

Circle
Show

20



Summer/Fall 2019

20



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Volume 20
Summer/Fall 2019

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Cover Art

“Burned Out”
by kevron2001

Joan Colby

Another Body in the Harbor

After the bars close, he is drawn
To the breakwater where the waves lash
The rocks and the stars are primitive.
It's easy to slip and then he can't get a purchase
On the slimy ledge.

Who can tell why he was lured
To the waters' edge, young, fit and
Healthy, life stretching before him
All the way to the crib that filters
The lake for potability.

You'd have to be drinking
Far too much and be a stranger unaware
Of the topography or currents.
You'd have to be a visitor
Separated from your friends or
On your own, probably lonely.

.

The Real Baby

I'd never diapered a baby.
The nurse showed me how
Before we brought her home.
This child that startled me
With her separate identity
Unleashed from the spectral kicking
In my stomach.

We stopped on the way to pick up
A borrowed bassinette.
My water had broken early,
We were unprepared.
My mother supplied a layette
With strange garments,
A nightgown with mitts
To confine the hands,
A matinee jacket,
Tiny undershirts,
Knitted booties.

I nursed the baby
Then put her away in the loaned crib
And read my book, typed my poem,
Smoked a cigarette.
Two friends visited with their babies
That they dandled and tickled,
Carried everywhere. Mine was sleeping
I said. But I began to get it.
I should interact with the baby,
Maybe sing to it.

Looking for Trouble

Trouble becomes an obsession,
A girl flirting with a Latin king.
You learn what it means to be a fool
When shots ring out shattering the day.
That boy you loved no longer exists.
See how the magpies

Are flying. Gather shiny objects like magpies
Who never resist an obsession.
Forget the questions of existence
Pondered by philosophers and kings.
You want the drama of the day.
You want simply to be foolish

And young. You want to wear the fools-
Cap and be excited as a flock of magpies
Harassing a hawk. Today,
You're alive. Life is your obsession,
Waking or sleeping or walking
Or simply existing.

You'll do as you like. You exist
In the moment like a holy fool
In the realm of youth. A king
Of history. Darken the skies like magpies.
The world is your obsession.
Carpe Diem. Seize the Day.

You could be shot today
Like the boy who once existed
In the melee of your obsession.
If he was wise or a fool,
Who cares. Think of the magpies
Baked in a pie for the king.

Trouble is what you are stalking.
It fills your heart like the day
Of the dead, thick with magpies
Gleaning the fields of existence.
You were a fool, a fool
For love. Admit it: obsessed.

Without obsession, existence
Is boring, an ordinary day with the magpies
Flown. The withered forms of fools and kings.

Darren C. Demaree

French Silk Pie

for Eustace Chisolm

Exit, frame,
this
landscape

is total.
The sugar
takes crop,

takes bloom
& holds
them close

enough to be
reality. That
was just one

piece. Look
at how
beautiful

the dark
remnants
can be.

I close my eyes
& nothing
else is closed

anywhere
at all. Such
decadence

should be
inherent.
It can be.

Cole Depuy

Saint Matthew

I thought my middle name
was a tribute
to Saint Matthew the Apostle

because my parents
presented me with a pendant
of him at my confirmation.

But then my grandma pointed
to an Old English Sheepdog figurine

and said, that looks like Matthew,
your father's first dog.

I had to ask my dad,
Why is my middle name Matthew?
After my dog, he said.
The sheepdog I grew up with.

And in that moment, I was
released from sainthood,
loving my enemies, and helping
those less fortunate.

