

THIMBLE LITERARY MAGAZINE

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Thimble Literary Magazine

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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 The author's biography should be included in the body of the email and the submission as a single attachment.

Cover art
Amanda Poulin, *Welcome*,
photograph, 2017.

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Xiao Lin Chen, *I Read You*,
ink and digital, 2019.

Editor's Note

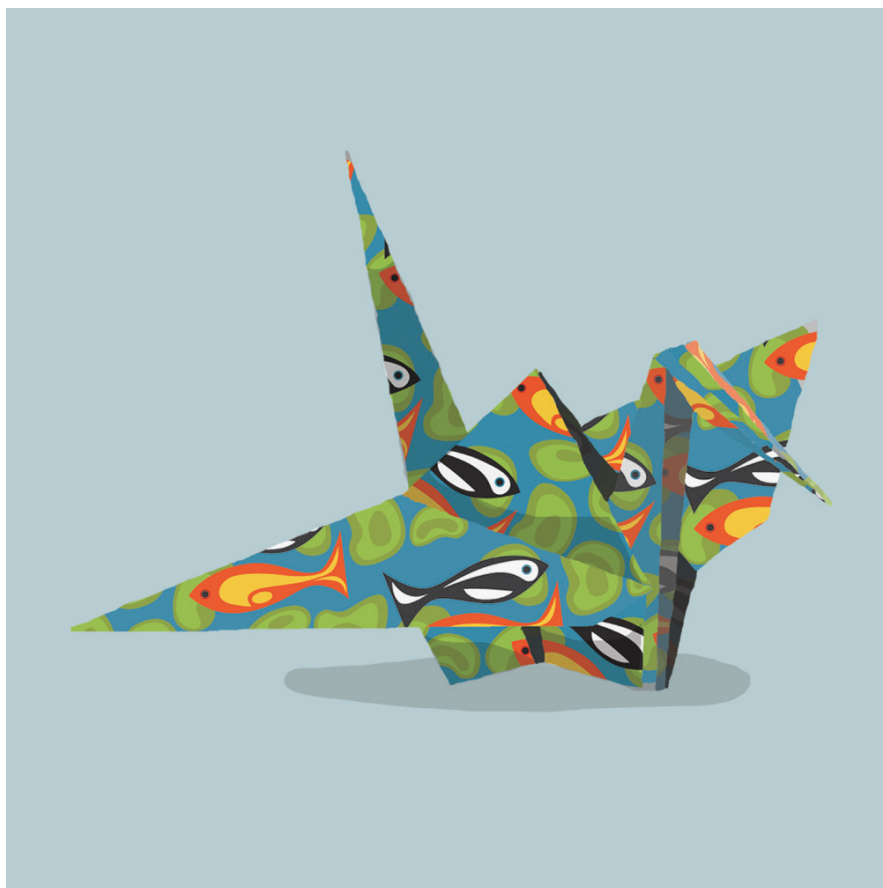
During a weekend in mid-April, I learned what it means to build. Another way to put this is, I got married. The idea was an outdoor wedding. Texas weather being unpredictable, however, it was necessary to make contingency plans. So my friends and I made porches out of old plant trellises, dining rooms out of the garage, and a gazebo from a tent. It rained so hard during the ceremony, we got married in the living room, but afterward had the reception in the variety of rickety shelters we made.

What a lot of work that was. How unaesthetic the yards of tarp were. How pockmarked my backyard is from the stakes. But everything paid off—even if it was only after the main event. What we did was enough.

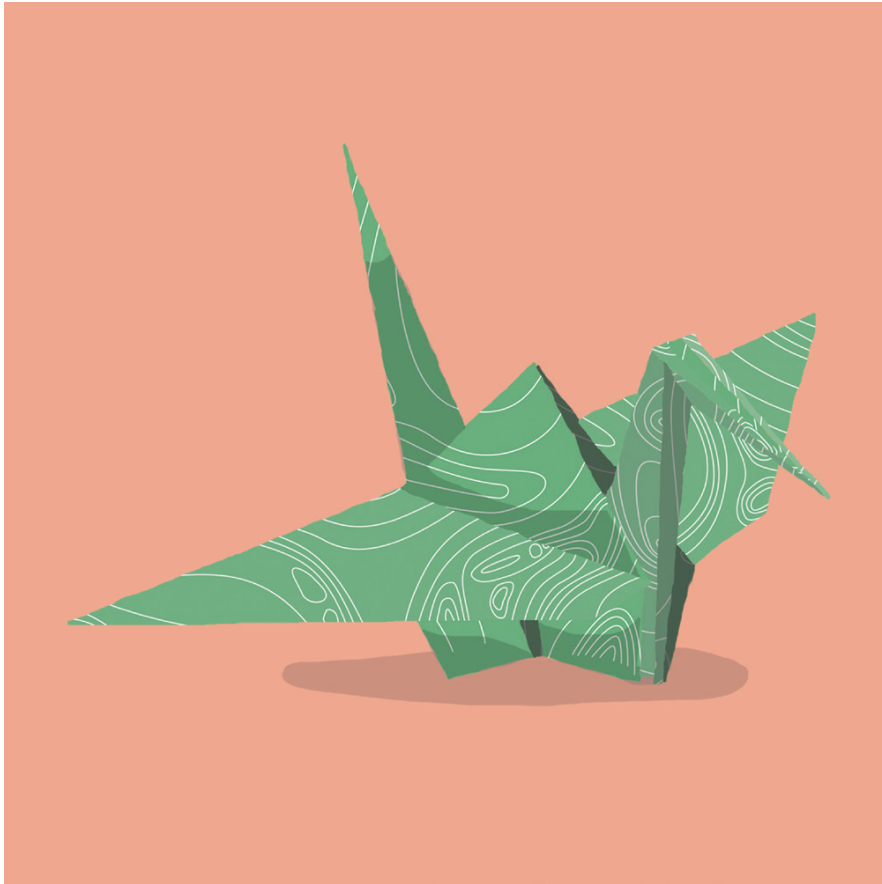
This is a special issue of *Thimble*, my friends, being our one-year anniversary. The idea was, well, we didn't have any ideas at all when we started. But "Thimble" sounded like a lovely word, so we built our journal around the idea of words being shelter. That words can be messy and look unbeautiful. But they can be enough, at least, for a little while, even if some rain gets in anyways.

The garage is open, and there're still a few beers. Phil is letting me bum smokes, because I've run out again.

NADIA ARIOLI (WOLNISTY)



Nick Jared, *Crane 1*,
digital drawing, 2019.



Nick Jared, *Crane 2*,
digital drawing, 2019.

One of the First Places

by Matt Mason

When both your parents were dead,
you took your wife and daughters to Disneyland.

Because it made sense.
There's a family trip
when you were four
that you remember—

not so well
with your head, it's
one of the things
inside you,
old sparks
still warm
in your wires.

You don't pretend to know what is
reaction and what is
accident when such normal
but extraordinary things happen
and leave your life
as something you don't recognize.
You miss them.
You're looking for them.

This is one of the first places
you remember seeing them.
Maybe
something's still there.

Misuko

by Shari Lawrence Pfleeger

I.

Having feared water all her life,
my mother now floats
between life and death.
Japanese Buddhists embrace Misuko:
humanity infusing a newborn
drop by drop
until the child is
whole
at seven.
My mother's oozing,
losing humanity
drop by drop,
mirroring our mortality.
She seems stuck,
dying more each day,
in my mind each day.
She becomes less herself.
I become more like her.
Strength, wisdom, tenacity:
gifts to me,
unappreciated until too late
to give thanks.
She knows that—has always known.
Now I know too.

II.

Familiar yet foreign,
like sounds in seashells,
her voice calm, comforting.
Though thumping clumps of soil
separate her world from mine,
her voice persists,
listening, advising,
shaping, smiling,
finally pleased.
No wave farewell
yet waves of feeling persist.
Water fears replaced
with her fearless fight for strength.
I remain at sea,
guided through the mists
with the rudder she left behind.

Argos

by Jude Luttrell

Noble hound, time-honored tracker of fleet-footed dear,
Now nestles piteously in a pile of warm mule muck.
Too old and tired to twitch your lousy, mangy back.
One eye sightless, draped by droopy lid,
You keep unwavering watch with the other,
Scanning passersby through a single milky lens,
Mustering a minute's strength to wag welcome
To the beggar who shares your history,
Long dead in a far country.

Ghost Ranch

by Nicole Zelniker

Mountains in New Mexico are half. The sun
is sweltering heat, sweat, relief; the shadows
are snow, shivering, pinching my skin.
To make it to the peak, you climb through both,

and red parts, clay, and parts
where you think you will slip, loose uneven
footing and hit trees and rocks tumbling down.
I climbed this mountain a couple of times.

