



The Magnolia Review
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Editor-in-Chief and Founder: Suzanna Anderson

*Note: Jack D. Harvey's "Little Liza" and "Ravishment" first appeared in Zombie Logic Review

Welcome to the ninth issue of The Magnolia Review! We publish art, photography, poetry, comics, creative nonfiction, flash fiction, experimental work, and fiction. The Magnolia Review publishes previously unpublished work. We publish two issues a year, deadlines on November 15 and May 15. The issue will be available online on January 15 and July 15.

While The Magnolia Review will not have physical copies at this time, the editors may compile a print version if funds become available.

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For more information, please visit www.themagnoliareview.wordpress.com or email us at themagnoliareview@gmail.com.

Table of Contents

Art

Zachary A. Philips	Little Red Riding Hood	22
Zachary A. Philips	Birds #2	23
Bill Wolak	The Mist Between Foghorns	43
Zachary A. Philips	Legs	62
Bill Wolak	The Radiance of an Unforeseen Delight	96
Zachary A. Philips	Grown Lily	131
Bill Wolak	Climbing the Wind	149
Bill Wolak	Beyond the Immediate Trapdoor	224
Zachary A. Philips	Blue Rose	256
Bill Wolak	Unsettling as the Strobe Light's Hesitation	272
Zachary A. Philips	Untitled	283

Creative NonFiction

Ray Armenteros	Recipes for Damaging Books	15
Lydia A. Cyrus	A House of Glass	157
Michael K. Brantley	Number One Pork Chop Man	228

Fiction

Penn Stewart	An American Love Story	37
J.B. Santillan	In the Morning, They Disappear	50
Dave Gregory	John's Oven	69
Sydnee Smailes	Seams of Peppermint and Sherry	88
Marygrace Schumann	Give, Not Take	100
Susan P. Blevins	A Marriage of Convenience	121
Mitchell Waldman	Stock Boy	138
Ruben E. Smith	The Women on the Falling Elevator, Going Up	169

Don McLellan	Brides	180
William L. Spencer	Crossing Copper River	190
Donaji Olmedo	A Pigeon	213
Eric Rasmussen	When He Caught the Big One	241
Kevin Haslam	Spitting Distance	260

Hybrid

Michael Paul Hogan	The Fractured Wor[ld]ds of Willem Kleist	25
Alexandra Brinkman	A Night Alone	80
Ash Strange	Her	116
Wade McCollough	Recovery	202

Poetry

Deborah H. Doolittle	Stephan Crane Looks Down	
	On a White Chrysanthemum	11
Lisa Stice	Resolutions	12
Simon Perchik	Untitled	13
Steven Goff	Bathers	14
Heikki Huotari	Rational Exuberance	24
Jayant Kashyap	Silence	33
Lisa Stice	Deliver Us	35
Jayant Kashyap	Pompeii	38
Lee Triplett	Changing Seasons	39
Susan P. Blevins	Reverie	40
Erica Michaels Hollander	Nakba	42
Judith Alexander Brice	Sketches of Sun	44
Jan Ball	Dorade Entire	45
Jack D. Harvey	Angelic Hearts	47
Deborah H. Doolittle	My Father as Cartographer	49
Jayant Kashyap	Death Sonnet	58
John Grey	Falling in Love	59
Heikki Huotari	Spatiotemporal	60
Deborah H. Doolittle	Why Bother?	61
Lisa Stice	The Selkie	63
Heikki Huotari	The Causal Chain	64

Richard Weaver	A Loose Bottle of beer eludes	65
Nathan Dennis	Rubicons and Metaphors	66
Jack D. Harvey	Clown	74
Lisa Stice	Eat	76
Nancy Byrne Iannucci	Reflection	77
Charles Joseph Albert	Vox Clamantis in Deserto	78
Simon Perchik	Untitled	82
Nathan Dennis	Drops of Gin	83
Jayant Kashyap	The Temple	84
Jan Ball	Uber Driver	86
Todd Mercer	Calendar Senior, aka Captain Miracle	90
Lee Triplet	Sound Effects	91
Judith Alexander Brice	When You Turn	93
Nancy Byrne Iannucci	The Performer	94
Richard Weaver	A Divided Highway has cloned itself	97
Aidan Coleman	Cenotaph	98
Judith Alexander Brice	Solitary	99
Erica Michaels Hollander	Siren Song	112
Sudeep Adhikari	beer and burrito	114
Simon Perchik	Untitled	115
Deborah H. Doolittle	Crimson Time	118
Jan Ball	clutter	119
Lee Triplet	Coming Home to a Racket	120
Sudeep Adhikari	master of all fuck-ups	124
Frank De Canio	Comedy of Errors	125
Jack D. Harvey	Ravishment of the Holy Wisdom	126
Jayant Kashyap	Veil	132
David Anthony Sam	Charitable Erasures	134
Richard Weaver	Bar Rat's tab is longer	136
Thomas Wattie	Fork Juice in the Orange Section	139
Nathan Dennis	The Bathroom at The Hungarian Pastry Shop	140
Nancy Byrne Iannucci	Chickie-Run	144
Erica Michaels Hollander	Pack Rat	147
Nathan Dennis	Meditations on The Creation	150
Susan P. Blevins	Decisions	154
Todd Mercer	Ingenuer Meets Gravity	156
Daniel de Culla	Autumn Melodies	160
Mark Hudson	Judith's Skull	166
Lisa Stice	Not	167

David Anthony Sam	Love Loss	174
Jack D. Harvey	Little Liza	175
Judith Alexander Brice	Of Grace, Hatred, Preying and Lady-Bugs	178
John Grey	I'm in a Painting by Hopper	186
Todd Mercer	In the Great Green Room	188
Charles Joseph Albert	I Awoke with the Homeless	189
Steven Goff	Pisces	199
Lisa Stice	Pie Astronomy	200
Judith Alexander Brice	My Magnolia Gamble	201
David Anthony Sam	Lost and Found	208
Charles Joseph Albert	In the Valley of the Ohlone	209
Richard Weaver	James Joyce's Challenge	212
Jan Ball	mother lode	216
Judith Alexander Brice	No Candy	217
Nathan Dennis	The Mandjet	219
Daniel Edward Moore	Narcoleptic Stallion	225
Charles Joseph Albert	Found In My Inbox	226
Daniel Edward Moore	Glory Unremarkable	227
David Anthony Sam	On Finding an Abandoned Firepit	233
John Grey	Freak-Show	235
Jack D. Harvey	Enter the Apocalypse	237
Daniel Edward Moore	Government Shutdown	250
Jayant Kashyap	A Little Elegy for Death	251
Mari Posa	Pieces of Intimacy	252
Mari Posa	Pieces of Intimacy	253
Mari Posa	Pieces of Intimacy	254
Mari Posa	Pieces of Intimacy	255
Steven Goff	Abandoned Observatory	257
David Anthony Sam	alt-right killer	258
Susan P. Blevins	A Wing and a Prayer	259
Gary Beck	Homeless VII	266
Richard Weaver	A Jar of mayonnaise explodes	267
David Anthony Sam	A Pipe of Ghosted Smoke	268
Susan P. Blevins	Yellow does not have a season	273
Theresa Williams	The Year is Strangely Quiet	274
Steven Goff	The Last Car	280

The Magnolia Review Ink Award	285
Letter from the Editor	287
Reviews	289
Contributors	292

In the Morning, They Disappear

The passing of my grandparents was my first experience with death. When they died, I wondered what the last things on their minds were. I was told that grandpa's last words were "I'm tired." What was on his mind then, while his family stood around the bed, tears in their eyes as he said that? No words passed grandma's lips before she departed; they must have stayed inside, lost forever. I wondered if sometimes death happened so quickly that a person's last thoughts were what they would have for lunch.

The same thing struck me as I recalled the loud bang of metal crashing into metal. I swerved the steering wheel to the right but it was too late. My thoughts at the time were "oh no, oh no, oh no!" but before that, it would have been about buying a cabinet. That was six years ago. At twenty-eight, it became one of my passing memories. The only feeling that lingered around me was fear. Fear of death. Fear that I almost died alone that day.

Those worries took a detour, as there were more important things I focused my mind to. I lay in bed next to someone I wanted

to have a future with. Getting past my teen years, I had evolved into a solitary individual. I spoke to my family a few times each month. My parents always told me to be careful, as the world wasn't often nice to a girl like me. Rarely, a person came into my life who would pull me out of these rings of silence. Dani was one of those few people, and she was here, sleeping next to me. How I looked at her with adoring eyes; her long, ash brown hair cascading over the sheets, the subtle freckles on her cheeks fading in the winter light. The gentle smell of jasmine that perfumed her golden skin reminded me of the home of my childhood. Around us, in that small space we now shared, were antiques and other secondhand items I had collected over the years. They stood out against the bright, minimalistic furniture we'd picked out, purchased not for style but practicality. There was no pattern to the items in my collection, just as long as it caught my eye.

At night, those old items would come to life. Their souls came to me in my sleep, the ghosts of their previous owners offering me some of their memories. These pass-

J.B. Santillan

ing memories, sometimes pleasant, at times heartbreaking, rarely were nightmares. Some were hesitant to share their stories. Days or even weeks would pass until they entered my dreams. When I told Dani the first time this happened, she hesitated to believe me. Understandable, as ghosts couldn't be real.

"The coffee place was a butcher shop?" Dani was already dressed in her white and blue scrubs while brushing her hair. "How'd you know that?"

In my hand was a small wooden box with geometrical carvings on the lid. "It was like in the sixties or something. Anyways, this was the money box the owner kept his extra earnings in!" I pointed at the box. "I saw it in my dream!"

"Dream?" She finally looked at me. "Jess..."

"You'd never guess the place was a butcher shop before, but the owner was there. He opened this exact box." I pointed to the box again. "His ghost showed me!"

"Ghost?" She put her hand on my shoulder then brushed my short black hair. "Get ready for work. Let's talk about it later."

We lived together for two years near a college neighborhood outside of downtown Seattle. In that time, Dani became accustomed to these dreams of mine. On the nights I was visited by an item's owner, I told her the very next day. It be-

came part of our morning routine. The dreams ranged from wealthy old ladies who had no children to inherit their collections, to couples who found the item during a trip to Berlin. I don't think she believed the stories, but she liked hearing them. We talked about them even as we headed off to our commutes—hers to the university hospital, and mine into the mess of downtown.

My interest in collecting antiques grew even more after that. I didn't think the antique shops I despised most in my childhood would be the places I couldn't do without. The first time my parents took me to one, I was ten years old and found the place uninteresting. No toys in sight, and it smelled like a closet full of old clothes. Knick-knacks on shelves that reached the ceiling. I was told to keep my hands in my pockets, but the sheer difficulty of going to an antique shop during the winter was navigating the narrow aisles while wearing a puffy coat. There were figures, tea cups, empty jars, all of which looked like junk to me. These days, nearly everything appealed to me. It was a matter of deciding which item would tell a better story.

**

Things began to change when I came across a vintage tennis racket. At the shop I frequented, it hung on the wall behind the counter. It hadn't been there the last time

I visited, and it caught my attention. I didn't buy it, seeing that my collections had no space for sports memorabilia. Yet, I kept thinking that someone else would get their hands on it first. The next day, I returned and purchased the racket. It was in surprisingly good condition, with a few scratches and dents on its lacquered surface, and the details of the wood still visible. The strings were tight, but the grip had some stains that I assumed was mold damage and regular wear and tear.

