

21

# Circle Show

Winter/Spring 2020



21



Circle  
Show

Volume 21  
Winter/Spring 2020

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Seven CirclePress

ISSN: 1948-1098

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**Volume 21, Winter/Spring 2020**

CircleShow (ISSN: 1948-1098) is published twice yearly by Seven CirclePress, a fiercely independent micropress founded in 2008.

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**Cover Art**

*“The Man Cyborg”*  
*by Grandfailure*

## Gale Acuff

### As Dogs Go

I love my dog but he's dead so can I still love him? Father found him run-over on the highway early this morning and broke the news to me after my breakfast when I came out to the garden calling *Caesar, Caesar, here boy*. That's his name - was - or did his name die, too? It's a good one even though he wasn't Roman at all, just a runt German Shepherd-husky mix but then so am I, in my own way. *Son,*

Father says, leaning on the hoe. *Caesar was hit by a car last night and he's died. I've got him in the wheelbarrow here so let's go bury him now. Okay, I say - I mean, Yes sir.* I'm not going to cry, at least not until we've dug the hole and put him in and covered him up and walked on top of the grave to pack it down so a raccoon or another dog won't dig him up again and so that we can put as much of the leftover dirt on top as we can because, in time, his mound will sink because his body will decay and we want the hole level to the ground, not a sinkhole back here behind the garden. Father and I talk as we do the job.

When we're finished we've left our shoeprints on top of the grave. *Let's get rid of those,* Father says, and turns the shovel over so that it's a kind of rake and erases

our being there. *I'm sorry, Son,* he says.  
*He was a pretty good dog, as dogs go.*  
Oh, that's alright, I say. *Where is he now,*  
I ask. Suddenly. *Well, he's in a place*  
*where he won't get run over again,* Father says.  
*Can you be more specific,* I ask. He  
chuckles. *No, he says. No, I can't. No*  
*man can. If anyone tells you he knows,*  
*don't believe it. Maybe he's in Heaven,*  
I suggest. *Maybe,* Father says. *Maybe*  
*not. I wish I could tell you more but I*  
*don't know any more. Oh,* I say. *Alright.*

Father rolls the wheelbarrow to the barn.  
He leaves me alone. I feel buried. *Wait*  
*for me,* I call to him. But he's too far  
away to hear. It's not that he's afraid.

.

## SK Brownell

### **Tidal**

We are not hardy folk  
Stout and stocky but not in the way of soups  
The cold doesn't get to us

Time leaves us be  
It's only the wind gets in

to the holes of our sweaters  
the weave of our shirts  
raincoats that don't keep out rain

on the slopes of a mountain we  
cannot see the top of

We're almost there and turn back. Faith  
comes in many forms  
none of which are satisfactory

—

Non-practicing is a misnomer  
We practice lots of things:  
temperance, posture, classical piano

We practice eating We practice  
sleeping well and get nowhere

We crumble at a young age, spend  
the rest of the time putting ourselves together  
It's not the time that gets to us

We have talents we're afraid of  
losing or forgetting or fulfilling

We practice navigation, maquillage  
cartography and attachment  
We practice breathing and standing up

—

It's not a thing to talk about, the undertow  
We only talk about the waves  
an ocean of amniotic fluid that repeats itself

as we brush salt from our shoulders in the sun,  
forgetting We're afraid of forgetting

the bottom of the mountain  
the time before the time before  
our faith or the tradition of it

that looks like steadfastness  
and houses built on rocks

Sea only erodes the insides of houses  
built on sand—but we are not our houses  
or our land.

## April

He used to say *it often snowed* on his birthday and we believe it. This is the kind of place it would, where farms are founded by glaciers, where lakes masquerade as oceans, where I was born on the banks of a river that remembers its roots.

It was spring when I left you across the world, winter the next day. Things needed to become new. You were happy before you thought about the bars in the night and after, in your cozy cell of trees, my hands were too much like axes.

You will never flee, but if you do, know there is a place where it often snows in April, for my grandfather's birthday, where your father's father's cousins found a forest, loved it, and chopped it down.

## Jason Cant

### **Dionysus in Pain**

He could have passed on through  
the whims of a warm day,  
but unfortunately he  
chose to write.

To this the world  
must owe him a  
debt of gratitude,  
for the fire of the  
sun can now be  
replicated, for there  
is a burning that  
arises from contentment.

