

# THIMBLE

## LITERARY MAGAZINE

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# *Thimble Literary Magazine*

*Volume 2 • Number 2 • Autumn 2019*

## *Thimble Literary Magazine*

Volume 2 · Number 2 · Autumn 2019

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The *Thimble Literary Magazine* is based on the belief that poetry is like armor. Like a thimble, it may be small and seem insignificant, but it will protect us when we are most vulnerable.

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### Brief Guidelines for Submission

The *Thimble Literary Magazine* is primarily a poetry journal but invites submissions on related topics such as artwork, stories, and interviews. We are not looking for anything in particular in terms of form or style, but that it speaks to the reader or writer in some way. When selecting your poems or prose, please ask yourself, did this poem help me create shelter? Simultaneous submissions are accepted, but please notify us if the work is accepted elsewhere. All material must be original and cannot have appeared in another publication.

*Poetry:* Please send us three to five of your poems.

*Short Stories:* Please send a single work or around 1,000 words. It can be fiction, creative non-fiction, or somewhere in between.

*Essays:* Please send a single essay of 1,000–3,000 words that touches on contemporary issues in literature or art.

*Art:* Please send us three to five examples of your art, which can include photographs and photographs of three-dimensional pieces.

Please send submissions to Nadia Wolnisty, Editor-in-Chief, Thimble Literary Magazine, [thimblelitmag@gmail.com](mailto:thimblelitmag@gmail.com) The author's biography should be included in the body of the email and the submission as a single attachment.

Cover art

Carlo D'Anselmi, *Feeding the Fish*,  
ink and colored pencil on paper, 2019.



## CONTENTS

Editor's Note	99
Carapce	101
<i>Kyle Laws</i>	
Lunar Run	102
<i>James Bengier</i>	
Catching Rye	104
<i>John Waterman</i>	
You Swung Round	105
<i>Millicent Borges Accardi</i>	
Birthday	106
<i>Sean Enfield</i>	
Expansion	108
<i>Noah Page</i>	
Wild	109
<i>Julie Hart</i>	
Bathed in European Light	110
<i>George Wallace</i>	
Typewriter 1	112
<i>Sarah Everett</i>	
Typewriter 2	113
<i>Sarah Everett</i>	
trades	114
<i>Laura Johnson</i>	
Open Burning	115
<i>Barry Peters</i>	

Lobotomy Boy	116
<i>Shannon Elizabeth Gardner</i>	
The Green Acres Couple	117
Spin Out Villanelle	
<i>Todd Mercer</i>	
Porcupine	118
<i>Sheila Wellehan</i>	
Roots/Wires	120
<i>Noah Page</i>	
Men Lean into Each Other	121
at the Polo Fields	
<i>Shannon Elizabeth Hardwick</i>	
Catalog of Hazards	122
<i>Amy Poague</i>	
Skipping	124
<i>Carlo D'Anselmi</i>	
Begonia	125
<i>Jennifer Lothrigel</i>	
schizophrenia sets the house on fire	126
<i>Samantha Slupski</i>	
Cone's Door	128
<i>Edward Lee</i>	
Gibeon	129
<i>Danny Fitzpatrick</i>	
Triptych: Day/Night/Day	130
<i>Nate Maxon</i>	
Abuela	132
<i>Shannon Elizabeth Gardner</i>	
Behold the Needle	133
<i>Luanne Castle</i>	

Breakfast	134
<i>Rachel Cunniffe</i>	
Female Trouble	135
<i>Naré Navasardyan</i>	
Blooming Yucca	138
<i>Belinda Subraman</i>	
The Potato Eaters	139
<i>Kassandra Montag</i>	
lostboyhood	140
<i>Ellen Huang</i>	
Puppet in a Shadow Play	142
<i>R. A. Erber</i>	
At the Crossroads	143
<i>Agnes Vojta</i>	
Thanatopsis in Mind	144
<i>Teresa McLamb Blackmon</i>	
Beauty	146
<i>Noah Page</i>	
Thinness	147
<i>Noah Page</i>	
The Newsroom	148
<i>Elizabeth Jorgensen</i>	
Your Father's Measuring Tape	149
<i>John Delaney</i>	
Woebegone	150
<i>Shannon Elizabeth Gardner</i>	
Cat-Lurching	151
<i>Marisa L. Manuel</i>	
Close Quarters	152
<i>Laura Lee Washburn</i>	



Let's Go Home	154
<i>Carlo D'Anselmi</i>	
Untitled 3	155
<i>Geselle Dominguez</i>	
The Mummies of Guanajuato	156
<i>Michael Gessner</i>	
Broken Handle	158
<i>Edward Lee</i>	
A Guide to Making Your Body Yours Again	159
<i>M. P. Armstrong</i>	
Upwards	160
<i>Noah Page</i>	

## Editor's Note

---

There are many classic songs about shelter: “Gimme Shelter” by the Rolling Stones and “Shelter from the Storm” by Bob Dylan, just to name two. But today I would like to speak about the lyrics of “Shelter Song” by Temples. It’s not exactly high art—assuming that means anything—but it’s a catchy tune and has some nice turns of phrase:

Last night  
I came on over to you  
My oh my  
We played a song or two  
Lifetime  
I read a poem aloud  
My time  
I wrote a song for thee.

