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Contents

Jennifer Givhan

Alice in the Snow, 5

Brenda Mann Hammack

Palaestra, 7

Grace Shuyi Liew

from *Publics*, 9

Maximiliane Donicht

Nighthour, 11

Sarah Gzinski

Parables, 12

Simone Wolff

Pick, 15

Meredith McDonough

Princess Maru Becomes Dr. Poison, 16

Claire Trévien

from *Astéronymes*, 17

Valerie Hsiung

london bridge is falling down, 20

Amy Schrader

Two poems, 21

Karen An-Hwei Lee

Three poems, 27

Rachel Fogarty

Green, 28

- Samiya Bashir
Upon Such Rocks, 29
- Claire Marie Stancek
Move, 31
- Evie Shockley
Two poems, 32
- Tara Betts
Two poems, 34
- Leia Penina Wilson
Two poems, 36
- Lauren Elma Frament
tamworth trail, 1:23 pm (how he shot the bitch dead right between the eyes), 38
- Bonnie Roy
from *hieronymus heronyma*, 39
- Min K. Kang
Two poems, 44
- Claudia Cortese
Two poems, 46
- Elizabeth J. Colen
Raised by Wolves, 50
- Monica A. Hand
Four poems, 52
- Leslie Rzeznik
Two poems, 56
- Jena Osman reviewed by Alyse Knorr, 58
- Contributor Notes, 63

Jennifer Givhan

Alice in the Snow

Savage girl, they called me, troubled creature.
Still, wild weather swift against my back,
he came for me. Locks never fastened,
hearts never beat, but windows flew wide.

We found each other at the cusp—
I was a girl turning a taste for fur-lined
flesh. My keepers never understood how I managed
the space between the bars. Were there cracks?

But what did they think they were rescuing
me from? I went with him
because he called me feral darling,
opening a channel and funneling us through,

crying me Wolf Alice, Bloody Alice, Alice
of Darkness and Love. First came tufts of white-haired
grass, squat gourd-headed shrubs, snow-
spinning tails, but none of these felt real. I fought

the hunger long enough. I ate.
They called for me in the night; I could hear
them like dangerous owls with red-tipped
fear against their wings. Sometimes it's a shooting down

before being shot. Want to know why I flew
through windows all those nights? What I became,

ghost-wardens growling wildly for my return,
all the while a great white bear carried me on his back?

They think the animals in their dreams
are beasts, are cruel, are inhuman. Alice-
baby, haunching on an icy mound, turned
orphan Alice, feral and motherless, wolf woman.

Oh Alice dear, they said. How did you survive?
That cave must have been so cold. No colder than a cage.
Bare bleak stone, I loved him. Great white bear,
I rode him. Snowdrop on my tongue, I was him.

Brenda Mann Hammack

Palaestra

after a painting by Dorothea Tanning

...like the time they played in granddaddy's grave,
and Mama said only heathen boys would do such things.
"I don't dress you in white so's you can keep dirty
ways." To which, Maeve complained: "Ain't our fault
we's hellions, all scrunched thisaway, thataway,
confined to one space till legs turn to fly paper."

...like the time Myrtle declared she'd sooner "trollop,"
Eve in the garden, than wear one more hand-me-scrap
of Maeve's, and Mama said, "You best mean frolic, girl."
And Maeve exclaimed Myrtle weren't even "true in spirit
to scripture since she ain't took them boots off, and keeps
scuffing heels over carpet like hissy-snakes."

...like the time Maddie seen shadow wagging whip-
snake and Mama sniffed, "Could be guilty conscience."
To which, Maeve did not say, "Who done snapped peas
all day? Who done dusted them shades?" It don't pay,
she has learned, to beg compliments. Instead, she prays
ghosts to nag Mama's sleep, pay back awfulness.

...like the time granddaddy called May "pretty
as a parsnip." Maeve said that weren't very,
but May still took to posing lingerie (really thread-
bare granny gown) and Maeve warned hip joint
would stay that way from so much thrusting. "But you
might could be a freak show's crooked lady."

...like the time Maisie and Mabel took to tussling. Maisie said Mabel had the bigger hiney. Mabel said she'd "never heard such whining or braying in a clover field," and Maeve, eyes clenched, swayed. "Dear Lord, let them kill each other. This bed is too small for such angst."

Grace Shuyi Liew

from *Publics*

In a dream I am to be shot.

Then the gunman explains his hesitance
In a dream I am to be shot.

Then the crowd shouts Yoko Ono into me
In a dream I am to be shot.

Then my hairless legs sputter last tears
In a dream I am to be shot.

Then at its dead end the labyrinth airs out
In a dream I am to be shot.

Then a blade strips a crotch-face of its frown
In a dream I am to be shot.

Then an ocean flattens into its sea bed
In a dream I am to be shot.

Then I arrange chopped fingers as flowers
In a dream I am to be shot.

Then I emerge on the other side of a barrier
In a dream I am to be shot.

Then I awaken to leash you in your sleep
In a dream I am to be shot.

Then I wring our blood-sopped sheets
In a dream I am to be shot.