The beauty lies within  
the heart, which is hollow,  
almost immune to pain,  
almost immune to  
the white heat that  
emanates from the  
underbelly of time.

Thank god he is only  
half complete,  
thank god the human condition  
is only a half-moon,  
a half complete  
follower of Dionysus  
before Dionysus  
developed liver disease.

Dionysus wrote his  
best poetry on his  
deathbed, seeing the  
infinite light, he shied  
away from darkness,  
and thus illuminated

the mystery, easing  
the transition from  
the glistening emerald  
to the immortal  
flower, blooming  
petals of solitude,  
peace and silence,  
sweet silence.

Dionysus wrote about  
fire when he was  
in pain, the wine  
gave him cirrhosis,  
the cirrhosis made  
him complete.

Complete enough to  
shed light on  
the human condition,  
illuminating truths  
that lie under the  
quiet soil.

Dionysus cast immortal  
under a laurel of grapes  
and a harem of lovely  
bohemians, had the  
power of beauty  
and pain, and the  
pen is mightier than  
the pain, and the  
pain is only  
temporary.

## Elias Diakolios

### **Meadowlands Poem**

Rusted skeletons are frozen knee deep  
In the swamp, broken and hunched over.  
They could be medieval peasants  
In mud-washed robes with scythes  
Or looming scarecrows on a clouded day.  
Skeletons and scarecrows in the tall grass stare  
Down the expanse of frosted mirrors.  
Doppelgangers of iced-out trees,  
Impostors waiting in the wetland's lobby  
To be evicted. Are they so different?  
Rough and still, the seagulls nest the same.

The overgrown backhoe  
Whose tracks sink in the mud,  
Whose name is fogged by tall grass -  
The TNT sleeps in mounds of chips  
Carelessly hidden in uprooted continents -  
The damp, dark cornerstone trees  
Who triangulate the pitch-black fences  
Enclosing the world,  
These are the gods of what remains.  
This is the topology of an apocalypse  
Abandoned in the midst of deconstruction.  
The cataclysm of the wetlands  
Survives as its own last testament  
To the onlookers beyond the concrete.

All that exists in the swamp  
Seems to return to it beneath  
The meniscus of mud. It is  
Natural repression.  
Prairie potholes filled  
With trash. This is what it  
Means to live here. The marsh  
Is a landfill.

## Apprehensiveness of Nocturnal Geckos

Up, after it was all over, I finally got up,  
went searching for polka dots at night.  
Down the dim and dogwood-shaded boulevard  
Was the only place I could find  
Nocturnal geckos. They would run  
into their lone cubicle holes in roots,  
Sometimes going too far down  
(The same direction I was in tune with)  
Entering strangers basements through cracks.

Left of me and far ahead, police lights stopped a car  
And a man got out holding a four-foot lizard.  
In the Christmas lights, he made a break  
Right out of the guy's arms.  
Having seen a single polka dot, I left  
In case they asked where I was going  
(I would have no answer and that is bad)  
After everything that happened;  
Asking fork-tongued questions, if I was alright.

Becoming another dot as I thought,  
This figure down the street raised both hands  
over their head, turning on a light  
In the middle of their head.  
This floodlight cyclops drifted their way my way.  
A turn is a senseless move, you would not love  
me for decisions; you drove a pickup truck  
and dressed in scales unlike the ones  
this glowing deep-sea diver would collect.

Before it happened, I painted circles  
on geckos' backs and let them loose.  
I lived with an iguana; he was kind.  
I knew what cold-blooded meant and  
Midnights were made for wandering.

But after everyone vacated the room,  
I got to thinking about the dinosaurs  
And peace and linearity of meteors  
and whether any single dot is a start.

## Josh Feit

### **Encyclopedia of Heresies**

Forty thousand people stopped taking the train.  
The next day it was 48,000.  
Then 53,000. Then 56,000.

In just a week, a 70% drop  
over the baseline before the virus.

It used to be a city

where boyfriends  
opened the window  
at night  
to let in cool Sound air.  
To let in an Encyclopedia of Heresies.

Like immigration. And  
horses galloping in alleys.

But there are no more manifestos  
at the Grand Ave. sandwich shop after shows

Now, our blasphemy and bodies have gone.