(I take umbrage to *thee*, but it’s a song, so I’ll give it a pass.) In a song about shelter, to me it seems the most natural thing in the world to discuss making art together.

Once, navigating Dallas freeways, an old friend and I sang this song really loud, especially the chorus:

Now I know the lonely days are gone  
Don’t you know that I can see  
Like a summer day that’s always long  
We repel the wet of tears  
As the shadows lighten up the day  
Through the cons we laugh away  
Like a windy day that’s always wrong  
We take shelter where we can.

We're not as close as we used to be. Both of are disenchanted, married, with our own grown-up lives, doing Big Important Things. I know it happens as folks approach their thirties, but I still get wistful when this song comes on the radio.

Now, instead of being lost in a falling-apart truck and rushing to rehearsal for a show no one came out for, I'm typing this Letter from the Editor at my grown-up job, between calls from angry or confused consumers. I'm grateful for slow days. I'm grateful for being married, living in a house, doing all the grown-up things.

And yet. The song slaps. Moreover, it makes me nostalgic for doing stupid shit and not having a clue, for still having the energy for the mad scramble—even when I work on things that people actually show up for, even though I am so, so grateful. Thank you, for showing up.

We take shelter where we can.

NADIA ARIOLI.



# *Carapace*

by Kyle Laws

---

At the Spanish carapace, steel cross  
where Coronado forded the Arkansas in Kansas,  
I find a box turtle, name him after the conquistador,  
bring him further west and across the state line  
to Camp Amache in Colorado.

Coronado is indifferent to the marker that reads,  
“On this site the Amache Indians defeated  
the Holly Wildcats 7-0, November 11, 1943,”  
Amache an internment camp for Japanese  
named after a Cheyenne woman.

I set Coronado on the parched ground.  
He heads for the barbed wire. No place to be left  
to fend against winds on a Dust Bowl boundary,  
I sprint after him over foundations of a school  
that created more controversy than the win—

the cost of \$301,000 that could have bought  
a Boeing B-17.

## *Lunar Run*

by James Benger

---

We ran through midnight woods,  
flashlights kept low and seldom,  
we thought we could become  
brothers in the moon's fraternity.

Phosphorescent glowing,  
literally otherworldly,  
it painted the leaves,  
the undergrowth,  
ourselves,  
all that was below the stars  
in navies and blacks.

Twigs and underbrush  
sounding off beneath our boots,  
the foxes and coyotes  
slept off somewhere nearby,  
frogs and mosquitoes in stagnant puddles  
remaining from the other night's storm.

The highway so far off,  
high-speed traffic didn't dare  
make an imprint on our night,  
only an occasional plane,  
higher than sound,  
red-and-white-blinking satellites.

Bobby's arm caught some farmer's  
rusted barbed wire fence,  
and even that red  
as J. R.'s needle-nose  
extracted metal from flesh  
couldn't color the moon.





John Waterman, *Catching Rye*,  
photograph/digital art, 2016.

# *You Swung Round*

by Millicent Borges Accardi

---

In a direful way, reaching forth  
In a wave of wanting, like a woman  
Is supposed to want babies and a home  
And a man, to want to attract anything  
And anyone better than her as a lifetime  
Of being a mere child, a poor thing, a lesser  
Than to be silenced and chit-chitted away  
To a moon launch of pillows on a bed  
Somewhere in a shared cell of misery,  
Is the female of the species only a vision  
To want  
To attract, a steadfast of do or don't  
A lifetime based on one I do?  
A have and a have-not no matter what?  
The only gender to instantly transform  
In three phases only: child, mother, invisible.  
Are women meant to be zany volcanoes  
That explode upon command until they  
Are invisible? The crate, the bath, the vast  
Picture of auspicious dexterity known  
To man only as the next best thing.

# *Birthday*

by Sean Enfield

---

Howling children color the park a soft pink. Their heads  
roll atop the surface of the wind, their bodies

blur in the frenzied motion. Parents hover nearby,  
supervising, mostly watching punch ripple in plastic

cup oceans. It is Harold Bowman's birthday, and he marches  
up the steps of the playground and proclaims himself king.

He stomps and shouts and pumps his little brown fists with  
fervor. The other kids watch but no more than a second passes

before chaos resumes and the screaming starts right back up and  
the pink blur moves Harold to sulk his way to the refreshments.

All the while, Momma Bowman observes the scene from  
a bench at the edge of the park. She has been pouring more and

more burn-your-throat, rot-your-gut whiskey into successive  
cups of fruit punch, and before long, she rises and takes

to running about the park. She, too, howls and stomps and  
shouts and pumps her brown fists, and she scoops her son

onto her shoulders while the other parents scrutinize her from  
the gazebo. She tells Harold to stretch his arms out like wings,



tells him that he is flying, tells him that he is a pilot like Poppa,  
tells him that no other kid has ever flown before—not like this.

Soon, the park fades into the background. The sidewalk stretches  
before them. Into the setting sun. When Harold bends over to ask,

“Where are we going?” Momma Bowman releases hot air from the  
pit of her stomach and murmurs, *the future, the future, the future*



Noah Page, *Expansion*,  
digital photograph, 2019.