Once, I hiked with four friends, the first
explorers in new territory: a less invasive
Christopher Columbus. We took pictures
at the top and basked in temporary glory.

Again, at night, when the red becomes grey in the
dark and slipping on snow isn't a joke anymore.
We peeled off gloves and scarves as we went,
desperate to shed the heaviness of excess.

Before I left, I climbed alone, touched the reds
for luck and browns because I had to.
On the way up I clutched at questionable branches,
the only thing keeping me from falling.



Shelley Bird, *Act One*,
3-D multi-media collage, 2018.

My Crows

by Yuan Changming

1.

Still, still hidden
Behind old shirts and pants
Like an inflated sock
Hung on a slanting coat hanger

With a prophecy stuck in its throat
Probably too dark or ominous
To yaw, even to breathe

No one knows when or how
It will fly out of the closet, and call

2.

Like billions of dark butterflies
Beating their wings
Against nightmares, rather
Like myriads of
Spirited coal flakes
Spread from the sky
Of another world
A heavy black snow
Falls, falling, fallen

Down towards the horizon
Of my mind, where a little crow
White as a lost patch
Of autumn fog
Is trying to fly, flapping
From bough to bough

Some Writer

by Katie McKy

Unlike my neighbors, who met E. B. White at the post office and general store, I only met him in his books and essays. I bought my house in Brooklin, Maine, too late to be his neighbor or even do anything other than drive past his old house, where the people who bought it stapled a plastic black and red “No trespassing KEEP OUT” sign to their front gate, forestalling any would-be pilgrims. My Mecca is closed.

I can and do, however, drive on to what locals call downtown Brooklin, which comprises a general store, townhall, school, two gift shops, and tidy library once beloved by Mrs. White. There’s also a cemetery where E. B. White, his wife, and his son reside today, all buried in the back. No front and center for the Whites. That’s the way E. B. liked it, for when he worked at his New Yorker office and saw someone coming he didn’t recognize, he’d skitter down the fire escape.

E. B. and his wife have identical slate tombstones. Slate is 2.5 to 4.0 on the Mohs hardness scale for minerals, closer to talc in hardness than to granite. This was the right choice, for E. B. was fond of the farm implements steadily decaying into soil in Brooklin’s mostly abandoned farm fields, as the soft slate will also do. His tombstone is inscribed “Elwyn Brooks White,” which one could miss because

- A. Who knew E. B. was Elwyn Brooks?
- B. The only things distinguishing it are the stones and shells pilgrims set on its arched top.

I could love him for the soft, humble stone alone, but before I ever saw it, I also loved him for the unblinking horrors in *Charlotte’s Web*,

where sweet Wilbur might be reduced to lard and bacon and pig's feet, barely saved by Charlotte, the too-soon-dead heroine who mummified flies alive. His book confirmed that life comes stuffed, like an apple in the Christmas pig's mouth, with horrors. J.K. Rowling knows this too, for while Hogwarts is a place of heaped feasts, just beyond the bright lights, are dark corners and hissing terrors where the adults aren't just oblivious to the mortal dangers: they put them there.

Death was right around the corner in my childhood too. In seventh grade, my classmate died of leukemia. She was in *the* quartet of pretty girls, and she simply stopped coming to school. As an adult, I assume she grew thinner and paler and weaker in her hospital bed, but I only knew what I overheard, which wasn't much, for I was beneath her, a mere bookworm. When our English teacher said, "Sherry passed," I hated the phrase. Of course, *passed* is a common euphemism, but it didn't convey that she would never, ever pass anything again, not seventh grade nor high school nor college.

The next year, Brady, an affable classmate with sun-streaked hair, was killed by lightning while sheltering under a tree. If the pretty teens weren't safe from cancer and Zeus's bolts, where did the rest of us stand? Not under a tree, for sure.

There's another cemetery nearby, Seaside Cemetery in Blue Hill. It's a jutting, humped point with hoary oaks and sugar maples, and it tells the same story that E. B. White and my junior high told. There are three large tombstones—the patriarch and his two wives, the first of whom died young, likely in childbirth—and then a line of tombstones decreasing in size, for if you died your first day, you only earned a nub of a rock. The children who died at three, five, and nine were given incrementally larger stones.

As I admire Elwyn Brooks White's soft and simple stone, I also admire Brooklin's restraint. E.B.'s name isn't on the sign for Brooklin. Rather, it reads, "WELCOME TO BROOKLIN BOATBUILDING CAPITAL OF THE WORLD," an overly generous nod to the wooden boatbuilders here. It does not profit from Mr. White, unlike Gettysburg, where you stand on a ghostly morning at the gate of the cemetery and see the Golden Arches marching through the fog. Then there's

General Pickett's Buffet, which David from Zama, Japan, describes as "a lot of food for the price."

There's no Wilbur's Buffet or any such thing in Brooklin or its neighbor, Blue Hill. Wilbur remains, in a way, for the Zuckermans of *Charlotte's Web* still bring a young, scrubbed pig—always named Wilbur—to the Blue Hill Fair every August. But no kids squeal to see young Wilbur, and I fear a succession of the Zuckermans' Wilburs squeal with no Charlottes to save them. But anyone who addressed death as unblinkingly as E. B. White in *Charlotte's Web* knows how it goes. If Brooklin ever decides to note E. B., I hope they settle for "Some Writer" on the sign.



Inga Buccella, *Arctic Tern*,
marker, pen, and ink, 2019.

What Could Be More Necessary Than Poetry or the Sea?

by Lin Nelson Benedek

My husband recites long-out-of-favor Longfellow and I know
why I'm here.
Longfellow brought him to words and words brought him to me.
Sandpipers scuttle shoreline, tracks in wet sand.

The sea awoke at midnight from its sleep ...

And round the pebbly beaches far and wide ...

I never thought it was coming for me, this violent, beautiful sea.

"By which magic does the earth breathe?" the professor asks.

"Define the forces of nature, including the fifth we call
quintessence."

Last night we sat out with a crescent moon and a smattering of stars.
I almost fell asleep to the rhythmic crashing and low hollow sounds, salt
spray in my nostrils and on the arms of the wooden chair and on the
cushions. I'm not going to pretend. Most of my adventures take place in
my imagination; more ventures inner than outer. I probably shouldn't be
telling you this: Home is my muse.

In the morning dolphins leap in the surf close in.
I'm drawn here by the light,
bright with no seeing.

Mr. Boynton gave us each a poem to memorize.
"Abou Ben Adhem" was mine.
Mr. Boynton taught us from a chaise in the front of the room after
his heart attack.

"Name five coastal towns. Name the seven seas, the seven winds."

Once the forces of nature were one.

We all die sometime.

My first epiphany, at ten: My family, asleep. I'm sitting on a balcony on a
cliff looking out over the sea. At dawn. Under the spell of sea-surrender.
Feeling greater and smaller than I ever have. All of it and none of it are
me. All of it and none of it are mine.

We know nothing and we know everything.

The Breaker

by Haley Stone

I am the Breaker
I break things, it's what I do best
My mother bore me to bore you to tears
Years of an unsuccessful marriage made me
Their baby savior they could never savor because
All I do is break things
Years passed, the cribs and the bibs,
I stand in our apartment hallway
The carpet is pink, the lighting dim
And the hole in the wall fresh
My flesh is raised, a sign of what's passed
A hitch in my breath lets me know i'm still breathing
Beating loud in my chest my heart beat unsynchronized
With the muffled mild moans coming from the kitchen
The leather of my jacket cuts cold against me
Like his words, what he said to her
I hear her pleading with me to save her
But I am a breaker
So I ball up a fist and do what I do best
I cannot save her but I'll never let him break her
His jaw catches my fist, the wall his I duck and tuck
And roll out with luck he's gone and gone for good
My hand traces the hole where he broke it—he is a breaker
I move to my mother a heap slumped on the kitchen table
All sloppy and shaken she looks at me with these eyes

Tear filled, fear filled eyes
She's looking at me for any part of her
But I cannot fix her
I have the eyes of my father, and he, we are breakers

Queen Anne's Lace

by Virginia Boudreau

a congealed filigree
a monochrome mandala
all sage and silken crumbles
shivering on the roadside

a confused candlewick
a snail trail sonogram, its
embroidered ecru edges
ebbing in the breeze

swaying shreds sashaying
all the birds above
tumbling in the trees
black towels in a dryer and

the traffic rushing past,
bees flying drunk, droning,
exuberant through the green sun
slicked walls of a leaning meadow.



Juliette Sebock, *Austen Solace*,
photograph, 2017.