Then a I a dream I dream of you in dead

Maximiliane Donicht

Nighthour

Windy rooftops, alleys in button-down
rain, population: freaks. Monster eating minutes
from your palm, snaps your thumb off clean, kicks you
in the balls and sends you to a really strange
party where everyone's high on something, violaceous
braids swinging on the trapeze, towards
citylights as though she wants to dive
into the cesspit where a pleathered vampire
dances with a floating condom,
and someone's underwear is coming around
like the anthracite tumor, caressing
our naked feet in the current
swelling its dark mass like a prize
jellyfish through the spume in which we leap,
laden, like bare-skinned astronauts into morning

Sarah Gzemski

Parable

like a needle into a camel

a rich needle
a camel's eye

a poor woman can find
kingdoms of heaven

treasured possessions
tied up in cables

heaven is full
with camels

shoving hooves through
treasured gates

to hoof at god
with gilded needles

god cannot be wounded
but the woman

like an eye into a cable

can certainly be sliced
clean

Parable

dig a hole in the ground
with your talent

lodged with you, useless,
you were never taught to have

talents, so dig.

your master sows only reaping,
and the other slaves have

made their talents grow.

plant your talent
because you know how

to plant, so dig.

when your master tries
to take your talent,

he will need to rake
it out by its roots—

with all your master's talent

he can't reach his arms
around its trunk.

Parable

what man of you
does not stalk after

the ewe that won't be
herded? a man

must catch his poor
disoriented

neurotic ewe, shepherd
her in with all

the others so everyone
feels safe from

slinking lions,
rumors in the dark.

he will fall asleep against
his staff

and in the morning
count sheep,

with each one numbered
he can wet

his lips and start shearing.

Simone Wolff Pick

i make my face
an emergency
then take
a bottle of skin
create the illusion
of the proper
distribution of blood
the elision
of the capillaries
that suck and blow
the blood of my blush
the mirror brings me face
to second face
my better half flush
with what it holds
at bay

Meredith McDonough

Princess Maru Becomes Dr. Poison

She pricks her fingers awake
shatters her crystal feet in furred slippers
bulks her body with tufts of cotton and rats
like a Gibson girl's coif
and paints her lips a proud predator pout
bright as a monarch's wings
She slides a latex layer over her hands
 and a thick woolen laboratory coat
over her asymmetrical body
to withstand the winter of this world war

She administers 'reverso' into the ally soldiers' water
They are such sweet princes now
their minds as inert
as a closed-mouth girl in a glass coffin
their desire as contrary
as a withered grasping queen
wailing for beauty in a bullet storm
love me forever they scream
running back to the shore they spilled from
 above all others they say
their will as silent
as a sleeping girl in a castle coffin

Claire Trévien

Astéronymes

*

*In this version of a novel, odd pages
have been turned into plywood bones
—the accordion opens on hands*

pointing their asterisked outlines at you.

The names of places you know, The E**** and C****,

The B***** T*****, have been asteronymed.

The places you don't k*** have been asteronymed.

The places that might or might not e**** have been asteronymed.

**

*Precision has been given a backstory
to make them more endearing,*

but it does not excuse their behaviour.

You thought this version of a novel

might make you look at O*****

differently. You thought you might

find gossip about M... R*****

and report back to them. You thought

you could object to their depiction

of D***** and the B*****.

You thought their take on P*****

would make for a good status,

what slide consists of 300 comments?

Half-way through this version of a novel

you tire of proper names hiding behind

asterisks: where are the ampersands?

*the octothorpes? the circumflexes?
Where are the f***** growlixes
bubbling out like so many oxygen scrawls
from the beard of Captain Haddock?
To your right, there is a p**.
Resist b***** something you won't stop.
To your left is a l*** interest
it'd be all too e*** to add.
Please forget about the a*****
sitting on your nightstand.

*Nearing the end of this version of a novel
you are told that the verb has become flesh.*

As of January 5th 2015 16:49 UK standard time, I do not give F***** or any entities associated with F***** permission to use my p*****, i*****, or p*****, both past and future. By this statement, I give notice to F***** that it is strictly forbidden to disclose, copy, distribute, or take any other action against me based on this p***** and/or its contents. The content of this profile is p***** and c***** information. The violation of privacy can be punished by l** (UCC 1-308- 1 1 308-103 and the Rome Statute).

*Frankly, the ending of this version of a novel was a disappointment.
'You will not believe it', so you do.*
The most plausible aspect of *Tintin*
is that the Captain wore the same
outfit for several p*a*g*e*s.

Networking

The city shakes my jaw loose,
until the teeth forget they ever met.
Talking becomes a juggling act.
Skin falls

in potato peels. I collage limbs as
best I can—reconfigure the meaning
of mind: does it fit in the finger tips
or winter

in the knee cap? My ankle vanishes
in the sinkhole. I replace it with a photocopy,
a taped-up ghost. I hear chewing gum can
hold the springs

of a car engine together. My pylon
elbows are collapsing, propped up
by wires. Limestone joints: the first
sign of Summer.

Valerie Hsiung

london bridge is falling down

If I were taught any manners
I'd let myself be carried away constantly
It is stasis that gives vertigo
It is stasis that reveals

If I were taught how to bite my nails
I'd do it in public
in the convivial square in Convent
Garden with a bucket to collect
charities I'd might as well
wet my bed & suck my numb
& spill cornflakes all over
wedding dress wouldn't that be wild

The manners we were taught
come in handy here do they not?
When we come to a standoff
we accuse each other of lacking etiquette
and we learn to love each other
lacking each other's etiquette

Amy Schrader

Emesis

...people enter the theater and amphitheater in droves, pouring themselves on to the seats

—*Macrobius (Saturnalia 6.4.3)*

No impediment to empire
but the stomach for it. Common
misconception, metaphor

for decadence. So much
for gladiators. We're left with helmets
painted garishly with namesakes: bears,

bengals, falcons. As children,
we learned about a fistulated cow,
how men inserted arms into her rumen.

They said she couldn't feel it. Still,
the vendors sell foot-longs & bucket-
sized beers. We eat, & eat

some more with no stopping to purge.
Which is to say, we gorge. We cheer
to hear the sound of our own

voice, this crush of spectators who flee
immediately following the spectacle.
We're already in the vomitorium.