Our handicrafts,  
bridles,  
trumpets,  
flutes,  
jars,  
plows,  
ships,  
and chariots are silent.

Open the window  
and what you'll hear is nearness walking away.  
The sound of tens of thousands of people  
on an empty train.

## M. Brett Gaffney

### **After Watching *The Babadook***

you tell me you're disappointed in the monster.

You say it was *just a metaphor*,  
as if metaphors don't have teeth,  
as if grief doesn't swallow you whole  
like shadows in the saddest part of the afternoon.

You wanted something scary,  
a real boogeyman. Fuck that.  
What's it going to do to me?  
Eat me? Kill me?  
Drag me to hell like the Cenobites?

I've always been more afraid  
of living with death than dying.

My mother holding the phone like it was alive,

the way she looked at me  
when she said my cousin was dead,  
the quick hand over her mouth  
to smother the scream. That reality  
as crisp as a kitchen knife.

Something horrible has happened

and you can't undo it.  
There is no salt or spell strong enough.

You still want the monster.  
And I ask you, is it because  
he's easier to live with?

Or is it simply that you know his name?

## Before the Worst

There's always that moment in a horror movie,  
before everything goes to absolute shit,  
when I wish I could keep things  
from going to absolute shit.

I wish I could keep the family  
and their U-Haul in the front yard  
before they ever step foot  
into the nightmare house.

Tell the babysitter to take another job,  
it's not worth the blood. The hikers  
to stay home, stay inside, even  
on this sunny and unassuming day.

But they never listen to me.

They make bad choices. Just like you  
and me, no matter what bullshit  
we say about doing things differently.  
About never splitting up or going upstairs  
or having sex at the party. Because  
the truth is, when the chainsaw  
is at our heels, we all run the same,  
our bodies instruments of survival.

Hell, even the final girl knows  
there is no going back  
to the life before her friends'  
deaths made her something special,  
not until I rewind the scene,  
bring them back to the beginning  
myself, the snarl of videotape  
protesting from inside the machine.

## How to Make A Monster

Find a pillowcase, never washed,  
that still holds your nightly toss-turnings.

Empty it and prepare these ingredients:  
scales from the rattlesnake skin in your basement;

used tissues from your last period,  
the darker the blood the better;

your baby teeth,  
your first-grown hungers;

a railroad spike.

Let the ingredients bake in the moon's cold  
for three nights and then stuff them into the pillowcase.

Bury it, like all good things.

Watch it rise like bad things rise.

## New Year

Somewhere there is an emergency.  
Somewhere, every heart beats to the rhythm of  
silence is the softest creature to be gutted  
and filled with the wasp's nest. Every heartbreak  
is a new year. Somewhere there is a party  
you aren't invited to about a pain you will never know.  
These are the resolutions we prayed for—that hurt  
will magically stop at midnight, that our somewhere  
will call climb into the backseat of grandpa's truck  
and fall asleep to the sway of the road. That rebirth  
is an ambulance that's crossed over, into oncoming traffic.  
Even when it destroys. Even when it saves.

## Jordan Gakle

### **When I Knock on Wood**

I'm knocking for the baker  
to pull out fresh slabs of focaccia  
at the exact moment I enter the store.  
I knock until he agrees to come  
live with me so that my house  
always smells of honey and  
warm rosemary. Everyday,  
we'll wrap our bread in silk cloth  
and leave it at the door for the  
family of seven that lives one floor up.

When my ten-year-old neighbor  
tells me she wants to be an astronaut,  
I knock until the President escorts  
her to space and gifts  
her with her very own fleet  
of peach-colored rockets.

I knock for mothers  
waiting for their mammogram results  
to instead get a letter that says  
breast cancer has been cured  
until further notice.

I pass a young black boy pulled  
over on the highway,  
and I wrap my knuckles on the dashboard  
until I see the cop pull out a bouquet  
of marigolds, instead of his gun.

My bank calls to tell me that I've overdrawn  
again, and I knock so hard they switch  
my balance with Jeff Bezos. I give handfuls

of cash to the men peddling carts  
of returnables down my street,  
while Jeff tries to live off of \$5.60.

I knock for the immigrant student  
in my English class that was told  
to go back to where she came from.  
The first time I knock, one of my classmates  
writes her a love poem in Arabic.  
The second time, he publishes  
a bestselling book of poems  
and donates all the money to the ACLU.