How to Make Orange Juice

by Pia Donovan

I open my eyes and peer into the darkness, I am confused. I hear soft noises outside my bedroom. I can hear Mom and Dad talking anxiously in hushed tones. I slowly get up; I want to leave my room, but I'm not sure I want to know what is happening. It all seems strange and unfamiliar, the darkness, the tense talking. I have to know, so I take tiny steps towards the door of my room. Slowly I twist the knob, I don't want to make any sound. I need to see what is happening before I am seen. I am afraid of what it might be, and I want to be sure that I can make a quick getaway if I need to.

I am good at the getaway; I often have to run to avoid Mom. Sometimes she is scary, and I know that running is the best way to stay safe. If I can be unseen, get out of the way, and avoid eye contact, I will be OK. I learned this from Dad, who stays in the back bedroom doing paperwork a lot; he taught me the word *getaway*; he said it means to run. Dad likes alone time; I do too. People think there is something wrong with me because I like to be alone. All the grown-ups say things like "you look like you're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders." I don't think my shoulders are that strong, and I don't know what they mean. Sometimes they laugh after they say these kinds of weird things to me. I think they are making fun of me.

I am taking very, very slow and careful steps down the hallway. It is so dark and so long. I am still just outside my bedroom door, but I can see the cut-out part of the wall that you have to walk into to get to my parents' bedroom. It seems very far away. Slowly I get there, the door is open, I stop to listen for the voices. They aren't coming from the bedroom. I wish

they were; I can hide really well just outside the doorway. I have to keep going though I am getting more nervous. If I get caught or scare my mom she will be so mad. Not the yelling kind, probably more the kind where she doesn't like me. That is the worst kind. I know what *annoyed* means. It means go away; sometimes she even says it to me.

This is why I like to be alone in my room with my things. It's my own place, and I feel safe there. I am very nervous about losing my room. I know it won't be just my room really soon. My parents told me they are having a baby. I will get a brother or sister, and the baby will be put in my room. I don't think I like that. I feel like maybe Mom got annoyed with me so much it made her get "fed up." I really don't know what *fed up* is, but I think you say it about people you don't like. I guess Mom decided to have another baby because I wasn't a good one. Maybe it's because I don't do what she wants. It's true, I don't. I want to make her happy, I want her to like me, but I don't know what to do. So I usually just play by myself and try not to make too much trouble.

I am between the bathroom door and the door to the linen closet now. I think an hour has passed; this is the longest hallway ever even though our house is small. We only have two bedrooms, so that's why I have to share. I'm mad about this, but I don't tell Mom, because she would say that I am "ungrateful" or "spoiled." Those aren't good things; I have to make sure to not be those things otherwise I get the annoyed face.

I cross in front of the linen closet door. I love the linen closet. On the third shelf up, there is a small bin that Mom keeps fancy makeup in. Not the kind she uses every day but special stuff she never uses. There is this silver box that has letters on it. Not written on it but cut into the top. I love the round C and the little q the most. When I am alone I get the little kitchen stool and bring it to the closet so I can look into the bin; I always take the silver box out first. Then I trace the letters on it. At first I didn't know it was a box; I thought it was a silver rectangle. One time it was a little bit open on one side, and I could slide the top in one direction and see what was inside. It was so beautiful. It was a white-and-silver color that shimmered, and when you touched it with your finger some of it stayed on your fingertip. It was dusty and soft and reminded me of the paint on the eyes of the angel we put on the Christmas tree every year.

Now when I go into the bin I open the box right up, put some of the dust on my finger, close my eyes, and rub some on my eyelids so I can look like the Christmas tree angel.

I am tucked into the tight little space between the linen closet and the grandfather clock now. I really hope it doesn't bong while I stand here. It is so loud, and I always jump. I can hear the voices better here though. I guess Mom and Dad are in the kitchen. There is light peeking through from the kitchen, but the door, that is really not a door, is half-way closed. I like the door; it looks like a giant piece of paper that was folded into zigzags. When you push it to one side all the zigzags close together, and the door gets small. If you pull the door, all the zigzags unfold, and there is a little magnet on the other side that sticks it open.

I can see more now; it's not as dark, because the kitchen light is on, and some of the light is coming into the living room. I look deep into the darkness and try to crane my neck towards the half-open door of the kitchen. I need to find out where my parents are. Something moves on the couch, I get scared, and a little squeak comes out of my mouth. I can now see a giant, long, and lumpy thing on the couch. It's making strange noises. I think maybe it's Grandma, who lives upstairs, and something happened to her. Then I remember that Mom is having that baby soon. I feel so nervous. What if it's her on the couch? What if she isn't feeling good? I have to find Dad and tell him. Maybe they were talking and then she got sick.

The noises on the couch get louder. I forget I am hiding and burst into the kitchen; Dad is there. His hair is messy; he has daytime pants on and a pajama shirt. He's doing something on the counter with the plaid Thermos, a spoon, and a can of frozen orange juice. He looks mad and scared at the same time. Then he throws his hands up and calls to my mom, "Elaine, how the hell am I supposed to get this orange juice in a Thermos for her! It's frozen!" My mom yells, "You make it and put it in, it's easy! You have to hurry up this baby is coming!" She sounds mad and scared too.

I run into the living room and try to sit as gently as possible next to my mother. "Are you OK, Mommy? I'm scared, what is happening? You and Daddy are angry." Mom is breathing funny; it seems like it's hard for her to get the air in and out. She seems extra big in the dark; her belly

looks like a mountain sitting on her. She probably can't breathe because of the baby mountain. Then I realize what she said to my dad, and I panic. My mom is in pain; what if something happens to her? Why isn't Dad in here? What if the baby comes out and hurts my mom or something happens to it? What if Mom can't tell Dad how to get the baby out? She has to tell him a lot of things; he can't do things without help just like me.

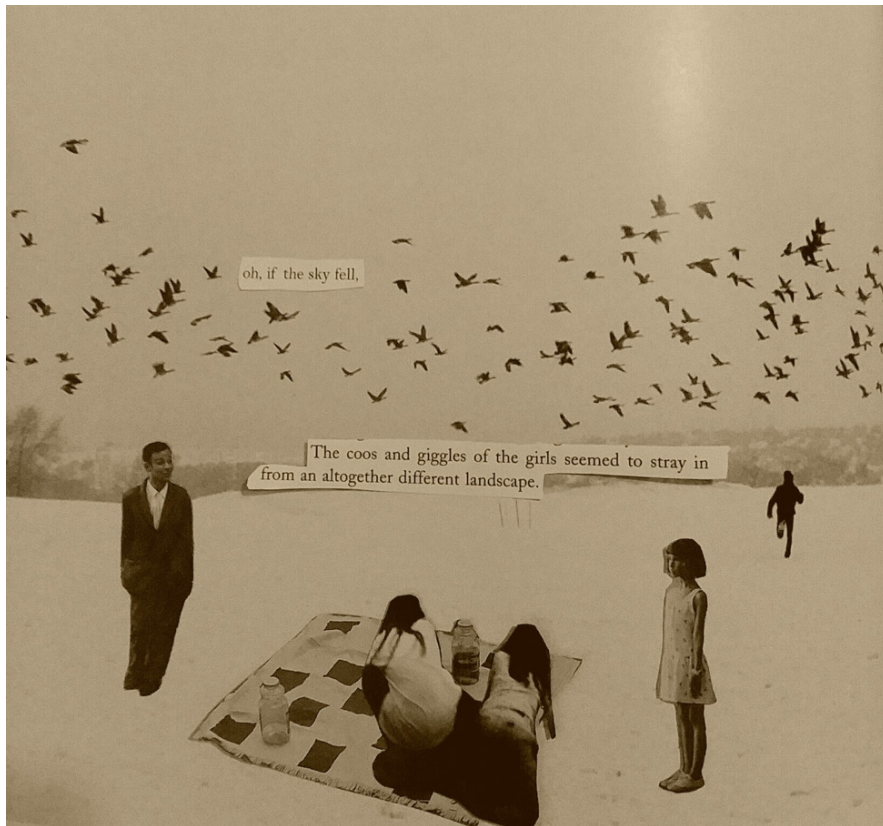
"Mommy?" I say again. "Yes, Honey, it's OK; the baby is coming. But don't worry, we are very close to the hospital. Daddy is just making you some juice so you don't get thirsty, and then we will go." "It's OK," I say. "I don't need juice; we can go before you get more pain. I will go and check on Dad." Sometimes I try to help Mom by bringing instructions to help Dad or checking on him for her. She likes when I do this, and she is being so nice to me, so I want to be nice back.