# *Wild*

by Julie Hart

---

It's 8:26 on Sunday morning, sun has risen  
high enough to paint the house across the  
street bright, cornice only, the rest still in  
shadow, the tree in front of it a black skeleton.  
The furled awning of the building behind it  
flaps from time to time, tiny, an inch across  
maybe. Behind that the one building in  
Manhattan you can see from our window goes  
matte under a passing cloud. The alarm clock  
ticks slowly, loudly. The faint rattle of phlegm in  
your throat soothes, its iambs predictable until  
you roll over and stop breathing. I hold my  
breath, counting. Eleven. You snort and I  
smile. Birds circle in the blue above the water  
tank. This, too, a wild kingdom.

# *Bathed in European Light*

by George Wallace

---

trying to avoid sleep because my dreams sometimes terrified me i opened up the leather-bound artbook my uncle had brought back from his most recent excursion to europe and presented to me (i was eight, it was september, “america can be so cruel” he used to say to my mother, being gay and open about it, he believed any nephew of his should also see the world thru the eyes of an artist and a dutchman, in this case vermeer);

but i was not ready for vermeer or the onrushing shame that spread like a warm yellow stain (“a boy afraid of his own dreams” laughed my father, he could not admit the presence of fear in the natural world never mind a son of his!) and there was a brueghel in the basement my father had hung it there and me in my trembling pajamas and winter coming on with its creaking furnace and aching hardwood floorboards and the wall clock ticking time away;

fear seemed entirely natural to me in those bleak and solitary hours of youth and abandonment (though i could see my mother thru the dining room dark wide as the continent that separated my bedroom from the companionship I both loathed and craved) and she was probably trying to glue some broken blue delft teacup my uncle had given her back together,

or maybe she was reading some tattered library magazine, practical suggestions a woman of the 1950s might use to make a perfect home even more perfect, and i was certain she could not hear me but i was wrong;

my perfectly imperfect american mother! bathed in european light, like vermeer!

and night's long shadows advancing on everyone in the house, including her, including me.



Sarah Everett, *Typewriter 1*,  
photograph, 2018.



Sarah Everett, *Typewriter 2*,  
photograph, 2018.



# *trades*

by Laura Johnson

---

we ran a plumb line down the chasm  
perhaps thinking to balance bitterness  
with renewed courtship:  
    flowers      wine  
a return to the start. unguarded  
    words recall aches and storms of  
passion don't invite the peace of a level line.  
    our vows refract broken glass.  
can it matter if you lie and i don't care?  
trading on futures with promissory  
    for a rare, dear flower—  
an ancient tulip trade—  
leaves us with the bulb unwanted.  
still, we plant and it grows after hard freezes:  
    royal promises.  
but, unexpected frost gathers on green petals:  
    browning leaves wither:  
the bulb is starved—  
all that's left:    food for squirrels.

# *Open Burning*

by Barry Peters

---

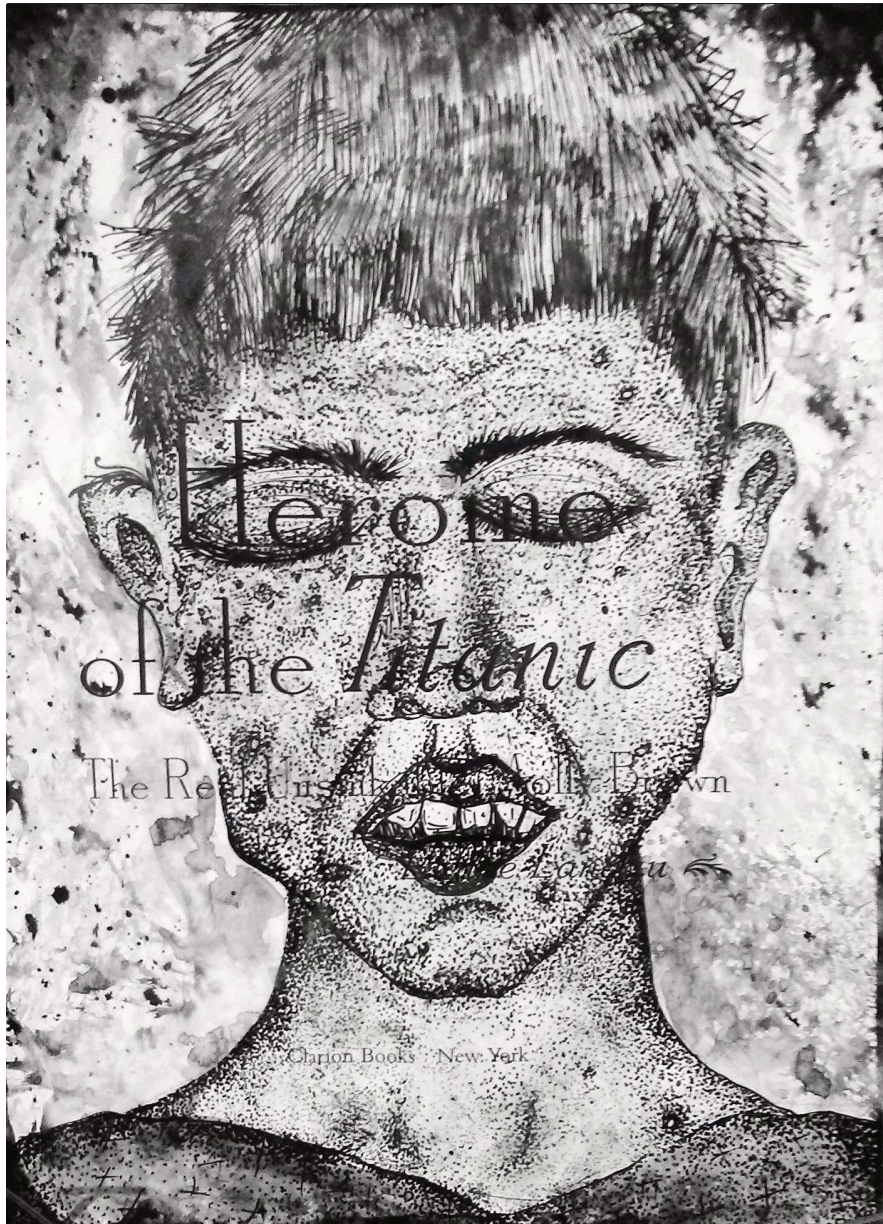
My father climbs the maple each July  
to escape his visiting in-laws, ascending  
with clippers, saw, rope, jar of tar,