When I knock on wood,  
the toxins in our springs  
turn to pinches of sugar  
and we all get drunk on the sweetness.

## Marquette Island

When I was eight years old,  
my freckled face smeared with lake clay  
& my hands stuffed with fistfuls of cedar  
for kindling, I declared myself king  
of the island.

I caught fish from under the dock  
with a butterfly net and kernels of corn,  
watching for their shadow & scooping  
them up at just the right time.

When my sisters and I found leeches  
suckled onto our legs, we seared them off  
with salt shakers and fried them on the sauna  
stove, just for revenge.

Every midnight, the lake whispered stories  
through my bedroom window until I crept  
out to sit with her. Her breath always smelled  
of moonlight and dune grass.

I never wore shoes. My feet were roots  
growing out of the carpeted forest moss,  
& my wind-snarled hair curled  
like the wildberry brambles behind our porch.

Once, I took the boat out in the middle  
of a storm & it floated me halfway down  
the bay before I pulled the sail in.  
I let my toes shimmy down the ship  
& dip into the grey-blue spray licking  
at its sides, waiting for the lightning  
to come & dance for me.

## Patricia Hartland

### Speech Act

it was too lonely to be outside. blue came to pull more coins from  
the sidewalk and tie a feather to each one. clouds slit churlish in  
the light of a passing eye who on my hand writes with evasion my  
body my snakes as i lose the rules. we could do without this level of  
abandonment we could not do without oh you who are my  
flesh wound yet could not take a hand not-not there and we  
must

always be moving we  
must always be  
moving must al  
-ways be  
moving must  
always be always  
must moving and we  
be always be  
must

so that for one more ounce of conditioned metronome in the crawl-  
space of my ribcage  
i could once-again-just-once tease the air with a little of my own long-  
ing the longing i taught my theory-fresh enemy to look at a crawdaddy  
with

in one crawl  
-daddy out the other  
as this lyricrot says in  
my clipped lip like too  
many cavities too  
many dirty tooth  
-holes come before it

so that inside the crescent fixture of a marble i call  
crackclaw i call speedthrift

in a revel anyway  
eyeing the eye of a bird inside  
it dies turned white

so that i become free to tell  
the sentence happens right now right  
where the cut brought blood to the air  
at your right finger pointing  
and it is in this air the lyricrot lingers  
aromatics mingling there too  
for my god is a garlic  
a bulb in my chest  
stretching scapes out the scaffold it makes  
of my throat  
my throat for you  
to put things in and take things out

so that in the last song i sang a river became a grave  
a series of graves not-still  
that is,  
animated because it is  
and is, still

so that when three times the boatman asks with his hands  
to twist against the bend and against the visible  
piece of dogbody i cluster over oar  
make a real splash  
make a scream not from my body but from my sorry  
passengers, yes mine now a body now too  
and when the boatman tells with his eyes take  
your clusterbody from the oars now i do

after all the land turns back again turns  
back to lack  
and back and back  
is dark like that is dark  
like that

so that  
when i find a way to be lonely again  
the gutter mutters up  
a fresh braid to pluck  
like dried catgut psalming another sleep  
to make a fallow pasture  
of our deathbed with

so that this too is my singing  
this too you bury you  
bury it with me bury me inside  
it in this now  
snow  
-sentenced instant.

## Laura Ingram

### **Gloom**

I am a long-boned eleven,  
listless as August fog,  
eyes two snowdrop bulbs  
sunken white like the sky inside my skull,  
watching summer erupt from the sore earth  
like new molars—

my mother saves all my baby teeth  
in a broken eau de toilette bottle  
brown as time  
tucked beneath her nylons.  
I snatch them from her bureau drawer  
use six to mark the grave of a dead canary  
the cat killed  
scatter the rest into the rosebush.

Before setting the table with grandmother's chipped china,  
she pulled her heart out from its box under the bed  
crushed it with the sole  
of one of my father's worn-out work-boots  
both of us crying in our dimming bedrooms  
with the doors closed.

## Life Cycle of the Locust

*Through want and hard hunger they gnaw the dry ground by night in waste and desolation-Job 33:3*

I cartograph a city from  
what I once wanted  
a city of thieves thirsty for  
milk long soured in a ceramic cup  
clouds shrugging rain off their shoulders  
me starting a séance  
fending off flickering ghosts  
and sickly-thin sun  
with a broken umbrella.