Dani furled her eyebrows when I came home with a tennis racket in my hands. She knew where I had been but expected an item on the fragile side.

"Why'd you buy a tennis racket?" she asked, expertly cutting green onions like the chefs did on TV.

It was mid-January and the sky said 8 pm, but the clocks read 5. She was cooking dinner. Tofu and vermicelli noodle soup, like the kind my mom taught me; in turn, I also taught it to Dani. The hot chili singed the air and the sesame oil warmed me up. I almost forgot that she'd asked me a question.

"It told me to buy it," I finally answered.

"Told you?"

"Not really, but I couldn't take my eyes off it." I spun it by the handle. It slipped from my hands and fell to the floor. "Anyways, if this tells me anything in a dream,

it'd probably be a fun memory."

Unfortunately, nothing came to me in my dreams. I was stuck with a relic of a sport I didn't play. It wasn't the worst eight dollars spent. The racket sat in a box by the bedroom door, and I eventually forgot about it.

A few weeks later, the silence broke. There in my dream was a young woman, running through a dark, narrow hallway. Out of breath, she hid around a corner. The moonlight flowed in from the small windows. In the corners of her eyes, every shadow struck her with fear. Someone could be hiding there. Heavy footsteps trudged up the stairs. She ran. The footsteps sped up. A door up ahead brought her relief, but on the other side was a closet. She was blocked in. All she could do was wait. Hiding in a corner, she grasped onto anything within arm's distance. In her hands was a wooden tennis racket. The footsteps slowed and then stopped. Silence. Her whole body trembling, she couldn't keep her breathing steady. The door opened. She hushed her sobs. The figure loomed before her. A hand reached out and grabbed her neck. Dropping the racket, she screamed.

My head and chest were hot. I thought my heart was going to burst like a volcano. The room was dark and all I could hear was the blood pumping through my ears. I shot out of bed. In the box, I rum-

J.B. Santillan

maged around for the tennis racket. Carrying it out to the living room, I shoved it into the back of the coat closet.

“Jess?” Dani stood behind me. A robe draped over her shoulders. “What’s going on?”

“I... I thought I heard someone outside.” I lied. “Did you hear anything?”

She shook her head. “I thought you had another of those dreams,” she said. “Sometimes they keep you up at night.”

Dani took my hand into hers. My cold fingers melted into the warmth of her palm. We returned to bed. She ran her fingers through my messy hair then kissed me on the cheek. The clock read 3. Dani went back to sleep. I lay awake until the sun came up. While getting ready for work, I didn’t bring up the dream to her. Not all of them would carry happy memories, but I didn’t expect a murder. Even I grew skeptical of the dreams I’d had, since I didn’t want to believe that in my possession was the last item someone touched before they died. Yet I wanted to keep it. The dream it brought to me—no, it felt more like a nightmare, was unheard of. I still wish I knew what my grandparents’ last thoughts were before passing. There were no items of theirs to remember them by. At least in this other way, I could see the truth of one death as it happened. I wanted to see and understand what they

saw and thought about in their final moments. Maybe I could come to terms with this inevitability instead of fearing it.

**

A few weeks later, I entered the apartment carrying a maroon box. I straightened my plastic framed glasses, reading the words written in French on the faded label. Dani looked up from her laptop. The dream with the young woman was out of my system. Instead of forgetting about it, I continued to feed my insatiable curiosity in the search of more dreams like it. Opening the box, Dani saw the contents and was ready to leave. A porcelain doll with a cherubim face and red-brown hair wore a black and brown dress with a pair of Mary Janes on its feet.

“Sometimes I think you’re stuck in traffic.” Dani was already dressed in sweats and a t-shirt. She cleared the blanket off the couch. “But you went and bought a creepy doll instead.”

I sat down then set the doll on my lap. “At least it’s in good condition,” I replied, fixing the frills on its dress. “And the face isn’t scary like other dolls.”

“Whatever scary means to you.” She leaned in and examined its face. “Don’t the eyes freak you out a little bit? So realistic in a bad way.”

Inside the box was a key with a label attached to it. The

label read that the doll was one of two hundred made, and the song it played was “Parlez-Moi D’Amour.” That wasn’t something to be alarmed about. I put the key into the doll’s back and wound it up. Dani inched away, saying that it might start moving or talking. When the music started playing, she curled up on the couch. Her eyes never left it. I let the music play until it stopped, then placed it back in the box.

Dani shuddered. “If that thing starts playing music on its own, I’m throwing it out.” She gathered her things then went to the bedroom.

Understood.

Contrary to horror movies, a doll was simply a doll. It carried with it no feelings of revenge, but only the markings of affection when it was so loved by the child who owned it. My mind was set on thinking along the horror route that I was disappointed when the doll had no dreams to share. It could have belonged to a child traveling with her family across the Atlantic, or it was an expensive gift, maybe it was stolen. Nobody visited me in my dreams to tell me. I took it to a shop and never saw it again.

**

The following months, I found boxes full of things I had no use for. From wind up “killer robot from outer space” toys to shadow

boxes with stiff lace, ceramic jewelry boxes shaped like eggs, brass candelabras, a glass paperweight globe, and things I didn’t remember buying. Our apartment now smelled like an antique shop. Dani kept the windows open and spent more of her time in the bedroom. The boxes piled up as I spent more time obsessing over the stories these items might hold. We were running out of space in the living room, and she told me to sort through the boxes and take the uninteresting ones back to another antique or second-hand shop.

Sometimes the dreams offered small snippets of a memory, but not their final hours. My sleep often went interrupted as I woke up in the early morning. Like an automated sorting machine, I got out of bed, took the item in question, and dropped it into a reject box. This went on for some time.

I once fell asleep on the bus and missed my stop. Sometimes I nodded off at work, my forehead nearly knocking over the computer monitor. If I snapped at a coworker, or one of those poor interns, I apologized immediately. Exhausted, I came home feeling revitalized after seeing Dani. Her beaming face lit up my dreary afternoons. And the fragrance of jasmine lingered around me like a tropical garden. If this lack of sleep made me cranky, I couldn’t feel that way when she was around.

J.B. Santillan

When I had dreams of robot toys and jewelry boxes, I continued to share them with her. It was disappointing, however, that these weren't witnesses to any last moments. Then she would tell me again to take those back to a shop. But those brass candelabras, dull and grayish-green, looked promising. They had yet to offer me a glimpse into their past. My dream instead told of a couple that owned a small restaurant. There was a war and the husband enlisted. The candelabras were soon locked away in a basement. But I didn't care. That wasn't what I wanted to know. Before the memory could tell me the importance of rationing, I woke up. The candelabras sat on the floor by the couch. I picked them up, went outside, and threw them onto the pavement below. A couple of dogs barked as the brass clanged and echoed across the street.

**

Coming home from work, I noticed three familiar looking boxes by the trash bin. Inside were the items I'd bought weeks ago. Why would Dani dare throw these out without telling me? I trudged upstairs with one of the boxes in my arms. When she saw what I brought in, she sighed.

"How could you just throw these out?" I dropped the box onto the floor. "You should've asked me first."

"The place is full of boxes!" She motioned to the rest sitting behind the couch. "You don't do anything with them anyways."

"I'll get rid of it myself when I need to." I told her.

"You've been saying that for months." She opened the closet and pulled out more boxes. "I left you this even though I don't care about antiques."

The boxes scattered around the room looked as though we just moved in.

"But this is just too much." Her arms were crossed as she looked around the room. She bent down to open a box.

"Don't touch them!" I pulled the box away from her. "I know what's valuable in these. You'll just throw them all away again."

Dani pulled her hands away then locked herself in the bedroom. We didn't speak to one another the rest of the day. I sat in the living room until night, sorting through all the boxes while she slept alone in bed.

I couldn't smell the jasmine in the air. It smelled like an old empty closet and felt a little less like home.

**

Some days, I took the tennis racket out of the closet and examined it. Was it the memories of the original owner or the one who last possessed it that I saw in my

dreams? Maybe it didn't make any difference. I looked closely at the grip; the mold damage on it might have been blood. I dared not tell Dani. She still didn't know about the dream. Even if I wanted to, I spent more of my time sorting through boxes of old stuff than speaking to her. Our morning routine became sparse with words. She didn't ask about my dreams, and I stopped telling her. How could I get rid of these items when they never changed? Dani was different—this place had become unfamiliar.

After some dreams didn't give me a glimpse of what I wanted, I became aggressive. Vases shattered on the floor, pages in old leather bound books torn out, Pierrot marionettes ripped from their strings. Nobody questioned the candelabras I threw out weeks ago. Somebody took them without a word.

"What happened here?" Dani stood over a shattered jar. She then grabbed the wind up tin car from my hands and placed it in a box.

"You don't understand." I got to my feet. "None of these tell me anything."

"About what? Where these things came from?"

"No! How the person died!"

Dani stopped. She didn't understand. How could she? It's not like she had those dreams I had. I showed her the tennis racket from the closet.

"Remember this?" I told her. "The person who last owned this was murdered."

She inched back. "How do you know that?"

"It was in my dream. That's why there's all this stuff." I continued picking through one of the boxes. "Any one of these items could let me see what dying is like."

"What will that bring you?" she asked. "Why are you so obsessed with death? Those dreams don't mean anything, Jess. They're all just coincidental—"

"There's something in those dreams." I grabbed Dani's shoulder and pulled her closer. "You want to get rid of these when some of them haven't told me anything yet?"

She slapped my hand away and took the racket I held in the other. She placed everything that was laid about into the boxes. "I was fine with it when it was just a harmless hobby," she said. "It wasn't hurting anyone, not even you. And now... now you just buy things and break them when they mean nothing. What's next?"

I took the tennis racket out of the box and clutched onto it. There was a hopelessness I remember seeing in Dani's eyes. She closed the box and asked for the racket. I refused.

"If you want to get rid of these, fine," I said. "But just let me keep this. It's the only one that showed me the owner's last moments."

J.B. Santillan

Dani shook her head. "I would be okay with it, if that wasn't the thing that started this mess."

I held onto it like a child keeping his toy safe. When she tried to pull it from my hands, I kept my grip firm and felt the strings dig into my fingers. She insisted I let go but I wasn't going to give up. In the struggle, I lost sight of everything and pushed her into the wall. She wailed out as I pinned her. The racket dug into her chest as I held her there. She gasped as her stomach inflated then deflated. No, I didn't want her to die. I let go of the racket and it dropped to the floor. I wanted to help her, but I suddenly didn't dare lay a hand on her. She pushed me away and told me she didn't know who I was anymore.