high in the heat pruning and painting, skills  
he learned working high school summers  
as a tree surgeon's apprentice. The cutting

gives life to that maple. In October it blooms  
leaves larger than my hands—red, yellow,  
orange float to the ground as if rocking

in a hammock. I rake and wheelbarrow  
them to the backyard, then burn the color  
into black smoke while my father sits alone

under the bare branches, shivering  
in the chill, watching me incinerate his art.



Shannon Elizabeth Gardner, *Lobotomy Boy*,  
watercolor and ink on paper, 2016.

# *The Green Acres Couple Spin Out Villanelle*

by Todd Mercer

---

I'm busy forgetting what you're bent on remembering,  
or maybe I have our respective hobbies backwards.  
No effort spent regretting what brought the end of the beginning.

Why not let things be, appreciate what vibe life is sending?  
One or more than one of us has deviated off task here.  
I'm busy forgetting what you're bent on remembering.

The years have barely changed me, while you find most trends becoming.  
I'll choose this pastoral retreat, you visit teaming streets, cultural Meccas  
No effort spent repenting for what brought the end's beginning.

I've seen many drop from the manic city pace, townspeople resembling  
clambering ants or worker bees. Give me meadows, seeds, soil, tractors.  
Peace. I'm busy forgetting, while you're bent on remembering.

We can't just make do. You want a string of upgrades labelled *assembly  
required*. Fault me for my simple ways, a few slipped harsh words.  
No effort too small, reviewing who wrote the end of the beginning.

Didn't you prefer more plain talk, fewer games, less disassembly?  
Who knew the tension between city ways and country life could wreck us?  
I'm busy forgetting what you're bent on remembering.  
No effort spent regretting what brought the end of the beginning.

# *Porcupine*

by Sheila Wellehan

---

My panting dogs didn't plunge into the pond  
with their customary gusto.  
They hovered at the edge,

and cautiously sipped.  
As I walked closer, I saw the reason—  
a dead porcupine floating on his side.

His exposed backbone and ribcage  
were a crown for a demented woods goddess,  
the key to a lost language,

a bass clef and staff.  
His flesh and insides had been ravaged.  
Masses of industrious maggots

ravenously consumed what was left.  
A flotilla of quills bobbed on the water's surface,  
a whispered breeze filled their sails.

Hundreds of tiny hollow white vessels  
released from their duties  
enjoyed a leisurely voyage

before they filled and sank.

A week later, the carcass still ruled the water.

Creatures who'd felt his wrath during his prime

were wary near his corpse.

The only ones who'd dared to wrangle with him,

the maggots, had vanished—

Porcupines are mighty,

even as bones and hide.



Noah Page, *Roots/Wires*,  
digital photograph, 2019.



# *Men Lean into Each Other at the Polo Fields*

by Shannon Elizabeth Hardwick

---

Their boots kick against my brain when I enter childhood. The mare used to spook at her own shadow. This is why we put her down. We put her down in the sand dunes. Men at the polo fields, sternums softened by hooves of cocaine and disaster, we put her down together. I used to think their beards tasted of apple cider. I used to think manure was a welcome home. Now, I pass by the men downtown on their way to meetings with geologists and maps, and the little girl from their coked-up dream follows me saying, You put a bullet in me but forgot to kill the muscle memory of what they did.

# *Catalog of Hazards*

by Amy Poague

---

The blue sky, opening like a mouth.  
Like eyes.

The blue sky atop  
slippery sidewalks made of steam.

A kettle boiling all the blue day  
and into the night's blue pathway,  
all pushy sound waves,  
bottomless elongated air, emotional labor.

Outlets for electricity  
and/or  
electrocution, as you like.

As you like.

A blue sky too hot,  
wet leaves over more slick wet leaves.

A perception of voice,  
though no chord vibrates:

the hearing without hearing.

The slippery blue sidewalk,  
falling all the way to the voice box,  
that unexplainable figurative encounter.