Every house here is empty,  
dim as dreams.  
I let myself into the first colonial I come to,  
sit by the peony plant withering on the window sill  
watching the dust motes flit from bright to bright  
through the rungs of a chair  
the only sound  
the thud of a locust landing against glass—  
No one's come home.

I go to the river to remember God,  
my God-given name,  
black-eyed-susan  
my God-given name,  
lamentation—  
I skip my purpling heart across the water like a stone  
make a Eucharist of dandelion stems  
*(this is my body, broken for you)*  
bury my own bones by the creek bed abloom with lilies  
my bones mixed with fawn's bones  
so little as inelegant as an end.

## Simon Perchik

\*

You lean into where the road  
takes its usual swing, rakes in  
the way this neglected graveyard

was once a galaxy, lit by streams  
and those sharp stones you dead  
still gather up as stars

now wishes that could last till autumn  
held together with tears, higher and higher  
as if this abandoned hillside

is still an hourglass with weeds  
dripping from its wounds: the footsteps  
binding you together side by side.

\*

The night behind the night  
is closing, makes its descent as mail  
though this envelope has lips

is familiar with darkness, can see  
your throat become swollen  
from kisses - you spit, over and over spit

as if her letter finally arrived  
from daylight into water  
where each word somehow weighs less

can easily be pulled across the page  
as the river where your arms  
are reaching under the surface whose seal

has been broken so many times over  
lets her breasts float up, waterlogged  
the way your forehead is now held

and with both hands the ink  
passes through your heart  
as the silence that's left.

\*

You warm these ashes one by one  
the way every shore now ends  
in pieces, piled among your graveside stone

as rain - from the start, its great height  
narrowed, became a stream, overflowing  
with the wishes mourners leave

to break the surface where moonlight  
is now a sea, could guide you back  
then grow a second moon, keep you company

hold your hand, pull one night from another  
that is nowhere on the calendar, whose shadow  
is still covered with darkness and gathering.

## Maureen Sherbondy

### Party Hat

For most occasions, the party hat will do,  
jazz clubs, birthday parties,  
beauty pageants, backyard barbecues,  
any sort of celebration.

Play an off-key melody on a keyboard  
prod those less talented to feel  
unintimidated by the prospect  
of their future musical reverie.

They'll whisper *over-rated* to their dates,  
think *I too might play the saxophone,*  
*bass, piano in a bar or at a show.*

Wear confidence with that party hat;  
you cannot take it to the grave.  
A woman declares after  
her terminal diagnosis:

*What on earth am I waiting for?*  
Then proceeds to wear her ruby ring  
sapphire pin, diamond bracelet  
to the grocery store and gym.

Take out your trilby, or that silly  
fishing hat hung with various lures,  
don the top hat with silver glitter  
that in the end litters stardust  
on every floor as you depart.

## RJ Robertson-DeGraaff

### **Chained to a Greenhouse**

A great fountain  
Springing from a single source  
To reach higher than humans dare.

I wish you could reclaim your earth  
Wind deep and unrestrained through the  
Mantle, the crust.  
You will exist long beyond my thoughts  
But never know the greenery  
Beyond the confines of your shackled vase.

We are alike.  
Longing for a past we cannot obtain -  
Could never communicate with.  
We are fantastical,  
Cartoonish,  
Wilting.

Eventually, we will run out of air.

## **Faux Roses**

Tray tables are piled high  
with the remains of TV dinners,  
while the mahogany slab  
that dominates the kitchen  
carries its plastic vase  
of faux roses.

One sister blares Christmas tunes  
through broken headphones  
the other sound asleep  
by three in the afternoon,  
neither will do her homework.

They tuck themselves into bed  
there will be no groceries this week.

Leave the door unlocked  
and the front light on  
but don't let the salesmen know  
there are no adults home.

