

Bone Bouquet

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Bone Bouquet is:

Krystal Languell, Trina Burke, Amy MacLennan, Allison Layfield, Youna Kwak, Ana Paula

cover art & cover design by Jana Vukovic
www.janavukovic.com

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Gale Marie Thompson

from HELEN OR MY HUNGER

+

I was once beautiful in my flexibility:
the door opened, the door opened
my flatness more luminous
against other jutting skins: against hardness
I could sit and carve

The body ages, the family gives in
and sinks. Older now I address myself
by more parts to grip, how I exceed
the long bridge between
two broken pieces of poems

A woman wears lines of a poem
in the way we find striations in our teeth
and fingernails,
bulbs of muscle tissue

+

Standing with other women I wake up apart
from them, copy their length of hunger,
pleasing, expertise

Am I and what is a woman, and if I keep
repeating this question, sharing
this same body won't seem so distant
I look over and arrange and arrange and arrange
How can a body make so many mistakes

+

Again I wake a humming body
after dreaming of marlins

the mess of their spears
against my thigh, ocean a nagging oil
pulsing underneath

I attempt to be breathable
watch butter melt in the pan

I remember sitting in the bathtub once
seeing a child-roll and thinking
sexy, and also *how fat*

You are not benign, I said, *not a benign thing*
What makes up our bodies
vs. what is being emitted

and how do we know when to draw those lines
Driving to one place to swallow it down,
then driving to the next
to vomit it out

Who or that which generates
or begets, a vessel in which steam is generated

instead I attempt a stand-off, thighs
half-buried in sand

Becoming so undisciplined
that I can touch
and touch and all but know it

+

“Pleasure,” on the page
“in sounding like a woman”:

I give it up, am desert-made
no outline, no ambulance

The oils in my hair
radiate a dirty myth
I drink clay to heave it
onto the floor again

What else but a receding
your symbol of pleading
into the ceiling,
him pushing up against

Helen, I see myself
edging bright to you

I need your lineage

+

It is far more typical to be empty
to be made of vantage points
Bygones carried on by another, better legend
I speak and say *sepiternum*

like a long fossil I put on like a skirt
to move from shadow to shadow

I walk through a neighborhood in June
so sure of its trees, its culs de sac
I see a dart of a girl moving by leaps
yet no memory of the salient houses

This was the ocean before, and then it wasn't
I just didn't have the heart to say it before

Men have memory, women have nostalgia
Forgetting was there first

+

Helen you are often overhead
when I imagine war.
The practice is always the same,
part ancient guessing, part real knowledge,
who may collapse on a chair
in this all-male house. Snow heaps
onto the book cover as a way out,
double-edged and settled on tree branches.
My chorus embraces a gorgeous room.
I draw it out, this hum, slow ideogram
of recall, where into my elsewhere knot
I mouth *Out, my comrades, out.*
What I'm trying to tell you
you know already—I'm olive, I'm far
orange, I am alternate shining scars
and tethers of body fat. It took me a year
to admit to being a woman,
and in stillness I remember my thicket.
Helen, touch the doorknob, the house is falling.
I think I should go under.

Leah Souffrant

Reading Simone Weil

I pick it up sometimes and put the book back down, face up on the shelf.

Afraid of its yellow pages, its penciled underlinings. I know something about reading that book. About eating beauty. I finger the pages

As if the pulpy texture is braille, read a phrase, her clause, turn away. Force my chin over my shoulder before I can let a whole sentence in. Seeking leads us astray. Never a whole page.

I know something about eating beauty. I put my hand

On the cover and close the book. Attention is creative. I put it back on the shelf, on the pile of books, face up. Those are my pencil lines. I know how to pay attention.

I read the book once. I take the book up, and I stop. What chokes, this reckless stopping. That

Textured paper, the penciled lines, the edge of the pages a bit softer each time.

Alyse Bensel

Fever

III. [pain]

Numbed, cured by it,

without the knowledge of synapses
or the hesitation before reaching
out to grab a flower made of wasps

curled like yellow petals
as if in sleep or just waiting
to pierce and protect.

Is pain the reaction
or the reaction to the reaction?
A chemical coursing
through shorted nerves

*greatly enlarged, boat-like and brightly colored
with bodies parallel and touching*

and stunted or growing
from this sharpness.

Sarah Sarai

Far on the Lake, Watery Lake

They stole a boat an
old floating shoe box
with choices one of which
was *I won't sink* and it didn't.

Good thing. They had
a place to go to lay low in
tug toward a hideout.

Big the lake its blue
an historical smudge of
remorse and archangel.

That meant something.
Passports were passed
ported stamped silly.

They had a place to go
the going necessitated by
acts that were wrong
or weren't or they did do
or didn't but once the
thinking was thought
they might as well have.

She used a color stick
the color of leaves-turning-
hair into forested fire.

Asked *Should we take*
out the trash?

To fool trackers. They did.

A mountain pass from child-
hood to the freeing squalor
appeared as a fog lifted
itself accepted itself for
what it was or wasn't
without knowing

Its thirst
for mystery fueled
the long ride.

Laura Jaramillo

THRENODY FOR ISABEL

(from Making Water)

She's opening her eyes for you milk blue around brown iris edge. Flowers on the road would perplex her violently, a jolt back into "reality." That she would exit life through the memory door, rather than the fleshy one

*

We enter into a world where color is all. The rest already lost their language.

Lone conversationalist in the house, a man of unflinching charm. Thin calories for the almost living oatmeal & sugarcane. Nurse chatter, low televisual glow. Brain dissolved over twenty-some years into body's entropy

*

Exquisite frequency at which toenails can be felt to push through the meat.

To death, you'll carry with you the reduced territory of a
consciousness once sovereign, vast and singular nation. Though
no one can define what consciousness is, you'll remain in the
halved plane, having known

*

To mistake the cerebellum's ridges for the maze itself

Blood's about-ness suppressed by bad circulation. Each
hematoma's character determined by the presence
of yellow and green in its topography. A lake of blood
or a flooded golf course on her thigh

*

Symphony of lungs clasping air lends the oxygen a smoky
topaz density

Nerves run aground from flesh halo to scapular picture
of the saints aquiver printed hearts polyester batting felt against
bone. Lone woman in the family left for decades to do the work of
kindness, considered to be petting a corpse or at least collection
of half-beating organs

*

A urinary tract infection classed severe enough to silence
the noise of fear

Jennifer Firestone

from TEN

Chirping in the near light, the vines straggle.
I saddled the rail, thought about it.
Magnificent wind splash.
Bird ricocheting. Those tiny fleas.
What I can't see moves. The bee
streams. Laura Ingalls Wilder:
"Then all the little bees in their bright
yellow jackets came swarming out
with their red-hot stings." The page
flung, children frightened.