Karen An-Hwei Lee

Flavor of Awe

I.

Roused, a female goes into labor, no seed but her own
and God's.

This must be a miracle.

The woman's bones creak open—eye of a ferris wheel.
Sheep stop ruminating to listen. In our imminent new world,
Dinner will not be served in a while, she thinks
as the afterbirth follows.

An angel applies an herbal balm, angelica root
and burdock against puerperal fever.

2.

In a technophile future, Jesus dwells in a city of stainless
globally positioned ice-cream machines, *vox populi*.

Be not mistaken: The Holy Spirit is not a machine
yet the cogs and levers hum with glory.

Oil the color of cold-pressed olives. Oil the color
of praline syrup in vanilla.

The ice-cream machines light up a fortress of those
who taste that God is good.

3.

Centuries later, a sinkhole yawns open
under a railroad.

Quarrels over turf and the nature of signs—
God wants us to stop breaking things
and vandalizing creation.

In this millennium, we are no more adept at sacrifice

than we are about saving ourselves
or prophesying *strawberry*
will appear twice in a poem.

4.

This all to say
at the parlor of vintage lamps and stained glass,
there is a flavor named awe.

For a dollar more, add foaming
root-beer or sarsaparilla. A woman with a halo—
or an angel—scoops strawberry gelato,
light streaming

through one-way glass.

What is the flavor of unmerited grace?
Just whisper *hosanna* into a pound of divinity
when no one is listening.

A female prophet
recognizes your profile in this aperture of light

petaled with hemoglobin before uttering the DNA
sequences of a beloved

under your tongue.

On Transparent Vessels

*for Adele Outteridge, an Australian book artist,
printmaker & sculptor*

If we could see our souls on the outside—

This book of life written in heaven
while we stroll under the clouds.

Most of the sculpture is air.

Nested parables, I say—those are parabolas

$y = ax^2 + bx + c$

or vertex form $y = a(x - h)^2 + k$

Collected vessels of air—tender fables

etched on acrylic glass

awl-driven or hand-drilled, soul-stitched.

*All the pages are visible and the whole book
can be read at once,*

even when it is closed.

Outteridge, Adele. "Artists in Residence at Go Troppo Arts Festival, Port Douglas." 2010. Web. 27 January 2012. <www.go-troppo-arts-festival.com/artists-in-residence.html>

Rachel Fogarty

Green

the cruise could have started
by a green canal
but the siren's nervous shriek,
neo-classic calm,
made the world—February

Samiya Bashir

Upon Such Rocks

A body. A zoo. A lovely savannah. Walls of clear, clean glass. Fresh food when they feed it. When it doesn't pace impatience and fend for its own fool self. It's a fool. There's a door. Door after door after door. Glossy paws shaped for knob turning. Every door leads to a new savannah. Each savannah bumps new clean glass. Light cyclopes a never-ending tap tap tap tap loud on good weather days. Tap tap tap tap two by four two by four can't get through the door. Tap tap tap through a trellised stream. Break. No.

Positions of the body that force it to touch its own flesh. Positions that don't. Hallelujah. Chairs turned backward. Straddled so legs can spread can breathe so arms can lift can rest can fold can lean. Bless the burying of chins into a crook. Bless standing. Bless rest. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. Keep going.

A body won't always put mind or heart before lips or eyes before feet. Needs me to keep it from falling face down in the road. Can't breathe without some salve to moisten the air. Me neither. Needs water to stop its eyes crying blood. Can't account for how it returns or as whom or as what but knows how to coax a languid kundalini toward dewpoint. Knows it is little more than slush-slop water. Knows not seventy percent but through and through. Heard somewhere only

birdbrains test water's depth with both feet. Well, hell.
Keep going.

If it were a preacher a body'd lean on its pulpit, pound its fists like emphasis to block out the pain. Where does its pain sit right now? Knees? Ankles? Hips? Shoulders holding the whole thing up against pulpit? Keep going.

It's tall but likes high heels. It remembers wearing short skirts and high shoes. Can it tell you why it stopped? Maybe it'll whisper it. Maybe it'll just tell me. I'll tell it I'll keep its secret. I'll lie. Keep going.

Right. Pain. A body can sprain ankles so much they no longer trust it. Without ankles a body falls and busts up its knee. Again. For a while there it sprained everything over and over. It was a glutton for punishment. It punished and punished and punished and punished and—don't be afraid.

Cried about it. Not to anyone who'd listen. No one listened until it stopped falling and just became cement. It never came forward at finger becks or calls. Two by four! Two by four! Once it woke from nightmares screaming *balloons!* screaming *rainbows!* and squished its sandblown eyes still as death with a humbird heart. When they'd feed it fresh meat against the glass it'd sleep again. Don't be afraid. It'd sit. Don't be afraid. It'd eat. Don't be afraid. It'd think. Be a little afraid. Keep going.

Claire Marie Stancek

Move

But were we even together said air to air, guest in the sound, even on that day? On the blurred blue neon bridge where the others were blurs on black background, but were we together? Or now, in midst of dance dance dance. Propose, put forward, say, solicit. Before a black glassed wall where our bodies are flattened and returned all shine and dim glimmer. Move in movement and be moved. Excite, arouse, stir up. On the street where your voice was seagull scream, car horn, sidewalk mist exhalation, a click shut, a question, whirl of wings, a braced ring-ring of iron grids walked on. To bow in acknowledgement or salutation. And a Britney song was on, where were you on the internet that day? Because the tree branches were in the wires rustling together and their shadows below showed little difference between life and live. Of a voice or part: to proceed from note to note. To control, govern, like the way the curl of iron braces sky, though the clouds passing through that frame actually aren't. Host in the station for a moment passing through a sign that says many dimensions. Where a pattern of bricks falling up over tree roots bunching under. Permeable to sound, guest and a host. Every particle in welcome to the movement enters through the enters through the sound. Find a buyer or be sold. Approach with the purpose of attacking. And were we even together of something mechanical? To proceed away from a place where one is considered by a police officer to have stood too long. To go from one place, position, state, to another. And superimposed, the bright silhouette enters open enter.