## D.A. Simants

### for emme and dominic

-but i know what you're thinking, there's no one outside,  
there's a plague happening, named corona, and it's not  
the gaseous envelope of the sun, or a body part likened  
to a crown, or the center of a flower, or a circular chandelier  
in a church, or a long cigar, or any other beautiful  
thing this word could mean - it means only fear, and loneliness  
- but let's ignore that for now, and focus on the  
park i was telling you about, with the people walking around,  
though there's no one outside, 'cause there's a plague  
happening, they're still there, the ghosts of passersby,  
the children who once played here, still here in spirit  
if not in body, and the old men walking their dogs, remembering  
their dead wife, if they have a dead wife, or  
their dead husbands, or dead partners, or whatever they  
might have had, or no one at all if they've always lived  
alone, and the joggers who don't know they're gonna  
die anyway, and the teenage couples looking for a semiprivate  
place away from home, though there's few to  
be found, all these people reduced to souls, half form  
half essence, as if they've ever been anything else,  
little balls of light floating above the lifeless grey sidewalks,  
which are only lifeless if you expect them to be,  
made of things which are and things which could be,  
as josé saramago once said a poet once said, "ah, who  
will write the history of what might have been," and the  
people could have been here, walking and playing and  
grieving and loving and so many other-ings, so many  
coulds and shoulds and woulds, and oh those coulds  
are wonderful, though they're shadows and light,  
they're sweet like citrus and taste of nothing at all

## Skaidrite Stelzer

### **falls a shadow**

as if a child has been left behind  
somewhere in an unfamiliar forest  
the girl with the basket  
raspberries or scones  
the boy wanting to carve a whistle  
injuring his finger  
bleeding on the autumn leaves  
or both of them  
somewhere seeking a church in winter  
and my father stumbling in  
to find them frozen  
just another war  
of children now missing legs  
now blind  
the golden fish rises with wishes  
but someone asks all wrong  
so skeletons remain  
wreathed in jeweled automata  
within the forest  
shadowed by  
the lost

## Gruel

if every morning's  
gruel is the same  
you must learn to enjoy  
what you find there  
the metal of the spoon surrounds  
your tongue  
a flake of oatmeal clinging  
such shrinking worlds  
the taste without spice  
then touch the texture  
remember dirt  
beneath your nails  
resisting the pumice  
the Lava Soap  
the bowl you eat from  
is black  
glows like an abandoned heart  
a small yellow bird  
eats seed  
in the drying yard  
sings of water

## In the garden

everything could seem natural -  
the trellis of new peas,  
the small knobs of radish,  
the single red root  
avoiding microscopic worms,  
the thriving of instinct  
of a sort.

I wrap you in a blanket  
and bring you out into  
that sun.  
That sun now to be avoided,  
shaded.

The green apples  
stripped of sour,  
the texture of flour  
whitened.  
Everything carried  
from a distance.

I sweep the porch  
each morning.  
The spring litter  
of rabbits holds still,  
listening.

In the cabinet  
the replacement waits -  
the magic pill  
meant to save  
the two of us,  
striped with a dull  
green.

## David Spicer

### **The Mermaid and the Airplane**

If I could give you an ocean  
with lighthouses and buoys,  
nights full of storms and stars,  
days windy with birds in flight,  
I'd snap my fingers and you  
wouldn't portray a mermaid.

You dislike playing mermaids.  
Living near the moody ocean  
frightens the gentle part of you,  
makes you grab buoys  
or envy gulls taking flight  
to kiss a sky full of stars.

I wish I could give you a star  
for the time you acted as mermaid  
on a choppy airplane night flight  
over ten countries and two oceans  
that became calm and buoyed  
when the wings felt light from you.

About that night: I never asked you  
if you conferred with clouds and stars,  
wanted them to be your strong buoys.  
I watched you in the role of mermaid  
even though you weren't in an ocean,  
but on a steel bird's turbulent flight.

I won't wonder if thought of flight  
ever crossed your mind, made you  
wish to be near the moody ocean  
instead of discussing with stars

virtues of an airplane-mermaid  
playing the part of a scaled buoy.

For an airplane not used to buoys  
until that dark, cloud-kissing flight  
when passengers met a mermaid  
who wasn't a mermaid, but you,  
dreaming one day of your stardom,  
an actress who slept by an ocean.

The buoy that scary night—you—  
now beyond flight, now a star,  
once a mermaid afraid of oceans.

## The Bargain

for Roberta Greifer

Two photographers staggered into a Bowery dive  
dubbed by its owner *The Dark Side*.