I run into the kitchen and ask my dad if he needs help. He is holding the frozen orange juice container over the thermos hole while he digs the frozen orange juice out with the skinny part of the wooden spoon. I remember Grandma; I guess she is still asleep upstairs. I ask Dad if I should go get her so she can help, but he says it's OK, she should sleep. I run back and check on Mom. She pats my hand and tells me it will be OK, so I run back and check on Dad. I think Mom is doing better than Dad. The frozen orange juice is running down his hand to his elbow, and it's all over the counter and down the Thermos. "Daddy, I really don't want orange juice; let's get Mommy in the car." He tries to clean himself up and throws a bunch of stuff into the sink. He gets out the spray bottle and sprays the counter, grabs a paper towel, and starts wiping the counter down, making big circles with his hand. Suddenly Mom shouts, "Now, Ralph, right now!"

We both run into the living room. I realize there is a big bag on the floor next to the couch. I try to carry it towards the basement door, but I have to drag it. We have to go down all the steps and go through the basement to the garage to get in the car. Mom is giant; I don't think she can fit in the car. This is going to be hard, I remember how scared I am feeling, and now I feel worse. Dad is trying to get Mom off the couch; it is hard for him. Mom is much bigger than him because of the baby mountain. I think she is taller too. Maybe the baby makes her taller; maybe after the baby comes out she won't be as tall.

Everything seems very slow. We are all walking so slow, but I think we should run because Mom said “right now.” That usually means go fast. I tell my dad to hurry, but he doesn’t say anything.

I look at them walking slowly together; I love them so much. I can tell how much they love me, because even though the baby is coming, they wanted me to have orange juice. I want to make everything stop so I can just sit on the couch in between them and feel safe and tell them I love them over and over. When the baby comes they won’t have time for me, because the baby will need a lot of help, so I have to make every minute as slow as I can, like I did in the hallway. That way I will have more time with them before they say goodbye.



James Diaz, *Every day is a good day in papa's house*
(*antler pie dreams and movie screens*),
collage, 2019.



James Diaz, *Momma, is you what they say you is, a desert with no door? (how time moves in the out-zone)*, collage, 2019.

The Orthodontists

by Katie Berger

Timothy the moon behind him all the time
made the meaning of the syringe factory
and steel mill himself because our teachers
wouldn't do it. Midnight mythology
of orange streetlights a highway
turned to ice in an hour the radio
weatherman said nothing. Medicine and metal
the gods know the truce no more sticky cotton
candy carnivals no more pay phones
that ring all day at the mouths of malls.

The cops met for coffee at the booths inside
the supermarket until corporate ripped it out
the blank spot a spork wrapper snow
the wood panel walls the last standoff
in an Easter coloring contest the sun
fades the winners but keeps them warm.

The orthodontists moved into all the quiet
spaces. One shares its building
with a gas station the parking lot a sparkle
of motor oil. They fixed my overbite the gap
in Timothy's incisors even though our teeth
were both white as Styrofoam cups to begin with.

Beeches—48/4

by B. Anne Adriaens

Down below a view of trees,
through a strip of glass high up,
you can breathe
sawdust, teak oil and white spirit,
smell the whetstone in its cradle.
The tools—sharp, abrasive—
pinned against their own shadow
on a soft wooden board
come with due warning
along with the offcuts,
the improvised toys.

Repeatedly, you ask to enter
the mausoleum of spiders
mummified in candyfloss webs.
If the mood is right, he moves the chipwood panels
along the back wall, holds aloft a lantern.

Yellow light bobbing through a maze
shines upon the dereliction upholding the house.
Hidden entrails of cinder blocks and bricks
bleed stalactites of concrete onto sand and grit.
And while your hair tickles the sagging stone belly,
you fancy yourself an explorer of underworlds.



Inga Buccella, *Bravery*,
marker, pen, and ink, 2019.

A Shadow Blankets the Bronx

by Daniel Wolfe

Nineteen thirty-seven was not a hopeful year, but we didn't know it. Seven-year-olds weren't expected to know it. Neighbors shared two-cent papers, hot water visited us occasionally, and heat rose from the basement when Mom's hammer-blasting blows onto our radiator roused the janitor from his alcoholic stupor.

In the Bronx, unemployed fathers met in Crotona Park to extol the virtues of socialism. It appealed to workingmen in the garment industry who considered themselves fortunate to be employed five months a year.

By utilizing rolled-up newspapers, broomsticks, milk boxes, tin cans, and rubber balls, competitive games occupied us for hours.

The ground rules were being settled for a punchball game between two neighborhood rivals, the Minford Place Marauders and the Seabury Place Pawnees. To avoid the inevitable argument, we gathered in a cluster around a sewer lid in the middle of the street.

"If you catch the ball off the car without a bounce, you're out, and don't try to punch the ball when you're halfway to first base. You have to punch the ball at the sewer lid, which is home plate, and then run to first base. That's how the big guys play it."

"If the ball goes in Schmidt's cellar, you're out and you have to—"

"Wow! Look at that! Look up there!"

A burst of silence erupted as we stood with our mouths agape. The bright, sunny sky was eclipsed by the sinister appearance of this huge, oval object. It became the focus of our attention, an unexpected intruder

on an ongoing neighborhood rivalry. We were stunned. The clear, sunlit afternoon vanished. Seabury Place was blanketed by a giant dark shadow. The airship hovered above us like a marionette suspended by strings. Why wasn't it speeding like the airplanes that passed by every day?

"Wha' ... ? What is that thing?" cried Arty as he moved closer to Donny.

"Get off" a me, Dummy. How should I know?"

"I don't like this. Let's get out'a here," shouted Bernie.

We saw the *Hindenburg* in newsreels and in newspapers, but who expected it to hang over Seabury Place? On its rudder, a twisted black swastika in a white circular field encased in a red square assured us it was the *Hindenburg*. Why was it flying at such a low altitude? Could it have come all the way from Germany? If there was a swastika on its rudder, were there Nazis inside? What will they do to us after they land? Where was it going to land? The punchball game had lost its moment. Without a word, the Marauders gathered and quietly returned to the security of their turf, Minford Place.

We retired to our headquarters, our meeting place, our dugout for ball games: a parked car's running board. For security, we squeezed more closely to one another than usual. Shoulders pressed against shoulders, trembling knees coupled with knees.

Arty, shaking with fright sputtered, "I'm going upstairs."

Bernie, who was just as anxious as Arty, put on an air of bravado. "Oh, scaredy-cat is going upstairs to his mommy."

With that, Bernie said he was going upstairs to ask his mother if she knew anything about the *Hindenburg*.

"How would she know?" asked Donny. "You don't buy a newspaper."

"I don't buy one either," I replied. "Mr. Suslow gives it to my father after he's through with it."

"Oh yeah. I'll bet he doesn't know that the *Hindenburg* flew over Seabury Place today."

"When he comes home, I'll ask him."

The running board session was adjourned. Rapidly beating hearts and wobbly legs stumbled for home. I opened the door to my apartment. Ma was filling a chicken-neck skin to make *heldzel* (stuffed derma).

“Ma, did you see the scary zeppelin that flew over Seabury Place this afternoon?”

“How can I see anything when our kitchen window only shows me Mrs. Koletsky’s kitchen? Wait until Pa comes home.”

Pa soon dragged himself into our apartment. I ran to tell him about the *Hindenburg*. He became agitated.

“What? A swastika?” he said. “Nazis? How could it be? The United States doesn’t want those bastards here.”

Pa was well aware of the German threat throughout Europe. A large part of our family was living in a tiny *shtetl* in Lithuania. He was about to turn on the radio when my uncle came home from work. He had been a freeloading boarder, laundry included, since he attended my parents’ wedding.

“Izzy, did you see the *Hindenburg* today?” asked Pa.

“What Hindenburg? Wasn’t he a German general? What was he doing here in the Bronx?”

“Yes,” Pa said sarcastically. “He came here to draft you for the German army.”

At 8:00 p.m. our family gathered around our small, gothic Emerson table radio to listen to the news. It was Thursday, May 6, 1937. An excited newscaster reported that the *Hindenburg* drifted slowly over New York City heading for Lakehurst, New Jersey. At 7:45 p.m., upon approaching its mooring at Lakehurst it exploded, killing thirty-five of the ninety-seven people aboard. A member of the ground crew was also killed.

Rumors as to the cause of this disaster persist to this day. Indisputable evidence is still lacking. On September 1, 1939, without the *Hindenburg*, Germany invaded Poland and World War II was underway.



Alan Gann, *Green Heron Reflecting*,
photograph, 2016.

My Therapist

by Allison DeRose

After Scott Hightower's "My Father"

is a lukewarm coffee spill.
My therapist is the graphite tip dulled.
My therapist is the chewed eraser.

My therapist is a junkyard,
an eroding opinion, rosed cheeks,
a half-sealed envelope, a saturated ice cream cone.

My therapist is kindling and unfed
fire. My therapist wears overalls.
He wears sparse words.