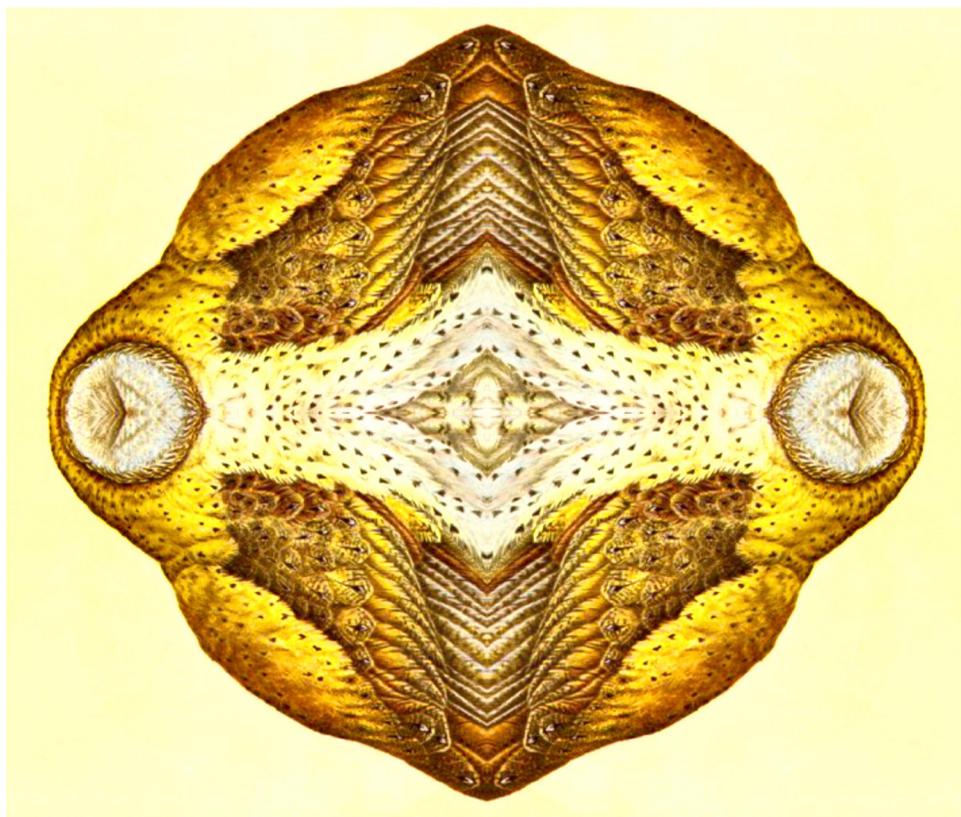
I didn't know who I was either. None of this was familiar to me, and in my fears and fascination, I had filled this place with useless items that changed everything. I had killed this home.

These possessions had taken possession of me.

**

Surrounded by secondhand items I will never use, the ghosts of their original owners visit me in my dreams. They offer me a glimpse into their lives; I see their happiness, their regrets, sometimes their final moments. My own regrets are temporarily forgotten. I am overjoyed by their company if only in my mind. In the morning, they disappear. At night, I sleep alone.

Climbing the Wind



Bill Wolak

Meditations on The Creation

I

God came into this world, naked and crying.

“Ma, ma”

“Ma, what do I do?”

But God ain’t have a ma.

God was alone.

God wept the universe into existence.

II

God made up the world

Having seen lots of other universes

And having become bored of consuming,

He decided to take a shot at something people would remember him by.

Whatever people ended up being.

III

God had an accident.

God kicked over a can of Campbell’s primordial soup.

Spilling the hydrogen gravy all over the cosmic countertop

Dropping the can onto spacetime with a knackered bang!

“Oops.”

“It’s your mess now, child.”

Nathan Dennis

IV

God needed a soundtrack
To accompany creation.
To welcome people to Heaven.
To herald Revelation.
So God made Enya.
And she was Good.
God loves Enya.

V

God passed the Devil, minding his own business.
“Ain’t I seen you before?” God said.
“You must’ve.” The Devil replied.
“You made me.”
“I ain’t remember that.” Said God.
“That seems pretty dumb of me.”
“I’m grateful you did either way.” Said the Devil.
“I don’t want to die.”

Winner of The Magnolia Review Ink Award

Nathan Dennis

VI

God got lazy. Making life was exhausting.

All the little molecules of DNA and RNA were always snapping apart.

And his phospholipids never made a perfect bilayer.

So he decided to optimize, streamline, increase efficiency.

His action item was evolution.

“I call it organic intelligence.”

“The important thing is I started it.”

“No one will forget that. Right?”

VII

God was very anxious the whole week.

He had worked very hard on Earth.

And didn't want to disappoint.

Disappointment gives God very bad anxiety.

“Is it good?” “Is it good?” He'd cry out past the Angels,

Past the vault above the heavens,

“Is it good?”

...

“Is it good?”

He went to bed, shaking with panic.

“Is it good?” “Is it good?”

When sleep finally took him, a voice carefully peered from past where God could reach.

A voice that curled open on the petals of a small Daisy.

“It is good.”

Nathan Dennis

VIII

“Am I good?” “Am I good?”

I went to bed shaking with panic.

“Am I good?”

I cried as sleep finally took

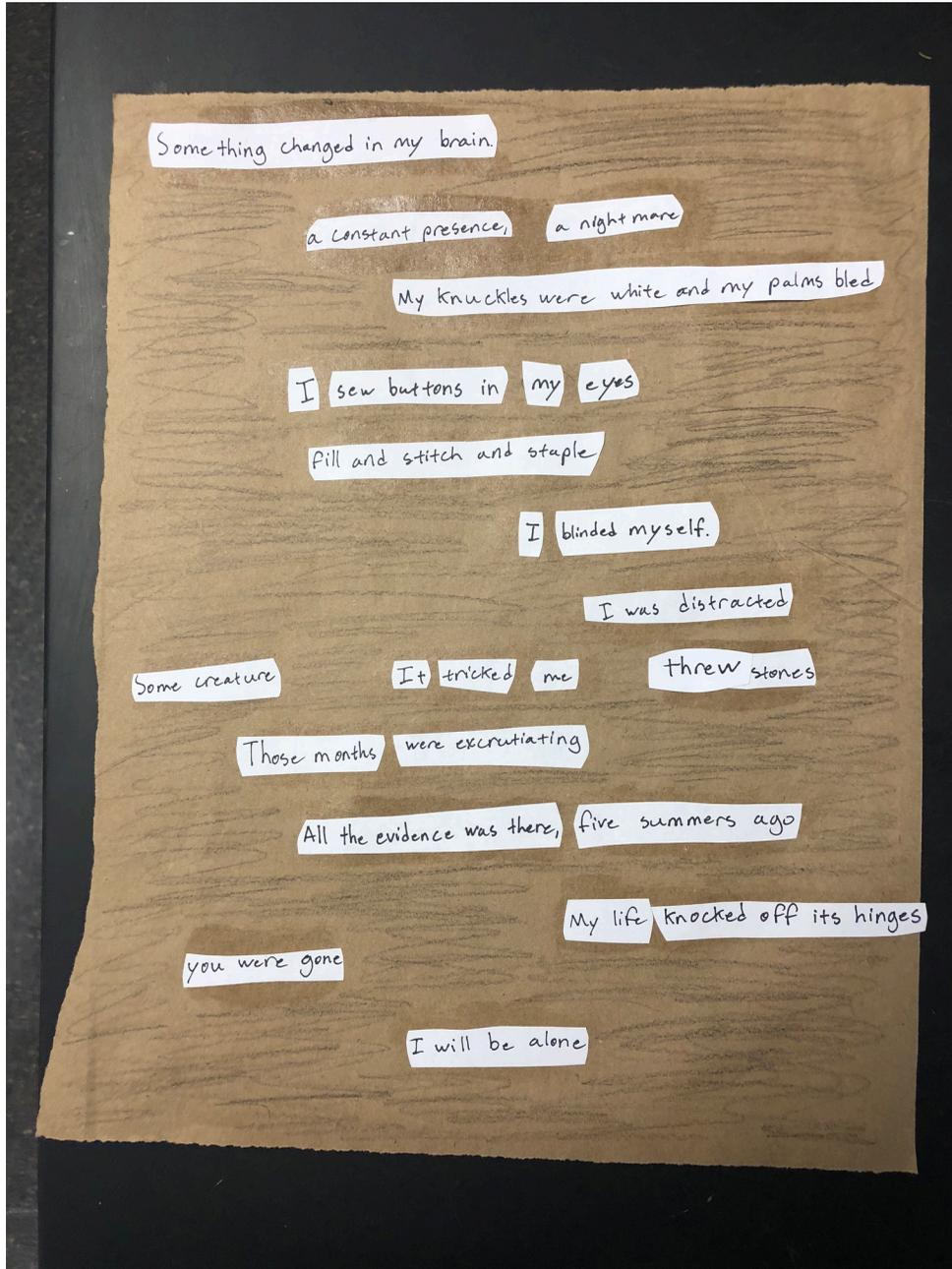
“Am I good?”

...

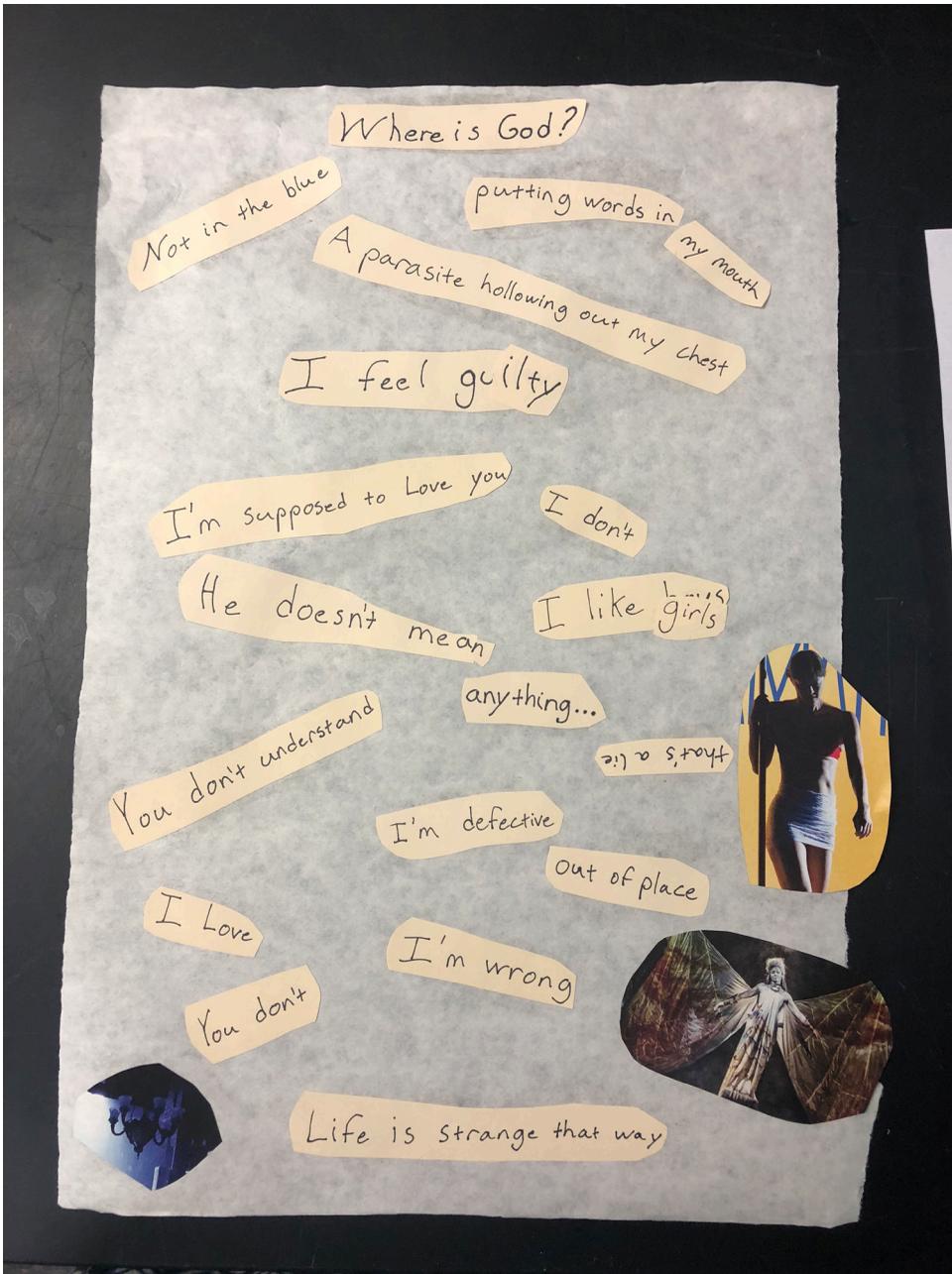
A muted siren moaned out on 145th street,

“Daisies don’t grow very well in Manhattan.”