One a slim woman, followed by a wide man—  
his name Weegee, hers Diane—  
into a hellhole disguised as a ship's room  
smelling of Schlitz, Old Crow, and tuna fish.

Above the mirror a mounted swordfish,  
one that had failed to dive  
to the depths of its ocean room.  
Pouring drinks, the bartender sighed  
every time the offbeat snapper Diane  
stumbled into his bar with a man.

Tonight, not just any man,  
but a genius who loved to fish  
for dead bodies, while Lady Diane  
never resisted or resented an endive  
when proffered by a dwarf at her side  
rubbing his eyes free of rheum.

This evening, in the overheated room,  
an idea formed in the bulb of Weegee Man:  
he asked his date to play dead on her side,  
pretend to be a three-day-old fish  
that forgot to ignore the hook and nosedived  
to the sea bottom, near a wreck, *The Diane*.

The proposal appealed to Diane,  
who wanted to see Weegee in a dark room  
and sacrifice his control to take a dive  
for her sake, and Weegee Man  
viewed Lady Diane as a unique fish,  
one that could inspire his artistic side.

*Deal, she replied, but after we do that outside,  
I'll be Weegee and you Diane  
in matching smocks that reek of tuna fish  
smellier than this lame room.*

Ambitious Weegee considered himself a man  
but agreed to take a feminine dive.

Two photographers shambled outside from the room:  
Dark Diane agreed to the wish of Weegee Man,  
who later portrayed a twin girl able to fish and dive.

## Jenny Wong

### **Re-Watching *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* in Your Thirties**

It's that scene. The one  
with the ceremony deep in a cave  
lit by brimstone and lava.

The one where a hand  
punches through skin and flesh and rib bones  
ripping out a still-beating heart,  
and then the victim remains  
alive afterward.

Watching it  
looks different now.  
Maybe childhood imagination  
has gotten thinner  
or grown-up logic  
has become thicker.  
Skin doesn't rip like that.  
There should probably be more blood.

And it's no longer such an unthinkable event  
to have a heart ripped out.  
People walk around every day,  
holes in chests, moving on with life,  
missing first loves, lost children, dead dreams.  
Except there is no ceremony,  
no evil deep dark purpose.  
It's a different kind of magic  
that can happen in broad daylight  
where people don't even need to touch,  
but can just walk by without saying a word.

## Surface Tension

An ache buzzes  
in the corner of my eye,  
like an annoying bug,  
or a bulb flickering  
before it burns out.  
And we all ignore  
those shadows  
floating across our vision  
circling  
the tethered orbit  
of their aqueous earth.  
But the doctors  
hum about fluid retention,  
a hanging on of too much  
that doesn't matter,  
water under the bridge  
is pooling around slender stalks  
of optic nerves  
for a slow, final choke out.  
But there is no prize.  
And glaucoma is not a glamorous word.  
The body will always find the point  
where pain gives life  
to disease.  
Tonight,  
I hide my eyes behind my palms,  
savor  
the hand fed darkness,  
and imagine  
what the beginning  
was like  
before we ever  
developed  
our thirst for light.

## Herbert Tinsley

### the numinous

*“What is that which gleams through me  
and smites my heart without wounding it?” - Saint Augustine*

if belonging has a color  
its color should not be named  
it is summoned up  
in total  
lush and beautiful  
more  
entire  
like the haze in attic-boxed imagery  
and when eyes go seeking  
through sepia shadows  
when faces haunt unformed tableaux  
and smile in gestalt beauty  
a logic flits and then holds fast  
a cageless, ageless thing  
on heavy heaving wing  
(not to say angels)  
since  
in the mix of time and place and sentiment  
it is summoned in over-authentic spaces  
in outer rooms  
where ghosts of just before your birth  
are said to wait  
and  
to exist

## Contributor Notes

**Gale Acuff** has had poetry published in *Ascent*, *Chiron Review*, *McNeese Review*, *Adirondack Review*, *Weber*, *Florida Review*, *South Carolina Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Arkansas Review*, *Poem*, *South Dakota Review* and many other journals. He has authored three books of poetry: *Buffalo Nickel* (BrickHouse Press, 2004), *The Weight of the World* (BrickHouse, 2006) and *The Story of My Lives* (BrickHouse, 2008).

