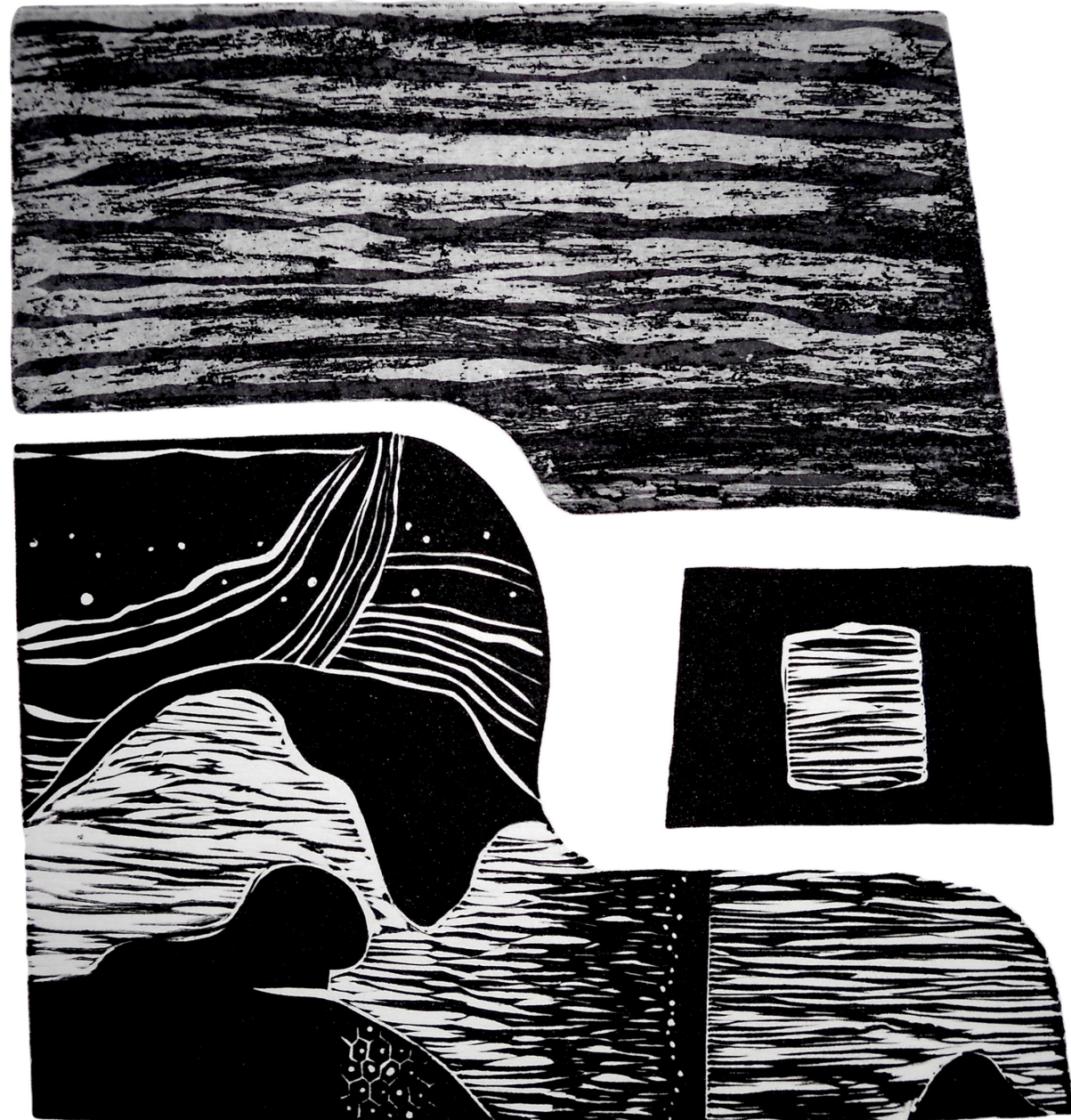
By a tall fire I want to hug,
Cesium-137 only sees what I am not;
it does not know *my* history.
Look up. The Capricornus Constellation

stared down one light-year ago
upon my sister Elizabeth at 17

swerving to miss a neighborhood dog.
When she rammed into a street pole,
I capitulated headfirst through the windshield
onto Massachusetts gravel

as Elizabeth's bodiless screams
ballooned into our family calamity.
Where is my sister? Where is my sister?
still echoing.

With my once mighty fire
reaching a low ember,
I trace my forehead scar.
Yes, Cesium-137 scratches within.
Can I bludgeon that radioactive haunt?
Give me a lifetime
and I'll bear witness.