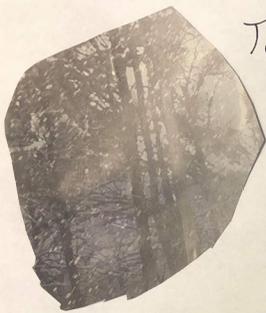
Recovery



Wade McCullough



Wade McCullough



To chase fireflies all night



Daylight
just out of reach

Watching stars,
but never holding





I tore myself
apart

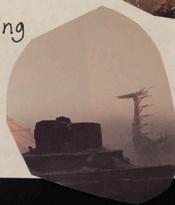
Put together
what
you wanted



I don't know what creature
is reflected in
the ripples of water



It's recovering
from your
lacerations





Wade McCullough



Wade McCullough

Number One Pork Chop Man

“I tell him you Number One Pork Chop Man!” Su said in her charming, and I think intentional, broken accent. Everything she said sounded angry, even when she was joking. She then looked at me and cackled. Su was short and round and held the arm of a slightly hunched, lean man with dark, lined skin who wore a white apron and white hat, pointed at me and rattled off something in Chinese. With a serious look on his face, he nodded at me and grunted. He then spun on his heels and went back to kitchen.

Su came over and put her arm around me, and squeezed. “He like you,” she said, and laughed again. A good foot taller, I pulled her close while balancing my plate that was piled high with steaming noodles, vegetables, and her husband’s signature dish, Garlic Pork. “That man is a genius,” I said, “and you’re not too bad either.”

Su was my Chinese god-mother. At least that’s what I called her. She fed me, tried to teach me a little Cantonese, and how to use chopsticks, although I only got the hang of one.

China Inn was in a low-traffic shopping center in Rocky Mount, wedged between Raleigh and the Outer Banks of North Carolina. The

restaurant was next door to a pet store, which of course invited plenty of stereotypical jokes. In the 1980s, before the proliferation of buffet style and takeout Asian restaurants on every corner, China Inn was a high-end restaurant. Everything was cliché red: murals, the cushions in the high back chairs, the vinyl booths, the doors, the cloth napkins, leaving only white linen tablecloths and dark woodwork for contrast. At least a half hour wait on Friday and Saturday nights was required for a table. In our area, it was about as exotic as an eatery got, and drew an interesting mix of business people, professionals, farmers, retirees, and laborers.

Common dishes on Chinese menus everywhere such as Beef Szechuan and Sweet and Sour Pork, were prepared in uncommon ways. The beef was sliced piecrust thin, lightly spiced and tossed with green onions. The pork was deep fried until it puffed up like a cotton ball and was served with vegetables, fresh pineapple, and an extra-sweet sauce. Their food was a treat, not anything like the offerings of the “fast food” takeout places that have sprouted up in shopping centers everywhere like mushrooms after a spring rain. As times changed, buffets became

Michael K. Brantley

the standard in the Chinese food business. China Inn eventually followed this path, first adding lunch, then later, weekend dinner buffets, but the food was never greasy or engulfed in MSG.

Chinese food made its way into America via San Francisco and the great influx of railroad workers in the 19th century. Dishes had to be adapted to American tastes and available ingredients. It is a well-known legend that the very Chinese-sounding dish “chop suey” was created from leftovers thrown together. Anything with a tomato sauce or even with broccoli has been Americanized, since tomatoes are a product of Native Americans and American broccoli is quite different than that in China. Fortune cookies were invented in California.

Ironically, in an era of dining that places a premium on heritage and authentic ethnic foods, American palates might be grateful. I have a nephew who works all over Asia, and he told me that most of the time when he orders Chinese food, it is swimming in grease. He often sees cats and dogs in cages tucked away in alleys and side streets next to eateries.

The food was always hot and fresh, and the family who owned it only made going there more interesting. It was more than that, though. They would laugh and joke,

Michael K. Brantley

and even sometimes bicker, but for that they would switch from English to Chinese. Su was a character. She always seemed to be skeptical of new customers, even to the point of being curt, turning her face into a scowl of mistrust when she dealt with the unfamiliar. But that all changed after a couple of visits — loyalty earned conversation. If she saw you coming from the parking lot, she'd have a table ready and your drinks on the way. If she saw you in Target or the grocery store, she would call you by whatever your regular order was, and put her hands on her hips, laughing.

For my wife and I, China Inn became our “go to” place. We went to China Inn to celebrate job promotions, the day we went into business for ourselves, birthdays, and eventually, we just headed there every Friday night. Friends and family often tagged along, and some nights there might be 20 of us. Su or her sister gave us the private back room. We always had a great time, and like a typical godmother, Su would chide us to eat more.

China Inn had signature dishes, with the same names you see everywhere, but something was always a little different, a little better. There was a variation of Kung Pao (no peanuts, ahead of the curve in food allergy service), General Tso's Chicken, and Hot and Sour Soup (which I swear cured winter head colds better than any prescription).

The best was Garlic Pork — very thinly sliced, marinated, bite-sized pieces of lightly fried tenderloin, tossed in a dark, sweet, garlic and red pepper glaze with onions. It wasn't even on the menu, but a special order for "insiders" only. On nights they didn't have the delicacy on the buffet, Su appeared out of nowhere, laughing, with a huge plate she delivered to our table, usually with a word about us not being disappointed. Sometimes, she slipped us a container to take home.

"Don't let Alan see the bag," Su would lean over and tell me, as if we slipping me contraband to sneak past her brother-in-law, who worked the register. "You know how he is."

There are plenty of theories about the dish General Tso's chicken. I've never been in a Chinese restaurant that didn't list it on the menu, and it tastes about the same everywhere.

It is believed the dish originated in Taiwan, and was introduced in New York in the 1970s. There were many General Tso's in Chinese military history, but it is believed the dish was named to honor Tso Tsung-tang, who crushed Muslim rebels and defeated the Russians in the late 1800s.

"Su," I asked one night, "Are all these recipes from your family? Do you ever miss China?"

"Not really," she said. "Just Hong Kong. Glad to be out of China. Garlic Pork recipe come from New York, not China. My husband make up."

One night, when our daughter Holly was about three, Su announced that it was time for Holly to get a tour of the kitchen. We thought Holly would protest, as she was still shy, but went right along with Su, long brown curls bouncing along. After what seemed like an eternity, the two emerged from the double doors, Holly clinging to bags of goodies stuffed with rice, fortune cookies, chopsticks, chocolate pirouettes and candies. "She's the perfect baby," Su said, beaming as a proud grandmother might.

We never thought about China Inn not being there. That is, until one night when Su looked distraught.

"My brother-in-law is selling this place, moving back to Maryland," Su said, barely masking her resentment. It was obvious she was not happy about the decision, even though she said she and her husband would stay and work for the new owners.

We went back once or twice after the transition. It just wasn't the same. The waitresses argued about who had to wait which tables. The restaurant was not crowded. Su was furious. "Nobody wants to work. This not going to last," she told us.

Michael K. Brantley

There is a scene in the cult classic, “A Christmas Story,” which runs on a cable network for 24-straight hours at Christmas every year that I can’t watch without thinking of China Inn. Ralphie and the rest of the Parkers have their traditional Christmas turkey ruined when the neighbors’ dogs ransack the kitchen and decimate the bird. The family heads out to find someplace open on Christmas — it turns out to be The Chop Suey Palace.

The family orders the closest thing they can find to turkey on the menu, which is Peking Duck, with the head still intact. Everyone at the table stares at the somewhat unnerving scene. Then the proprietor whips the cleaver down and decapitates the bird, relieving the tension that quickly converts into giggles and laughter and allows the Parkers to finally let loose of all that Christmas tension and stress.

We never ordered Peking Duck, and I don’t know if it was even on the menu. China Inn was less about the food as time passed and more about being an event to look forward to all week, a time for family and friends, and mostly laughter. Su was often the cleaver, the catalyst for all that, always with a gruff staccato followed by a warm embrace.

Shortly after it was sold, China Inn was no more. Shuttered

Michael K. Brantley

behind those red doors were a lot of good memories — college decisions, engagements, pregnancy announcements, promotions, teasing, plans and dreams were passed across those tables, right along with the soy sauce.

There was my best friend’s knack for running a serving spoon into a stainless steel tray and managing to get nothing but meat, no vegetables, as he constructed his “fried plate,” a second serving with a purpose. We relished how the other waitresses thought my nephew was my brother, which meant they also thought my oldest sister was my mom. We laughed at my three stick-thin nephews, who were told by Su they needed to “put some meat on ‘dose bones!” We debated whether fried rice and lo mein were merely a distraction from the finer things on the buffet. We talked about plans for the future, some realized, some failed. We talked about loves lost, starting families, and never once did I consider that our time together and the place would ever cease to exist.

I’m glad we couldn’t see the future, because it would not have made us savor the moment more, it would have made us feel we were on the clock, and consider that time was slipping from us, that lives were being lived faster than we knew, and that we’d never gather as that special group again. Those dinners were a rare time in life when taking some

thing for granted made the world right.

We've not had truly perfect Chinese food since. We've been to Raleigh, Wilson, other eateries in Rocky Mount, and Greenville, and had friends in other cities stay on vigil. We tried Thai and Korean and Japanese, much of it quite good, but nothing just right. And never any Garlic Pork.

The space is now occupied by a barbecue joint and I've found myself asking was the food really that much better than anywhere else? Was the 1980s chic atmosphere that key? Am I simply imagining something to be better than it was, as our brains often do when an experience slowly morphs into a memory?

Or, was it being part of something, something about my family and those who took us into their world and became extended family, even though we had absolutely nothing in common? There are places to get good food and decent service, but there is no Su to make it just right, to look out for the Number One Pork Chop Man.

Michael K. Brantley

Untitled



Zachary A. Philips

The Magnolia Review Ink Award

The Magnolia Review Ink Award Winner is “Meditations on the Creation” by Nathan Dennis. The imagery created a relatable experience to modern readers, and the repetition of dialogue is a wonderful view into the self-doubt yet continued persistence that plagues all artists and creators.

Honorable mentions are “In the Morning, They Disappear” by J. B. Santillan and “Recovery” by Wade McCullough. /Santillan’s prose about death, dreams, and collection is a fascinating take on how obsession can either connect one to the world or shut it out entirely, and McCullough’s poetry and collage growing into color show a wonderful sequence of the creation of something beautiful from nothing.

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Aretha Lemon

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the ninth issue of The Magnolia Review. Great news is still on its way! In November 2018 I launched a Kickstarter project to get Volume 4, Issue 1, and Volume 4, Issue 2 in print. Even though the project did not reach its goal and therefore did not receive any funding, I do appreciate and want to thank every person who backed the project. I especially want to thank those who have donated since then to help with the mailing costs, since I used my savings to print copies of Volume 4, Issue 1. Copies are available for \$15 each, through PayPal on the site, or just send a check to Suzanna Anderson at PO Box 1332, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068. Shipping is \$4. The goal is still to hand each contributor two free copies of his or her work, and ship them for every issue of The Magnolia Review. So I am working on translating the archived issues into InDesign and into print form. That is the goal for 2019. The ideal goal is for the past issues to fund the upcoming issue's contributor copies and mailing costs.