**SK Brownell** is an interdisciplinary writer, artist and educator from the Midwest. Their poetry, prose, and drama have appeared in *Crab Fat Magazine*, *Typishly Literary Journal*, *Crack the Spine*, *formercactus* and elsewhere. They were a 2018 Sewanee Conference Tennessee Williams Scholar and winner of the 2015 National Partners of the American Theatre Playwriting Excellence Award. They hold an MFA from Boston University, teach writing at GrubStreet, and produce theatre with Artists' Theater of Boston. More at [skbrownell.com](http://skbrownell.com).

**Jason Cant** is a poet, writer, and editor from Silvis, IL. His work has appeared in *Van Gogh's Ear vol.7*, *Open Minds Quarterly*, *Struggle*, *Rockford Review* and *Chiron Review*.

**Elias Diakolios** is a current MFA candidate in poetry at Columbia University. His work has been published in *Rainy Day Magazine* at Cornell University where he studied entomology.

**Josh Feit** is the speechwriter for the Puget Sound's regional transit agency. Prior to that, he worked as a city hall reporter. Feit's poems have been published in *Spillway*, *High Shelf*, *Cathexis Northwest Press* and *The Halcyone*. He recently published a prize-winning poem in *Lily Poetry Review*.

**M. Brett Gaffney** holds an MFA in Poetry from Southern Illinois University. Her poetry chapbook *Feeding the Dead* (Porkbelly Press) was nominated for a 2019 Elgin Award from the Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association. She works as co-editor of *Gingerbread House Literary Magazine*.

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**Patricia Hartland** writes and translates and is a PhD student in comparative literature at UMass Amherst. Their translations of Monchoachi's *MISTRY* are forthcoming with The Operating System and Ugly Duckling Presse.

**Laura Ingram** is a tiny girl with big glasses and bigger ideas. Her poetry and prose have been published in over seventy literary journals, among them *The Cactus Heart Review* and *Voice of Eve*. Her second poetry collection, *Mirabilis*, is forthcoming for 2020 with Kelsay Books. Her first collection, *Junior Citizen's Discount*, was released with Desert Willow Press.

**Simon Perchik** is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *Forge*, *Poetry*, *Osiris*, *The New Yorker* and elsewhere. His most recent collection is *The Gibson Poems* published by Cholla Needles Arts & Literary Library, 2019. For more information including free e-books and his essay "Magic, Illusion and Other Realities" please visit his website at [www.simonperchik.com](http://www.simonperchik.com).

**RJ Robertson-DeGraaff** is a college student and amateur dance teacher from Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he is an English major at Western Michigan University. Much of his work addresses LGBTQ+ issues or mental illness.

**Maureen Sherbondy's** forthcoming book is *Dancing with Dali* (2020, FutureCycle Press). She has also published a short story collection and eight other poetry collections. She teaches English at Alamance Community College in Graham, NC.

**D.A. Simants** is a poet and novelist from Aurora, Colorado. Diagnosed with schizophrenia and a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Their goal is always to write about what is truly important.

**David Spicer** has published poems in *Santa Clara Review*, *Synaeresis*, *Chiron Review*, *Third Wednesday*, *The American Poetry Review*, *Ploughshares* and elsewhere. He is the author of six chapbooks, the latest of which is *Tribe of Two* (Seven Circle Press). His second full-length collection of poems, *Waiting for the Needle Rain*, is now available from Hekate Publishing. His website is [www.davidspicer76.com](http://www.davidspicer76.com).

**Skaidrite Stelzer lives** and writes in Toledo, OH, where she is an Assistant Professor in the English Department of The University of Toledo. A Pushcart Prize nominee, her poetry has been published in *Fourth River*, *Eclipse*, *Glass*, *Baltimore Review*, *Flock*, *Storm Cellar*, *The Cape Rock*, and many other literary journals, as well as several anthologies.

**Herbert Tinsley** lives and works in Washington D.C. He spends much of his free time on night walks, in dive bars, and experimenting with poetic expression.

**Jenny Wong** is a writer, traveler, and occasional business analyst. She resides in the foothills of Alberta, Canada, and tweets @jenwithwords. She is currently attempting to create a poetry collection about locations and regularly visit her local boxing studio. Publications include *3 Elements Review*, *Grain*, *Vallum*, *Sheila-Na-Gig Online*, *The Stillwater Review*, *Atlas & Alice* and elsewhere.



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