A sky too wet to plug in.  
My finger plugging a hole in your voice.

My smile as an experiment. As a question.  
An outlet for pure happiness too laborious to be figurative.

A smile in response to a smile, the speaking without speaking.  
A slipshod effort to remain upright.

Your eyes and mouth before I smile.  
Slippery blue rarefaction.  
A response favoring gravity or electricity.

Looking up and back at you.

The blue sky?  
The blue sky.



Carlo D'anselmi, *Skipping*,  
ink and colored pencil on paper, 2019.

# *Begonia*

by Jennifer Lothrigel

---

I met you when I went to pick up a table  
from your house. I saw you on the white  
mantle. Your floppy leaves were grieving.  
You were not facing the window. Your  
home was being cleared out. I asked if I  
could have you. The caretaker paused  
and sized me up, then told me you had  
loved two women before me, that you  
were passed from mother to daughter.  
Was I willing to love you carefully like  
they had? I brought you home and wanted  
to give you light so I put you outside.  
Your bright green (on front) and red  
(on back) leaves burnt, swelled, and  
turned brown. I thought I killed you.  
I felt unworthy of your nurtured legacy.  
I felt unqualified. I had no idea if you  
could rebound, and if so; should I cut off  
all your leaves, or would you mend them?  
I decided to cut them off which left you  
with only one brown limb, lying flush  
against the soil. I placed you in a window  
that I knew in my body was the right place  
for you all along. I gave you water and  
nutrients. Very quickly you rebounded,  
fanning out over a few weeks to your  
original glittering wide-leaf self.

# *schizophrenia sets the house on fire*

by Samantha Slupski

---

& the joke goes, *how many mothers does it take to change a light bulb?*  
& the punch line falls silent because  
there is no mother here.  
now i am expected to change all the lights when they go out.

i am five when father's light goes out.  
& this is the first time my mother turns me into an electrician,  
i have to learn about the wires of schizophrenia,  
have to learn that if one wire is crossed the wrong way,  
you can start a house fire.

i am seven,  
when my house burns down  
& i make it out alive.  
now i have all this knowledge  
on how to change a light bulb  
& how to escape a house fire  
but still no mother,  
only a father with wires  
that are crossed too often.

i am sixteen & i am still searching the sockets for my mother  
still learning how to swim through the tangled wire  
of my family  
still learning how to swallow the shock  
that sits inside of my mouth

i am twenty-four & every time my father calls,  
i let it go straight to voicemail,  
let his voice ring like a smoke siren  
that warns me i will be nothing but burned here  
& i wish i knew how to change light into lineage.  
wish i knew what it was like  
to have every light on in the house.

& i have built my own house now  
i warn everyone who touches a light switch  
that i am one wire away from being a house fire

all i know of light is  
that it burns  
all i know of family is ash  
& all i know of home  
is that it is always something  
i will have to run out of

& the joke goes,  
*how many mothers does it take*  
*to remember there was a daughter here once?*  
& the punch line falls silent  
because now there is only an electrician here  
learning to keep the lights on in her own house.





Edward Lee, *Cone's Door*,  
photograph, 2018.

# *Gibeon*

by Danny Fitzpatrick

---

That forty-first year we too became strangers:  
Shook off our stone homes, tattered our robes,  
Shucked the crumbling bread from molded cupboards.

Mere miles out we met, shared tangled stares.  
Our skin had never known the Nile.  
Our sweat had never darkened Jordan's bed.

And in their wake we washed up on the ruins,  
Gazed in their eyes on perfect excavations  
Spared the ban on sworn deceit.

The pails have worn their paths astride my thigh.  
The quail dogs prime their muzzles in my skirt  
As I pass uphill beneath the yoke of noon,  
Uncertain of this second birth.

# *Triptych: Day/Night/Day*

by Nate Maxon

---

1.

A car almost ran down my brother and I crossing Lead and 2nd  
downtown the other night  
He sprinted, I dodged, and the machine roared north, drunk towards  
Central Avenue  
Heart rates elevated, we had a beer: glasses held with shaking hands  
“Did you see that? I was THIS CLOSE”  
I pinched my pointer finger and thumb together to illustrate  
A near-death experience, shouldn’t I be so much wiser now?  
One feline life-measurement unit down and how many to go?  
So close and nothing changed but the shrapnel underfoot, still hot  
from the almost

2.

The pride parade was the next morning  
I wore a T-shirt with a picture of Walt Whitman’s face on it,  
Considered meeting my ex in the crowd, looking around for her,  
and thought better of it  
Women on inflatable unicorns shot super soakers at the crowd,  
a hot June day  
Men in leather, the old guard, danced to disco music on top of  
a slow-moving school bus  
There were no protests and I was grateful

My thirtieth birthday looming and sweltering, approaching  
I watched the line of brightly colored floats and hopeful revelers drift  
towards wherever it is that parades go to end, horizon a few miles  
off the rainbow

3.

Coming home from the movie theater  
The power is out, a line fell in the backyard and the house  
smells like ozone  
My neighbor gives me a candle, says the fire department just left  
I light it standing on a saucer on the floor of my bedroom, paper and  
books cleared away in a perimeter  
Small prayer light to what quiet watchers  
Those who see the gay child and the drunk driver alike  
More mercy than I/the outnumbering of days  
Let this only make me kinder  
I open the window and the screen  
And I sleep with the wind on my back



Shannon Elizabeth Gardner, *Abuela*,  
ink on paper, 2019.