What's thought of as flower is waste
though crumpled form remains
lovely. Blocked from their whistles
until decidedly confrontational.
So then what?
Thoughts congregate at the wayside.
Oh forget her.
Flowing tenderly
from A to B.
A pop song.

Michal Leibowitz

Variations on Eden (Woman with a Head of Roses)

- I. she seduces the snake
- II. I seduce her
- III. on Fridays
we all seduce the roses.
let them clutch at our hair,
our faces.

sometimes taking root.
- IV. when your face
turns, I think of moths and pale
things. think of the month
we lay without bodies, the night
you spilled your fingers
down my throat
and I coughed up bone.
- V. in this world,
women turn to furniture
and I turn to grasping.

call it anesthetization, etherization
the sky the color of chloroform.

VI. somewhere, the roses are morning.

I plant your head in the barrenness.
let the thorns pry through.

Jessica K Baer

Mask Generators / Weather Machines

You both sides
reversible

moebius strip
roots up: cables
trace subject - unseen horse
-string-death & relays out
going signs

bothearth in yr
hollow ear: registers A
conch divide serrates by
horseever either
stars slid cavity
hunch &

inner pivot
level moils sight
forms cant

green flare rim
thrum chords re
peat insatiate loop
a littlebit notched

mineral films pulp
choruses: tides recurrence

wave formation
sand scours aside
commutating endlessly upright
image after

glow thread & re
generate: world dens
void b/t note, terrain
stud is a hole
earth surfaces fragments
reset clay cuts, weather
composer skeins to face
adamic generators
thresh

hold out / in nervated
4 nodes contract
2 leaves – endlessly completing it
self

Erin Dorney

Repression Of Home

possums possums possums &
mixed drinks
& the abandoned mushroom factory
its second story open doors
easter egg of a one-bar town
there are scores of things
there are scores of soccer games
and no one here knows the difference
beyond their lawns and he's out there
with weed killer again
carcass deer in the ditch
don't tell the kids I killed it
& in '98 at school
she flushed a baby
I wrote a note asking
should we tell the office? what a slut
the mushrooms kept growing and
he never told &
I never told &
here there are stories
worth forgetting

M.K. Brake

The Taxidermist's Cake

Freeze her belly (moon unwaxing)

Imbue the fetal fondle carmine

likewise in trash

The thrushes molting in the molten bush

where buried cavalcade of clavicle sprouts baby's breath

the garlic simile

as/like "to throttle" "to spray"

(verb)s

a milk death doily

And All I Wanted

Bricking Up

My Acetylene Triumph

Cup of cherry juice where stems umbilical regurgitate tasteless linger

(on young toes)

(and the horns)

growing out the walrus and the cat

Each Cunt-Wing

in Resin

Concaves Miraculous

Circuitry

formaldehyded blissful in the mid-morning mist

by the bone-littered creek wherefrom sails corona cherub /

(shit-moths-out-fish-mouth-horizon)

Tames the Bleating

Warmth Receding

Her Veiny Vanity

Ring of diamond plaster

growing/swelling to cast

my eternity of hardens

to hoard all in her hardest

forever pert in perch

above the bedside table

(this pink gift to her/for her—
immortal color of *just budding*)

Oh my

Sugarbaby!

Baroness-of-

Tripe-and-Rhinestone to

sit groin-throned

petit-four

rose-tip-entombed

in icing in

Somnolence

Corpus Christi

confectionary corpse crusting ()

macaroons

hard-ons

Sugar *still* now —

Sugar *still* !—

Miss Sugar Still —

Brianna Low

Watching *Little House on the Prairie*

I envy the girls in their rough dresses,
their closeness, all the sisters
asleep in one bed. Their breath,
white in the cold,
and in the windows, real glass
and through them the fields
are moving. There is one sister
I love best, not Laura, who knows
so much. Who often describes the woods
as *the great dark trees*, who says Almonzo's
name into the sister-filled dark.
No, it is Mary, who lies down
in the prairie grass, the bones
in her face aching as she stares
into the sun, the light already
on its way out. It is the moment
she awakes that makes me love her,
in her nightgown, frantic,
blind, tearing down the curtains,
putting her hand through the glass.
Mary, who, after her baby dies in a fire
stands in front of a podium
and says, *We'll all be together again
someday, in God's house.*
Mary, who in real life never marries,
has no children, who spends her life
sewing fly nets for horses,

who can find her own way
to the paddock, toward the noises that drift
through the rough darkness
from where the animals have gathered.
Mary who reaches out to them,
their sides moving up and down
beneath her hands, their necks
wet with sweat.

Chris Tysh

from *Ravished*¹

X. Lost in the rye

Six o'clock I'm at the hotel
ahead of Tatiana who I fear

will not come the whole room
seems to know the color scheme

of suspicion spread out
like the clouds above

I want the gray shape
lost in the rye asleep

an odalisque one might say
promised to her sultan

¹ Source text: Marguerite Duras. *Le Ravissement de LolV. Stein*. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1964.

Against all odds Tatiana
arrives red-eyed

folded into her grief
slowly she strips and lies

next to me amid the phrases
one uses for such instances

I stroke her hair which
has come undone

“It’s that crazy Lola,
say it,” she shouts to the bed sheets

In the darkness that floats
in the field caught on fire

we untie the anchor
let the vessel drift at last

XII. Sous les pavés, la plage

Between tides her eyelashes
send shadows

across reeds and cattails
standing in slack water

sous les pavés, la plage
here meaning a shallow

band too silty for swimming
when we awake under hysteric gulls

ravenous to wring the neck
of this endless repetition

in which we lodge
without a lease

Further down a commotion
unspools around something

glistening in the sand
dead dog drawn like a cartoon

“It seems we’ll have to
spend the night here,” Lol says

“I’ll call my husband
I’ve already told him it’s the end ...”