My therapist owns a chess board missing
a knight. My therapist owns interrupting
run-on sentences. He told

me yesterday to breathe. My therapist
is a painting, a paint-by-number,
a paintbrush, a paintball, a painter

with a stained hand. He admires forehead
wrinkles. He admires unsharpened questions.
He collects snow globes. My therapist is

a NASCAR fan. Told me to learn how to
depreciate Mondays. My therapist is cold turkey,
unclean breaking. My therapist is a polished

penny, tail-side sideways. He enjoys eating
tiramisu. He enjoys people-watching people.
My therapist is Panopticon.

He is soft lines, enunciated. My therapist enjoys large
amounts of small talk. He enjoys still frames. Because of him, I don't
double-check, triple-check, checkmate.

Because of him, I uncloze my
eyes. Because of him, I don't see purpose
in duct-taped umbrellas. Because of my therapist,

I use the bench press spotter-less.
Because of my therapist, I dislike journaling.
Because of my therapist, I draw hearts on both sleeves.

POND

by John L. Stanizzi

12.10.18
6:58 a.m.
20 degrees

Petulant nuthatch cranks at me to fill the feeders.
Open water yesterday is frozen today, and yesterday's ice is
noticeably thicker this morning. The hoarfrost landscape is
dull, but the sun has just risen, and soon the dew will
glint and then vanish.

12.12.18
12:28 p.m.
28 degrees

Papyral leaves encased in this new ice
over which I stand with caution,
numbly recalling days when a
dropped puck meant slash, clatter, grunt, dusk.

12.16.18
7:32 a.m.
44 degrees

☞ *Forecast calls for all-day rain*

Perhaps yesterday's hatch was blue winged olives, though I doubt it.
Olives seem too big; these were tiny. And gone today,
nymphs, nearly invisible, making the wren pulling at the sumac
drupes seem gargantuan, the thick slush of the pond planetary.

12.19.18
11:31 a.m.
32 degrees

☞ Time let me play and be
 Golden in the mercy of his means,
 And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves
 Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,
 And the sabbath rang slowly
 In the pebbles of the holy streams.

—DYLAN THOMAS, "FERN HILL"

Perfectly calm day, brilliant sun in a 9/11 sky.
Oh, I know it's only Wednesday, but today is the day I
named *The Day I Understood the Sabbath Ringing Slowly*,
deifying the pebbles of the holy streams, the pond settling
with one loud crack.

plane has an element of blank

by Cordelia M. Hanemann

a line is the trajectory between two points
black without innocence or intent
measuring the span beginning and end
dividing the world into manageable halves

this feeling predatory raw insists
on its place loudandlarge it sucks up all
the air no ingenuous black mark
connecting unseen points across the blank page
it thickens precariously consuming the negative
space that gives it shape its urgency
defies physics devours the white page
anomie no two points can contain
this live thing panther in its sheath
of night asserts its persistent black



Alexandria Jared, *Heart-Shaped Motions*,
fridge drawing, 2019.

The Grey Town

by Ewa Mazierska

When Alex and I visit our summer apartment in Kinghorn, there's always something that doesn't work and isn't easy to fix. This time it was the hot water boiler, and the only two people in the area able to repair it were both unavailable. So, we decided to go to the swimming pool in Kirkcaldy, to swim and to use the showers. As the weather was good, we went there on foot; it was only a forty-minute walk, and besides, the whole point of going on holiday is to stay outdoors as much as possible.

We left in high spirits. Alex was even running and jumping up and down when we were passing the empty caravan park perched on the rocks north of Kinghorn. But when we were approaching Kirkcaldy, his mood had dropped. He said that it made little sense to walk for so long just to reach this town, as if a different destination might warrant the effort, but not there. I replied that our itinerary was agreed on the previous evening, but this only made him sulk more. I realised that I'd forgotten to pack shampoo, which meant that we had to stop on the way to the swimming pool to buy some. This made Alex even grumpier; he hated shopping, and in Kirkcaldy especially so. He followed me into Aldi in his unsettling walk, asking repeatedly "Where is it?" when I tried to find the shelf with cosmetics. There was no point to chastise him, because in a deeper sense his behaviour was rational. Kirkcaldy made me sulky too. I couldn't imagine a gloomier place. It greeted visitors with a row of grey high-rise blocks, ex-council flats. After that, there was a building site of what had been intended to be a collection of luxury apartments, as the sign announced. It was, however, abandoned by its constructors long before it could display any opulence. The building looked now like

a cross between a skeleton and a cripple; some of the gaps intended for windows were boarded up, others served as rubbish bins for passersby. In a warmer climate or a poorer place such a building might be occupied by homeless people, furnishing it with some human touch. In Kirkcaldy, however, the impression was that of a void. Next to the unfinished apartment block was a box-shaped building to which two signs were attached, "Pet Food" and "For Sale." It must have been for sale for ages, as I had no memory of there ever being a pet shop. Life for humans was wretched enough without bringing animals into the suffering. After this there was another ghost in the form of an old swimming pool, followed by the back of Mercat, the main shopping centre in Kirkcaldy, a concrete-saturated, slowly dying relic from the 1970s, my favourite decade, yet one which Scotland tried to forget. Needless to say all the buildings which we were passing were grey, as was the sky, although the day was sunny when we were leaving Kinghorn.

By the time we entered the pool, Alex's mood had improved, perhaps because the walking was over. He wondered whether the pool would be guarded by the Sea Monster. We gave this name to one female swimming attendant because it seemed like her ultimate *raison d'être* was to make the swimmers leave the pool. For example, although she remembered us, she always enquired whether Alex swam well enough to use the adult lanes. Then, after fifteen minutes or so, when it was clear that he was a good swimmer, she ordered him to return to the pool for small children. She also demanded that everybody swim in absolute silence and not commit even the most minute act of naughtiness.

The Sea Monster was there, and she was blooming because that day the pool offered an extra attraction, a pumped-up barge in the shape of her double, an inflatable serpent which covered half of the large pool, leaving just two lanes for those who actually wanted to swim. The female Sea Monster tried to make the most of the obstructive power of this gadget by ordering her coworkers to take it out immediately after it was put in the water and carry it around the pool, which proved an onerous task. To make things worse, she insisted that the few people who were trying to swim, including us, get out of the water, which created an extra obstruction for the four or five young girls and boys who tried to remove the sea monster from the pool. The situation was so absurd that Alex and

I started to giggle. Our pleasure was increased by the fact that on this occasion it was not us who were arguing with the Sea Monster, but a big tattooed man with drooping moustache and sideburns, who emerged from the pool like a walrus and told the woman that on the day when there were practically no children in the pool, putting the barge there made no sense. Then he ordered everybody to return to the water, and he carried the rubber sea monster to the back room all by himself. For the rest of our stay the Walrus behaved as if the whole pool belonged to him, jumping, splashing and shouting to his slightly less tattooed pal, while the defeated Sea Monster sat in her place at the top, looking melancholically at the invisible horizon and paying no attention to the swimmers. In the end, we were almost sorry for her.

On the way back we marched towards the Kirkcaldy station, to take a train to Kinghorn. The sky was still cloudy, but the clouds were delicate and white, and the sun was trying to pierce the heavenly cotton wool. Three seagulls were walking on the pavement, undeterred by the passersby, as if they were a military patrol, making us laugh. It felt good to be clean, and also tired from physical effort. We talked about the pizza we would order on our arrival home. And then we saw a small crowd gathered on the street some hundred or so metres from the station. There'd been an accident: a boy of about ten was hit by a car, and people were waiting for an ambulance. We couldn't see the victim, but Alex showed me a small spot of blood on the asphalt. The blood was crimson, more like paint or theatrical makeup pretending to be blood than real blood itself. We didn't say anything on the train but felt guilty about criticising Kirkcaldy for its lack of drama.



Grace Gallaher Fitzpatrick, *Peering Little Transcendence*,
watercolor and graphic design, 2017.