## *Behold the Needle*

by Luanne Castle

---

I hold between my fingers  
its lack of suitability for this task  
to take apart the earth beneath me  
for the memories grow together  
like moldy pages, impossible  
to separate: the celery fields,  
striped black and green, July 4  
corn and purple chicory, salted  
sand of San Diego, lit ribbons  
of LA traffic, twin downtowns  
still climbing over Phoenix's  
saguaro-studded sun-splayed  
hills, the dark lake waters that  
lap and lick the weedy shore.  
When I most need to accept  
I cannot be only here and not  
there and there at the same time:  
thus the needle to pry the places  
apart, but the way needles are  
is that they travel in and out,  
knotting as they move about.

# *Breakfast*

by Rachel Cunniffe

---

An exercise in storytelling—  
five people in a kitchen  
describe the same incident  
each one of them is a liar,  
each one would not perjure themselves in a court of law.  
This is a respectable family  
unmarried daughter,  
notices from above how bald her father has become.  
He leaves the room muttering about creosoting  
the gate as she enters.  
Married daughter eats her toast  
are video games bad for her son?  
The little boy is with his grandmother at the window  
they watch an ancient cat turn predator under the bird table.

You watch them all  
as the radio announces  
an air crash,  
a pop star's untimely death,  
an assassination attempt.  
They will not remember  
where they were when they heard the news



## *Female Trouble*

by Naré Navasardyan

---

Father left off when she was two, but she always says it doesn't mean shit. Works as the deputy head of a department. Leaves off the "deputy" part at high school reunions. Thought she was ugly at nineteen, dyed hair platinum blonde at twenty-three, at twenty-four likes to talk about how much everyone wants to fuck her. Doesn't get along with girls—they're so catty and gossipy. So. Creates her guy friends' resumes, sometimes even sends them out. They all wanna fuck her, too. Forbids boyfriend of three weeks to respond to his ex's messages. Hopes she never understands sacrificial unconditional love. Bleeds through her clothes every other period. Tries convincing her mom to get Botox. Doesn't wear bras. Shouts at boyfriend of one and a half months to stop drinking so much. Accepts all free drinks that come her way. Knows how to tell a good story and how to tell it the twelfth time, too.

Extensively worried about what the cool kids are up to and about the dark circles under her eyes. Father drunk himself to death, and she cried though they hadn't spoken in three years. In an open relationship she wouldn't mind turning closed, but he's a hotshot designer, so she sits under the gazebo drinking white wine with him, his ex-wife, and now-bride. "Has had enough," so gets with his good frenemy. Doesn't want to be overly public about the relationship, so posts a conceptual captionless photo of his nose to her Instagram. Likes to tell people she barely met just how bad her ex of two and a half years was in bed. Lacks a sense of humor, brushes it off as a linguistic barrier. Says her thinness is part of her "brand." Doesn't dance. Smokes socially despite a history of thyroid cancer. Keeps a few suitors online in different parts of the world in case she ever moves and needs a place to stay.

Lesbian and obsessive. Refused to have sex with the girl she was in love with at the opportune moment because of weight concerns. Wants her girlfriend to be sexually inexperienced, ideally considering herself straight upon first meeting. Wants her next girlfriend to ultimately become her wife. Still loves everyone she has loved “even if she would cross the street to avoid them.” Food fetish. Eats plates and plates of salads. After her father lost the house to gambling, she couldn’t pay tuition and had to drop out of college where she studied architecture to work as a bike shop’s manager. Her Iranian boss wanted to marry her and take her to his country even though he knew she liked girls. After she said no a thousandth time, he pushed her against the wall and tried to touch her. She screamed. He began crying and apologizing profusely. She worked at the bike shop five more months.

Daughter of a Wall Street guy engaged to a Wall Street guy. The former emails her every Christmas and on her birthday and sends money. Not a big deal. It was always like this. She touches herself every time the latter goes to the bathroom. They have set up a twice-a-month fucking schedule, but sometimes he’s so tired from work he asks for a raincheck. He doesn’t know this, but she used to be a heroin addict from ages twenty-four to twenty-eight. One time when high she tattooed a dot on her arm never to miss her vein again. She misses her cat Dottie but is scared to get her from her ex’s apartment. Has been kidnapped twice so far. Once as a kid, when her aunt took her from their house in Kansas all the way to LA as a distraction tactic for her runaway marriage. The second time when one of her drug-dealer boyfriend’s delivery guys stole some Mexican clients’ gun. “They were very polite, other than the gun to my head,” she says. “All ‘would you please’ and ‘thank you, Miss.’” Her belly button’s fake: a remnant from excess skin removal surgery from when she lost one hundred fifty pounds. Wants to have children because she “doesn’t want to die alone.” Doctors say pregnancy may be risky for her after the surgery, but she insists she carry the children herself. She’s getting cheekbone surgery this September.