The sentence hangs
on her lips unfinished

points de suspension
implying a complicity effect

which yields to kindest
tears she laughs through

and always that glance
tips the scales

claims a room with a view
I pay tossing a few banknotes

One by one sky-blue fens
give in to the tide

that drowns each little set
erases their frilly partition

Lol inconsolable now reads
as the quotient of death

Momtaza Mehri

What we said.....

You.

Slippery thing. Dispersed boy-turned-man-turned-fiction. The sum of all my failures or my brother from another mother, by another name.

Our kind of shattering deserves a medal.

Your blood. Every day the papers remind me of its cheapness. I won't blame you for wanting

to feel its violet rush. At least once.

This crust frothing at your lips? A coral reef of lessons. Surgical.

The colour of my third-day flow, or a shade or two darker.

I forget the name for it now. It's the shirt of a videographer telling the smiling bride to stop,

the office-chair creak of your lust,

sorella, it's cheapening the shot.

A too-hot patio heart. Al-Hamidiyya. Lower Kabete. The Old market, the older country. An Eritrean butcher in a West Ham shirt telling us he is older than his own country,

laughing a raw, round O, ripe for a finger or two

to slide into. The night eating

from our clavicles. You poured it out of me later

on liquid tarmac and a bed of waiting.

Some of us make a work ethic out of waiting. Call it a breath, or

raindrops congregating

on a windowsill in the shape of your earlobe,

thicker than a blood clot.

My face is an airport waiting room. You may not want to stay here long.
A land turning sixty the way bad guys in films swivel around in chairs.
Deliberate. A bad joke.
We left like all jokes do,
a copper scent in our hair.

.....**What we did**

Instead, crush a flower, Guantanamo orange
and brutal, against the tight grid of my
eyelids. Take me into a warm shell of hands
and hands
and let's count, a piggy-and-roast-beef count,
this binary age, mourning
the flora in our gut,
a small war blooming in its place
and your birthday cards shelved
on the rungs of my ribs.

Laura Esposto

Children of Beasts

For B. C. R.

Clawing up my shirt, I urged you
to weave together my ribs.

Maybe it will stop the bleeding, I say.
You refused to touch me,

the crumpled wound the black of ocean trenches.
You say, *how can anyone touch you*

when you are not here? I had turned translucent
except for the honest hole in my side.

It was big enough to stick a fist inside,
a mouth inside. All thirty members

of your family, dogs included, could visit
and each have a place to sleep. Neighbors paid

to see it, you sold tickets made from strips
of dish cloths and per-cap checks. You asked,

what is the point of this wound if not for attention?
I walked from your house, turned circus,

turned burial site, and made sure to smear
as much of myself on your door as possible.

I marched down the street, the neighborhood kids
dancing behind me, burial shroud locked in fists.

Arden Levine

Caught it just right

means caught it just wrong, means
caught a sweater on a nail, sprawling
after a toe caught a floor divot. It's

the wine glass fallen from the right hand
that the left hand then hit into the air and
the floor caught. Valued things

tend to catch righter, oftener, longer:
a child's fall continues until
the parent has considered every potential outcome

of the fall. A door slams near my face
and in the years the door spends slamming
I explore the anatomy of my face, classify

the loved features and the expendable:
caught it just
 right and destroyed my nose.
 wrong but my eye was spared.

The last time on this trail

she lifted a centipede from the dirt, shook it in her small hands. In fear, it excreted the sweet scent of cyanide, the carbon-nitrogen almond.

Evolution is not always perfect. A protective substance that does not explicitly state *I am death in the mouth* will at best confuse, at worst invite.

Marcella Durand

Snowplows in the distance, so far
in the distance, small lights in the distance
far, across a river, are sometimes obscured
in the distance of light, and weather; snowplows
move across the river where birds hang
in the wind, and contrast of wind versus
machinery, electricity of both air and
engine; lights whirl within the absence
of light, jagged metal edge of plow against
greyness and subtlety of storm brought
via the edges of a world of extremes
resulting in a complexity to be deciphered,
an impossible range of signals, some made
by you or others or me, and then so many
engineered by laws and mystery
of the universe jumbled together, a rain
of atoms in a motion unpredicated by absence,
absence of which allows combinations and
recombinations, structures and compositions,
buildings against wind, engines against clouds.

from **Rays of the Shadow**

We breaks into I under tides pulled by super
moon close to earth this turn: takes time to understand
sun as moon doesn't rise but fades in low over
us or me tracing the lines between feet and eye
and where points meet exactly middle. Sand startles
as rocks in water, colored iron, malachite,
plum, red, amber, green, glow, ray: blue as only shade
beyond lines of color and when separated
from water dries to spectrum of grays or sinks back
to vermilion under all, under we, I,
point of rock against tides pulled by slender moon.
When smooth, together as only one does amid
a greatness about solitude; all infinite
points create lines, after which time flame to appear.

I too was invited: by light, clouds, greenery
and always color. Light is just invisible
until interrupted by solidity. Then
it assumes shape, even if the shapes of dust motes,
even if dust becomes light, cities are always
illuminated during the night, buildings are
lines of light, alternating, crosshatching of light
on mass, materials, reality. Sunrise
transitions to sun, quality of adjustment,
change to the more familiar, daybreak is always
unfamiliar, new and strange. Light fades off buildings
and diffuses into time. Again, how actions of water
and language are related to light. Whether the
motion of water is direct or sinuous,
sweep of clouds guides light upward, slight scattering of
photons, half solid, so half invisible. The
quality of water determines quality
of light. Rays become visible after finding
their objects. Visible or shadow, rays seek us.