Przewalski's Horse

by Elizabeth Vignali

Here they are, thriving in the Chernobyl exclusion zone. A hardy gold-coated thing of extremes, of grassy steppes and shrubland, highest highs and lowest lows. They shoulder the burgeoning

recovery among wolves and ravens. Span the Samosely selfsettlers, the sturdy evacuation refusers. The world's worst nuclear disaster has given way to this: glints of sunlight in the reactor shadows, brown voles

in the paint-peeled kitchen, the silvered Babushka making moonshine from her garden potatoes. Firebreaks turned sand-ash highways for the wild survivors. Elk, moose, badger, boar, rabbit. Swans coast

across the radioactive cooling pond, the Red Forest's needles rusted to dust. Beaver, roe deer, brown bear, fox. The old man trowels up summer lettuce from the poisoned dirt. Wild, isn't it—to turn his back on the government-funded

tenements in Kiev, to choose instead an illegal shortrich life in the home he loved. They all suspire the toxic and thrive, trees fall from beavers' teeth one by one, land returns to bog, becomes what it was a hundred years ago. Thirty years

post-meltdown, 1000 square miles of wild, the half-life
of cesium-137 decayed into barium. A 1986 heirloom,
this patchy spread of fallout. When given a choice between
civilization and radiation, the wild choose to burn.

by Ingrid M. Calderon-Collins

Tell me I'll be beautiful when I'm 93? / that I'll burn with a knowing /
that my bones will stop hurting / tell me I'll finally be beautiful when I go
blind / don't fret / stay beautifully blue, she says, from across the ocean

no smooth young thing, I was born old / no breasts declaring Heaven /
they know of their demise, and descend to Hell / it's better there / it
imitates my furnace / my uterus / the one that'll never fill / the one that
bleeds on thighs / leaves trails behind

She tells me I belong next to her / I tell her I belong topless in a jungle /
that time is an illusion and timelines don't exist / that serenity is loud /
that love is a choice and I choose to hate myself / that I want to get gone /
get lost / come back / and do this thing all over again / only this time /
make me beautiful / make me a Los Angeles sunset / take your time /
give me wings / an array of things / make me infinite / a sight from eyes
to toes / make me, me / only this time / get it right



Alan Gann, *Tricolor Heron Dance*,
photograph, 2017.

Seven Ways of Looking at the USS Arizona

by Steven Duncan

Perhaps the truth depends on a walk around the lake.

—WALLACE STEVENS

I. Oil lies neatly
over bottomless water
like a welcome mat.

I wonder if
I should take off
my shoes.

II. The oil does not mix
with water.

War and peace
continue to be
a vinaigrette.

III. One thousand men
are buried below
deck, below ocean

below air.

Water flows in
and out, driving
oil upward.

It makes sense now
why it's called a wake.

IV. The surface gathers
light from the sun,

returns it prism.

This rainbow
a sign from God

the flood is over.

V. Rust and barnacle,
there is only reef now.

The bay
has taken the ship.

I turn away
for thinking the phrase
swim with the fishes.

No one is swimming—
it is far too still.

VI. A veteran guide
tells of five
living survivors.

There is folklore
fuel will seep, so long
as one remains alive.

The oil seems
to drift slower,
more phantom.

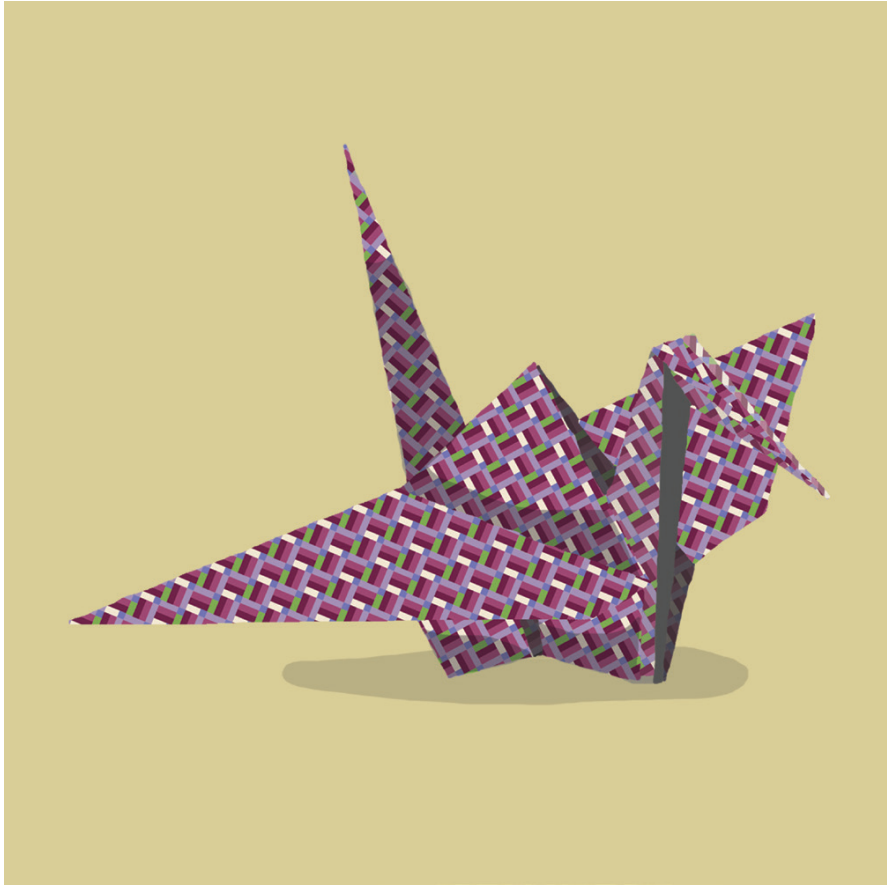
The guide is missing a leg.

VII. The tired monument
 shut down last week.

Concerns over
structural integrity.

I visited
just in the nick—imagine

what could have been
with slightly different
timing.



Nick Jared, *Crane 3*,
digital drawing, 2019.



Nick Jared, *Crane 4*,
digital drawing, 2019.

Conglobation

by Megan McCormack

In the basement bathroom
I almost step on them
With bare feet
Hundreds of husks
Of pill bugs
All converging
At the darkest corner
Of the concrete shower
They are piled on top
Of each other
Dead at the apex
Of their journey
I scoop them up
In my hands
Staring at their outstretched legs
And bent antennae
So light
I can hardly feel their bodies
Roll off my palm
And into the drain

For six years
You grabbed my stomach
Squeezing the flesh
With your hands

Sometimes you'd bite it
Purple ovals
From yellow teeth
That lasted for days
Other times
You shook the fat
Laughing
At the ripples you made
I'm just teasing,
You'd tell me,
That's how you know
I love you
I tried pulling my knees
To my breasts
Held them with my arms
Your fingertips
Would push into my rib cage
Until I had no choice
Until I couldn't breathe

Hot summer days
Of my childhood
Were for collecting
We lifted big stones
To find them
We called them
"roly-polies"
Because they curled
Into gray, armored
Cannonballs
On our palms
We used our fingernails
To force them to unroll,
To reveal their legs
Soft abdomens
And sometimes

Little white eggs
Once my sister and I
Shoveled dirt and moss
Into an old fish tank
We emptied our collection
Into it
Our roly-poly colony
We put the tank
On the rotting porch
And lay on our bellies,
Eyes level with the dirt
As we began to name them,
The largest pill bug
Began to eat the others
One by one,
Gnawing through the abdomen
Consuming through squirming legs
“Should we stop it?”
My sister asked.
I told her
“No, we let cannibals
Be cannibals.”

Dream Catcher

by Taylor Teachout

Sat down to weave a dream catcher
Turquoise thread and a found hoop earring
It was not as easy as I remembered
Nothing went as planned
I yelled when I made a mistake
Like playing Mario Kart with my brothers
And driving off the road
The feeling of being out of control
Ellie says, "It doesn't have to be perfect,
It just has to be."
I find comfort in her words
And beauty in its imperfections
I think and weave
Can nightmares weave dream catchers?
I laugh at my dramatics
But bathe it in sunlight just to be safe

A Cow Jumping over the Moon

by Christina Rosso

I remember shards of glass like jagged puzzle pieces scattered around the white-and-black tiled kitchen floor. The overhead lights were bright and blinding, leaving floating blurs and stars in front of my eyes.

They had been arguing again. I didn't know what about. I knew it wasn't over though. The broken dishes and glasses signaled limbo—a lull in the fight when the embers were still simmering, ready to flare up at any moment. Ready to burn.

She did the throwing, he the cleanup. It made sense. She was hot-headed, he obsessive compulsive.

She had moved onto the second story of the house, pulling clothing and jewelry from drawers. Soon she would come into my room and then my brother's and sister's and put us in the car, saying we were going to stay at Mommom's. This happened occasionally, and always late at night. Usually we just drove around until the sun woke up. Then we would go home, and she and he continued their fight, sometimes with more shouting, sometimes with silence.

I had come down from my room for a glass of apple juice. But the one with a cow jumping over the moon lay on the floor, broken. It was the only cup I would drink juice from. He was on his knees when I walked into the kitchen. My father's hands out before him, he was meticulously maneuvering larger pieces of glass to the trash can while avoiding the small splinter-like ones. His neck craned when he heard the pitter-patter of my feet.

Hi, Sweetie, my dad said. Stay where you are. I don't want you to get a boo-boo. He leaned back and slowly rose, now a giant before me. He carefully walked through the maze of glass until he was standing in front of me. He picked me up; I wrapped my arms around his neck. He smelled both musty and fresh at the same time, hints of his aftershave still on his skin from the morning. His cheeks were a deep pink like the stickers I wore as an angel in *The Nutcracker* ballet. From his green irises sprouted vines of red. My father seemed defeated, like he'd been to war and lost the battle, but I knew it wasn't over. My mother wasn't done until there were no survivors left.

