Poetry South

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August Song

One day the end
of summer nears:
all heat is spent.

Geese disappear.
Leaf-litter covers
water. Whitecaps
break. Clouds over
waves collapse
with wind’s caress.

Sky’s luminous,
faint light is left
to smudge across
far hills. In haze,
such distance turns
bright greens to grays.

The evening burns
some far, lean edge.
A star appears—

another age.
Stray fog has cleared.
The sun recedes.

Gold fades; is gone.
The lake still beats
its metronome.
John Sibley Williams

TACIT AGREEMENT WITH DUSK

The wind-smoothed surface comes alive, 
delivers its sermon of sand & want.

Flotilla of cottonmouths, blister beetles, what slept 
beneath us all this time 
praying 
for the sun 
that we pray to to fall.

Shadows fill with lust. Saying its name three times 
doesn’t make the desert 
unfold any slower. Unseen 
skins graze our ankles.

All sung out, our awe goes hoarse.

Things dislocate. Eventually, we knew the world 
would forget our place in it.

Even my name emerges from beneath 
a creosote bush 
ready to strike 
like my father’s before me.

That we were never holy, 
only briefly lit; 

never safe, only here; grateful 
when it seemed nothing apart from us hungered.
Pauletta Hansel

ELEGY

All things break away.
Paper loosens from its spiral bindings, the music box’s key is overwound, even the good fountain pen lets loose black rivers. Parents divorce or die or both. Cells divide and spread inside our secret caves. Children scatter continents beyond.
Some days there are miracles: missives, remission, clay armadillos lost then found under our Christmas trees; tea tins, coasters, a father’s army tags retrieved from that vast somewhere our once precious objects reside.
But mostly not. Mostly it is up to us to speak of ancient things, to bring to our neglected pages the smell of lavender remembered in the pillow where my mother’s head once lay.
George Drew

TOAST IN TEXAS: A TRIPTYCH, IN MEMORIAM

Here’s to Paul. All told, he didn’t do half bad.
—Paul Ruffin, 1941-2016

1. Death, You’ve Done it Again, in Texas

Death, you’ve done it again, in Texas,
streaking in behind my back and snatching
a good man—a colleague, an editor,
a fellow poet, and though we never met face
to face, a friend, a brother in the art.

Like so many times before, I never had
an early warning; as always, you were cloaked,
a scythe-armed Klingon rocketing
in at warp speed and beaming him up,
his atoms split into their cosmic constituents,
an invisible rendering.

Hear me, Death—

I could curse you roundly, beat my chest,
not because I hate you for being what
you are, but for the way you operate,
your modus operandi. I could, but I won’t.
Rather, I thank you for outfoxing fear,
defanging dread.

Death, I thank you

for the only act of mercy you’re capable of:
a terror-snuffing last gasp of absolute surprise.

2. Him in Texas, Me in New York

Not long ago, as measured by a puny human sense
of time, a man I never met in person died,

thereby depreciating the actual physical distance
between us—him in Texas, me in New York.

Measured by an infinite space beyond all measuring,
that smaller space, two thousand miles, could
easily be bridged, which come November, I was going to do, the Delta or United or American airliner

I would dream my way to Texas on deftly shrinking an already shrunken distance to hours instead of days required to continentally divide New York and me, to meet the man who died.

How the word distance, no more than markings on a map, no more than a dactylic sibilance equally pleasing and off putting, once faced with a specific diminution expands until there is not one but two—two distances, the smaller one abridged to nothing by the other.

3. *Not for a New York Minute*

Like Keats, I knew something was keeping me from sleep, some phantasm I couldn’t grasp, some dread. I dozed, but fitfully, and I woke fully informed of peril at exactly two past two. Only, the peril wasn’t mine. It was his, and it claimed him at exactly two. In the window above my bed the moon smirked. The wind sneered. In Texas breath lifted from him like a helicopter from its fleshly landing pad, and not even taking time to hover, disappeared, all that was him strapped in for its long flight. I didn’t laugh, not for a New York minute, and I’d long ago held out my hand to him. And he’d taken it.
Cyn Kitchen

WHEN NIGHT IS BLACKEST

waxing moon
waxwing sliver
silvered behind thin clouds
flanked by Mars & Saturn
Jupiter cradled
in the fulcrum of Libra,
Scorpio’s poison tail
curled in my southern window.
I hear the owl’s rhythmic
harmony calling from
an ancient tree; doubtful
he knows I hear his song
but then again
maybe it’s just for me.

IS LIKE

the whump of a cardinal colliding
with plate glass is roughly
equivalent to the startling news
that mother is dead, the news
that reverberates through me,
reversing blood flow, screech & halt,
then backward grinding, roughly
akin to the shock of a two by four
square to the forehead, that unrecrreateable

synapse between now & then, then
& now, the moment her red body
plummets, but has yet to hit the ground.
spent, flattened from impact
against hardened steel plate
no longer recognizable
as the before
report, then expansion,
expulsion, spin
down rifled ridges
pushed into flash
a memory I dare not
trigger but that anyway
comes, your face in my hands
your face, my hands.

abandoned bathtub
at the edge of a cornfield
near the fallen fence
listing ship on a black
ocean of dirt. bleach bone
dinghy glistening white.
who sailed it this far
before it ran aground?
some green deckhand’s attempt
at following orders while captain,
below deck, slept off a hangover?
its leaden treasure chest
sank & broke open against the hard
seafloor spilling its booty now covered
in fathoms of silt.
Carol V. Davis

EVERY NIGHT SHE BARRELED DOWN A HILLSIDE

The choices as to cause:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The accelerator stuck</td>
<td>The brakes failed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She tried to pry it off the floor</td>
<td>Her foot pressed harder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but it would not budge</td>
<td>It did nothing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quaint houses stacked like teeth perched on one side of the road. The next night only scrub brush, pale as the moon.

On Wednesday the car was a convertible; Thursday a Ford truck stick shift.

Choose carefully.

In one ending, the damage to the house was great but the passengers survived. In another it was too late by the time the ambulance pulled up.

Suing the car company will not bring back the dead.
THE FIRST NIGHT

in someone else’s house is like being with a new lover.  
His grinding teeth not yet traceable to an unreasonable boss;

the whistle of his breath circling skates on a concrete rink.  
You try your best, but sleep smirks at you through frosted windows.

The stretching and contracting of floorboards familiar, but  
unsettling, the wheeze of the fridge startles.

You wonder on what travels the small stone on the mantle  
was collected, resting on a velvet cloth with five cigarette burns.

Grateful to be lent a house, you hesitate to question the ghost  
that lingers in the photos tucked in well-worn paperbacks.

Red fleece jacket in the closet, was it hers?  
The mold of her body about to stretch, flinging wide the arms  
to shoo you away so she can have her house back.
Morrow Dowdle

SURFACE

A snake swims near the water’s surface where I am wading, skirting my calves. I watch it navigate rocks, moving easily against the river’s flow. It slips beyond view and I let it go. What good would it have done to scream, run, disturb the current? I have already lived too much out of fear.