Jill Khoury

Bridge Freezes before Road

I call her my arson, fatal slope. My voice emits from me so naturally
everyone mistakes it for light humming /

I splash my face with bleach. I will sacrifice. I will scarify. /

My mouth will turn blue

But before that there will be more stripes. My mouth will be pushed
open by a February wind as I cross the highway without looking. Leaves
of paper will fly from it. /

Chatter and sibilance

I am choking on feathers. No one will believe me. I put my mother
into rehab. I break her out during a squall— big papery flakes. Then
the temperature drops. They become cold, tight, snipe my face when
I roll down the window and stick myself out. I want to be sucked into
someone else's slipstream /

None of this has actually happened

The sudden opera of being spun sideways. The universe pulls me

I have lost control of this craft

infinitesimal rest
in her electrical

rhythm /

all for nothing

all for nothing

all for nothing

I will concede

I lie with my head on a stump. Very still. In the curl of my fingers, a twig.
I want to write my name in the dirt but I have forgotten it /

Susan Lewis

Monumentally Manumitted,

rubbernecked & blubber-naked, the uncivil war rages from top to toe. Floral notes tipping the lost & throbbing meat. Wannabe cyclones circling like buzzards, issuing their carrion cry & mustering an interest in anywho's future. Matchless fine if passing estranged. Misapprehension mastering the age of untruth, unforgivably forgotten. Ministered to those more or less consumed by miss & mister fortune. Joined by the loving arms of this soldering iron & that rusty stitch. While the bend in your elbow rises to the tidal zone slapped by rock, paper, wizard—a tribute to the breathless kick. Don't pretend you know whereof you want, distracted as who isn't by this spongy spectacle.

Martha King

E.O. Wilson on the Gowanus Canal

It might be an elephant
trying to save its tusk
it might be Mickey Mouse,
it might be a Belgian tree, clipped round as a lollipop

The mud along my river
which isn't even a creek
tamed in the 19th century
as a working waterway

its mud changes all the time

It might be nature at work

where an elephant seeks a tree trunk to strip
where Mickey Mouse ruins
our imagination
where a clipped tree turns dishwater gray
where the
water is

Alice Notley

Gliding Past Noncommittal Centers of Breath after Dark

Who needed all these mistakes?

Such as dying in a hotel—Doesn't everybody?

now that world is one in its claim, wrath, is it bigger than fire?

Is it just harm itself?

One loves our leaders, gangsters all; everything's one's, there's nothing.

Manners of drunkards in grey,

grey like air. How does one feel about one's job? Is this a soul

speaking from alien details

here, the cot beds blankets and sheets, getting ready, holding hands?

Note

I don't want you to know me any more (One doesn't want . . .)
So I left with my entourage of voices (One doth Leave . . .)
The Earth left us (the ones), after we killed it, her, them.

Ark is cool and dry—airless—when there's no more Life.

The planet shrinks to an imaginary point in an enigmatic reflection process: the singed years are Dead. The Lotus is Dead; the animals, the instincts, the echos, the chimeras, and the Functions are all Dead.

The point in my (One's) forehead may not be retracted and hurts.
Where are the leftovers going? What does "going" mean?

rising from fossils of Doom, Who do you love?

Deep in the One one still says I
even without You.
it isn't a heart it's a doomsday reflex.
Besides, who are we?

They used to say the circuits commanded one.

I'm thrilled you think you know something,
a cherry bomb in a spacesuit. The men, etc
what else but them? My heavens

and tears, soaked in from before one began,
displayed as just water with antique eyes.

In the Empire, past, like marriage and a frozen cake, blood bitch
one doesn't *want* to support unmistakable jerk any more.
It's called virtual reasoning, grey, spell check'd but not
proofread; invent a more profit-comestible car, run on the fat of
dead vagrants. The Effects play a benefit for The Causes
and will fund the Healing party presided over by Cheesy Swami
and the Insurpassable Media Fraud Chicks. In those days
one shrugs, up in the tower where he hopes to be worshipped,
before it becomes Card Sixteen. I hear the weather rumbling
against the moth-eaten shawl, blushing, of antique missile shield.
Is it the Erinyes? Sorry, She trumps the Greeks. Who? Why,
the Fanged Proprietress! Haven't you heard of the Fanged Proprietress?

Sprig

Autumn is dead, remember, and the others, even winter.
I cursed you, with this sprig of heather . . .
And among the billions of destructors, les hommes,

there are only I and you—I the human, you the earth,
I the lover you the spurned beloved I the jackal
you the. You're supposed to be meat. You find me
mete, fitting, for my language worships you in sweet
totems until. It's supposed to be The Industrial
Age or fragmentation of the molecule into
slippery. Maneuvers for credit, Why. I can't speak
this language any more. Don't I hear what's happening?

I left you, I left you and I'm leaving you. I
leave you, because you're dead—no one's really dead—

you will get back up a desert just an ex-concubine
and you will say that I will be left. It's true, I'm
deserted of all love, depicted as flowers and
bunnies. The deal is closed, O one, the boat has left . . .

the odor of time lingers like a trace of my madness.

Dominique Salas

Figures in the Parabola Water

Mom isn't talking about the funeral
or her dead tío, just about her past,
which only might have included
him. Restaurant people say
we look alike. Brown, opaque,
& green bottles wink on the pool
deck. She tells of running from her
first proposal; how caller ID ruined
her concurrent affairs. Sunglasses
are on, but she is fixed on my
eyes. Elbows ebbing in and out
of the dizzy water surface, she inhales,
pinching the tent of her nose,
somersaulting—straw sunhat on
rippled surface, left nodding.

WOC Seeking a Reflection

My mouth opens too loud and is greeted with civilized squeals.

I am close to relapsing into wanting to be white.

Hi, my name is Dominique and I self-loathe because I want friends.

Hi, Dominique. I am also Dominique. I am here to affirm to you that you are alone and talking to yourself.

Hi.

Since I have your attention:

I want to be the damsel in distress. I don't know who informed me that damsels have tawny rose nipples, but I don't have those. My nipples are—I must lift up my shirt, look. Fairytales did not inform me of my nipple color: they are brick quarters. I think,

I am losing ahold of glossy stability.

This is real life so I humor the people that pass into my view because that is what people are supposed to do. And no, I don't want to leave 100%, but when I do want to,

I want to 100%. Kicking the grass at the edge of a field for recess isn't all bad; eating in a bathroom stall only sucks if I forget to vice-grip my legs

so the yeast bread doesn't plop in the water. Now, I risk only guaranteed companionship: butterflies playing chicken across a rural road; me acompañan de huevo, windshield jelly.

Still, the civilized folks with their torch-and-pitchfork lip designate

my nipples as those of a grump. And, I can't undo it by bleaching my body; root of my looping flat giggles not that shallow. I might have enough patience in reserve to teach myself how to skin a mirror.