Evie Shockley

sore score

ugly :: no, nothing more than a scab :: a pain(t) job, applied biology,
wound-be-gone, but meanwhile :: black-brown patch :: skin-music,
band-aid, home-grown :: stuck :: itching to beat the band, itching to
disappear, magic foiled, the urge to peek piqued :: picked :: well not
enough let alone :: pink the price to pay :: raw news, read meat, rough
cut :: edit

if a junco

~ a vocabulary takes us under its wing ~ a vestibule soft until ruffled ~
it muffles our voices with its muscles and down ~ do we pluck it bare
~ then what of flight ~ a lexicon connives against us when we are busy
admiring its plumage ~ does the music of its mating call seduce ~ if we
crack its hollow bones and blow ~ will such broken notes carry ~ us ~
how far ~ a language spreads its tail ~ draws our eyes to its outer feathers
flashing white ~ when it snaps shut the fan ~ will we lose sight of what
we are saying ~ can we fly blind ~ can we fly right ~ can we fly-by-night
~ see ~ again ~ already ~ what are we whistling ~

Tara Betts

A Season of No

The fall was a season of no and flat, open books.
I laid on the living room's hardwood floor—smooth,
warm clean where my arms were propped on a pillow.
The fantasies of words turned phrases then sentences

where I flipped pages until sleep dropped its
heavy hood around my still body. After midnight,
a page brushed against my forearm as I slept—
an extended finger across the hair on my arm.

I awoke and saw it was not a book fluttering closed,
but a spider the size of a quarter. When I jumped,
he startled backwards an inch or two and stood still.
I screamed as he scuttled under the television.

My screech, hard footfalls, and flinging myself
on the bed did not wake my husband, as if he
refused to hear, refused me in this bed again.

I cannot help thinking that spider warned me.
This man would leave. That tiny leg offered
a knowing touch to replace absence.

Baltimore Starting to Sound Like Babylon

“...they made them gats.

They got some shit that ‘ll

blow out our backs

from where they stay at.”

—André 3000 on “Babylon”

The planes are circling Baltimore.

 We could say they are rehearsing
for other cities, other dead caught
 in a profile that race gives finality
as a fortune, and we could get used
 to helicopters whirring near
our windows and crushing tank
 treads punish the worn streets.

We could even say that placards
 and broken windows meant more
and we could say that changed law
 almost as quick as a spine snapped.

Once what’s on paper changes,
 ask what protects us from circling
steel predators overhead. While
 watch the news, what flashing blip
distracts us from loaded catapult
 drawn and aimed at living rooms
where one could be alive, then gone.

Leia Penina Wilson

the roots of a mountain

i run hard by this deep snow i know
it is springtime—

sewn into my thigh you must
now be my subject.
would that i could sing
a hymn that is worthy—

your mortal body
couldn't bear such heavenly excitement
you burst into flames.

my lion's chrysanthemum head
my anxiety that fragile *i hallucinate you best*—
drink this drink this.

i do not want
to die dumb.

we grew our own grief.
this body is not
those azaleas that moon flower
those fleas.

the face of all people who love people

o horrible tenderness! battle sweat! it's noon!
crinkled wings sour everyman's face patroclus
underlines you are not alone
lonely without criticism
lovethings are whispered
let me pace
without fear the common path
of death.

true spring plants chains! profoundest
sense! city shame!
almost palatable daffodils!
blackblack horses!
eternal achilles
wears the horns of a ram

for luck her family letters *here*
for luck become a god yourself
say this prayer *guard me against*

guard against me she says
this world is falling in love
i have robbed myself
what god opposes me
i do not know.

Lauren Elma Frament

tamworth trail, 1:23 pm

(how he shot the bitch dead right between the eyes)

the summer, fever hot
 backwoods wildfire
& heaven.

 the strange man
no one saw, but who left
 the dog obedient

& good-as-god dead,
 left no trace but bulletdust
& a phone call two weeks later:

*i shot your dog,
your kid's next.*

 my mother, alone
except for me:
 a month-old ruby

with no language
 but a tiny firework
in my mouth

 exploding.

Bonnie Roy

from *hieronymus hieronyma*

h. h. arrives
in a platinum car

descent marks our breath with fril
ly no
things

but whether hieronymus hieronyma remembers us

(this way)

is ticking across the pale clock of her brow

less impressive in daylight

we stumble the dark a few
unfinished leaves of sycamore

still pattern
our night
lights with life

() when
the car pulls up we have grown
precisely.
and point our knees and toes to the dash

each

summer

a shell of light
hands turned
open

pearl

-like

pyrite

that instant we touched

cooler stone

of shade walls

lemon button maidenhair [boston]

and opened a garden

the sorts of scrolls the newsboy unrolled

throat to the hand

who gripped it and

: we were silent on this :

pulled blue

arbors through

embroidery hoop

actual trees broke
our distance
instant's
thickets but green
leaves all over
the glassware

gentlemen
ladies of botany

we leave after speaking
for years

a classic

a tongue

ex al ta ta

as h. h. rolls up
her window
and turns the car around

Min K. Kang

Let me explain Houston to you

as a bulls-eye the Loop or the 610 is where you wanna be
Arts Gastropubs Thrifting Gentrification

out of that Target lives Sam Houston Tollway or the Beltway 8
it's cheaper to live there but it is less desirable you are
Admitting Your Age and/or Stealthy Racist Inclinations

 out of the Beltway are: Farmlands Whites Asians
Suburbia Yogurtland and the Privatized Shipping Centers
because money buys time