I lie down in the riverbed, its hardness holding me like a spare-fleshed lover. My bones against its bones, these stones carried and laid down by seasoned logic. Complex as the metacarpus, so many small parts set together to make what carries and holds, what grips this world with all its strength.

There is a river within the river, a swath that shines more brightly for being less broken by turbulence, untumbled by obstacles in its path. The copperhead of my imagination later turns out to be a brown water snake. When frightened, it may strike, but holds no venom in its bite.
Stacy Bustamante

BACKSLIDING

I have a memory of being good at things—
like reading books and cataloguing good and evil.
Distributing love, hate, death, life;
two slender columns traveling down the page
eternally.

But I’ve begun to backslide.

Things look grey, and slate—indistinct.
Now I’m afraid to speak at all. I have lost
myself in the paleness of love and hate.

Things are so temporary, and so permanent all at once.
I am not sure that the sun will rise tomorrow.
I no longer think that love is easy.
I am afraid of myself.

I remember once, the line between
right and wrong was taut and firm.
But now it seems to shimmer and dance;
waves of heat rolling down midsummer highways.

The only thing I can set myself upon
is the fact that I am breathing
and so are you.
The lines sliding back and forth before our eyes.
Ted Haddin

LEAVING THE FARM

Now they are sold,
the farm is gone,
the catfish are cold
in the bottom of the pond.
You say they were getting
old, anyway, and ate
too many of the other fish.
I wish we had saved
some of their bones to
remember the days we tried
to fool them. But they got
strength from all that food
you threw to them, and
the body behind the head
was bigger than any man’s
arm. When hooked, it thrashed
back and forth to pull you in,
and cut lines under the dock.
The head, as hard as rock,
could nail another fish
or kill a leaping frog.
We’re ignorant of what
catfish can really do.
It woke me up, far from
the farm, to feel this strength
again, so deep and dark
under the pond.
THREE MEN

They all stand there looking at you
as if they want to say good-by
but don’t know anywhere to go.
Bill invites us up to his place,
up the hill he can no longer climb
and tells us he can’t be keeping things,
there’s too much to leave behind.
Carl calls to tell me I left a white phone
in his kitchen, and he’ll get the phone
company to come. He knocks instead
at my back door, gently at first, then
all insistence and banging till I come.
Andy prowls his hallway perfectly certain
He’ll find the door to the basement
where he keeps his manuscripts and books
now only reminders of a past no longer there.
They turn to ask you where you’ve been,
and when you ask *them* they can’t remember,
they’re just three standing men. Just when
things closed off for them they don’t know.
One is gone now, it was Bill, his house
upon the hill swallowed as if by snow.
Carl and Andy coast their rooms and call
as if someone were there to answer back,
but there’s none to tell anymore,
who could explain what their quizzical
looks lack.
Frederick-Douglass Knowles II

His Last Name Mine

I enter Cedar Grove’s office and extend the slit of sunlight peering through a cracked door lock eyes with an old sexton inscribing names of fallen souls. I stammer hello. Utter the silent “K” in my last name. He flips through an index of ancient files brushes a layer of cumulus dust from 1974, and engraves 56 R7 HK onto the yellow surface of a Post-It.

I thank him for his time, slowly exit his office and descend down the hillside studying each pillar in search of my father’s marker. I pause in front of a pallid row of ancient stone, flap the Post-It over a cluster of ants, to unveil the worn plaque of a Negroid sailor. His last name mine.

Clouded tears recall the legacy of an Airman recruit rigging chutes for the USS Wright. A Native Son swaying to Coltrane in Korean cafes with cinnamon women, who never choked on the plume of black smoke sewn into his skin. Debating Truman’s liberation of Yongsan that would churn 5 million Seoul into Korean dust.
MASON FREEMAN CUT JENKINS DOWN

He hung from an old hickory tree along the Mississippi
*A uppity Nigguh seared in a Red Summer flame
His *Oh Lawd!* forsaken for a swig of moonshine
A sun god wrung for eyeballin’ the sun

*A uppity Nigguh seared in a Red Summer flame
His innard ate earth under a disemboweled sky
A sun god wrung for eyeballin’ the sun
Charred loins stick-poked by children cloaked in Christianity

His innard ate earth under a disemboweled sky
Mothers cast quilts riverside to keep close eye
Charred loins stick-poked by children cloaked in Christianity
Minions mimicking their ghost-hooded inheritance

Mothers cast quilts riverside to keep close eye
A crow psalmed the blues to a metronome of cracked bone
Minions mimicking their ghost-hooded inheritance
While I gripped my shiv in the shallows of a stream

A crow psalmed the blues to a metronome of cracked bone
He hung from an old hickory tree along the Mississippi
While I gripped my shiv in the shallows of a stream
His *Oh Lawd!* forsaken for a swig of moonshine
Ryan Lally

REMEMBERING THE BODIES TAKEN BY LYNCHING

We who take the beaten track,
Trying to appease
Hearts near breaking with their lack,
We need elegies.

— Countee Cullen, “Threnody for a Brown Girl”

Because I want to see your faces as more
Than a genre of pain and smoldering dreams,
I’ll hold my hand to your pulses and speak
Your resonances to the stars
That shined on all of us.
History calls us to slow burning embers
And the placid riots against the body,
The absolute zero of fact, so here it is:
We have darkened the native pathways
Of broken bodies and human life
And we have soaked our feet in dead gray coals
And become old and forgetful
With memory like a two lane road—repaved into disbelief.
You crave a fact:
Well, beneath my feet lay the unknown
Ashes of those who breathed smoke to protect white air.
We bottled our histories with silence
And bounced them in the boughs of young poplar trees
To whisper for the dead disposed.
Yes, it’s true, we need elegies
For us bodies still walking the masquerade,
The ones with bones collecting dust
On our mantles. Yes, it’s true too,
I cannot forget you.
FOR THE BAKERS, TWO LYNCHED IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Have you seen the marker in Lake City, the reprinted mourning dependent on footnotes, and did you stop to wonder how long it took Lavinia to stop setting a place at the table for her husband, for her daughter, for each little life she grew until they collapsed like dreams in the morning light

Have you traced the pathways of the moon, that swirl of stars pounding relentlessly over the earth, and gulped all that absence between two points of life, knowing that the stars die slower, that someone, anyone, could have snapped their necks waiting for a God who was more than stone and the suffusion of mirage and seen nothing but the same stars that you see

Have you ushered their negligible decay into the pages of your amygdala, or have you measured your distance between them Yes, you say that history is black and white while you live in color. Now they are fading; you are indulging in forgetfulness, and you are happy you are happy you are happy.
Ryan Lally

**AFTERMATH**

I stare at this sum of subtraction:
“4084 lynched” catches the throat

with words that won’t come out, clinging
to the dorsum of the tongue, cleaving

like a soft punch
Pushed gradually into the stomach

until it slices
like rope into skin.

I stare at the number
until you become

conversations, until your eyes are no longer burned out photographs.

I calculate all of you;
I am greedy with vision

and I wonder
if this multiplies your pains.