Sarah Françoise Champion

Hey you champion so nice
you champion you had
to say champion twice

like five times your knuckles
like small tins of beans
like a tour of our fridge
for cold cherries in June

champion you lost me
in your champion plan
play-champion play

you wouldn't know
just from looking at me
I've wiggled into chain mail
stolen from a dead Etruscan
who wore it better

in the fight, champion,
senses were lost
forever

like kneeling for water
like gagging for champion

like reclining to slake
a Sicilian girl

who died
at the source.

Nandini Dhar

Natural History

When we smash a shiuli with the back of our heels, we
repossess the petals in entirety—the opening in the middle,

the stem as orange as the fruit, the mud-stain on the edges
of the petals. This is how we rid the flowers of their ghosts:

memorized rhyme-schemes, eight year old voices repeating
the same lines over and over again. These voices that can

only speak in accents of ascension, the radiance attributed
to grammar, the certainty in learning the difference between,

is, are and am, the uncertainty of remembrance. Spell a word
wrong, a thwack on your head. Replace am with are, kneel

in front of a class. Inside my sister's tongue, a flower is nothing
but a dialect of failure. In the myth that dies its own gossamer

death inside the illustrator's ink, a tomcat and a field-rat drag
together—in between themselves—a little girl's head with rosy

lips, chubby cheeks, dimple chin. In the myth that my sister
writes with a broken twig on the damp grounds, they are squeezing

this girl's head within the openings of a red hibiscus. It's monsoon:
the first drops of rains on sister's eyebrows. Yet, her chapped lips

are bleeding, as if it's the middle of winter. Her alphabets, floral
as the shape of our baby cousin's milk-vomit on the floor.

The petal-cracks unloosen the knowledge—the girl is no one to us,
but could have been. When we suck the nectar out of its crimson

petals, it is the honey of her blue eyes that we're swallowing. A
humming bird drags the end of her blonde curls with its beak,

and we find a village of dead caterpillars inside the crevices
of the calyx, their forms intact. The belly of a flower

is an amateur entomologist's notebook, an alleyway where
insects come to live their blotting paper demise, along with

goldilock girls. Anger is the manure on which my sister
is tracing the architecture of brown foxes, secret staircases,

the neighbor-woman who turns into a rojonigondha stalk
while breastfeeding. And, I, who cannot do much other

than watch, am trying to follow.

Georgia Faust

Disaster Invented

the vagaries, erased the white noise. How can this work if your shoulders won't touch my shoulders. Special Instructions: Please place everything on the side so that I can construct the bagel myself. Thank you. And please DO NOT toast the bagel. Special Instructions: Please make it spicy. Thank you. 'You are so beautiful' but only in space in which I can see but cannot hear. If I were beautiful I would dig for gold too. I am sorry it is not your fault I am sorry I intend to default blame. What descends I might leave over I said to the door I should have crossed. I need you to hold me, not the pillow. Not another dog in mobile contact. The pine is in my foyer. A pine fell on the house / in the house / in the living room. A pine grew in the living room. When did you lose your electricity? I lost it before you lost it. I lost my electricity in anticipation of the bearing of the storm.

Please erase this exponential mirrored travel light. Across twenty-one flights of concrete. Because source decisions derive from futures. All of them falling candy corn. Someone later will tell you the rest of the story on the other side. Better from afar, did you know I make hurricanes. As in, I cry new weather realities. My glasses intend obstruction on my face, to break my face and face your face. *Thank you for / improving my Face! / Thank you for / improving my Life! / Thank you so much!* I couldn't find out where you were because I lost access to the storm tracker. You couldn't see where you were because you lost the privileges for the gathering of bog data. I have procured grinding water. Clean enough I lost again and before there was a hand to lose. Does your face hurt from smiling / from the articulation of a hypothesis translation of an emoticon onto facing questions. I swam in horizontal striped viscose to Wall Street's urgent care clinic. The ear canal is a beautiful place if you are patient. Languid in the FedEx envelope. Appropriate servings of brown liquor: dark and candle and cheeks on fire. Tired is the way that makes stop motion animations automatic actions. I worry how I move in the dark across a room. In other light from small contained fire perhaps / a light fixture on the ceiling made to look like the handles of intricate forks. And then there was space / not enough space for the addition of a chair.

Past noise, you looked so pleased with yourself. In tiny corporate colors. Me too because I'm always surprised. This place is all sorts of chaos. A certain kind of star: All eyes on me is the most of the anxiety containers. See you at the water cooler. The water cooler was replaced by the reservoir source. My hair sheds in hurricanes but not exclusively (also in office chairs). My ear ended in when I realized my hair had never functioned properly in its role as distraction. So my ear procured a suggestion-based fear: the overheard presence of anti-Occupy Wall Street rhetoric in the newest of the Batman franchise. I didn't see; filmed awake under someone else's bed.

In the vacuum of white noise, everyone from afar looks like a break in the vocabulary. Before white noise I was trying to discern what tastes your sweet buds and particulars you. The simultaneous seam in clove and cardamom. Next and Last; Stop. Firecrackers to the brain, strangers to the hair follicles. National oceanic and atmospheric administration deems all times then of crisis. Waiter spills coffee: *Usually I have a steady hand. I guess you make me nervous.* No, my nerves are contagions. The student asked me what integrate means. I wonder if he knows what intuition is. I am scared of the sentence too but in other terms. He saw me drop my phone in pieces but it held together. The man with PathMark bags opened all the windows in the train car. His being suggests he was famous in another place-time axis. It's a good thing my position is not professor because the boy who carries his notebook in his back pocket asked if I was a freshman. I am so much older than you. An expert in all things but vocabulary, the boy said: You look young. And then: *That's a compliment.* Today I am nostalgic for the time before this morning started. The boy knows how to make me blush, but asked what integration means. That's a great question, I said, because it is for those who don't know. Because I wish I could say I don't understand when I don't understand.

Nazifa Islam

Always Him

a Virginia Woolf found poem: The Waves

He talks of tortures and devastations—
and he is bored. His stories

sanction abandonment
and a certain extreme extravagance.

He seems to like lying
and insincerity—the vulture

that tears at grass and little boys
the appalling sentence

that tails off feebly. He makes us
all feel heavy and gaping.

But he is seductive
too. I feel his curious brutal power

then I feel foolish—
like a cricket dangling over teeth.

Now I no longer
think about lightness and laughter.