I would say that outside of the Beltway equals a Death Knell
on my Cool Factor or whatever but I always ate at Buffalo Wild Wings

shortened meals

for AK, JK, and KB

sometimes I have to leave our sushi dinners short
because I want to talk about fathers
but it's hard work to overthink and I don't wanna

how we hate our fathers but love them
it's exhausting and don't wanna order more wine
and I get that we're just like them and that's what they hate

because I can't logic anymore, it is the way it is
I feel you and know you during our drives home
a summer sunset across our windshields says, it's enough

Claudia Cortese

Le Strega Speak

“Swallow this, my little sparrow, your feathers
are white and snowlike tonight, but no one loves
a goosepimpled girl.”

“Our cauldron’s cursives rise—”

“Men stared at my small wings, my blue-tint skin.”

“I love Beyoncé
so much.”

“You see Belle wearing a Kimono in Japan,
find her as a French peasant girl,
glimpse her again on widescreen TVs.”

“If you crawl the forest floor with a leash
in your teeth, your throat becomes the lost city,
snarls tightening the air like collars,
if your power your power your power—
nothing new but not so old
it won’t crackle, more machine
than canine, not girl but *Strega*—
if you slip inside the circle,
put neck to noose, ignore the
Do not enter nailed to a tree, you’ll follow
the dark cord, nameless, all need—”

“We fried maple with boiled strawberry, passed a bowl
of goat’s milk between us.”

“I unfist ferns
to crows, night-
winged omens.
I suck mints
and glowsticks—
all that cock.”

“Leaves chatter, shadow eats the green.
Sun undresses the girl,
brightens to bone-harp—”

“If you see a peacock in a summer snowstorm,
run.” #MysticTip #SomethingAintRight

“The trees turn zinc, a ghost gang—
their mineral rape. You must sleep where it’s safe.”

“Mark each alley with breadcrumbs,
follow the forest-trail, walk with your key
in your hand, carry a whistle,
hair clip, any object
voiceless, without magick—”

“I gifted the black lung to every passing prince
dreaming of glass coffins—stole his horse and rushed towards
color that crashed across dusk cloud.”

Notes toward a God Essay

- 1) God in one hand, Barbie in the other—
I want to be that girl again—

circling my cul-de-sac in October,
the leaves' ssshhh and shhha.

- 2) Our bodies like gold leaf hammered we bend
in our beds we pray in three languages, no—we pray without words—
- 3) The Historical God, the Girlhood God, the Guilt God, the Clit
God, the Penis God, the Many-Handed God, the Deity-In-Trees/
Sky/Landmines, the God Hates Gays, the God I Imagined During My
First Communion as I Took the Host in my Mouth I Won't Hurt Jesus
if I Don't Bite down, the God I Forgot Existed in Barns too, the God
I Prayed to When I Wanted a New Car/My Sister to Die/Mom to
Shut the Fuck Up
- 4) (Yeah, I was *that* kind of girl)
- 5) Julie Carr says there is no more powerful
emotion than fear, and I think—
she must not have been raised
Catholic.
- 6) What else rearranges the past
in its image, links event A with event B with C,
finds the place where the self can take

all the blame a body can hold.

7) I called my mother today, asked her when she last
had fun with dad, she laughed.

8) *The Church won't let you take communion if you divorce,*
she said, and wouldn't believe
that those rules don't apply anymore—

9) I want to be devoured,
which is not the death-wish or sex-wish—

it's ghosts silvering the field that was forest,
each tree stump an elegy for the green chatter

that spangled its oxygens; the voice
scarving the rough wind that tears the girl's blouse,

says, *You must be devoured to be remembered.*

10) Each morning, I watch sun harden
in the pan, eggspit turn white as angels.

Elizabeth J. Colen

Raised By Wolves

One girl's finger on another girl's—
Tap, tap
Didn't mean it to get so far.

*You're going too deep,
No farther for me.*

“Let's play ‘do you trust me’ or
what did you call it...?”

One girl's mouth on another girl's growl.

--

They say she was raised by wolves,
How to keep the bait away,
But really she was born in Wichita,
Reared then in suburban towns of the northeast corridor.
Saw her first roadkill twitching as a truck went by
Slowly, slowly
On the Schuykill Expressway.
Fur shuddered in the hot late June dirty boxcar boxcar wind.
Compression brakes squeal or scream like a last whatever for it.
Dead or dying, mother tapped the wheel.

“We'll never get to camp this way”
and then she never went.

Tap, tap, wolf den
Mother's ring vibrated the wheel.

The car overheated and the roadkill twitched.
"Sleeping," the girl said.
"Sleeping," her mother said.

Nothing is restful at ten miles an hour.

Raised by—
wolf daddy loves entrails.
Buckets of chicken
May well be buckets of blood.

The secret recipe is no love,
And distance,
Clean teeth,
And red on the fang.

--

It's like this every day:
jump at small sounds, and the big ones,
well, they can damage.

There is something to living a life full
of buckshot, covered in hairy, eyes full of wild.

And the soft hair that brings a growl
when rubbed on bark right.

Monica A. Hand

American Refugee in Newcastle upon Tyne

The river is opaque like salt.
Tower blocks, cathedrals and courthouses reek of industry.

The smell of coal chokes.
A bridge tilts to let ships pass.