He told me if I drank my apple juice out of one of the plastic cups tonight, he would buy me a new glass tomorrow. Any kind I wanted. I agreed.

He filled a small orange cup with juice and snapped a clear sippy lid on it. And even though I wasn't a baby anymore, I said, Daddy, don't put me down, and he didn't. He cradled me in his arms, telling me a story about a dragon and a hero as she continued to throw and smash things above us.

Like a spider weaving her web, my memories expanded over time, strands of silk eventually covering this one, leaving it forgotten. Hidden. It was lost for twenty years, not coming back to me until I arrived at my parents' house twenty minutes ago to find the kitchen floor and counters covered in broken glass. It was surreal; I felt like I was five years old again coming downstairs for a glass of apple juice. My mother had been at it again, breaking dishes, glasses, an expensive vase he had bought her for their fortieth anniversary. The vase had been large and pale blue in color. Pieces of it were scattered on the counter and floor like crystal tears. He was sitting on the other side of the room, away from the wreckage, tending to a cut on his pointer finger from a shard of glass. It was strange to see him bleed; I had never seen my hero wounded before. My father said she had thrown the vase at his head. Luckily, he had ducked in time.

Tears welled in my eyes, my hands balled in fists. Where is she? I asked.

He shook his head. She left, he said. He didn't know where she'd gone.

I knew my father wasn't lying in an attempt to protect her. Mom-mom's house no longer existed; it was sold and torn down the same month she was placed in the ground. There was nowhere else for my mother to go; this was her only home now. My mother was gone, who knows for how long, but maybe that was for the best. I said, I'm sorry. You deserve better.

He didn't counter my words. Instead, he said, Thank you.

I walked up to him and threw my arms around him. He was no longer a giant or a dragon-slaying hero, but an aging, tired man. He was smaller than I'd ever seen him, shriveled, fragile as glass in my arms. I love you, Dad, I said.

I love you too, he said.

I squeezed him, breathing in the familiar mixture of sweat and after-shave on his skin, my hands still balled into fists.

Wolves

by J. R. Gerow

There are wolves living in the attic.
We did not know, for many years,
living our little lives beneath them,
hushedly, gazing out of windows.
Their presence became our deeper pulse,
a constant dream which we could not articulate,
clicking across the ceiling like
an entire climate under which
we conducted our separate affairs.

One night, rising from my chair,
I climbed the stairs to meet him,
waiting at the door—
where we stood measuring each other:
with a shudder, and click—

Fed him my finger.
Walked back downstairs.
Continued to write through the night.



Huda Tariq, *When Innocence Blooms*,
Microsoft Paint, 2012.

Court Street
by Margot DeSalvo

The subway smells like urine and the change of season.
Spring is lurking but unconvincing.

Absorb these dynamics of gravity—
collisions of trying different lives,
the sky's growl,
and moments unkempt.

Sometimes it takes years before one knows
how to walk off a subway with pride.

Fragment
by Valerie Stoyva

Wings still wet
with colors and paint,

face luminous
like a saint's—

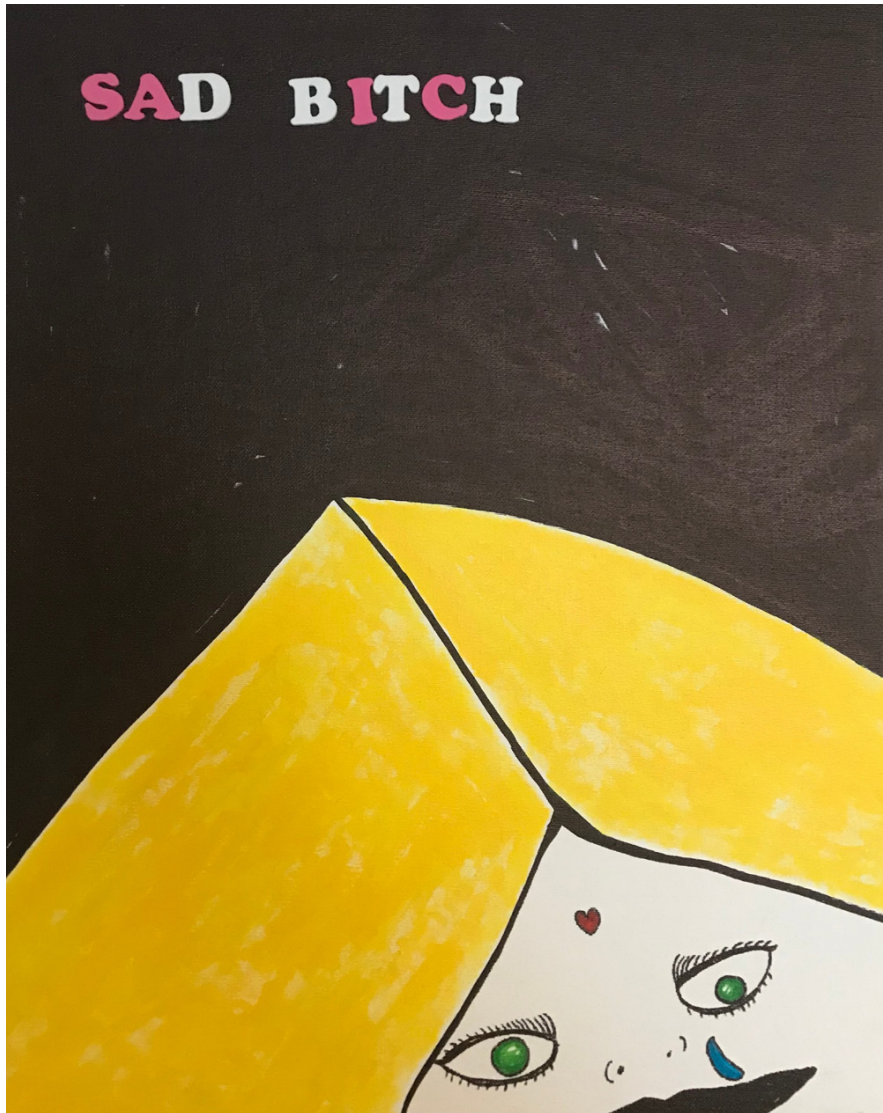
you,
who hatched on a branch

Train Ride through Small Towns

by Mary Lou Buschi

After Hopper

Her suitcase was too wide for the aisle, too heavy to lift, so she stood between the train locks, where the breeze angles up, where weeds between the rails cleave to a purchase. Wicker seats give and crackle as each passenger sits. The windows are open, as green fans wobble overhead. A crowd gathers behind her. Heads turn to watch. The train lurches forward into the summer fog. There is more than enough unhappiness.



Alexandria Jared, *Sad Bitch*,
acrylic and foam letters on canvas, 2019.

A Brief History of Autism

by Julia Clausen

Father.

I make music. Maybe because I can't quite express myself any other way.
I make music well. Without any real training or help from anyone,
I made myself.

I am my music. But my music is not me. I have a job.
My students never seem to get it, when I sit down with them,
show them the mechanics of the flute or trombone,
and tell them to create sound.

They don't understand that they are the source of their own magic.
I can't make them see.

But I try every day. Every day. The same dissonance.
And I don't understand it anymore. Clarinets tend to squeak,
and it hurts my ears.

I can no longer hear my wife call to me from her desk where she sits
baffled by the computer's misbehavior. So I stay on the couch.
I can no longer hear my son mumble about how he's "fine."
So I keep eating my dinner.

I can no longer hear my daughter whisper in a theater.
She used to scream, and now she whispers. As a child she screamed
from the top of the tree in the old backyard. Because she wanted
to stay there forever.

She tries to understand the magic in her own way. But she's buried
it deep.

My son understands sound, but he breaks it down into its parts.

He memorizes it. My wife listens.
But music should be purple. It should be spoken in phrases.
It should be free.

Son.

I sit and think. About everything. Which is probably too much.
No one person can handle the world. I can barely confront the fear
in my own eyes. I don't know how to speak to it, so I let other people
do the speaking for me.
Scorsese, Dante, Mahler, my therapist. I don't let my mother speak to it.
She knows it too well.
And my father doesn't know how. My sister leaves it alone.
People seem to like my sister, and I don't know why. I know a lot of
things. I know how to articulate Plato's theory of aesthetics.
How to play a Strauss horn concerto. I know the names of every
Academy Award-winning film since 1970. I even know how to drive
from South Central LA to Arcadia without taking a single freeway.
But I don't know why people like my sister.
All I want to do is explain to someone why I care so much. I want them
to see it too. But they can never stay until the end. Never hear me out.
I suspect they get bored. In fact, I know they do. I know they feel left out.
That's why I'm trying to include them. Once when I was explaining to
my coworker why logic classes should be included in all early
childhood education for the betterment of our national politics,
she asked what I wanted for lunch. She gave one of those blank stares
babies have.
So I stopped talking to her as much.
I like writers. They care. A lot. Maybe too much. Like me.
My sister tries to tell me how to write. My mother tells me how not to
write. But I think I know.