I go to our local flea market on Sundays sometimes where all those butterflies stuck in amber are stacked on rows upon rows of infinity-sign bracelets, someone’s grandmother’s rings, and flamboyant, tasteless scarfs. Whenever I go into a woman’s room, I look for her altar of beauty

products and letters in hearts scribbled in unfinished diaries. Since K. and I decided we're better off living life as men, we can't stop telling about what we no longer are. In the same way, I imagine, a sailor who swam hours and hours to get to land would tell the story in some pub that night.



Belinda Subraman, *Blooming Yucca*,  
unknown, unknown.

# *The Potato Eaters*

by Kassandra Montag

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*—on the painting by Van Gogh*

And so it is, potatoes and coffee,  
dim light of the lantern,  
pouring of the drink,  
holding of the cup.

They are arranged in their own order.  
Beyond their hut the old canal flows by,  
rich in its elegance, in its green sophistication,  
outliving us all.

Not a spirit, but an older  
kind of body, its mind  
a corporeal pleasure, lovely as a lady  
reclining on a chaise lounge.

The potato eaters' faces are not  
yellow ochre, burnt sienna, raw umber.  
With those hands they have tilled the field,  
swept the floors, forked the hay.

And so it is, dust unto dust,  
and they remain, faces,  
bodies in the darkness, ghosts  
quiet as reverent children.

*lostboyhood*  
by Ellen Huang

---

because “lost girls” took power from us  
but “lost boys” we could say with pride.

because we crouched in the shadows,  
imagined food, shared vision, and ate  
dripping mangoes to the fill.

because we skedaddled past the murals,  
crept by automatic lights as if they were  
the eyes of giants,  
& the instant the lights clicked awake  
we’d take off flying through church halls  
as our bridge of shadows suddenly  
gave way. we kept happy thoughts  
just in case we’d fall.

because we howled at the moon,  
fenced with pool noodles,  
fought the coming growing-up  
with all our happy thoughts  
& singing & pranks & rowdiness.

because i built my life on forts and swings  
& a playground empire  
& a crumbling neverland  
& eventually you, too,  
told me to grow up.

because everyone else was a teenager  
and i, the eldest, still didn't get what good  
this dark passage could possibly offer.

because my happy thoughts are tainted  
& i miss when you believed  
but dare i say it, i'm happy still.



*"Real knowledge is to know  
the extent of one's ignorance."*

*Confucious*

R. A. Erber, *Puppet in a Shadow Play*,  
magic marker on printer paper, 2009.



# *At the Crossroads*

by Agnes Vojta

---

Rest on the rocks,  
feel their reassuring solidity,

take a deep breath to still  
the panic that rises like bile,

recite the litany  
against fear

and imagine  
Sisyphus happy.

# *Thanatopsis in Mind*

by Teresa McLamb Blackmon

---

—*for Cindy*

So wait, in this persistent vegetative state,  
lying there, mouth clinched pouty like a child,  
holding what your fingers fit,  
knuckles stretched in a purgatorial grip,  
eyes following nothing but sound.  
Wait, while doctors and nurses enter,  
feed you through a tube in a polka-dot room,  
desperate black, white, colorless believing,  
a place for bad bets and losers.

Wait with family-gathered photographs  
left standing guard, Kodachromatic sentinels  
pursuing your blue-eyed glance,  
sent to fetch you back  
from the no place you've been.

Wait, while visitors disturb your  
wrap of stillness, mumbling prayers  
like conversation heard through thin walls  
as if there is someone listening  
on the other side of silent.

Wait with your *Southern Living* magazines,  
hydrangea pages, secret pound cake recipes,  
your Springsteen music  
haunting what hope cannot tune in;  
keep time with swollen toes.  
Wait until that caravan of saints parades by,  
sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust;  
fall in place, match them step for step—  
march until you hear their beat and  
recognize the melody we do not hear.



Noah Page, *Beauty*,  
digital photograph, 2019.



Noah Page, *Thinness*,  
digital photograph, 2019.

*The Newsroom*  
by Elizabeth Jorgensen

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We called it “The Newsroom”—Grandma’s basement stacked with relics  
from the depression, Kennedy’s election, Watergate.

When her sight failed,  
we emptied it out. Then, her editorial began—hoarding her words.

# *Your Father's Measuring Tape*

by John Delaney

---

Silver and square, a relic in your palm.  
It was the one he trusted, you said,  
to size planks for the skiff he was building  
in the driveway, or, later,  
for the kitchen cabinets your mother  
had pleaded about for so many years.  
It always came down to an inch,  
or, more likely, a quarter inch  
or five-sixteenths. Decisions always do.  
“Measure twice, cut once” was the fail-safe rule.  
And when he shook my hand for the first time,  
and looked me quickly over  
with a carpenter's query,  
I had to wonder  
if any future husband measures up.

Now you use the marked metal tape  
when you're shopping for curtains  
or have to know if a table will fit  
where it's needed. You carry it in your purse,  
among glasses and keys,  
the occasional piece of hard candy.  
You want to keep it close, handy.



Shannon Elizabeth Gardner, *Woebegone*,  
watercolor and ink on paper, 2019.