You are dead and unchained
to this crisis of clarity

and I am a rag spun from unknowing and
like a town of witnesses

I am saturated with the guilt of all this knowing
and I look at your charred bodies made

sacred and sanctified
and your eyes are uncrossed infinities

unmaking me.
I fear truth and I fear
forgetting anything about you,
but your silence tells me

I will die
with all the questions

still half-formed in a tomb
I will die

without answers.
I am incurably prone to hyperbole,

but believe me:
I love you all,

so I will take these clippings of your souls
And remember you.
Simon Perchik

* 

Empty and the sand
follows you along Broadway
as if some dampness
was left for shoreline
moves the IRT up
then down the way clammers
use their feet to rake
--you walk on tracks
careful not to miss
while the train underneath
breaks open its doors
all at once --no, you don’t jump
nothing like that
--these shells are the same
the mad feel for
though their sweat takes the place
water grieves into
and their mouths are the same
let you yell down
and not a mark inside your body
to call you by.

* 

This slope broken loose
cracks the way all ice
rises from a single stone
though below the tree line
just her grave
already has a twin
two mouths, easy to spot
not yet the mountain range
she would sip if it was water
could leave the hollow
the underbrush, mouthful
over mouthful, talk
sit across from you
while her words no longer move
are in the way and colder.

And though the Earth lets you dig
it’s your tears that heat the ground
already growing stars
once the darkness covers it
to lure these dead here
with stones scented with shorelines
returned not as rain but grass
just as it was, closing in from all sides
the way this shovel is warmed
by your hands kept wet, pulled
closer – you cling to this dirt
as if it once was an afternoon
knows only the slow descent
hand over hand into stone
that no longer opens to hear the bleeding.

Leaning against the wall
it becomes a death bed
the way a name on paper
flattens out to take hold
for which there is no word
only a room where no one noticed

you didn’t ask for help
so close to the corners
with the light still on.

*

You fold this sweater the way a moth
builds halls from the darkness it needs
to go on living –safe inside this closet

a family is gathering for dinner, cashmere
with oil, some garlic, a little salt, lit
and wings warmed by mealtime stories

about flying at night into small fires
grazing on the somewhere that became
the out-of-tune hum older than falling

–you close the drawer and slowly
your eyes shut –with both hands
make a sign in the air as if death matters.
William Cullen Jr.

**JUST PAST EARLY SPRING**

The creek is flowing fast
having shed its ice
like a snake unbound
by its own skin.
There’s just enough warmth
to hear a bird somewhere upstream
but getting fainter with each call.
Perhaps it’s pulled by a memory
wing beat by wing beat
back to an old habitation
nestled somewhere deep in the hills
where an animal love
can renew its compact
with the course of the seasons
and the simplest things.
Peter Grandbois

_THERE IS NOWHERE TO BEGIN_

Except in snow
    stretching across a field
    in late March,

A crow in the branches
    standing against
    the long riffs of wind.

*

In a few weeks time
    the rapture of alder, ash, and elm,

the almost forgetting of galanthus
    bloom

    and hawks
    soaring with sun-forged feathers,

mapping the secrets
    of the invisible world—

*

Why are we always
    Leaving,
    Or being left?

And how do we clear away
    This winter we carry
    Inside?

*

Today, for example, I was thinking
    that I wasn’t
    anyone,

That I don’t know when it’s time to stop
    pretending.

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The calculus of light
that holds us
keeps shifting,
even the fox standing wary
at the edge
of the clearing,
or the squirrel dancing
around that tree,
gathering what little it can,
are no longer the same.

We move so
slowly,
Like steam
rising over the high grass,
waiting to see what face
we bring
home.
Morgan Blalock

TO THE PYTHIA AT DELPHI

Black cliffside rooms you entered up into, hoarse enough to be believed. There was a fee; we were alone. I could not begin.

You told me, before I spoke, of my family: you knew them by their roots, two small plots barren, calcified. Of my mother and father, you told their failure to take light in, to produce.

Of my learned fear of tilling old soil, of myself, of the dogwoods, their loose-ning, my hands shoved in the dirt to save them, you knew. The long hallways of bark my birch-mother would tread to reach me: these you foretold.

Finally, you spoke of the winds, in which my father would lift high his leaf hands and sway until evening.
Do not believe that
a thing is
sown deep enough not to be

undone. Years later,
   watching the
   fall of the dogwoods, I felt

the earth rock rootlength
to rootlength.
   Inside the storm, I held out

my arms to catch my
mother’s limbs,
   frailing, father’s leaf flutter.
Ashley Cundiff

SEPTEMBER

Why is it that September brings a sense of promise? Despite the leaves, yellow rimmed and hungover, despite the spent flower heads, eaten by bugs and disease, despite the nation drowning in still and running waters…

Even so, its signals of surrender are welcomed with anticipation. Perhaps it is the desperate optimism that comes with death—that the heady excess of midsummer wasn’t the end after all. That the spent leaves will cede to the sleeping buds, that the soil will rot into richness.

That the receding waters will reveal magnificent fossils long forgotten… After all, in entrusting sleep to the black of the night, don’t we all believe in resurrection?
Lorna Wood

ETHEREE FOR HEATHER HEYER

One
Person
With freckles
And hazel eyes
Helped bankrupt people
Get in their paperwork
And showed us love is simple,
Like falling while crossing the street,
But rising again, reaching toward hate
With arms and heart made infinitely strong.
H. M. Cotton

Library: The Week After My Father’s Death

Halfway between Flagg and Lee, I find
the spine my daddy checked out once
a year since 1943. Gap-toothing the row
of balustrading books, I pluck it
from the others: brothers diving spikes

along the mineral rail line. Winding through green
and red, coal mines and soot, these words etch
the history of my father’s side. I birdsmouth
its hardback binding, the book swallow -nesting
lightly in my hands. A page shudders

as a man with Capote passes by, while, outside,
bricklayers kneeling by a broken wythe
butter culls for a Dutchman’s repair
with clinkers darker than the rest. Now, alone,
I cosset the due-date card from its front flap

fold. The numerals line up like mantrip cars
battening down the page, the first half-
handwritten with curly 2s and 5s, the latter
stamped in iron red. I slip it in my pocket
to shadow box with his marriage license

and engineer’s watch, then fingering the book’s
corner between its mates, I button it back
till it fits like a steel tongue in its striker plate.
PLAY THE LINE

Our empty boat slip needled toward Panama. Across the bay, embalmed in brackish backwash and sand, pilings fingered up like broken masts. At low tide, a heron high-stepped among them, looking to gullet a speckled trout. Clutched against the breeze, we shivered through our last day on the water, back when the barm of dawn sloughed off. We kayaked the cypress knees,

and when I cast my line, I caught nothing but the flesh along my upper arm. You kneaded the kahle through, nipped the barb, and pinched me free. Now, I try and recall your hands and how many turns you used to cinch the leader to hook. Maybe you will return with the pitcher plants’ bloom. Tonight, the sun sets in layers of annealed steel. Minnows whirligig in the shallows, the heron still stalking their wakes. I have learned to wait.
HARDENING OFF