I Cannot Return

a Virginia Woolf found poem: The Waves

I fell to where water and the spinning
breeze and even the hours
are not indivisible.

I am crumbling here. Bits of me—
my thighs, fingers, feet—are slipping away.
I cannot clasp myself together.

I remember being one but now
I am only a tired half
woman sleeping side by side with bodies

cut in two. It seems I am
perceptible in this grey light—
I must still exist.

Elizabeth Ribar

This is what it's like to be a vampire

You love when it's sunny but you dread going outside. Feeling a delectable warmth that tickles, you want nothing to do with it. Joy is all you wish for. Skin prickles and you want to pinch yourself until you hurt. As your mouth sighs with pain, you hate the way the rain is sizzling its way down the window. With each invisible cloud, you want to cloak your sorrows in them, burrow your face deeply until you're so white you don't even recognize yourself. You once told me you were a vampire, to which I scoffed. Like how they all scoff. Bones on bones and animal teeth.

Clare Louise Harmon

PEDAGOGY (III)

At initial interpretation [Redacted]'s dis
pleasure

(for the assignment
Arthur Honegger's viola
sonata of 1920 evinced
an affront
an unfavorable assessment
of her technical prowess)

was obvious prompted her
teacher [Redacted]
to flail

in guttural utterance "What
is wrong with you
it is a touch. Play it
a touch a caress
I'll show you how."

Neither explication nor technical terms
pressure angle and width
of vibrato

[Redacted] heard
nothing nothing of the sort rather
felt gentle warmth at the small
of her back fabric lightly
depressed
by five calloused tips.
"I'll show you how like this"

Technically it's simple
plays as so much post-war haze
requiring
of its agent a Jungian channel:
ancestral memories of Parisian opium dens.
It's a "teaching" piece
effete sensualist
and unsubstantial given
to students not adequately mature
not enough
interpretively adept
to tackle work
of Paul Hindemith
Johannes Brahms these most
sacred
canonical bits.

Carly Joy Miller

Dayshift Caught in the Ribs

To crash into the architecture
of the beast is to remember
how the body is rigged:

fable me along the wicked
spine and I trip
pearlescent. A bruise.

A wonder: how sea
glasses the ribs:
windows, paneling

a horn of light.
A chill. Day
airs me

like a sin
left to mercy:
how frost hums for bone.

Midshift Contemplating the Heart

Unfaced unlimbed so only center: where will you
spread your rust, my beaut? Tasseled begonia, scarlet
hummer, my little psalm doll: hollow be thy head when
I pang you again. Apologies: the ones I love loot my
cage. Their appetites curl the girl right out of me.

Lily Iona MacKenzie

Big Lucks

She told me to
surrender but

I didn't know
what the word meant

I found a bird
with a knot

in its chest
that I tried to

undo but a kite
ran away

with me I
thought a monster

would save
me One jogged

past named Mary
She had mustard

written across
her chest and the

moon dropped a boy
into a bag

It seemed better
than giving birth

in a zoo All
that junk lying

around in a
subway Some janitor

got ambitious
and threw the cat

into the box
I now am holding

Gillian Cummings

Sky Thin as Thread

Dusk equals a quilted, seamed-through sky,
hydrangea petals purple, hydrangea petals blue,
stitched with wobble and bite, but tread softly,
needle of moon-shoes, tread and thread what we
would call a little today into a gianter tomorrow.
Oh, pink and pink and gone, and the goneness
a thorough going, where we would venture when
rocks turn rabbits and sight enters the hole of its
mote, gone, gone bone, gone home of the prayer-
hidden, hallelujah-heavy heaven that cried (and for us).
At dusk, we have a hope, a famine we feign would be
plenty. The air doesn't lift us to the tops of the copper
beeches. The air wants, *Wider, wider*. We open our arms
to a number that subtracts what we hold from the zero
that binds us to bliss.

Marissa Higgins

A Glasgow Smile from West 34th Street

The salesgirl greets me,
as she always does:
*which problem is it
today?*

I want to know
if I'm organic,
or just comprised
of organic parts.

While she sterilizes
her scalpel, a naked woman
paces next to us:

I can tell she is new here
from the way
she conceals
her breasts.

As my salesgirl cuts
into my cheek,
I wonder if she remembered
to clean the dirt

from beneath
her fingernails.

The cuts are quick,
but she stitches slowly.

Your results aren't bad,
my salesgirl says.
You are mostly organic,
but you aren't natural.

She slips three vials
into my palm.
This will help.
I crave her reassurance.

A security guard stops me
on my way out.
Smile, he says.
I offer him a weak one.

No. He furrows his brow.
Give me a real smile.
I point to the incision on my cheek.
He shrugs.

I smile and a stitch
pops open. *Good,* he says.
Now you will smile
the rest of the day.

Sarah Ann Winn

Dot & Bo Age in Oak

A strong industrial style you can taste
Dot & Bo Style Blog, January 8, 2016

Let's live in a dried out beer barrel,
tho one of us leans to stout.

Let's style our lives around eleventeen
sips. Let's go a little overboard, let's buy

enough glasses — promise you'll never
do dishes drunk. Let's fret away

the corners of our lives til everything
is rounded and sanded and smoked,

and we age in ways that change our chemical
composition and flavors. To aficionados,

it's obvious, it's intentional, it's the best
we could hope for, bottled, distilled.

Dot & Bo Go Stable Chic

We stall, we sweep
every minute we are not
cleaning tack, we're leather
and brass, we shine and matte.

Illusions of constant dressage
aside, marriage is a lot of work,
shoveling someone else's shit
and so much work for show.

In the quiet minutes, when
you ask him to lift his foot
so you can vacuum,
and he does, when he turns

his head, and his eyes find yours.
Dust filters through the dawnlight,
always golden. In the ring,
then on the trail you signal,

the landscape jolts and starts
into the blurred gallop.

Contributor Notes

Jessica K Baer received their BA in Creative Writing from Georgia State University in 2011. They live and do field recordings in Chicago. Their work has been featured in *Fruita Pulp*, *Horse Less Review*, *Deluge Journal*, *Prelude*, *The Boiler Journal*, and *Potluck Mag*. They also have a future chapbook with Magic Helicopter Press called *Holodeck One* (2016). They love horses.