This is the first issue where there is a paywall from the start for the entire magazine. There will always be a free sample available, to help those who just want a glimpse to see if his or her work is compatible with the magazine. I do not want to prevent people from submitting just because they do not have the money to pay \$15 per issue. The literary magazine world and publishing world has been changing with the advent of digital publishing. People are still reading books. People are still writing words. People are still creating art.

This issue's theme was Lost and Found. Volume 5, Issue 2, out in July, the theme is questions.

Let's do our part, by writing our words, creating our artwork, and sharing our words and artwork with the world. 2019 is going to be great. Thank you for reading, and check out the next issue in July 2019.

Suzanna Anderson

Editor-in-Chief and Founder of The Magnolia Review

Suzanna Anderson

Reviews

Blunt Force by Gary Beck. United Kingdom: Wordcatcher Publishing, 2018. 110 pages. \$5.99, electronic, \$10.99 paperback.

It is always a pleasure to read Gary Beck's words. *Blunt Force* is no different. This poetry collection explores the military, homelessness, and other crises that people deal with on a regular basis.

The poem "Combat Zone" is a perfect example of what it means to be a soldier and return to home, only to be reminded of the battlefield: "Bursts of fire, / bodies duck for cover, / hug the earth / hope they don't get hit, / time seems to stop / until the gunshots end / and they resume play / in a Bronx park." The turn of the final two lines draws the reader and the speaker into the present environment, and how quickly PTSD can flash back.

In "Rain Delay," the two stanzas mirror each other, as one waits for the rain to stop so "...I can go to the park / for a concert" and in the second stanza, "Someone else / sits indoors, / tense, / frustrated, / hoping / for / the / rain / to start, / so he can save his crop / from drought."

Protest is a common theme with the original "Protest" and eight more numbered poems throughout the collection. In "Protest IX," the speaker is part of the group that sets up tents; however, "but the wealthy mayor / ordered tents

taken down / so we'd melt away / with the first snow, / stop annoying / the servants of privilege, / yet some of us stayed / despite the coming freeze / hoping Americans / might remember Valley Forge."

—Suzanna Anderson

The Remission of Order by Gary Beck. Amazon Digital Services LLC, 2018. 139 pages. \$5.99, electronic, \$11.99, paperback.

Gary Beck's poetry explores the problems of homelessness, starvation, and other crises that Americans face in living paycheck to paycheck or losing their homes, as well as their actions in fighting overseas or at home. In "Purple Heart Revisited" "Our children shed / invisible blood. / The scars are real, / ongoing agonies / with slow recovery, urging us to heal / unseen wounds / with medals of appreciation / for hazardous service" (16)

Beck's language is strong and on point throughout. "Voices of the Dead II" the speaker looks to a grandmother for advice, but the speaker did not listen to her advice when she was alive, and "Now I'm at a crossroads / between criminal acts / and the need for something else, / a better, safer future / where I don't hurt anyone." (23).

In “Disregard” the repetition of dreams and then the speaker falls into unconscious activity: “Dreams of falling / from perilous heights / snap us awake / just before impact. / Dreams of pursuit / by malevolent hordes / snap us awake / just before capture. / Unconscious activity / denies nature’s mandate / for refreshing rest, / designed to prepare us / for demanding tomorrows” (36).

The “demanding tomorrows” come in “Hallowed Be Thy Gun” where the family’s musket is handed down through the generations to fight in America’s wars and conflicts (44).

Yet at home the problems of food and hunger linger, especially in “A La Carte” “The manager lurks in the doorway / puffing on a cigarette. / No customers move past him. / The stove grows cold, / the food grows old, / the waiters hulk near tables, / captives of unused menus” (40). The theme of hunger continues in “Motivation” where “hungry elephants stampede, and “...people forgot / that the big beasts / couldn’t go shopping for food / at the local supermarket” (99).

Even with the pain of the past, present, and the bleak future at first glance, there is still hope. In “Seasonal Yearning,” the speaker says, “When winter gifts its killing cold / and distant hopes of spring grow old, / I know that I will surely miss / the blossoms of the clematis” (112). America has had problems in the past and will continue to have problems in the future, but there is hope that life will improve for everyone

—Suzanna Anderson

Overhead from Longing by Judith Alexander Brice. Cincinnati, OH: David Robert Books, 2018. 130 pages. \$20.00, paperback.

Brice opens the collection with a quote from Barbara Crooker, *Radiance*, with “Sometimes, I am startled out of myself / like this morning, when the wild geese came squawking.... [and yet] / They stitch up the sky, and it is whole again.” The first poem is “The geese stitch up the sky,” and the first stanza asks, “Or is it each and every one of the birds— / not just the flying geese— / but our warbler, oriole and kite / who in our dimmest, darkest hours, / can frisk our pockets of despair?” (15).

Brice has brilliant choices of words, too many to list here. But one of my favorites from “Migraine” is “Heaving shadows blacken my mind, / mist all grass underfoot, and drench / me in fields with desolate dark— // though quickly a Towhee trill / might quaver me awake, / rustle my blighted brain, / even grab its bilious gaze // to catch silken embers of sun / as they topaz the sky” (27). And in “These three years—” the pain of waiting rooms and doctors suggesting a walker, “More anguish / than a soul could know / more struggle / than a poem can own” (106-107).

The title poem “Overhead from Longing,” is dedicated to Charlie, April 19, 2017, where “Sometimes, your voice catches me / from beyond and overhead, from your longing / love—I think of your timbre, / the tremolo and cords it strikes, reminiscent / always of starlings, their cantabile

Reviews

speech, / as they learned to sing—no, talk, to Mozart” (37).

In “Vespers of Fireflies,” the indentations of the line are like the flash of fireflies in the image of “a four year old / had just been given / a brand new / flashlight / (a tiny one for sure) / and all the while delighted / in jumping / from creaking log / up to rock / then down / to swampy bog, / each second switching / his winking wand / on, / then off, / then on / once more” (85).

Brice’s poems explore memory, birds, pain, and more. This is a beautiful collection that is a must-have on the bookshelf, shared with friends, and reread often.

—Suzanna Anderson

Bombing the Thinker by Darren C. Demaree. Gardena, CA: Backlash Press, 2018. 152 pages. \$, paperback.

Demaree opens with “A Letter to Auguste Rodin about Useless Wine,” and “We’ve been mud / & bird // & dealt with / terrible loneliness” and “again was left / wanting // more bronze, / more marble” (9-10).

In “A Letter to Auguste Rodin, Explaining the Bombing of the Thinker,” the speaker says, “We know there can be / no comfort for a dead man // about a cloned son / that never actually lived, / but this felt like the right // thing to do under such / circumstances. We’ve / decided not to heal him. // He will remain un-alive. / He will be placed back on / his pedestal, without repair” (37-38).

Reviews

Because the Thinker was “Originally Named the Poet” it is interesting how Demaree uses that name in poetry to see that “If he had stayed / simply The Poet // that fire would / have ruined him. // He stayed scarred. / He stayed here” (66).

There are moments of imagination, like in “A Damaged Thinker #20” where “...I heard none // of the explosion, because I was / too taken by a neck that won’t / move. I fell face-first. I felt // cheated by the placement / of the dynamite. If I fell back, / I could have had the sky” (47-48).

There are moments of humor, like when the speaker whispers a dirty joke in The Thinker’s ear, or in “Poem #164 about the Thinker Bombing Makes Me Laugh” that the crash from the pedestal was instead from a moment where The Thinker “just tried // to stand up / after a hundred years / of weight // & thought / he fell, splayed / against the concrete, // his legs bronzed / & asleep from effort, / his embarrassment // too much to explain” (116).

It was joy to read Demaree’s collection about The Thinker and art, exploring art and poetry together, and playing with language and line breaks.

—Suzanna Anderson

Lady, You Shot Me by Darren C. Demaree. Montreal, Canada: 8th House Publishing, 2018. 78 pages. \$14.88, paperback.

Demaree studied the music and narratives of Sam Cooke. In “Decorating the Phrase,” the tercet stanzas begin with “Every word / shares two skins / with the tongue // that releases it / into the world / & Sam Cooke // could lift / & separate / the same word // fifteen times / in a row / & you would // still believe / there was a soul / in the repetition” (5).

Because Sam Cooke was a singer and composer, the musical elements wove into the poems like “Crop” and “A Harmony So Tight You Could See It In the Air.” In “Crop,” “Some songs / begin with a tether, / but they never end // that way / & if they try to / they become hymn // for a God / that might allow / such harness // to be attached / to the rockets / of one man // opening / the back of his throat / to charge the heavens” (6). Music is more than a sound, it touches other senses in “A Harmony So Tight You Could See It In the Air” ““If there is a music to save / us, we must rub it // all over our bodies, / until the scent overwhelms / the rest of the empty air” (20).

“Lady, You Shot Me #16” with the repeating line “Don’t fight it” at the beginning of the stanzas is well placed, and the repetition is striking when read aloud.

Don’t fight it,
the feeling always
burns at first.

Don’t fight it,
the feeling always
confuses the witness.

Don’t fight it,
the feeling always
ends with a shutter.

Don’t fight it,
the feeling is always
a story we tell.

(23)

Demaree’s collection about Sam Cooke is a fantastic read, especially while listening to Sam Cooke sing.

—Suzanna Anderson

Never One for Promises by Sarah A. Etlinger. American Fork, Utah: Kelsay Books, 2018. 49 pages. \$14.00, paperback.

I studied music for years. All of those years learning to read the notes and play in rhythm was an education in itself and paved the way for poetry. But Sarah Etlinger's poetry is music, an education in the rhythm and space of silence within those musical melodies. I first read her work when she submitted to *The Magnolia Review*, and I was immediately captivated. I rarely accept entire packets, but Etlinger's was one of the few. Etlinger's poetry is a beautiful collection of images of lovers and how they connect and disconnect. From Noah to Zeus to Kant readers to God on the subway, Etlinger carries the reader through a narrative of love, hope, and loss.

In "Summer Aubade," the speaker begins "Sometimes we feel more than we ever are: // hammocked in your arms / we fade into summer's / constellations / ... until dawn erases the stars." Such a beautiful way to end a poem! The depth of Etlinger's word choice is striking in every line, a word never out of place, a line break just so pretty perfect that I can't imagine this poem existing in a different way. Her word choices are precise and open the world into possibilities that I couldn't imagine without her voicing them. Images I've seen but haven't described in such gorgeous detail. I can't even choose a favorite poem because I love them all.

I hope the reader enjoys every word in this collection as much as I have. Defi-

nitely on the list of poetry that I will come back repeatedly. Etlinger's work is a presence you need in your life. I look forward to reading her next poetry collection.

—Suzanna Anderson

An Absolutely Remarkable Thing by Hank Green. New York: Dutton, 2018. 352 pages. \$26.00, hardcover.

I reread Patrick Rothfuss's words on the back cover several times: "Fun and full of truth. To be honest, I'm a little irritated at how good the book is. I don't need this kind of competition." Because I agree that this book is good, and it is Hank Green's first novel. The reader goes on a journey with April May as she finds a giant sculpture and makes a video with her friend Andy that goes viral. She deals with the fame and makes discoveries about the sculpture.