A tomato plant buried
up to its ears
set outside to harden off

Like me
firmer in the stem
a little ruddier,
less sway in the breeze

Patient, like a squirrel
waiting for the inevitable bread
or crust appearing in a row
on the railing

Bored, like the dogs that don’t bark at me anymore
when I walk past their property,
They loll their heads on their paws
No need to watch me skim by the road
I wave

Like me
roots reaching out
graping the soil
filling the pot
Ready to be transplanted.
I turn myself around
spotting you
spinning into your path

The moon keeps one side to us

You catch my rising tides
scooping them
soaking me

The moon chips away its own face

I’m saturated
gurgling
sloshing

The moon hides behind its breath

I unwind
whirling
uncorking

The moon is ashamed

You join me
we spin
two blurs dissolving into one

We mock the moon.
Claire Scott

LANDSCAPE WITH DROWNING WOMAN

Go Fish you say
grinning at your six pairs
to my one

I sink to the bottom of the sea
starfish circle
somewhere my son floats
in a sea of cells
his fish-body blue
somewhere he breathes
through tiny gills

I feel the force of your mother
slipping through my legs
I hear her piercing cries
protesting exile, preferring
the warmth of the sea-womb
jelly fish float by
I hold her to my breast, stay little one

Go Fish you repeat

I hear your voice far above
I drift in the ocean current
linger in sea grass and
long strands of kelp
looking for my first born
still at seven months
angel fish with blue stripes

Go Fish Grammy

the sea grows deep as I rise
a pinch of salt in my hand
seaweed woven through my hair
lantern fish light the way
my lips spew bubbles
I reach for a card
with webbed fingers
At Eighty

webs stitched
with tar
nished moments
emptied
of light
spun with mum
bled strands
of prayer to
missing gods
shape
less days
stalled-out
nights loop
mobius
my heart’s
tongue silent
my soul with
ered weight
less while
orphic wasps
hiss &
the ferry
man taps-taps
his time
worn foot
beside a bar
ren boat
my fur
rowed face
seeks
a thread of
light to
linger over
the little
that is
left
Jim Ferris

DON’T TELL ANYONE

I don’t say this out loud
to anybody, ever,
but every day I think
of dying, death,
checking out, that state of how
the hell should I know,
not of killing myself
or of getting someone
else to do it – cracker –
but of not
having to do all this
anymore,
that’s all. Is that bad?
It’s just a thought,
well then why don’t you
say it to people,
what are you afraid of?
Obvious –
people will flip out –
can I pray for you?
Call in the authorities,
my god
is an awesome god, suicide
risk
assessment, how are you
feeling today,
threat to self or other,
you have
so much to live for, that
could do it right there.
Don’t look for the sequel.
Or the explanation.
We all should have known,
I just
talked to him last week
and he sounded
great, upbeat, why didn’t
he say something?
You know what, now
I’m getting angry, 
he should have told me, 
damn it, 
he should have told me. 
Make up 
something if you need – 
the police 
are here, I must go. Don’t tell 
anyone.

EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON

he died 
because his heart stopped, because 
our big forebrains thirst for answers, 
as if this exam were multiple choice 
after all – he died 
because he could no longer 
make fine distinctions – are you waiting 
for an example, you too, child, 
are implicated – he lived here, now 
he doesn’t, his tense and time are past, 
but what lives on lives on, we tell us, 
and we are grateful to hear, thank you, 
and to believe, the snow is waist-high 
tonight, bitter cold, getting colder, 
but it won’t last, summer will be hot 
and it won’t last, the moon is almost 
full, tonight I am almost
Kristin LaFollette

STORIES

Here, we are hunters and
gatherers—
I don’t eat meat, but my teeth
are sharper than most—

There’s a boat upside down
in the sand, and because I can’t see

land across the water,
I think it
must be able to take me to the
other side of the earth.

Our words, songs from a
hymnal,
like woodsmoke as our
hands collect moths from
the air—

Around a fire, I smell eucalyptus
and
lemon oil and

I think I was made for the plants,
the cinnamon fern and
junegrass—

While taking shelter from the rain,
someone asks how the funeral was,
my sister, their friend.
I want to say, I wish you
had been there

as we talked
about her love of oranges,
told stories over trays of
vegetables and cold salads—
Instead:
The music was loud and beautiful, just as she would have wanted.

I think of how her body would have thrived in this heat, skin like an apple absorbing water,

our hymns lifting her up out of the fog & wildness inside of her—
Kristin LaFollette

**THE WASHING OF THE BODIES**

I watch you and listen
for subtle changes in
your
voice,
altered expressions on
your    face,

signs of the aggression
I’ve known and
witnessed.

You speak to your boys
with soft
tones, and when
you hold them,
you are held.

All these years,
I didn’t know about
your creekbed body—
Like your brother,
you’ve been rootless,

subsisting on scraps
dropped from the table.
Whatever you both

went through before
I knew you is lost
in bone.

After all this time, we
no longer argue with
wrong
words.

Here, in this
house, we drink
water.
Here, we break bread.
Kali Lightfoot

WILDERNESS RANGER

[haiku]
ice axe
in the snow with
columbine

snow frosts
reds and golds
of autumn

steaming pile
of berry-stained scat—
bear ahead

krummholz lean
away from the wind
at timberline

[senryu]
krummholz
wood like living rock
at timberline

walking all of the
switchbacks shows maturity…
or sore knees

bannock
hard salami macaroni trailmix
cheese  repeat

one layer
of ripstop nylon between
me and the dark

[tanka]
ten days in wild air
my nose wrinkles
smelling oiled and dusty
logging road half a mile
ahead of me.
Jessica Goodfellow

HEARTBREAK CENTO

The body is the vehicle of a wish, commanded. Here I am making, unmaking, doing, undoing, and I’m dizzy, frescoed to the wall of a kiss. The world is repeatedly stained, was a different color for each of us. My shadow accepts the weight of birds each morning. Each evening hands them back. Wind and the sound of wind—am I really better at being crushed than I was before?

Sources: Liz Waldner, Gail Mazur, Henrietta Goodman, Allison Smythe, Pamela Alexander, Mary Cornish, Charles Wright, John Loomis, Fanny Howe
Praise to life though it tightened like a knot—
but instead I’ve been thinking
of the gash God made in me.

Who hasn’t been tempted by the sharp edge of a knife,
the invisible tug on the knot
of the river? Winter, Wintering, listen: I think of you.

I was thinking of you when, distracted, I cut my hand—
wound leaping evergreen to evergreen / Imagine
a blade that gleams and remains.

I saw my life as a wolf loping along the road,
along the snow, to keep the motion steady
once the snow has stopped. Thinking then let it begin.

Sources: Adrienne Rich, Jon Loomis, Francesca Bell,
Chris Abani, Andrea Hollander, Joseph Fasano, Kevin
Prufer, Shane McCrae, Patty Paine, Anne Carson, Elizabeth
Whittlesey, Karin Gottshall
Sarah Brown Weitzman

A BACKWARD GLANCE

We’re not told her name
only that she looked back
not what it was she had to see
one more time.