3 Poems

Maggie Hess

Trial of Three

The same morning I found a dead little song bird
out walking my dog in the neighborhood
and the moon high in the western sky was oh so full
when on the next street over
I saw something falling slower than anything I ever had seen
and wondered first if it was a leaf
but then soon saw
it was a powerful feather
coming down near my head
from the wing of a dove.

I say it was a powerful feather
because for a moment the whole world stood still,
the dog in the nearby house quit barking for four minutes
and the passing car stilled
and the flowing fall breeze stopped blowing
and the train that was whistling, rested gently.
It took four minutes for that feather to land
and the only thing alive on this earth other than the plume was me
diving towards it,
hoping like a child to catch it.
But it pinned into the yard near about four steps
which I climbed mumbling to myself “that’s my feather”
so whomever might be peering from a window would know what’s up.

And when I held the feather,
it reminded me there are some things we hold onto in life
and other things that we let go of.
Yet, when I got home,
I also was remembering a story a professor once told me
that he once resuscitated a hummingbird
that seemed quite dead,
but was only shocked,
just by cupping it in his warm hands for a while.

So I picked up the song bird I had found
but I saw it was quite dead, missing its eye on the other side.

So that was my second reminder that some things
when they go
are gone forever.
And I just need to let things go.
And maybe I will.

Singing "He is Risen" in October

Maybe the orange was always waiting beneath the green.
And when Tobin, our old dog, used to wander down to the creek
when he was too old and his front legs too weak to lift him up the bank,
maybe he did it because he knew he would always end up there.

We scattered Tobin's ashes, one year ago, in autumn.
We put them in the swimming hole he so much loved.
And now I see just why. Our tangerine coated dog
has risen all around us in the foliage.

CONTRIBUTORS

Awake

Old tree branch knocks at my window.
Wind brushes my hair in the darkness.
Quiet night tells to me about it's day.
Toe nail moon draws my bath and tide.
Distant train whistle reminds me of connection.
Swifts tuck in their chimney waiting for their story.
Rain gives me hope for more.

Natalie Campisi is a journalist and fiction writer currently residing in Los Angeles. She has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize in fiction and her work has appeared in the Chicago Tribune, Auburn Literary Journal, and Writer Magazine. She was recently awarded a writing scholarship to the Chautauqua Institution in New York. Currently, Natalie's producing, directing and performing in a fully improvised play based on the work of Wes Anderson, which is running at ImproTheatre in Los Angeles.

Jan Carroll's work has appeared in Borderlands, California Quarterly, Cider Press Review, and other places. She has two chap books: River (2015) and With What's Left: Gardening, Earth-Tending, and Keeping On in the Midst of Climate Crisis (2019). She hosts a reading series for local writers and facilitates and participates in two poetry writing groups. She loves experiencing the joy of the process of writing and encouraging others to do the same. She works in healthcare. www.jancarrollpoetryetc.net

Carmine Denis is a French poet writing in English about thematics such as mental illness, gender, and myth rewriting. They can be contacted at carmine.g.denis@gmail.com.

Keith Mark Gaboury earned a M.F.A. in creative writing from Emerson College.

His poems have appeared in such publications as Poetry Quarterly and New Millennium Writings along with forthcoming chapbooks through Duck Lake Books and Pedestrian Press. Keith lives in Oakland, California. Learn more at www.keithmgaboury.com.

Nels Hanson grew up on a small farm in the San Joaquin Valley of California and has worked as a farmer, teacher and contract writer/editor. His fiction received the San Francisco Foundation's James D. Phelan Award and Pushcart nominations in 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016. His poems received a 2014 Pushcart nomination, Sharkpack Review's 2014 Prospero Prize, and 2015 and 2016 Best of the Net nominations.

Jared K Hayley is a luthier living on Long Island. He has taught writing at numerous colleges and has been published in journals such as The Paris Review, The Literary Review, Spinning Jenny, and Cog.

Inspired by her transformational battle with schizoaffective disorder, **Maggie Hess's** poetry has been widely read. Maggie won the Leidig Poetry Award judged by Linda Pastan and the May B Smith writing award.

Ana Jovanovska received her M.A. in Printmaking from the Faculty of Fine Arts – University Ss. Cyril and Methodius,

Skopje, Macedonia (2016). Upon receiving a scholarship she spent time studying abroad attending École supérieure d'arts & médias de Caen/Cherbourg in France (2013-2014). Ana had 10 independent and more than 100 group exhibitions in Macedonia and abroad in countries such as: Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Romania, Czech Republic, Poland, Russia, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, USA, UK and so on.

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