Alyse Bensel is the author of the poetry chapbooks *Not of Their Own Making* (dancing girl press) and *Shift* (Plan B Press). Her poems have most recently appeared in *Zone 3*, *burntdistrict*, *Heron Tree*, *Spiral Orb*, and elsewhere. She serves as the Book Reviews Editor at *The Los Angeles Review* and Managing Editor of *Beecher's*.

M.K. Brake is the author of *The Taxidermist's Girl* (dancing girl press, Summer 2016). Her work can be found in *Fruita Pulp*, *Smoking Glue Gun*, *Bayou Magazine*, *TAGVVERK Journal*, and others. She holds an MFA in Poetry and will pursue an MFA in Nonfiction at the University of Iowa beginning Fall 2016.

Gillian Cummings is the author of *My Dim Aviary*, which won the 2015 Hudson Prize and is due out in November 2016 from Black Lawrence Press. Recent poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Barrow Street*, *Cider Press Review*, *The Journal*, *New Orleans Review*, and *Whiskey Island*.

Nandini Dhar is the author of the chapbook *Lullabies Are Barbed Wire Nations* (Two of Cups Press, 2014). Her poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Chattahoochee Review*, *PANK*, *Los Angeles Review*, *Whiskey Island*, *Bitter Oleander*, and elsewhere. She is the co-editor of the journal

Elsewhere. Nandini hails from Kolkata, India, and divides her time between her hometown and Miami, Florida, where she works as an Assistant Professor of English at Florida International University.

Erin Dorney, Poetry Editor for Third Point Press, has an MA in English (Creative Writing) from West Chester University and an MS in Library and Information Science from Syracuse University. Her work has been published in various literary journals, including *Paper Darts*, *Hobart*, *The Pinch*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, and *Entropy*. Erin is a founding editor of *The Triangle*; interns with VIDA: Women in Literary Arts; and is a member of the editorial board of the peer-reviewed journal *In The Library With The Lead Pipe*. She is a freelance writer and consultant based in Mankato, Minnesota.

Marcella Durand's books include *Deep Eco Pre*, a collaboration with Tina Darragh (Little Red Leaves, 2009); *AREA* (Belladonna*, 2008); and *Traffic & Weather*, a site-specific poem written during a residency at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council in downtown Manhattan (Futurepoem, 2008). The excerpt of *Rays of the Shadow* is from a book-length poem based on the alexandrine, a classic French form. She lives in the Lower East Side with artist Rich O'Russa and son Ismael.

Laura Esposto is currently a student at The Ohio State University studying English with a concentration in Creative Writing.

Georgia Faust grew up in downtown Manhattan and lives in a vortex under the Brooklyn Botanic Garden where she presides over poetry and corporate bankruptcy administration. She holds an MFA in poetry from Brooklyn College.

Jennifer Firestone is an Assistant Professor of Literary Studies at Eugene Lang College (The New School). Her books include *Gates & Fields* (Belladonna*, forthcoming), *Swimming Pool* (DoubleCross Press), *Flashes*

(Shearsman Books), *Holiday* (Shearsman Books), *Waves* (Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs), *from Flashes and snapshot* (Sona Books), and *Fanimaly* (Dusie Kollektiv). Firestone co-edited (with Dana Teen Lomax) *Letters To Poets: Conversations about Poetics, Politics and Community* (Saturnalia Books). She has work anthologized in *Kindergarde: Avant-Garde Poems, Plays, Songs, & Stories for Children* and *Building is a Process / Light is an Element: essays and excursions for Myung Mi Kim*. She won the 2014 Marsh Hawk Press Robert Creeley Memorial Prize.

Sarah Françoise is a translator/writer living in Brooklyn. Her writing has appeared in *Poor Claudia*, *Oxford Poetry*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Tin House*, *Vol.1 Brooklyn*, *Hobart*, *Poems in Which*, and *Queen Mob's Teahouse*.

Marissa Higgins is an essayist and poet based in Washington, DC. Her essays have appeared in *Guernica*, *Salon*, *Hippocampus*, *The Washington Post*, and elsewhere. Her poetry has been featured in *Apogee*. She enjoys word economy.

Clare Louise Harmon is the author of *The Thingbody* (Instar Books, 2015) and the chapbook *IfWishesWere Horses the PoorWould Ride* (Finishing Line Press, 2016). Her work has appeared in numerous journals including *PANK*, *Quaint*, *The Feminist Wire*, *Sixth Finch*, *Sundog Lit*, *Inferior Planets*, *The Stockholm Review of Literature*, and the Meerkat Press anthology, *My Cruel Invention*. She holds degrees in music performance and creative writing from the University of Minnesota and the University of New Orleans, respectively; from 2011-2012 she taught violin, viola, and chamber music at Drake University. Presently, she writes about Jazz as a staff writer for the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra.

Nazifa Islam grew up in Novi, Michigan. Her poetry and paintings have appeared in *Anomalous Press*, *Fourth & Sycamore*, *splinterswerve*, and *The Harpoon Review* among other publications, and her debut poetry collection *Searching for a Pulse* (2013) was released by Whitepoint Press. She earned

her MFA at Oregon State University. You can find her on Twitter and Instagram @NAFOOPAL.

Laura Jaramillo is a poet from Queens, and is the author of *Material Girl* (subpress, 2012). She is a doctoral candidate at Duke University where she is writing her dissertation on experimental film in Spain and Latin America. She lives in Durham and is an occasional film and book critic for various local and national outlets.

Jill Khoury is interested in the intersection of poetry, art, gender, and disability. She edits the journal *Rogue Agent* and has two chapbooks—*Borrowed Bodies* (Pudding House, 2009) and *Chance Operations* (Paper Nautilus, 2016)—and a full-length collection, *Suites for the Modern Dancer* (Sundress Publications, 2016). Find her at JILLKHOURY.COM.

Martha King attended Black Mountain College briefly as a teenager and has lived in Brooklyn since 1969. Her recent books are *Imperfect Fit: Selected Poems* (Marsh Hawk), and *North & South*, a collection of short stories (Spuyten Duyvil). Currently, she co-curates a prose reading series with Elinor Nauen at the Side Walk Café on the Lower East Side, blogs irregularly at [HTTP://WWW.BLOG.BASILKING.NET](http://www.blog.basilking.net), and has recently completed a lengthy memoir, *Outside Inside*.