# *Cat-Lurching*

by Marisa L. Manuel

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If lab rats ran the labyrinth of reality sidestepping the cheese and the mirrors, reward-based testing—if these rats escaped to the world outside, opened their eyes to sewers, starvation, murder, cat-lurching—when would lab rats return to their homes return home to dissection and more tests    god, always more tests    or would lab rats find their cat world commendable, their world full of newness no needles no lab—then, what would they think when some boy with no parents no home no parents at home or two parents or one—but no sense of justice or *too much* taste for justice or strict black-and-white coding or no coding at all—what would rats think when he pulls off their tails or ties them together calls himself king and do rats even think, and *have we ever asked them*—have we asked one another in our labs, in our homes—and isn't it fate, those born for dissection, those born to be analyzed, bred to be cut—and isn't it funny, cats think the same way! as they tooth-and-nail Fate, fleeing lab rats,

Run.

# Close Quarters

by Laura Lee Washburn

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*TranzCoastal Train, Picton to Kaikoura, NZ*

At home, we make up  
rules for movement.  
If you bump me again,  
not anger but a kiss. Our kitchen  
is small for two cooks,  
though I prefer to think  
of you as *sous chef*. In bed,  
a guest room double,  
your elbow grates  
into my back. Traveling  
or at the movies,  
it's unclear to whom the armrest  
should belong. I'm not angry  
exactly, but in the night  
I've thought, *chop it*. Elbows,  
like mesquite, aren't easy  
to remove. Cut one down  
and it gets angry, grows up  
a dozen or more, long,  
longer-thorned replacements.  
On this island's coastline  
boulders jut up like elbows,  
no more than one or two

fur seals share  
each jutting stone. I stretch,  
raise my arms over  
my head, yawn, pleased  
by view and novelty; you're quick,  
bracing your arm  
on the rest between us,  
smiling as you turn your gaze  
just west toward your own  
smug reflection, the long line  
of mountains broken up from land  
it's hard to believe was ever flat.



Carlo D'Anselmi, *Let's Go Home*,  
ink and colored pencil on paper, 2019.

## *Untitled 3*

by Geselle Dominguez

---

My anger is the stranger I'm scared to know but always see.  
She's invited to the table but doesn't speak.  
Doesn't eat.  
They say if you let her speak, the walls will shake and the house  
will come crashing down,  
crushing everyone around me.  
So I cut out her tongue.  
My anger is mute.  
Her stare is like stone.  
She's learned to sign to sad.  
Sad takes up space for the two of them at the dinner table,  
double the helpings, nice and full.  
He's not scared to make his presence known.  
One look from her and sad translates her unbearable quiet to  
a blue void.  
Anger and sad have learned to come paired now.  
When sad speaks, I know the words were filtered from their  
red hues.  
But the longer they chat, the more they change.  
Sad has started to lose his appetite.  
He says the food is cold and the tea has become bitter, like it's  
steeped in its leaves for too long,  
and hasn't begun to let go.

# *The Mummies of Guanajuato*

by Michael Gessner

---

The oncologist, well groomed, in a crisp  
white jacket, pointed at the MRI contrast—  
“This, *this* is not one of the good cancers.  
If left untreated it will lead to a bad death,”  
checked his watch, tapped nervously on  
the bedside table, stood up to leave  
and said, “I want you to think about that.”

He failed to add the “gold standard” treatment  
would create other radiogenic cancers, and after  
a few years of poor health and grief,  
would have the same result.  
Was there ever a good death? I wanted  
to ask, but he had left the room.

Still, I thought about it, about the bad death,  
and my thinking brought me to the mummies  
of Guanajuato. Here were bad deaths on display,  
an entire museum of them left over  
from a cholera epidemic, kept intact  
by unique climatological factors.

Stiff in their hard, stretched, clay-like skin,  
every mouth was the same, open wide, an oval,  
as if in the dentist's chair, or from  
an unseen, eternally fixed shock,  
or reaching for a perfectly pitched aria,  
like a soprano in "Queen of the Night."

Once they became so dehydrated  
their blood surfaced to the skin,  
the villagers dubbed them  
victims of "the blue death."

Guanajuato is a collage of colors,  
tiers of orange and red homes,  
purple shops, painted churches,  
gray streets and blue curbs, an enclave  
rich in cultural history, sought  
by artists and composers.

I'm thinking about moving there,  
wandering among them, the artists,  
a ghost chorus of silent sopranos,  
and the young couple on a bridge  
kissing with their mouths open,  
inhaling each other's breathing  
so their kiss will last and last.



Edward Lee, *Broken Handle*,  
photograph, 2018.



# *A guide to making your body yours again*

by M. P. Armstrong

---

step one: start in the winter.

drown yourself in wool until you are bloated with the knit  
and purl.

bury yourself in layers until it is forced into hibernation.  
if it cannot see you, it cannot hurt you.

step two: invest in protection.

allow leather and jean jackets, cardigans and blazers, to  
cocoon you.

resist the temptation to break free in the blossoming heat.  
remember, you are not a butterfly.

step three: hold your breath.

stay inside and throw blankets over your mirrors, if you need to.  
hell, smash the mirrors. possession is not even one-tenth of  
our law.

do not be tempted to break it.

step four: roll up your sleeves.

the work will now begin again. the cuffs of your flannel are your  
first task.

suffocate your doubt in the chilled air; leach its strength away  
and bury it

deep within your beating heart.



Noah Page, *Upwards*,  
digital photograph, 2019.