Certainly she’s been warned,
a punishment story to keep

women in their place, thwart
curiosity, head off disobedience.

Still it was home to her and home
is where you will always go
back to in your thoughts. Like
the home I’ve dreamed about

every night for over seventy years,
the home I was taken from at two

Too young to know enough
to take a backward glance

at whoever was there
hiding behind a window shade.
Matt Morris

STILL LIFE WITHOUT GRAPES

A banana, some apples,
& a couple pears

in a wooden bowl
sit by a blue vase, droopy

with tulips atop
a lacey linen

tablecloth bespattered with
the varied shadows,

including such shapes
which suggest a large cluster

of grapes not found else-
where on the canvas.

Mistake? Or is it akin
to the notes in jazz

that one doesn’t play,
resonant only in their

absence? The missing
grapes show a world rife

with temptations so juicy,
dark & delicious,

no one, not even
the artist, can resist them

all the time. Well, then,
let’s now consider

the Jeroboam of wine,
also not pictured.
Esther Johnson

**Sunday afternoon in the Villa Borghese,**

runners streak by on cobbled paths,
dogs bark, off-leash, racing through pines,
lapping from fountains old as emperors
whose broken busts line the boulevard.

Music from the carousel celebrates
a cloudless day as parents push
babies in strollers, and old men
rest on benches in stippled sun.

From the shore, a violinist serenades
lovers on the lake rowing a shaky boat.
The man in tux props up the oars,
pours champagne and fills two flutes.

The girl, demure in little black dress,
drinks a sip, looks deep into his eyes.
He directs the show, hand signals to the shore
where a photographer captures the scene.

Inside the Borghese, former palace of popes,
Bernini’s statue dominates the gallery,
lit by spotlight, focal point of every eye—

*The Rape of Proserpina*

Pluto’s fingers push deep into the thigh
of the girl he’s stolen away,
her marble flesh pulsing beneath
the violent, grasping hand.

Proserpina’s face contorts into a howl
for help that does not come.
She is dragged into the Underworld,
damned to wed the god of darkness,

thrown into a never-ending cycle—
rising to sunlight once a year,
falling again back to the pit,
doomed for eternity.

Poetry South 2018 / 50
Outside on the lake, the man presses a ring onto the finger of the girl. Music dies, and the blood-red sun drops low behind the Roman ruins.
Abayomi Animashaun

PULLING WEEDS

Not the tired thought
Of thistle and thorn

As metaphors
For lost loves

That when cleared
Allow a glimpse

Into how
The aching heart leans

When pried
From the pull and clutch

Of a past now lost
And wounds quietly borne

Nor discourse
On the virtue of distant ideas

Artfully held or
Carelessly joined

No dressed-up language
In heels and lace

For the gratitude
Roiling your chest today

Despite the clot
And dialysis

Months-long spasm
And throbbing knees

To again from the waist
Yank each staggered weed
Tossed in a pile you’ll dump
At the public works
West of the city

Gratitude this evening
For this brown mulch
Beneath your feet

The rest and rustle
Of light and wind

Upon the thick green bush
And frail thin trees

Gratitude
For the wide staccatos
Of croaking frogs

The burrow and buzz
Of mice and bees
Abayomi Animashaun

AFTERNOON IN AUGUST

Today
There’s no music
Within me.

Outside
Rain is falling.

Trees pull
And lean
In the wind.

No noise
From school girls
And boys

Laughing
Arguing
And tossing rocks.

No knock on the door
From Sidi
The mango girl

Trying to sell me
Five unripe fruits
At twice the cost.

Just this silence
With its gray buba
And non-music

Peeling unripe mangoes
For the school boy
Within me.

Note: Buba is a loose blouse or garment worn by adults and children
Barbara Lawhorn

GOAT STORY

The sound silk against silk
makes.

The scandal of the particular—
how we turn it, this way and that—the anchored blade
of fish hook that catches our cheek. The shard of cow bone
we extract from our gum; what causes us pain and thrills
us alive both. How small they look in expanse of palm.

I am the cloud, rain heavy and full of prisms.

I am the weather vane, trembling, and the roiling bruise
of storm, looking for someone to hurt. These lips

have sung babies to sleep as they suckled, have sucked
men off in lust and curiosity and confusion and love, have clasped
my mother’s cheek and hand in prayer, and exalted salted, buttered
summer corn. I am a ravenous glutton. I have been apologizing
for it my entire life. Each time I disrobe, I know, carnally

my own insignificance and insufficiency. I am a constant
problem to myself. Suffering is the mirror and the reflection,
both. I am no Saint Francis—he, who kissed the leper
and was able to see the hidden
world, gloriously; within himself too. The terror
of God’s
face
everywhere.

Maybe,

I’m the leper you need to kiss. The disfigured
skeleton key to a door leading to your broken
self. I’ll be the stone you dash your foot upon.

I’ll teach you the proper, tragic sense of life.
Thai-Lynne Lavallee-McLean

KISS-FLAVORED TEA

She is called Gran;
a simple word known
as far as any scabby-kneed ten-year-old
could throw a baseball.
In their shorts
and torn sneakers
they run up and down the dirt road,
kicking up dust clouds that glow
red in the late afternoon sun.
Gran sits alone watching them,
her muscles less limber
than those they use
to run and bend.
She pulls her woollen shawl
closer around her shoulders
even though the cicadas sing
in the hot afternoon air,
which is still, and drips
off fat banana leaves.
In her hands is a mug
of spicy orange tea,
the steam joining its cousins
pregnant particles in the damp air,
filling her nostrils
with spicy sweetness.
The milk clouds swirling within
turn it the colour of her palms
which bleed into her honey chocolate skin,
wrinkled and wizened
giving her the textured look
of an old oak tree,
the wise man stretching
his gnarled boughs
over the old stone graveyard.
“When I was a girl,” she used to say,
while hands, creased and lined
with years of clasping
together in prayer,
clutch her worn cherry-wood rosary beads,
cool and solid in her tired fingers,
“we gathered by the fire every night,
and the little girls sat hugging their knees
while the boys roasted marshmallows
and all listened to Great Aunt Rose
talk about the plantation
before it was overgrown
with vines and flowering weeds
and ravens circled in the sweltering heat.
And when Billy pulled me
‘round the stables
and tried to kiss me
in the light of the moon
and stars and fireflies,
I came undone
right down to my fingertips.”
At this the little girls sighed
just as she had when Great Aunt Rose
spoke of poetry that Uncle Henry whispered to her
under the cotton-picking moon,
while the boys fight over
the best marshmallow stick for a sword.
She pauses,
her smoky voice husky
and tired from storytelling.
The spicy orange and sugar kiss
her aged lips,
flowing inconspicuously over teeth and tongue,
that reach for the sweet liquid
as if it were a lover
about to crawl into bed
beside her.
“And I didn’t realize
until my hair was much whiter,
that I didn’t need a man
if I had kiss-flavoured tea.”
Carmi Soifer

CENOTE

the green reflection—limestone—
makes immersion seem inevitable
along with fish
in Mayan bath water
met clearly
by the sea

PLAYA DEL NORTE

when you swim out
in the full light of afternoon
nothing is foreshortened

but clear
lines against sky
and lean

horizon
appear closer
than an hour ago

are closer
as you swim the same distance
alight
WOMAN

You showed up in a poem once—
the way you walked
and swayed
all breasts and hips
the red shoes
you chose to wear.