Michal Leibowitz was born and raised in White Plains, New York. Her poetry has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Boxcar Poetry Review*, *Spy Literary Journal*, and *Up the Staircase Quarterly*. Michal has been recognized by the 2016 Adroit Prizes for Poetry and Prose and the Lex Ann Literary Festival. She is an undergraduate at Stanford University.

Arden Levine's poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *American Life in Poetry* (a project of the Poetry Foundation), *AGNI*, *Rattle*, *Sixth Finch*, *Bodega Magazine*, *Prelude*, and various elsewhere. Arden

reads for *Epiphany*, holds an MPA from New York University, consults to nonprofit organizations, and is a D.C.-born Brooklynite.

Susan Lewis is the editor of *Posit* (WWW.POSITJOURNAL.COM) and the author of eight books and chapbooks, including *This Visit* (BlazeVOX, 2015), *How to be Another* (Cervena Barva Press, 2014), and *State of the Union* (Spuyten Duyvil Press, 2014). Her poetry has appeared in such places as *The Awl*, *Berkeley Poetry Review*, *Boston Review*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Cimarron*, *Gargoyle*, *The Journal*, *New Orleans Review*, *Prelude*, *Raritan*, *Seneca Review*, *So to Speak*, and *Verse* (online). Find her at WWW.SUSANLEWIS.NET.

Brianna Low was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She is a recent graduate of Indiana University, where she received her MFA in poetry.

Lily Iona MacKenzie has published reviews, interviews, short fiction, poetry, travel pieces, essays, and memoir in over 150 American and Canadian venues. *Fling!*, one of her novels, was published in July 2015. It's available in print, Kindle, and audio. *Bone Songs*, another novel, will be published early in the spring of 2017. A third novel, *Freefall: A Divine Comedy* will be released in 2018. Her poetry collection *All This* was published in 2011. She has taught writing at the University of San Francisco for 30 years and was vice-president of USF's part-time faculty union. When she isn't writing, she paints and travels widely with her husband. Visit her blog at: [HTTP://LILYIONAMACKENZIE.WORDPRESS.COM](http://LILYIONAMACKENZIE.WORDPRESS.COM).

Momtaza Mehri is a poet currently in conversation with biomedicine, inheritance, and her particular brand of transnational baggage. Her work has been featured and is forthcoming in *Hard Food*, *Puerto Del Sol*, *Elsewhere*, *Cecile's Writers*, *Sukoon*, *Poetry International*, and other delights. She co-edits the digital space *Diaspora Drama* and has been shortlisted for the 2016 Brunel African Poetry Prize and Plough Prize. She is a fellow of The Complete Works. Laugh with her @[@RIUFFNECKREFUGEE](https://twitter.com/RIUFFNECKREFUGEE)

Carly Joy Miller's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Adroit Journal*, *Blackbird*, *Boston Review*, *Gulf Coast*, and elsewhere. She has been nominated for a Pushcart and was a finalist for the Stadler Fellowship. She is a contributing editor for *Poetry International* and a founding editor of Locked Horn Press.

Alice Notley's most recent book is *Certain Magical Acts*. She has received many awards for her work, including the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize. She lives and works in Paris.

Elizabeth Ribar is a poet and writer living in Queens, New York. Her poetry can be found or is forthcoming in *espnW*, *Up The Staircase Quarterly*, *Juked*, *Dead King*, *The Gambler*, and more. She is the author of the poetry chapbook *all girls will not feel pretty at some point*, released by Ugly Sapling Press in April 2016. She is also the Founder and Editor-In-Chief of *Dulcet Quarterly*.

Dominique Salas, a native El Pasoan, is a poet, translator, and PhD candidate in Latin American Studies at Tulane University. She holds an MFA from New Mexico State University. Her work has either recently appeared or is forthcoming in *The Volta*, *Huizache*, *riverSedge*, *Dirty Chai*, and *Cutbank's* 'All Accounts and Mixture' feature.

Sarah Sarai's books are *Geographies of Soul and Taffeta* (Indolent Books, 2016) and *The Future Is Happy* (BlazeVOX, 2009). Her poems are in *Threepenny Review*, *Boston Review*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, and many others. Her stories appear in *Grist*, *Tampa Review*, *Devil's Lake*, and many others.

Leah Souffrant, MFA, PhD, is a poet and critic who teaches writing at New York University. Recent examples of her poetry and her studies in poetics, feminist theory, ethics, and aesthetics can be found at *Jacket2*, *Poet Lore*, *WSQ*, *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, and *Feministas Unidas*, and her

book-length study of “the poetics of the unsayable” is forthcoming in late 2016. Information about her work can be found at LEAHSOUFFRANT.COM.

Gale Marie Thompson is the author of *Soldier On* (Tupelo Press, 2015) and two chapbooks. Her work may found in places like *Gulf Coast*, *Guernica*, *Colorado Review*, and others. She is the founding editor of *Jellyfish Magazine* and lives, teaches, and writes in Athens, Georgia.

Poet and playwright **Chris Tysh** is the author of several collections of poetry and drama. Her latest publications are *Our Lady of the Flowers*, *Echoic* (Les Figues, 2013); *Molloy: The Flip Side* (BlazeVOX, 2012); and *Night Scales: A Fable for Klara K* (United Artists, 2010). She is on the creative writing faculty at Wayne State University. Her play, *Night Scales: a Fable for Klara K*, was produced at the Studio Theatre in Detroit under the direction of Aku Kadogo in 2010. She holds fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Kresge Foundation. Her latest project, *Hotel des Archives*, features verse “transcreations” from the French novels of Beckett, Genet, and Duras.

Sarah Ann Winn’s poems, prose, and hybrid works have appeared or are upcoming in *Five Points*, *Hayden’s Ferry Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Passages North*, and *QuarterlyWest*, among others. Her chapbooks include *Field Guide to Alma Avenue and Frew Drive* (forthcoming Essay Press, 2016), *Haunting the Last House on Holland Island* (forthcoming Porkbelly Press, 2016) and *Portage* (Sundress Publications, 2015). Visit her at [HTTP://BLUEBIRDWORDS.COM](http://BLUEBIRDWORDS.COM) or follow her [@BLUEAISLING](https://twitter.com/BLUEAISLING).