A black Venus wheezes between the folds of a dirty book—
a poem written in ancient script crossed out and underlined

examined down to its genitalia
its jagged edges strained against the grain.

It stares back at me in critical silence.
I dig for artifacts beneath tunnels and estuary,

fail to open my mouth.

Walk with Sharon: at the bedtime of owls

Deceiving tranquility—dog footprint inside woman's footprint, woman's footprint inside shoe print inside print of the rocky sand on the beach inside the island inside the world that is round and yet we do not fall off into the abyss but manage to walk. Where is the self, the self that gathers small stones and shells, not the self that sees only gravel? White at the trunk of trees. White salve to keep away insects so that they find something else to eat. What is the name of the tree, the name of the insect, the name of survival? Does home always follow you? What terror is walking even here in white stone? *Whowho who* calls the dove—a baby's coo, a terrible wail.

Cigarette smoke ash

Bottles and bottles of wine

Slur of the drink

(Athens, Greece)

Women hold
entire temples on top
of their heads.

Today whole families—children, women, and men—march through Syntagma Square, protest outside Parliament against the government's austerity policies: salary cuts, pension reductions and tax hikes. Our guide tells us to stay away from the square and instead takes us on a tour of The Acropolis. We climb and climb until I think my weak heart and flabby legs will give out. We see the ruins of the Parthenon, and a replica of the Caryatid Porch that uses the bodies of women as columns. Later at the fancy new Acropolis Museum, our guide tells us that archeologists first discovered graves, then palaces, and then along the slopes smaller shrines, shrines that were built to protect women, women who were confined to the house and domesticity, shrines that held ceramics that describe the wedding ceremony, shrines that were gifts to the gods that they may bless the marriage and the family. We view what's left of 75 sculptures found in a pit—hidden from theft and destruction. I stand close behind the original female figures that held up the Caryatid Porch now safely perched inside away from the sun. A museum attendant tells me to be careful with my ballpoint so that I don't carelessly graffiti history. Next we tour what's left of the Parthenon's frieze—115 blocks of relief representations of men and animals in procession—there are no women, except the one whose body is Athena's empty shell.

(Day 2, Athens)

Aliki stops by our table at the café with half a dozen herb plants: thyme, oregano, sage, marjoram, peppermint and basil. Basil, according to islanders, keeps mosquitoes away. Tomorrow we travel by Speedrunner Ferry to Serifos. When Aliki and Craig start talking about God my attention wanders back to the blaring sounds of street traffic: small yellow taxi cabs, mopeds and petite cars that you rarely see in the States. Our hotel, walking distance from The Acropolis ruins, is on a street lined with Jacaranda trees and home repair shops that sell every kind of power tool imaginable and leather goods (even saddles.) Almost every other building is a bank or a coffee shop, a perplexing sight (the number of banks) given the state of the economy. The people don't seem especially happy to see us. They move about like bees. The buildings are tagged like in gang-possessed neighborhoods back home—except here the graffiti is a political message: KAMIA EIPHNH MET'AFENTIKA—There can be no peace with the Master.

My granddaughter asks
Is Jesus dead? I answer
Yes, I think so.

Leslie Rzeznik

hollow

monday

swell of musk upskirts,
whispers a siren's call—
rousing blewit from childsleep

tuesday

strung pearls chime bright—
bridaling the heave and thaw
of antique lace

wednesday

infant fingers drum
heart's time, milksweet
breath marks calendar's rush

thursday

the shuck of peas—
fragged words rounding down,
salted minutes boiling on the stove

friday

incense scrim
a clutch of hissing beads—
bone-clogged pipes in the rectory

saturday

crows answer dawn's caw—
blood seared on linen sheet,
tears dousing hell to hollow and back

not enough teeth in a mouth

the trick
she said

is to appear
as if you know

pinch

the hinged
jaw soften

the palate
the places love

has missed

fold the crooked teeth
into a crucible

which is just now
learning to say

—enough—

Public Figures by Jena Osman
Wesleyan University Press, 2012

Review by Alyse Knorr

In her insightfully daring book, *Public Figures*, Jena Osman's intriguing project is to take pictures of the human statues in Philadelphia, then hoist a camera up to each statue's eye level and photograph what they "see" from their vantage point. Osman presents both sets of photographs alongside her writing, inviting the reader to directly become a part of this examination through a gaze of his/her own. The effect is immediate, creating a unique urban portrait and a dynamic performance of surveillance.

Through her photographs, Osman discovers that some of Philadelphia's statues gaze at trees and rivers while others watch city skyscrapers and billboards featuring our own era's celebrity icons. Others stare at each other—within firing range, as Osman notes, for almost all the statues are armed—with guns, bayonets, swords, and axes—and wearing armor or military uniforms. What's most striking to Osman, however, is not the weaponry of Philadelphia's statues, but the fact that she did not notice it at first:

While proceeding, you become aware of your not noticing. You walk around these figures as if they are buildings or large pieces of furniture. You navigate their boundaries without a momentary meditation on who they are or why they're there. With that public invisibility in mind, you become aware that a fair number of these statues populating your city are armed.

The statues “loom” above the viewer with their threatening arsenals, yet the weapons themselves are merely stone symbols, as Osman points out: “You wonder how a weapon, and the body that carries it, can become so neutralized—to the point where you no longer take it in.”

The genius of *Public Figures* is that Osman compares the blank, benign surveillance of the statues with the very real threat of military drones. Running across the bottom of most of *Public Figures*’ pages are excerpts transcribed from YouTube videos of drone strike missions. This spookily anonymous, militaristic language creates a geometry of tracking and targeting, of preparing weapons and coordinating an attack. As the book progresses, the drone text becomes increasingly terrifying when a child appears dangerously close to the target. Simultaneously, language about “impact,” “tracking,” and “infrared” begins to infiltrate the main text, almost as though the drone language is spoken by the otherwise silent, menacing armed statues.