What didn’t happen
is the story of the darker woman
walking her narrow way back from work
her dull blue suit
in a warm and rural place
where the kids get hit.

She’s in another country
and I’m walking the other way
toward her
toward dinner, really
toward town
and we pass

in the high grass
on the same path
although it may seem
there is really only one of us.
Margarita Serafimova

**THE LAST DAY OF AUGUST**

Summer passed, 
treading the voices of Asia Minor cicadas, 
as free souls pass themselves.

**Ο ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝΑΣ**

(Apollo)

The seas were as high as the heavens. 
Their white manes included the sun.
Wendy Elizabeth Ingersoll

**THE DOE**

When it breaks from road’s border, catapults my windshield: glass empty, then full,

I’m eating a plum and humming an aria, fingers curved around the steering wheel as if to mime ripe. What does it mean to meld red with blue, succulence with delicacy, Butterfly with Turandot:

purple wonder just to breathe Puccini, leap across asphalt like that doe.
Poetry South 2018 / 62

Alan Johnston

STEPHENSON BRIDGE ROAD

Near Davis, California

The Coast Ranges are burning.
Nut-brown plumes of brush fire smoke
rise to north and west.
To the east, invisible,
the Sierra Nevada
are marked by wads of thunderhead.
In the valley, between fire
and rain, the world is different —
dreamy, green and yellow,
hot with the snap-dry air.

As we bicycle,
we turn south on the road
to Stephenson Bridge —
tough WPA work
spanning Putah Creek.
Over the years, graffiti —
faces, pictures, signs —
have spread across it —
angled, illegible words;
strange, random sloshes
of color on concrete,
making this place a stony
throwback to the sixties.
The bridge almost seems
to outshine the bright,
flowing zucchini field
bursting with golden flowers
where the road angles in:
sharp, dangerous curves,
swastika-like, beside
the bank, a bleak, depressing
purple spilled down pillars
to the creek: car parts. Tires.
Cans. A clear jar.
All the relentless trash
of humanity
on the creek bank and roadside,
and above, the bridge:
the gang signs, the sexual
boasting, sworn endless love
in a homogeny
of delirious colors,
all these shades and juices
so intently rendered:

the names flow
mad and sensual
color explosions
interwoven

erasing each other against horizons
marked by smoke and clouds.
KB Ballentine

EDGED WITH FIRE

Because maples have burst into flame,
morning flushes long before the moon
slides from her wide perch,
stars stippling the bluing sky.

Towhees sheltered in the Rose of Sharon
tempt the sun with song,
and wrens blend with fallen leaves
drifting into edges of the yard.

Too early for frost, steam lingers
over the birdbath where a squirrel sips,
tail flirting the air, starlings
stenciled on oak branches.

Chrysanthemums crisp the lawn,
echo dawn’s gold, Venus murmuring
goodbye.
FAITHFUL, EVEN AS IT FADES

Last splendor of leaves spool like gypsy moths
from mountain ash, from oak sparkling gold orange red.
October now, even Virginia creeper folds into shadows
that sever the edges of our yard, fields furrowed
and empty after the harvest. You are closer somehow
under this bright blue sky, North Star still smoldering.
Apples peeled and simmering tang the air,
and thoughts of warm cider make my mouth water.
It’s hard to be sad in the clean sweep of clouds,
evergreens teasing this softer light. A wren lifts his throat
in song, notes you would have mimicked to give him answer,
the two of you in tête-à-tête until he flew away —
melody suspended, echoing in unexpected silence.
Gina Malone

**At Buttermilk Creek**

The crow on a bridge railing
in this city park presides
over Autumn.
Knife-carved letters
are hieroglyphs beneath
his deliberate feet.
He gathers wordless promises.

Winter is coming, he knows.

The heat from the sun
is waning, light slants
to soft.
Woodsmoke signals
are borne by breezes.
Acornfall taps a code
of warning.
Trees drop dry leaves
like quiet notes
into the shy creek
that will pass them on
to bigger waters.

Winter comes, they say.

He turns his head, this sentinel
crow, to watch a caret
of vehement geese
point itself away
from here.

I turn for home
mindful of the word
of winter’s coming.
BEGINNING AGAIN

She could not recall
ever having ironed
while angry before,
but how cathartic
to push hot metal hard
against the soft cotton shirt
with its pretty pattern,
clusters of muted cherries;
to be startled
by the metallic groaning
of the ironing board
as it gave way beneath her resolve,
then straightened itself again;
to hear the sigh of steam escaping,
echoing her own deep-dredged
breaths of ragged frustration;
and how satisfying
to solve the only problem
the cloth had—wrinkles
after a washing;
to know she would get over
the stomach-sunken despair as soon
as the shirt was smooth
and his hand was touching
the still-warm fabric at her back
as they walked out into the world
to begin again,
while the iron,
unplugged,
cooled in the quiet room.
David Radavich

BEHIND THE CHICKEN TRUCK

Feathers drift	right and left across
the windshield,
reminder that
life moves fast
and the cages
that keep us
stay mainly closed
in this transit.

I am eager
to get around
this narrow road.

Nonetheless,
I admire those wings
beating against
the wire,

eyes turned up

all that vibrancy
destined to arrive

not far from
where I am going.
David M. Harris

**Dead Letter Office: William Harris (6)**

For several weeks, my daily workout was cycling up Tenth Avenue to Amsterdam to the hospital to visit you. Sometimes I’d stop off for a quiet moment in the cathedral across the street before what I refused to believe was the death watch. I remember talking and watching sports -- Borg vs. McEnroe at Wimbledon, good enough to capture two men who didn’t care about tennis -- and waiting for the only possible resolution. I spent a night in the waiting room, without drama, and a few hours on the sidewalk, days later, waiting for Shelley to drive up from Maryland. Then we were busy through the shiva. Cleaning out the safe-deposit box, the house, the long-unopened drawers of memories, secrets, and surprises. Old pictures, ID cards, a Nazi Luger, war booty. The file cabinets. The few letters you had saved. The letter from your sister, around the time of my bar mitzvah, reassuring you that I really was your son. Under Jewish law -- not that that was important to you -- the man who raises the child is the father. I don’t have the Harris nose, but I got the curiosity, the Sunday Times crossword, the love of history, the love of the Yankees. Forget about genetics. Everything important came from you.
Jeffrey Hannah

Estate Sale

Four houses down from me an Estate Sale begins. I watch through my window the pickups line up curbside, and strangers entering what was once a home. A lamp, a couch, appliances… Truck beds being filled and harnessed down with bungie. The closing sound of rusted tailgates.

Only days ago was that house haunted with the living. I didn’t know him. I didn’t know his loves or displeasures. But I do know there were days I passed, walking the dog, and saw him perhaps working in the yard or maybe even carrying in some of the things that have now been auctioned.