Mother.

I am tired. I've been to rural China and grown thin living off of
vegetables and rice for every meal.

I've lived in a hut in Guatemala. I've taught English to South Americans
and Spanish to young Californians. I've made a living.
My husband is more tired than I am. He has retreated into jazz and
cleaning the pool. I hire someone to clean the rest.
I think I have my daughter, but sometimes I don't. Sometimes I think
she wishes I were someone else. Someone who is more certain but
less verbal.
My mother talked very little. She would always eat the smallest piece of
chicken, and never cake. I like to study history.
My mother's history doesn't feel like history, but it does to my daughter.
She asks about life "then," incredulously.
No, that's not the right word. I've run out of words. I teach young
children to write, to multiply fractions, to study the clouds.
Last year, one boy ran up to me in the middle of a lecture on birds.
He handed me a story.
His story.
It even had a title page. He said he thought I should read it to the class.
His face was so serious.
It reminded me of my son, that face.
I'm so tired. I wake up at two in the morning with a cramp in my foot
and the vision of my son crying.
I want to take his pain, but he thinks I'll break it. Maybe I would.

Daughter.

I dance. At least, I used to. It was my whole life until it wasn't.
Now I dance in my kitchen while I cook, listening to Mahler's first
symphony. My father doesn't think I like his world, but I do in parts.
I rarely invest in the whole of anything.
I love too much, and I like too little. For now I study data science.
Tomorrow, chances are I'll be a professional origamist. Or an
academic consultant. Or a Spanish linguist. Or a writing teacher.
Though I know how teaching kills the soul.
No, not kills. Drains. Teaching is giving, and eventually people run out.
Then what is it?
Recitation maybe. Scraping the bottom of the barrel for scraps.

I don't like the idea of scraps. I'm too selfish for that sort of life.
I've hidden myself away. Maybe I'll move to London and pretend I'm
from Los Angeles. I'm very good at pretending to be something I'm
not. Plus everyone likes you abroad if you say you're from Los Angeles.
Once I was boarding a plane, and the little Irish flight attendant asked
me where I was from. He must have looked at my passport.
He was so happy and so sad when he heard California. I wanted so
many things for him then, but I didn't know how to speak. Maybe I
could make a good teacher. I've learned it from my mother. She thinks
I don't listen, but I always do.
Even when she says this shirt makes my hips look too big. Even then.
Even when she asks how my brother is doing. Because I'm the only
one who will answer when he calls at 11:30 p.m. to complain about
Breaking Bad for two hours.
Even when she tells me to go ask my dad for help because she assumes I
can't solve my own problems. Even then.

Burn

by Jennifer Wilson

The mug of instant coffee had just been made with boiling
water and set down on the carpet beside my father who
in a rare moment of kindness had
decided to lay on the floor and read us a book which
was Yertle the Turtle by Dr Seuss

and i remember the book and its beleaguered hero who
sat with a stack of fellow reptiles piled upon his back and
i'm sure there was a moral but i didn't know what it was
because

i was three

and i was just learning how to do a somersault and so i
was balancing on my head saying look daddy, look but he
wasn't looking, he was reading to us better than any father
ever had before because he did all things with excellence

look daddy, look

i flipped over straight onto the mug of coffee and i was
wearing a heavy sweater because it was winter in Alaska and the
trailer was chilly. The thick fibers sucked the liquid
hungrily up like a wick and held it to my small white back in a
caress like a lion's tongue which, i have heard, can remove
skin

i screamed and leapt up

my father leapt up, shouting at my mother to bring a towel to save the carpet and she came and they mopped up the mess while i stood screaming and screaming until she put a hand to my back and realized the truth too late to save my flesh so i was held beneath the tap of that Anchorage kitchen sink and bathed in frigid water and my sister and brother ran outside in the snow to escape the noise of my terror and pain

i was bundled to the hospital

where i was mummified in ointment and gauze and sent home to heal. In the weeks to come i would sit on the dryer weekly while my mother unwound me to change the bandages and the smell of humid detergent and sterile wrappings still comfort me to this day.

My father apologized lately for the whole fiasco, though i am fifty now, and i could only laugh at the irony of saying sorry for an accident when so many other things were on purpose.

*Queen of the Andes,
Puya Raimondii*

by Lynne Goldsmith

She defies the odds, monocarpic
shallow roots set down
high unsheltered in Andean Mountains
forming leaf rosette ten feet wide
lined with thorns'
protection of inflorescence towering
into thirty-foot-tall stalk of 30,000
flowers once-in-a-lifetime
emergence from soil's globe of leaves
luring hummingbirds
before six million seeds to fall
by forgotten winds with a trunk
a hundred years needed to bloom,
largest bromeliad,
surviving cold
on rocky slope and standing out
in terrain she has grown from
this far thrust to let go.



Lakiesha Edwards, *Colorful Thoughts*,
acrylic on canvas, 2015.



Lakiesha Edwards, *Beyond the Neon*,
acrylic on canvas, 2018.

FISHBONE

by John Minser

Slivered bone, hands
over glass, lips smoky.
The oil-slick air, a menu
list of flounder names: *sea-sorrowed*,
coral-born, *for-want-of-tides*.
They circumnavigate.

I tell you: four dead today,
gurneys through the school;
heads a puzzle. Pathology
worked till dawn to solve them.

And after, it's not uncommon
finding chips of bone in pockets.
Bits of us, uncollected. We beg
for neatness: a box of looped hair
a stack of toes. A whole.
It sticks in our throats, the injustice.

Magister Vitae

by Carlene M. Gadapee

*And tell me this: of all the roads you know,
Which is the quickest way to get to Hades?*

—ARISTOPHANES

What the hell's the deal
with these suicidal, daredevil
frogs, who insist on hopping out
onto the highway, half hidden
by fog and mist, scantily illuminated
by headlights? I hate the squishy
pop of them, these slow-moving pale
river dwellers out for the thrill of their
short, rain-blessed lifetime.

I look like a drunk driver, so I stop

playing tag with the frogs. I avoid
the larger ones, the ones I can actually see
before I hear the soft *thunk*. I have little to say
about the living and dying of the smaller ones;
they are too slow, too dazed, too intent
on a strange mission. It feels fated, this asphalt massacre,
and I am sorry to have to hit them.
We all have a role to play: theirs,
to cross I-93 with froggy abandon,
and mine, to make the survivors feel they earned it.



Juliette Sebock, *Snake Rail*,
photograph, 2012.

Because Now I Am a Grandmother

by Jackie McManus

I stopped writing the poem
to babysit the grandchildren
because now I am a grandmother

and I need to start acting like it.
I'll park my car in their driveway and later,
the kids and I will pretend that car is a boulder

they are racing around on their bikes with
training wheels with me after them,
my arthritic tyrannosaurus hands in the air,

them screaming before they are caught
in a dinosaur embrace, before the
car-boulder becomes a giant turtle,

snapping at us, and we run across the
beaten grass, realizing we've made it out
alive, and no one is more surprised than me.

A GLIMPSE

by Patricia Whiting

I watch the stitched-together
snippets of home movies.

Imagine my aunt's red hair.
Imagine her infectious giggle
and the grunts of my uncle—the one
whose hair is parted in the middle.

Imagine the thuds from arrows
smacking the target on the lawn,
and the chattering of children
in paper party hats.

Here is properly corseted Gram
standing stiffly with Gramps
in front of the house he built
on Utica Street.

Can that be my father in the rowboat?
The young man who empties fish
from a basket onto the ground?

I lean forward, attempting to commune
with the cameraman,
who is long dead, as are all but one
of the children at the party.

Show us his face, I implore.
Don't be in such a hurry to move on.

Remarkable

by Rita Rouvalis Chapman

My anger is not
permitted here.
It is possible that
this is worthy of remark.

OK, yes, I'm alive, in the same
sense a warehouse piled with
sugar is alive, no longer a thing
becoming, but a thing going away.

It's all so unjustified:
bricks, sweetness, confessions of faith.

What is any of it to me, receiving
my share and pouring it out from
thumbs stretched taut
as a ripe plum, thumbs passed
over the pulse of cheeks hardened
by the cold shoved ashore.

The small vein in my wrist tells time.
I am going to stand here
as if I belong, and perhaps
it will become true.