Overall I loved the use of emails and Tweets in the novel. Since April May won fame from social media and the Internet, it is only appropriate to share them in the story. The subject line is included, like **NO! THIS ONE! READ THIS ONE FIRST!** and **READ THIS ONE FIRST** and **You said it was warm?** followed by the email itself (20-23). And the tweets, for example,

March 17

@PrimPat1ot: Sometimes I wonder how much people like April May are being paid to shill for the government.

Reviews

@AprilMaybeNot: They pay me in PopTarts. So. Many. PopTarts. Why did I sign this deal? I have a problematic number of PopTarts. (169)

But perhaps my favorite part of the novel is not only watching April May deal with the sudden rise to fame, but her theory of tiered fame. I will only share a portion of it here.

Tier 1: Popularity

You are a big deal in your high school or neighborhood. You have a peculiar vehicle that people around town recognize, you are a pastor at a medium-to-large church, you were once the star of the high school football team.

Tier 2: Notoriety

You are recognized and/or well-known within certain circles.

Tier 3: Working-Class Fame

A lot of people know who you are and they are distributed around the world.

Tier 4: True Fame

You get recognized by fans enough that it is a legitimate burden.

Tier 5: Divinity

You are known by every person in your world, and you are such a big deal that they no longer consider you a person. ...You are not currently alive.” (121-122).

An exciting read that I could not put down until I finished it. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do, and recommend it highly to others.

—Suzanna Anderson

Mark the Dwarf by Jack D. Harvey.
Amazon Digital Services LLC, 2015.
328 pages. \$2.99, electronic.

Mark is an elderly dwarf living in Phoenix, Arizona. He receives two mysterious letters and embarks on a quest filled with interesting characters in novel situations. I laughed throughout the story, and even though I did not understand every allusion to history and literature, I was still able to enjoy the story.

Harvey’s language is top notch, and there are too many examples to quote them all. Mark goes bowling and finds himself in a new adventure: “He held a hand up in front of his face, but could see nothing. After a short period of time, Mark had a sensation of descending at a tremendous rate of speed—like being in an elevator free-falling through space. Mark remembered something he read about Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity and an elevator—the concept of no frame of reference; a simple analogy for the common reader and this analogy had always frightened him....Mark waited motionless for what was coming next. Slowly, the pitch-black dark gave way to grayness and then to a kind of pearl gray that seemed to emanate from every direction. Mark began to

make out some features far below him, emerging from the mist. As the air cleared and visibility was restored, he realized immediately that he was high up in the air, maybe a thousand feet or more from the ground or whatever the surface was below and that he was sitting on the edge of a dilapidated cement sill that stretched on as far as he could see. The flat green surface below was so far away that he might as well have been in an airplane for all the detail he could make out—was this a shallow green sea or a green landscape? The only thing that he could be sure of was that the color of the surface below was green; a green that was indescribable and almost unendurable to look at; the greenness of green, the color green, stripped of its disguises.”

This is one of the most original books that I have read in a long while. Whimsical and full of truth, Harvey explores the elements of time, clowns, and what it means to be living in this modern world of ours.

—Suzanna Anderson

The Frayed Edge of Memory by James Croal Jackson. Cleveland, OH: Writing Knights Press, 2017. 44 pages. \$10.00, paperback.

I have been reading James Croal Jackson's work since he submitted poetry to the Volume 1, Issue 2 of *The Magnolia Review*. I'm thrilled that his work is also in Volume 3, Issue 2 and Volume 4, Issue 2. It is exciting to read his collection *The Frayed Edge of Memory*

and share with you a selection of my favorite lines, though really I would share the entire collection.

In “All the Bulbs are Burning Out,” the speaker begins, “I am scared to death / of death. // Not just the *big* death / but tiny deaths, too. // All the bulbs are burning out / in my house one by one. // In living, we accrue small darkneses. // Mirror to mirror: void / where my eyes should be” (6). Jackson's language is strong as he builds his images. The build up to the line “we accrue small darkneses” is just one of those hooks of truth that you immediately recognize when you read it. Small darkneses! Yes, that is what that is!

His short poems are as powerful as the longer poems. One of the short poems in the collection, “Freckles,” connects counting sheep in order to sleep with music: “Your freckles / count more easily / than make-believe sheep // I count in / quarter-note trills // remnants // between loneliness / and / sleep” (8).

Fog recurs throughout the collection. In “Foggy Mornings,” the speaker says, “When mirrors were our only reflections, / our pasts—behind / doors rusted, opened only to / reveal slow decisions— / lovers like mud / in shallow potholes” (9).

Jackson's language in “Utah Sandstone” propels forward through the lines, “I run from exceptional red. / Distance. Majestic arches. Loop- / de-loop of common want. Canyons, / or peace of mind. Say Zen. Say / Zion. Watch as wind-up forests / spiral from sand. Leaves whisper” (15).

Reviews

The collection's title comes from "Skeletons of New Year's Eve" where "...hope is like a kaleidoscope, a conjecture. / Each dying wave returns, even at the frayed edge // of memory, how the dead are lavish with flowers / and stories. Still, we press on to uncork // our champagne future: drafts of breath in each / new year, dead waves haunting the mortal tide // with no specific beginning, no obvious end" (16). A poem often shares a title with the collection. However, the title of this collection comes from a line in "Skeletons of New Year's Eve," and that is refreshing, especially since the strength of "frayed edge // of memory" with the line break is powerful in the poem.

I hope you enjoy this collection, and I look forward to reading more of Jackson's work in the future.

—Suzanna Anderson

Mishigamaa by Robert Krantz. Amazon Digital Services LLC, 2017. 22 pages. \$5.38, paperback.

Krantz submitted to the first issue of *The Magnolia Review*. His poems are magnetic and show poetic mastery. His language builds strong and lasting images. His chosen language sounds a melodious music to read aloud, a rhythm that you have to play to completion.

In "Pearl," the speaker begins with, "I remember the wheat fields / of Iowa and the photograph / of you I took with me, / and how neither ever really ended." The speaker continues, "We

ate and loved / much in that decade, / collided with stars, / authored myths / and stuffed our age-spotted hands / into denim pockets." The image and sound carries through the lines, building to the final image of "The half shells we find on beaches / were once a thing joined together, / breathing, and grinding / new pearls into place." The poem builds like a pearl, with the images stringing together into a cohesive piece.

Laundry can be boring. The speaker reflects on his fellow laundry-doers in "Load," where "The bachelors in the laundromat / spill their words / like bleach / on black clothes, / speak of condos / and alimonies— / thick humidities turning." The clothes transform into more, they are "damp thoughts" as they wash, and they "... breathe[s] / restless poems / into my blues and grays. / Soon this summer rain / will end, volume of water / striking pavement / will knob itself silent." Krantz ends the poem with a moment that draws the reader back to the reality of the laundromat, "The cash machine, / against the flecked wall, / reminds me to change."

The collection ends with "Pathfinder," about a hatchet and its story. It shares the story of two boys cutting down a tree and of a sibling wrestling game gone awry.

Overall, Krantz's poems are musical and full of images that inspire looking at mundane events in a new and interesting way. I look forward to reading more of Krantz's work.

—Suzanna Anderson

Reviews

Firefly: Big Damn Hero by James Lovegrove. London: Titan Books, 2018. 336 pages. \$20.66, hardcover.

With fourteen episodes, a movie, a graphic novel, and a board game, *Firefly* has hooked the hearts of many. And with this novel of the crew on another adventure, it is a rip-roaring fun time. There are summaries throughout to ground the reader where the book takes place in the episode timeline. For example, the crew takes a job from Badger, and when River mimics his accent, “Oi, bint, none of your lip,” Badger retorted, but truth was, he had a soft spot for River, cultivated last time they’d met, when he’d held the crew hostage. ‘I washed before I come ‘ere today. Clean as a whistle’” (18).

Simon is still trying to undo the Alliance’s damage to River, and “After he had decoded the letters River sent from the Academy—the Alliance-run experimental center that had methodically driven her mad—Simon had spent countless sleepless nights wondering if she was dead. In a way, she was. The fantasy of her future had turned to dust” (124).

The reader learns more about Mal’s past and his coming of age on the planet Shadow with flashbacks. The reader meets the Four Amigos, Mal’s friends and cohorts on Shadow.

The Chinese is still present, *Tā mā de* and *Gǒu shǐ* and *mèi mèi*. It was pleasing to see the Chinese woven into the text and the story. Overall it was fun read to spend time with the crew as they delivered cargo and encountered conflicts along the way.

Titan Books has two more upcoming titles in the *Firefly* universe, *The Magnificent Nine* by James Lovegrove, available March 2019, and *Generations* by Tim Lebbon, available October 2019.

—Suzanna Anderson

I Exist. Therefore I Am by Shirani Rajapakse. Amazon Digital Services LLC, 2018. 179 pages. \$7.99, electronic. \$15.99, paperback.

Rajapakse has traveled to India often, and these stories “...were written at two stages of my life and represents the eight years I spent in India, working and travelling to cities and also some of the remote places where I encountered many instances of negativity towards women and girls. Some of the incidents I came across or heard about are too painful to recount or fictionalize. The tales I have included here are a mere fraction of the lives touched during my stay.”

In “Drink Your Milk and Go to Sleep,” a married woman continues to carry girls while her husband and mother-in-law want a boy child. Her family takes her to a midwife who “...was famed for helping women with problems. She must be good because women from all over the land visited her to find

solutions to their sorrows. She didn't talk much. There was no time for any words as it was obvious why we were all there. She had lots of customers like me waiting to be served every day. She gave me something to drink when I got home."

As a widow, Gayathri Devi was "... waiting to die" in the story "On Death Row." In the beginning of the story, Gayathri Devi "...had been sitting here in the same place for a while, not caring about what happened around her. She'd seen the colors change in the sky a thousand and one times and more and was no longer interested. Was no longer overjoyed. She no longer anticipated the fading beauty of the end of the day as she did the first time she arrived." The widows "...were a burden on the young, an unnecessary life that needed to be cared for, fed, clothed and helped along the way. There was no time, no money or room left in houses for the likes of these women that passed their expiration date and were still sitting on the shelf, when whatever little money the families had were needed for the hungry mouths to feed, the demands of school and the dowries to be collected throughout their lives. Women like Gayathri Devi were put aside and left to themselves and what better way to get rid of the unwanted than to send them to God."

The collection's title comes from the story "I Exist. There I Am." Those words are the opening line and the refrain carried throughout the story. "I rest deep inside you, wrapped up tight like an old woman swathed in quilts in the desert during winter when it's too

cold to do anything but sit by the fire and wish it was summer once again." "You see me through the folds of fat projected onto the screen and can only discern a small shape with a centre that beats like a drum. The sound and rhythm unlike the drums they played at your union, but a drum just the same. Thudak, thudak, thudak, it beats softly. You place your hand on your stomach but you can't feel me, nor can you hear the drum beats of my heart pounding inside me. Only the machine can tell you that."

And in "Secrets" "Rules kept the family together, rules made things work the way it was supposed to."

Each story is heart breaking in its own way. I can't even begin to imagine the stories that were too painful to recount or fictionalize. Rajapakse's prose is as strong as her poetry. The characters' pain is real and their circumstances resonate. I hope for a brighter future.

—Suzanna Anderson

Final Inventory by David Anthony Sam. Johnston, PA: Prolific Press Inc., 2018. 22 pages. \$8.95, paperback.

Every time I read a poem by David Anthony Sam, I am filled with his images and strong language, people I can connect to, and a voice that propels me to the end (and often back to the beginning to read the poem again.) His collection *Final Inventory* is no different, except it is about his dying mother and the years without her.