So for the experience, I go and pose as if I was in the market. A blonde woman, professionally dressed, answers a collector’s question on the age of a grandfather clock. Strangers, uninvited, moving methodically throughout a house not their own telling themselves things they want to hear.
Late July in Central Arkansas, the Delta commanding her presence. Clouds rolling in dark and darker, and the wind and sound of rumbles took over what we knew… or whatever we thought we knew. The Blackjack Oaks in the backyard littered their leaves not unnaturally, but unseasonal. The power out for four to five hours… and no place to go.

The rain, with rhythmic change, felt as if a metronome led its fall. Our doors open to let in the summer evening’s fading light. You on the couch, reading… taking what was felt the best use of time. Me sipping my drink, feeling a new darkness coming on. Both feeling the turn of a world. You and Me Alone. Together.
Jay Vera Summer

CHICAGO PARKS

Where Irving and Portage cross
the men play dominoes on concrete
tables the women sell mango
dipped in chili powder
the children run after churro and snow cone
carts, the cats hide under bushes,
but you see them
from the other side of the black fence
you see them.
Robert Farrell

ON HABITS

Silt clouds of the western Gulf the water dull the
Mississippi soil suspended before derricks standing
in said water while mothers wipe tar from children’s
feet in a house that also stands on stilts where the
elderly crack shells and pick at meat where a shirtless
boy holds a Roman candle where other children wash
the beans and break them wondering why they come
here since on the other side the water’s clean the
dolphins not just mullet leap why it’s only here they
come to die the jellyfish the men of war the horseshoe
crabs the ancient creatures they will not eat
Susan Ludvigson

ON FEROCITY

I’d like to tell you I’m a lioness, eating
when I’m hungry and any time I can—
roaring when I’m outraged, rolling
on the ground when I want cool grass
against my skin. I’m guessing you think this
doesn’t sound at all like the small
old woman you know I am.
Think again. There are things
you might not altogether understand—
how fast we can shift, rolling over
at a murmur from a man
who knows how to stroke
the bristle from a cat.
Derek Annis

**BEFORE AND AFTER PICTURE**

What will I write about now that the house is clean and filled with children? Now that my yard is trimmed and the garden’s gone purple and red with fruit? The dog chases her ball trots across the lawn, drops it at my feet; the mail carrier always leaves a treat in the box. I go to work and I write.

Sometimes I fight with my wife, but there’s no shattered glass or fist-hole; we don’t even work ourselves up enough to yell and risk waking the baby. Now what will I write about? The children sleep all through the night.

I ate breakfast today. Showered in warm water. Sang softly with daughter in arms.
Jacob Hall

In Which I Am Segmented

I give my bones to the window. I commit to the break
of birch that peels against the courthouse reciting its whim
through the now thickening morning. There’s no relief
in the floorboard, no tone of gravity as I trace the fates
of the sparrow flitting over the power line above the home
and the child waking too close to the highway’s edge, hands
outstretched towards that eventual heaven. The house
stills in the distance between breath and the measure of self
it becomes. I can’t tell the bricks scattered along the sidewalk
from my fingers draped over Pike and Prospect as the cold
eases its light into a throat. I can’t place the morning’s body
or the conflict it denotes within the trees, the subtle gaps,
the texture of a wholly dissipated sound. I know the ground
I give as my eyes slide through a limestone arc, the space
between them a puncture of thought, a vague segmentation.
ON PROVIDENCE AVE

I’m without a means of confronting
what commits me to breathe

as a window drafts its fingers across my skin
and the living linger like a slipstitch
wedged in exodus

in the edges of a heart. I’m walking a street
where heaven is the mark of a zero-sum game.

Ricocheted prayer skirting the edges
of a bullet’s name, an impenetrable row
of blankets draped across the sidewalk

to mourn the unclaimed dead.
I don’t think I know what it means

but the day draws its curtains
through the trees and a television
feeds the woods a violence that can’t be

mapped, a backlash wrapped around cotton stalks, a continuous knot that gives way

to each common act. The city slope
as it holds its back in a rumor of war, insects
grown familiar as a child drags a bicycle

into the crop field chanting I don’t care
I don’t care who sees me.
Bill Brown

**Knock, Knock**

In the green morning
I wanted to be a heart.
A heart.
— Lorca

Wake to a sunrise
in the old farm house—

in the orchard,
apple, pear, peach,
glow spring green
as creek willows.

You, beside me asleep,
breath, a hush, a snooze,

how words I learned
as a child,

consonants, vowels
whispered,

quiet dawn,
teach a heart
to pump
smoothly,

as dew drops glisten
tops of grass

before crow calls
knock

a waking day’s door
to open.
Always

“Always, These gigantic inconceivables.”

— C. K. Williams

How they plant themselves
in fear’s closet, unexpectedly
expected, even half-desired,
knowing along with life, you
will lose the things you worship:
gold finch and chickadee,
deer herd and fox kits,
April green and October blue,
heron flight and creek sparkle—
your soft hair-tangle when I wake
at night so all alone. And isn’t
this why love and fear of love
always look over our shoulders
to see what isn’t coming
and what is.

Outside the pulse’s
carnival ride and the price we
pay for a seat, one can choose
to argue with the world or to be
amazed at small hours.

Cool breeze surprises
a June morning. Even chickadees
choose to share instead of squabble.
A candle shines in a human heart,
however short the wick.
She is Beatrice
Shakespeare’s, not Dante’s
Tall, tanned, loud, and alive
Not watched and dead
Looming quietly in another’s tale
She carries sunshine pinned
In her lion’s hair
Her heels the rhythmic pat
Of a fiddler’s keeping beat
She moves in music, always
I conjure her among trees
Her frame camouflaged in trunks
Her earrings mistaken for leaves
Or reclined in soft grass
Passing secrets at sunset
At cusp of winter she droops as flowers do
The Amazon queen growing small
She was not forged for solitude and sweaters
Forced to watch her playground freeze over
Too heartbroken to hibernate
Have patience, my summer friend
Your kind are but a whistle away
The well-worn tracks remember your feet
The faeries await your command
To follow your laughter into the day
I always hear the color blue at night
(our waltzing feet, my drowsy hands upon you)
before I down my pills and flip the light.

Obscured with moss, the trees encircled a dike,
like early years of sleep. I hate—like you—
to always hear the color blue at night:

the foaming waterfalls or waves that strike.
I almost touched a planet or star (or you?)
before I downed my pills and flipped the light.

The smartest man I’ve ever known, unlike
the wisest man you knew, will never know you
had always heard the color blue at night.

I laugh at a void that lingers within sight;
my life returns to dust (and where are you?)
before I down my pills and flip the light.

An aura—white and overarching—a weight
prevents my dance from reaching God or you,
and still I hear the color blue at night
before I down my pills and flip the light.
Paul Freidinger

SEE IF I CARE

It is summer and the air has the mass of an elephant. Every day is a slow day and time grinds its grist mill of oblivion through the hours. The palmettos shake their weary heads in the hot wind, yet the water doesn’t register waves, only ships of cumulus hovering within easy listening distance. Just because

your eyes be closed, don’t mean you’re sleepin’. This is no-time being cleared for contemplation. You shut me out, but that face feigning serene gives you up. No escapin’ the condition we’re in. No runnin’ away for good. Wouldn’t do no good. You’d be lost and here in your heart.