At the same time, however, the central curiosity to see what the statues see is a potent expression of empathy, and Osman carries this over in her descriptions of the statues themselves, which include each figure’s nicknames, mistakes, legends, and, in one case, what Osman imagines embarrasses him. Osman’s eye—and her lens—miss nothing, and she is artfully aware of her own gaze and perspective as a poet writing about these very themes. At the core of this book is Osman’s concern with public space, who and what takes that space up, and how meaning and politics are imbued in that space. “If your city and its sculptures are a kind of garden (can it be called a war garden?),” she writes, “it is a garden that has lost its semantic drive. These carefully designed emblems of wars past—symbols of values and virtues defended by spears and sabers—register only with the occasional tourist. The figures wait for your demands. Screens sweep you into their petrified world.” By juxtaposing the drone transcript against the statue photographs, Osman asks us to consider how spatial positioning (especially from a

higher vertical angle), the gaze, and surveillance create domination or ownership of physical space.

In a particularly interesting twist, as she undertakes the project, Osman herself is watched by strangers in the parks and on the streets. “The moment when they realize that these figures indeed have a gaze projected outward,” passersby watching Osman “gasp and laugh,” as though they had never realized before the implication that the statues, at least in the imagination, are not just objects to be gazed upon, but possessors of a gaze of their own. A fascinating, backflipping kind of feminist argument resides here, which is fitting, considering that, according to the Smithsonian Institution, less than 8 percent of America’s 5,193 public outdoor figurative sculptures are of women. In *Public Figures*, the Virgin Mary is the first statue we see, but she’s one of only two women statues in the book—all the rest of the explorers and military figures Osman shows us guarding the streets and parks of Philadelphia are men, most of them Civil War heroes.

Osman never lets us forget that statues document history, and throughout *Public Figures*, she uses this fact to tackle questions of authenticity and reality, noting the historical errors and contradictions in some of the statues’ heroic narratives and even in the Smithsonian’s cataloguing of the statues themselves. She writes:

The historical fact is a double vision: tumbling into the present, it picks itself up and walks quickly away—at first flashing, clashing, then disappearing into the crowd. You take a sample, test the residue. You are the sensor.

By examining the connections between military uniforms, fashion, and historical war re-enactors, Osman points our attention to war as performance and uniform as costume—it’s all in the perspective, she seems to tell us, and in how we understand history “not from what has

been recorded, but from what has fallen out of the picture, forgotten.” This discussion culminates in photographs of real soldiers in Iraq, which startle the reader following after page after page of soldier statues. The distinctions break down in the still, static photograph, which makes statues of life and stone alike.

Furthermore, at three points in the book, Osman interjects a set of three pages, each containing a “Story,” “Image,” and “Caption,” with the same usage of “you” but no photos of statues or drone transcript. These sections seem concerned, above all else, with secrets: secret missions, envelopes, maps, and the secrets of people on the street doing ordinary activities that suddenly seem suspicious when their motions and activities are reported out of context, the way drone pilots report target movement on the streets below them. These sections of the book provide a place of intersection between the drone language and the statue photos and analysis, and Osman challenges us to try and discern between three categories that seem completely contradictory in some cases and identical in others. Story, image, and caption blur together in a kind of meta-commentary on the project itself. Are Osman’s poems the story to the photos? Or are they the caption? Or are the images themselves the story? When Osman asks of the drone, “Is it a plane, a camera, or a gun,” a similar blurring takes place, echoing this repeated trio of borderless definitions.

Osman’s consistent use of the second person “you” instead of “I,” along with the photos and prose form, are reminiscent of Claudia Rankine’s *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely*, which broke ground on a new kind of lyric essay. In Osman’s book, the “you” implies that there is a universality to her experiment—that the statues in “your city,” or any city, will reveal similar surprising insights on perspective and military history. As the book progresses, this “you” dexterously shifts from creator Osman to the statues themselves (“Your outer skin, your inner skin, is metal”) to, in the end, a real-life soldier. And, similarly, in the book’s climactic

final eight pages, the drone transcript becomes the main text itself, on facing pages across from text resembling the “Story, Image, Caption” text. Horrifyingly, a lone “I”—the first in the book—emerges in the drone transcript dialogue and discusses watching a man die. The act of watching has merged into that of identity-making, leaving—as it should—disturbing questions in the mind of any 21st-century reader.

Contributor Notes

Samiya Bashir's books of poetry, *Gospel* and *Where the Apple Falls*, and anthologies, including *Role Call: A Generational Anthology of Social & Political Black Literature & Art*, exist. Maybe you've read her poems in *Poetry*, *World Literature Today*, *Poet Lore*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, or online somewhere like *The Rumpus*, *HOAX*, *Eleven Eleven*, *The Normal School*, or *Cascadia Review*. Maybe you haven't. Sometimes her poems are made of dirt. Sometimes zeros and ones. Sometimes variously made text. Sometimes light. New poems are forthcoming here and there, so you'll see. A "tree town" native, she now lives in Portland, Oregon, with a magic cat who shares her obsession with trees, and blackbirds, and occasionally crashes the poetry classes she teaches at Reed College.

Tara Betts is the author of *Arc & Hue* and the chapbooks *7 x 7: kwansabas* and *THE GREATEST!: An Homage to Muhammad Ali*. Tara's writing has appeared in *POETRY*, *Gathering Ground*, *Bum Rush the Page*, both *SpokenWord Revolution* anthologies, *The Break Beat Poets*, *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*, and *GHOST FISHING: An Eco-Justice Poetry Anthology*. Tara Betts holds a PhD from Binghamton University and an MFA from New England College.