Reviews

In “Anticipation,” a young speaker is coming home as his mother watches him. The mother waits as the speaker “...studied the ground for / shallow holes where / rain had gathered sunlight / into clear reflection. // Behind sun-mirrored glass, / she waited her elation, / knowing I must leap / every heaven to splash / any puddle I could find” (3).

The collection’s title comes from the poem “Final Inventory (On Her Dying)” and the repetition of “wait” throughout is a strong pull as it moves the pace forward and slows down. The “wait” changes, from “I think it needs thinning / or it will not bloom / another spring. Wait...” to “Wait...wait. / Open the door to my / dining room... Do I still have that furniture? / Do I still...Wait...” (10-11).

Green beans were part of childhood dinners with pudding for dessert in “The Independence of Green Beans.” Sam explores the experience and memory of picking green beans in the garden and preparing them for supper as a child. As an adult in the second stanza, the speaker makes green beans and pudding for supper, and says, “Here, in this distance from childhood, / I must mother myself a new life” (20).

The collection ends with “Reverberant” where “All this world / depends on echoes: / canyons walking concrete— / waves breaking the ocean.... // While I break my pieces into their fragments, / my ears attune / to that vacant place / where your voice was / when last we spoke” (21).

Reviews

Death is truly not the end for the ones we love. Sam’s mother may be gone, but the poems here remember her memory. Her presence will pen more words about her life and the love a son has for his mother.

—Suzanna Anderson

Depression Hates a Moving Target: How Running With My Dog Brought Me Back From the Brink by Nita Sweeney. Miami, Florida: Mango, 2019. 288 pages. \$18.99, paperback.

Personally, I hate running unless I am chasing down a tennis ball on the court. So Nita’s goal of running a marathon is not a goal for me. However, I loved reading about how Nita returned to her love of running and started small with a kitchen timer in her neighborhood before she was able to run a full marathon.

The prologue begins as Nita is running the marathon. Nita’s mind says negative things like “Who do you think you are?” and “You’re old and fat. People will make fun of you and you’ll die of heart failure.” But Nita keeps running. Her niece Jamey died, and she was a runner. Nita’s friend Kim said running was fun, and Fiona bought shoes to start running. Small moments add up to convince Nita to start running again. She runs with her dog Morgan, aka Mr. Dawg, slowly building the momentum to complete her first 5K.

You can return to something you used to enjoy. Start small. Your goal may not be running, but Nita's story is inspiring as I return to my past loves of art, reading, spending time in the snow, and so on. Enjoy your journey, even the steps that seem like you will never reach the finish line.

—Suzanna Anderson

Contributors

Sudeep Adhikari is a structural engineer/Lecturer from Kathmandu, Nepal. His recent publications were with *Beatnik Cowboys*, *Chiron Review*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Midnight Lane Boutique*, *Occulum*, *Silver Birch Press*, *Eunoia Review*, *Utt Poetry* and *Spilling Cocoa over Martin Amis*. Also a Pushcart Prize nominee for the year 2018, Sudeep is currently working on his fourth poetry book “*Hyper-Real Reboots*,” which is scheduled for publication in September 2018 through Weasel Press, Texas, USA.

Charles Joseph Albert lives in San Jose, California, with his wife and three children, where he works as a metallurgist and writes poetry and fiction on the trolley to and fro. His work has appeared recently in *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Collective Unrest*, *First Lit Review*, *The Apeiron Review*, *Asissi*, *The Ibis Head the MOON*, *the Lowestoft Chronicle*, and *The Literary Nest*.

Rey Armenteros is a Los Angeles-based painter whose expressionistic brand of surrealism was largely shaped by the Far East iconography he encountered during his several years in Seoul, Korea. He writes a blog on the methodologies of art titled, *Through Concentrated Breath*, <http://blog.reyarmenteros.com/>.

Jan Ball has had 274 poems published or accepted in journals in the U.S., Great Britain, Canada, India and Ireland in journals like: *Atlanta Review*, *Calyx*, *Connecticut Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *Phoebe*, and *Verse Wisconsin*. Her two chapbooks and first full length poetry book were published by Finishing Line Press. When not writing, Jan likes to work in the garden at her farm and work out in Chicago at FFC with her personal trainer. She and her husband travel a lot but like to cook for friends when they are home.

Gary Beck has spent most of his adult life as a theater director. He has 14 published chapbooks. His poetry collections include: *Days of Destruction* (Skive Press), *Expectations* (Rogue Scholars Press). *Dawn in Cities*, *Assault on Nature*, *Songs of a Clerk*, *Civilized Ways*, *Displays*, *Perceptions*, *Fault Lines*, *Tremors*, *Perturbations* and *Rude Awakenings* (Winter Goose Publishing) *The Remission of Order*, *Contusions* and *Desperate Seeker* will be published by Winter Goose Publishing. *Conditioned Response* (Nazar Look). *Resonance* (Dreaming Big Publications). *Virtual Living* (Thurston Howl Publications). *Blossoms of Decay*, *Expectations* and *Blunt Force* (Wordcatcher Publishing). His novels include: *Extreme Change* (Cogwheel Press), *Flawed Connections* (Black Rose Writing), *Call to Valor* and *Crumbling Ramparts* (Gnome on Pigs Productions). As part of the continuing series, 'Stand to Arms Marines', Gnome on Pigs Productions will publish the third book in the series, *Raise High the Walls*. *Sudden Conflicts* (Lillicat Publishers). *Acts of Defiance* and *Flare Up* will be published by Wordcatcher Publishing. *Extreme Change* will be published by Winter Goose Publishing. His short story collections include, *A Glimpse of Youth* (Sweatshoppe Publications). *Now I Accuse and other stories* (Winter Goose Publishing). *Dogs Don't Send Flowers and other stories* will be published by Wordcatcher Publishing. *The Republic of Dreams and other essays* will be published by Gnome on Pigs Productions. His original plays and translations of Moliere, Aristophanes and Sophocles have been produced Off Broadway. His poetry, fiction and essays have appeared in hundreds of literary magazines. He lives in New York City.

Susan P. Blevins was born in England, lived 26 years in Italy, and has now resided in the USA for the past 25 years, first in Taos, NM, and currently in Houston, TX. While living in Rome she had a weekly column in an international, English-language newspaper, writing about food and restaurant reviews primarily, though not exclusively. Since living in the USA, she has written pieces on gardens and gardening for N. American and European publications, and she is now writing stories of her life and travels, and poetry, and gaining traction in various literary publications such as *New Verse News*, *Feminine Collective*, *Mused Bellaonline*, *Write Place at the Write Time*, *Scarlet Leaf*, to mention just a few. She loves reading, writing, cats, classical music, and stimulating conversation.

Michael K. Brantley is the author of *Memory Cards* (2015, BRW) and the forthcoming *Galvanized: The Unlikely Odyssey of a Carolina Confederate* (2019, Univ. of Nebraska). He has an MFA from Queens University of Charlotte and teaches English at N.C. Wesleyan College.

Judith Alexander Brice, a retired Pittsburgh psychiatrist, has the honorable distinction of being married to a wonderful poet—namely, Charles W. Brice—who has published widely including in *The Magnolia Review!* This first drew her attention to this very eclectic lovely journal, which happens to have a name that called to one of her enclosed poems, “My Magnolia Gamble.” Dr. Brice has published in many on-line and print journals and newspapers including *The Paterson Literary Review*, *Vox Populi.com*, *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Versewrights.com*, and *Annals of Internal Medicine* among others. Her first book, *Renditions in a Palette*, appeared in 2013. Her second book, *Overhead From Longing*, has just hit the shelves.

Alexandra Brinkman is a student at Bowling Green State University.

Frank De Canio Took various poetry and writing courses At BMCC in Manhattan and Jersey City State College in New Jersey and has attended poetry workshops in Manhattan for many years.

Aidan Coleman has published two collections of poetry, and his work has appeared in *Best Australian Poems*, *The Australian*, *Australian Book Review*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Glasgow Review of Books*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, and *Virginia Quarterly Review*. He is currently writing a biography of the poet John Forbes.

Daniel de Culla is a writer, poet, and photographer. He’s a member of the Spanish Writers Association, Earthly Writers International Caucus, Poets of the World, International Authors (IA), Surrealism Art, and others, and director of *Gallo Tricolor Review* and *Robespierre Review*. He participated in many Festivals of Poetry, and Theater in Madrid, Burgos, Berlin, Minden, Hannover, and Geneve. He has exposed in many galleries from Madrid, Burgos, London, and Amsterdam. He is moving among North Hollywood, Madrid, and Burgos. Contact him via email at gallotricolor@yahoo.com.

Lydia A. Cyrus is a central Appalachian writer from Huntington, West Virginia. She is an award-winning scholar and her work has been featured in various places in print and online. She is a proud Mountain Woman who strives to make positive change in and about Appalachia. She lives in Lafayette, Indiana with her strong will and sense of truth, which guide her wherever she goes.

Nathan Dennis is a Manhattan based playwright and poet of Floridian extraction. A graduate of NYU Tisch Department of Dramatic Writing, his most recent play, *Lord of Florida*, was workshopped by PrismHouse Theatre Company in the Fall of 2017. He is the founder of *Little Shitty Theatre Company* which is developing his new play about a descent through the inferno: *Circle of Shit*. Further information on current and past projects can be found at nathandennis.ink

Deborah H. Doolittle has lived in lots of different places but now calls North Carolina home. She has an MA in Women's Studies and an MFA in Creative Writing and teaches at Coastal Carolina Community College. She is the author of *No Crazy Notions*, *That Echo*, and *Floribunda*. Some of her poems have recently appeared (or will soon appear) in *Albatross*, *Eclectica*, *Hubbub*, *Chiron Review*, *Poets Espresso Review*, *Slipstream*, and *Steam Ticket*. She shares a home with her husband, three housecats, and a backyard full of birds.

Steven Goff studied psychology, creative writing, and publishing at Drexel University. He enjoys writing personal poems indicative of life in the Philadelphia area as well as ekphrastic and literary leaning poetry. His other interests include making music and mosaic art. Goff's poems have appeared in such publications as *Pendora Magazine*, *The 33rd*, and *Literary Yard*.

Dave Gregory used to live and work at sea but now writes in a bay-windowed, book-lined room. Currently a reader for *Gigantic Sequins*, his work has appeared in many publications such as *Literally Stories*, *Ellipsis*, and *Bull & Cross*. <https://courtlandavenue.wordpress.com/> and <https://twitter.com/CourtlandAvenue>

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in the *Homestead Review*, *Poetry East* and *Columbia Review* with work upcoming in the *Roanoke Review*, *the Hawaii Review*, and *North Dakota Quarterly*.

Jack D. Harvey's poetry has appeared in *Scrivener*, *The Comstock Review*, *The Magnolia Review*, *The Antioch Review*, *The Piedmont Poetry Journal* and a number of other online and in print poetry magazines over the years. The author has been a Pushcart nominee and over the years has been published in a few anthologies.

Kevin Haslam is a content writer and communications professional. He was a paint salesman before shifting to writing where he earned an MA in English at Morehead State University. He resides in Cranston, Rhode Island, with his wife and two boys, and he can be found at www.KevinHaslamAuthor.com.

Born in London, Michael Paul Hogan is a poet, fiction writer, and literary essayist whose work has been featured extensively in the USA, UK, India, and China. He is the author of six volumes of poetry, the most recent of which, *Chinese Bolero*, with illustrations by the great contemporary painter Li Bin, was published in 2015.