Just because you say good-bye, don’t mean you’re gone. Nothing disappears, least of all, the blues in the drone of flies and bees’ buzz around the honeysuckle. Ain’t no disguise for the hard life, the blood, bone-ache and heart-pound around the body. This is a slow day,

and I think too much. Wish you was way down the road. Wish I never met you, trouble that you bring. Go ahead, close those eyes. See if I care. Won’t hide your pain. Won’t spare me none, neither.

*italicized phrases are Gullah aphorisms
When Everything Is Over

Aftermath: the umber hour,
cool, still, without revelation,
shielding damage from dawn,

from eyes to see the half-life
of hurricanes leaves effects
humans can barely surmise.

If it took the whole island and left
a slow wake, it would have been kind.
Instead, houses slant in surrender,

shingles torn away, chimneys
crumpled, glass shattered, expose
the secrets of a bedroom: what

should have remained hidden.
Along the road pines, oaks,
snapped off at the base,

brittle bones that could not bend
enough; psyches cinch
their mourning to the late rose

blooming its arrival. Petals anoint
the light. Is it innocence
that stirs survival, red announcing

their presence, nodding in the breeze?
This we know and are dumb,
in October when everything is over,

and we sit silent among the ruins.
ContriButors

Abayomi Animashaun is the author of two poetry collections, *The Giving of Pears* and *Sailing for Ithaca*, and editor of two anthologies, *Others Will Enter the Gates: Immigrant Poets on Poetry, Influences, and Writing in America* and *Walking the Tightrope: Poetry and Prose by LGBTQ Writers from Africa*.

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Clare Brennan is a Chicago-based theater artist and writer. Using spoken word, performance poetry, devised theater, and text adaption, her work focuses on the transient, evolving nature of isolation, home, womanhood, and identity. Recent credits include *Alter Ego* (Writer and performer, The Frontier), Anthony Neilson’s *Stitching* (Director, BlackLight Theatre Company, Dublin), and *Home of Love* (Devising concept and direction, Wall to Wall Theatre Festival). clarebrennancreative.com


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Carol V. Davis is the author of *Because I Cannot Leave This Body* (Truman State Univ. Press, 2017), *Between Storms* (2012) and winner of the 2007 T.S. Eliot Prize for Poetry for *Into the Arms of Pushkin: Poems of St. Petersburg*. Her poetry has been read on National Public Radio and the U.S. Library of Congress and Radio Russia. Twice a Fulbright scholar in Russia, she taught in Ulan-Ude, Siberia, winter 2018 and teaches at Santa Monica College, California and Antioch Univ. Los Angeles.

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George Drew is the author of *The View from Jackass Hill*, 2010 winner of the X. J. Kennedy Poetry Prize, Texas Review Press, which also published *Down & Dirty* (2015), and his *New & Selected, Pastoral Habits* (2016), winner of the Adirondack Literary Award for Best Poetry Book, and a Finalist for *The Lascaux Review’s* Poetry Book Prize. His eighth collection, *Fancy’s Orphan*, is due out in 2017, from Tiger Bark Press. He is the winner of the 2014 St. Petersburg Review poetry contest, the 2016 The New Guard’s Knightville Poetry Contest, and is First Runner Up for the 2017 *Chautauqua Literary Journal’s* Editors Choice Award, his poem appearing in this year’s issue.


Jim Ferris is the current Poet Laureate of Lucas County. He is an award-winning poet and performance artist, author of *Slouching Towards Guantanamo, Facts of Life, and The Hospital Poems*. Ferris, who holds a doctorate in performance studies, has performed at the Kennedy Center and across the United States, Canada and Great Britain; recent performance work includes the solo performance pieces “Is Your Mama White? Excavating Hidden History” and “Scars: A Love Story.” He has won awards for creative nonfiction, mathematics, performance and poetry. Ferris holds the Ability Center Endowed Chair in Disability Studies at the University of Toledo.
Paul Freidinger is a poet residing in Edisto Beach, SC in the heart of South Carolina’s Low Country. After digging out from two hurricanes in the last year, he can attest the ocean is rising. That thought keeps him awake at night. He has published over 200 poems and has poems recently published or forthcoming in Atlanta Review, Bayou Magazine, Cold Mountain Review, Florida Review, Folio, Grist, Isthmus, New Plains Review, Potomac Review, Portland Review, Roanoke Review, Santa Fe Literary Review, South Carolina Review, SubPrimal Poetry Art, and Triggerfish Critical Review.

Jessica Goodfellow’s books are Whiteout (University of Alaska Press, 2017), Mendeleev’s Mandala (2015) and The Insomniac’s Weather Report (2014). Her work has been included in Best New Poets, Verse Daily, The Writer’s Almanac, and was made into a short film by Motionpoems. She was awarded the Chad Walsh Poetry Prize from Beloit Poetry Journal, and has been a writer-in-residence at Denali National Park and Preserve. Recently, her work has appeared in Three Penny Review, The Awl, The Southern Review, and Best American Poetry 2018. Jessica lives with her family in Japan.

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David M. Harris had never lived more than fifty miles from New York City until 2003. Since then he has moved to Tennessee, acquired a daughter and a classic MG, and gotten serious about poetry. His work has appeared in Pirene’s Fountain (and in First Water, the Best of Pirene’s Fountain), Gargoyle, The Labletter, The Pedestal, and other places. His first collection of poetry, The Review Mirror, was published by Unsolicited Press in 2013.

Wendy Elizabeth Ingersoll is a retired piano teacher. Publications include her book Grace Only Follows (National Federation of Press Women Prize), two chapbooks, and poems in various journals. She was a finalist for the 2015 Dogfish Head Poetry Prize. She serves as reader for The Delmarva Review, and can be found online at wendyingersoll.com.

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Allan Johnston earned his M.A. in Creative Writing and his Ph.D. in English from the University of California, Davis. His poems have appeared in over sixty journals, including Poetry, Poetry East, Rattle, and Rhino, and his translations and co-translations of French and German poetry have appeared in Ezra. He has published two poetry collections, Tasks of Survival (1996,) In a Window (2018), and three chapbooks Northport (2010), Departures (2013) Contingencies (2015), and received First Prize in Poetry in the Outrider Press Literary Anthology competition (2010). He teaches writing and literature at Columbia College and DePaul University in Chicago.

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Matt Morris attended the University of Southern Mississippi’s Center for Writers at Hattiesburg many years ago. Since then, he has appeared in various magazines and anthologies, for which he has received multiple nominations for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Nearing Narcoma, his first book, won the Main Street Rag Poetry Award. Knut House Press published his latest collection, Walking in Chicago with a Suitcase in My Hand.

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poetry has appeared in Poetry South, Partisan Review, The Nation, The New Yorker and elsewhere.

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