Elizabeth J. Colen's most recent book is the long poem / lyric essay hybrid *The Green Condition* (Ricochet Editions, 2014). Forthcoming books include the short story collection *Your Sick* (Jellyfish Highway, 2016, co-written with Carol Guess and Kelly Magee), and a novel-in-prose-poems, *What Weaponry* (Black Lawrence Press, 2016). She teaches at Western Washington University.

Claudia Cortese is the author of two chapbooks—*Blood Medals* (Thrush Poetry Press, 2015), a collection of prose poems, and *The Red Essay and*

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Maximiliane Donicht was born and raised in Munich, Germany. She has studied comparative literature and creative writing in Paris and New York. Currently, she is completing her master's degree in poetry and translation at Columbia University. Her poetry has appeared in several issues of the American University of Paris' literary journal *Paris/Atlantic*.

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Jennifer Givhan's full-length poetry collection *Landscape with Headless Mama* won the 2015 Pleiades Editors' Prize and is forthcoming in 2016. Her honors include an NEA fellowship, a PEN/Rosenthal Emerging Voices fellowship, The Frost Place Latin@ Scholarship, The Pinch Poetry Prize, The DASH Poetry Prize, and she has appeared in *Best New Poets*

2013, *AGNI*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and *Rattle*. She teaches online at The Rooster Moans Poetry Co-op.

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Monica A. Hand is the author of *me and Nina* (Alice James Books, 2012). Her poems have been published in *Pleiades*, *Oxford American*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Black Renaissance Noire*, *The Sow's Ear*, and *Drunken Boat*. She has a MFA in Poetry and Poetry in Translation from Drew University, and, currently, she is a PhD candidate in Creative Writing – Poetry at the University of Missouri – Columbia.

Valerie Hsiung is the author of three full-length poetry collections: *efg (exchange following and gene flow): a trilogy* (Action Books, forthcoming 2016), *incantation inarticulate* (O Balthazar Press, 2013) and *under your face* (O Balthazar Press, 2013). Her writing can be found in print and digital publications, including *American Letters & Commentary*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Moonshot*, *New Delta Review*, the PEN Poetry Series, *RealPoetik* and *VOLT*, among elsewhere. Born in July in Cincinnati, Ohio,

Hsiung spent significant portions of her childhood in Las Vegas and is now based out of Brooklyn, New York.

Min K. Kang's poems have been featured in *Asia Literary Review*, *As/Is*, and *Tender: A Quarterly Journal Made by Women*. She lives and works in Houston, Texas as a high school English teacher. She is a Kundiman fellow.

Alyse Knorr is the author of *Copper Mother* (Switchback Books), *Epithalamia* (Horse Less Press), *Alternates* (dancing girl press), and *Annotated Glass* (Furniture Press Books). Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Denver Quarterly*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, and others. She received her MFA from George Mason University. Alyse teaches English at the University of Alaska Anchorage and serves as a founding co-editor of Gazing Grain Press, an inclusive feminist press.

Karen An-hwei Lee is the author of *Phyla of Joy* (Tupelo, 2012), *Ardor* (Tupelo, 2008) and *In Medias Res* (Sarabande, 2004), winner of the Norma Farber First Book Award. Lee also wrote two chapbooks, *God's One Hundred Promises* (Swan Scythe, 2002) and *What the Sea Earns for a Living* (Quaci Press, 2014). Her book of literary criticism, *Anglophone Literatures in the Asian Diaspora: Literary Transnationalism and Translingual Migrations* (Cambria, 2013), was selected for the Cambria Sinophone World Series. She earned an MFA from Brown University and PhD in English from the University of California, Berkeley. The recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Grant, she serves as Full Professor of English and Chair at a liberal arts college in greater Los Angeles, where she is also a novice harpist. Lee is a voting member of the National Book Critics Circle.

Grace Shuyi Liew's chapbook, *Prop*, recently won Ahsakta Press's chapbook contest and is forthcoming with the press soon. Elsewhere, her work can be found in *West Branch*, *cream city review*, *Twelfth House*, *Puerto del Sol*, *H_NGM_N*, *Winter Tangerine Review*, *PANK*, and others. She is from Malaysia.

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Bonnie Roy is co-author of the chapbook *Seven to December* and co-translator of Jean-Marie Gleize's *Tarnac: A Preparatory Act*. Her poems have appeared in journals including *Diagram*, *Jubilat*, *Caketrain*, and *Jerry*. She lives in Davis, California where she is completing a dissertation on sensory work and spatial imagery in American place poetics.

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Claire Trévien is the author of *The Shipwrecked House*, and her next collection, *Astéronymes*, will be published by Penned in the Margins early next year. She founded *Sabotage Reviews*. CLAIRETRIVIEN.CO.UK

Leia Penina Wilson comes from a long line of warrior princesses. When she's not reading YA fiction, she's playing Magic the Gathering. She's proudly Samoan. Her work can be found in *Powder Keg*, *Curbside Splendor*, and *Voicemail Poems*, among others. Her first book, *i built a boat with all the towels in your closet (and will let you drown)*, is released from Red Hen Press.

Simone Wolff, fresh from their MFA at Vanderbilt University, currently designs and edits for *Coconut*, *Glad Fact*, and *TransGenre*. Their poetry, prose, and reviews have been published in *Souvenir*, *Finery*, *Coldfront*, *Poets@Work*, *Girls Get Busy*, and *We're Here We're Queer Zine*, among other places.