Erica Michaels Hollander is a lawyer, artist, psychodramatist and poet. With her husband and her pooch, she lives in the Front Range of the Rockies in Colorado and seeks to express her vision in a number of ways.

Mark Hudson Mark Hudson is an Illinois poet and artist, who spends most of his time writing and doing art. He has a degree in creative writing from Columbia College, in Chicago, and has been published many times in print, online, and internationally. To check out his poetry on the web, go to Illinoispoets.org.

In a past century Heikki Huotari attended a one-room school and spent summers on a forest-fire lookout tower, is now a retired math professor, and has published three chapbooks, one of which won the Gambling The Aisle prize, and one collection, *Fractal Idyll* (A..P Press). Another collection is in press.

Nancy Byrne Iannucci teaches history and lives poetry in Troy, NY. Her poetry can be found in numerous publications including *Allegro Poetry Magazine*, *Gargoyle*, *Autumn Sky Poetry Daily*, *Typehouse Literary Magazine*, *Riggwelter Press*, *Three Drops from a Cauldron*, and *Picaroon Poetry* to name a few. Her debut book of poetry, *Temptation of Wood*, was recently published by *Nixes Mate Review*.

Jayant Kashyap, a *Pushcart Prize* nominee, has had his poetry in *Barren* and *StepAway* magazines, among others; one of his poems was featured in the *Healing Words* awards ceremony (Sept 2017), and another won the third-place in Young Poets Network's *Bletchley Park challenge* (Dec 2018). His collaborative poems with Lisa Stice now appear in zines, and he is now a food blogger for Shahi Dastarkhan's *Foodie's Desk*. His debut chapbook, *Survival*, is to come from NY-based Clare Songbirds Publishing House. He is also the co-founder and editor of *Bold + Italic*.

Wade McCullough is a student at Bowling Green State University and studies popular culture and creative writing.

Don McLellan has worked as a journalist in Canada, South Korea, and Hong Kong. He has published two story collections, *In the Quiet After Slaughter* (Libros Libertad), shortlisted for a 2009 ReLit Award, and *Brunch with the Jackals* (Thistledown Press, 2015). More at donmclellan.com.

Todd Mercer was nominated for Best of the Net in 2018. Mercer won 1st, 2nd & 3rd place of the Kent County Dyer-Ives Poetry Prizes and the won Grand Rapids Festival Flash Fiction Prize. His digital chapbook *Life-wish Maintenance* is posted at *Right Hand Pointing*. Recent work appears in: *Leaves of Ink*, *The Pangolin Review*. *Postcard Poems and Prose*, *Praxis* and *Soft Cartel*.

Daniel Edward Moore lives in Washington on Whidbey Island. His poems have been found at *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Rattle*, *Columbia Journal* and others. His poems will soon be found at *Hawaii Review*, *Blue Fifth Review*, *Plainsongs*, *The Museum Of Americana*, *West Trade Review*, *Frontier Poetry Journal*, *Flexible Persona Literary Journal*, *AJI Magazine*, and *Duende Literary Journal*. His book *Confessions of a Pentecostal Buddhist*, can be found on Amazon. His work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Visit Daniel at danieledwardmoore.com.

Donají Olmedo was born in Mexico City, where she still lives today. English translations of her fiction have appeared in various venues, including *The Bitter Oleander*, *Gargoyle Magazine*, *The McNeese Review*, and *xo Orpheus: Fifty New Myths*. She blogs at *Casa de Ateh* and edits the chapbook of the same name, where she publishes the work of young Mexican writers.

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *Forge*, *Poetry*, *Osiris*, *The New Yorker* and elsewhere. His most recent collection is *The Osiris Poems* published by *boxofchalk*, 2017. For more information including free e-books and his essay “Magic, Illusion and Other Realities” please visit his website at www.simonperchik.com. To view one of his interviews please follow this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSK774rtfx8>

Zachary A. Philips dreams of living a tiny home. He enjoys hiking and would like to write a poem or two at the top of a fourteener someday.

Mari Posa is a proud Philadelphian by way of Madrid, due to personal ambitions. He is a graduate from West Virginia University with a degree in Sociology. Recently, Posa relocated to Southern California.

Eric Rasmussen has placed short fiction in *Fugue*, *Sundog Lit*, *Gulf Stream*, *Black Fox Literary*, and *South Carolina Review*, among others. He serves as editor of the regional literary journal *Barstow & Grand*, and fiction reader for *Split Lip Magazine*. He earned his MFA at Augsburg University in Minneapolis and currently resides in Eau Claire, WI.

Born in Pennsylvania, David Anthony Sam is the proud grandson of peasant immigrants from Poland and Syria. He lives now in Virginia with his wife and life partner, Linda. Sam has four collections and his poetry has appeared in over 80 journals and publications. His chapbook, *Finite to Fail: Poems after Dickinson*, was the 2016 Grand Prize winner of GFT Press Chapbook Contest and his collection *All Night over Bones* received an Honorable Mention for the 2016 Homebound Poetry Prize. www.davidanthonysam.com In 2017, his poems were accepted by *50 Haikus*; *Aji Magazine*; *Allegro Poetry Magazine*; *Burningword Literary Journal*; *Chantwood Magazine*; *The Deadly Writers Patrol*; *Dual Coast Magazine*; *Foliolate Oak Literary Magazine*; *Fredericksburg Literary and Art Review*; *GFT Press One in Four*; *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*; *Gravel: A Literary Journal*; *Heron Tree*; *The Hungry Chimera*; *Into the Void Magazine*; *Inwood Indiana*; *Literature Today*; *The Muse: An International Journal of Poetry*; *The Mystic Blue Review*; *Nourish*; *Piedmont Virginian Magazine*; *Poetry Quarterly*; *The Ravens Perch*; *Red Earth Review*; *The Sea Letter*; *Smoky Blue Literary and Arts Magazine*; *Summerset Review*; *Temenos Journal*; *Three Line Poetry*; *Two Cities Review*; *The Voices Project*; *The Wayfarer*; and *The Write Place at the Write Time*.

J.B. Santillan is a student at Central Washington University. Her interests include sketching, collecting art books, and driving through backroads.

Marygrace Schumann is a writer, educator, editor, and Virgo with a bachelors degree in Creative Writing from Columbia College Chicago. She has worked as an editorial writer for *Chicago Woman Magazine*, a production editor and typesetter for *Hair Trigger 39*, a contributing editor for *Hair Trigger 2.0*, a staff writer for *Shredded Magazine*, and as an editorial intern for *Chief Learning Officer*, an offset of Human Capital Media. Her writing has been featured in *Thrice Publishing*, *Hair Trigger 39*, *Chicago Woman*, *Chief Learning Officer*, and *Shredded*. When she's not writing, teaching or editing, she's serenading everybody around her with '80s music and taking her role as Mom Friend way too seriously.

Sydnee Smailes is currently an undergraduate student at Bowling Green State University studying Creative Writing. Outside of writing, she spends most of her time tending to her three cats, water dragon, and a boat load of fish. After school she plans on taking a year off and then going to back to school to pursue her Masters Degree in fiction.

Ruben E. Smith is a current English major student at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana. He likes to write short fiction, nonfiction, and the occasional poem, while also finding time to argue about Faulkner, speak French, and read Fitzgerald. Some of his work has been published in *Argus Art & Literary Magazine*.

William L. Spencer has published fiction and non-fiction in the *San Diego Reader* and *West Coast Review* (Simon Fraser University). His short story "In the System" was published online by *Uprising Review* in 2017 (pen name Carlos Dunning). Short story "What I Done" is in the Spring 2018 issue of *Furtive Dalliance Literary Review* available on Amazon, and a piece of experimental fiction "The Bastard Died On Me" is online at SoftCartel.com. Two stories were published in *The Magnolia Review Volume 4, Issue 2*. Spencer can be found on Scribophile.com as "Carlos Dunning" and an author interview is at: <https://verysherryterry.wordpress.com/2018/04/02/author-interview-william-l-spencer/>

Penn Stewart lives and writes in Wichita Falls, Texas. He has a big brown lab named Yoda and a Les Paul guitar named Betsy. Neither of them come when called. His latest flash fiction will appear in the *Iron Horse Review*, his longer stuff is up at *Pacifica Literary Review* and *Literary Orphans*, and he's got a chapbook of stories coming out called *The Water in Our Veins*.

Lisa Stice is a poet/mother/military spouse. She is the author of *Permanent Change of Station* (Middle West Press, 2018) and *Uniform* (Aldrich Press, 2016). While it is difficult to say where home is, she currently lives in North Carolina with her husband, daughter and dog. You can learn more about her and her publications at lisastice.wordpress.com and at facebook.com/LisaSticePoet. @LisaSticePoet

Ash Strange is a freshman from Bowling Green State University, majoring in creative writing. She was born in Las Vegas, Nevada, and grew up in Lima, Ohio, for most of her childhood years, going on to live in California, Oklahoma, and Florida. She lives with her aunt, uncle, her two cousins, and her two brothers. She often writes every day about almost everything she can think of, including her life experiences. Some of her hobbies include art, listening to music, and going out with friends.

Lee Triplett is a poet, voracious reader, seeker, bipolar depressive, pianist, queer, and South Carolinian. A student of poetry, piano performance, and computer science in college, she immerses herself in poets to whom she is drawn. Her poetry has been published in *Amethyst Review* and is forthcoming in *Mused: The BellaOnline Literary Review*. She currently lives in Tega Cay, South Carolina.

Mitchell Waldman's fiction, poetry, and essays have appeared in numerous publications, including *The Waterhouse Review*, *Crack the Spine*, *The Houston Literary Review*, *The Faircloth Review*, *Epiphany*, *Wilderness House Literary Magazine*, *The Battered Suitcase*, and many other magazines and anthologies. He is also the author of the novel, *A Face in the Moon*, and the story collection, *Petty Offenses and Crimes of the Heart* (Wind Publications), and serves as Fiction Editor for *Blue Lake Review*. (For more info, see his website at <http://mitchwaldman.homestead.com>).

Thomas Wattie studied philosophy at the University of Toronto. He answers the phone at a pizza place. His interests also include biking, cooking and trap music. He would prefer to answer the phone somewhere else.

Richard Weaver lives in Baltimore's Inner Harbor where he volunteers with the Maryland Book Bank, and acts as the Archivist-at-large for a Jesuit college. He is the author of *The Stars Undone* (Duende Press). His poems have appeared in *River Poet's Journal*, *Southern Review*, *Little Patuxent Review*, *Loch Raven Review*, *Adelaide*, *Slush Pile*, and *Elsewhere*. (Yes, there is a magazine named Elsewhere).

Theresa Williams lives and teaches in Northwest Ohio. Her current project is a Sketchbook novel called *The Diary of Lea Knight*. It traces the inner life of Lea Knight, who has recently lost a baby. Theresa twice received Individual Excellence Grants from The Ohio Arts Council and has been published in numerous journals, including *Gargoyle*, *Hunger Mountain*, and *The Sun*.

Bill Wolak has just published his fifteenth book of poetry entitled *The Nakedness Defense* with Ekstasis Editions. His collages have appeared recently in *Naked in New Hope 2017*, *The 2017 Seattle Erotic Art Festival*, *Poetic Illusion*, *The Riverside Gallery, Hackensack, NJ*, *the 2018 Dirty Show in Detroit*, *2018 The Rochester Erotic Arts Festival*, and *The 2018 Montreal Erotic Art Festival*.