Teenage Gravity Bong Survivor

I light the bowlful of cheap
marijuana and my bangs
ignite like Daedalus' wings

before paranoia
my cop-less rearview mirror
displayed objects further than they appeared

my stoner friends in back seats
innocent as dwarfs with bloodshot eyes

now I crush benzodiazepine
into joints
and exhale it all like sniper smoke

my gardening boss once told me
when bleeding
to hold the cut above the heart

but I can't survive upside-down

getting high is not childlike
anymore

the panic it brings though
the panic is better than nothing

Emily Dolan

Coping

She wears death tucked inside a blackberry, burrowed between sheets of nettle and ivy, pinned together like her mother's favorite brooch
At night, she lays it in a bird's nest, stone among eggs, robin warming it like a long lost dream, disdain growing in its curved beak because no matter the heat, rocks don't sprout wings and leave
The sun, low enough for errands, returns it in the morning, raps gently on the window first before smashing it with stone-turned-boulder
Boulder no bigger than a seed, dressed up in night-lock and wilted orchids – her mother's favorite – and after drawing heavy curtains, she clips it to her breast

Death wedges itself between two of his molars, immune to floss or bristles,
long devoid of taste or color from an ocean's worth of spit and endless prodding from his tongue; some days he forgets it's there – easy ache, mosquito buzz, drifting ghost of distant highway rumbles – conscious of it only when he kisses her, when creaking doors sound more like wheelchairs climbing ramps, a child's laugh like phlegmy cough
He checks it every two weeks, sits in rooms with chemical smells that burn his throat, too clean for rotting wooden houses, then lets his face crumble in his car before returning home and not kissing his wife

Death leaps out from sidewalk cracks when the light turns green, the breeze
against his back nudging him towards a grill-and-wheel demise, while bees
march in suicide swarms, moss scales walls like crawling infections, and the eyes
of feral cats, mouths capped in foam and garbage, follow every step he takes
A ladybug buzzes in his head, bouncing off his skull, a spot for every second passed like bricks stacked on slowly-cracking glass, quivering legs weary under growing weight – how long can such fragile things last?

At night, he swigs green tea, checks his vitals one last time, then tucks
his bible
between his pillows, so if morning never comes, his soul will have a
roadmap

Red Bucket

With summer dripping through the canopy,
Mom wrings out the suds and puts the sponge to work
on the tires as me and my sister chase the runoff
down the slope of the asphalt, pooling in the neighbor's
gully like a short-lived ocean that we float blades of
grass in and watch as they sail down the sewer drain.

While Mom vacuums the seats, we steal her red bucket,
still full of soapy water, and add stolen flower petals from the garden
and their swirly-green capsules, pinching them, watching
the seeds spring into our pot like salt and pepper. We mix in
some pebbles for the heaviest dumplings you'd ever taste and
rhododendron, ripped into confetti and sprinkled generously.

It was always a soufflé; we latched onto that word like the sap
we scraped from the leaky beech trees. Once, I added a caterpillar
and instantly felt terrible as I watched my sister swirl it in with
the rest of the yard, bringing the concoction to imaginary boil on
the blacktop stove. We resist the urge to add dirt for as long as
we can, but we cave eventually, then add too much,

the mucky soufflé no longer appetizing and thus ensuing our
favorite part: dumping it down the slope of the asphalt and chasing it
to the drain. As the sun slides down and the mosquitoes come nipping,
Dad shoots water out the window above the kitchen sink as we pass by,
the blast strained through the screen into mist that collects in the cobwebs
of the pane's corners; we use tennis rackets to serve beech nuts into

the bucket until the complaints of the naked flower stems become too
loud for Mom to ignore. Our legs are streaked with mud and our
fingertips are stained with petal-juice and dead ants; my sister's hair
sways away from her face like a willow tree and my shoes slosh
with every step towards the backdoor. The crickets start singing and
we hear their voices through the curtain of sleep, soft like autumn's arrival.

Right? Right?

There's something in the way a flower dies, isn't there
supple green baby flesh
breaching teens and blooming 20s
blown out 50s, saggy 80s, then dissolving
into dirt, erased as easily as chalk on a blackboard
The next generation – stupider, lazier than the last
 who chooses soil crammed in sidewalk cracks?

There's something in the way all things die, isn't there
except trees, maybe; those fuckers last forever
 years and years and years
unless they're murdered

There's something about murder, isn't there
as if the act would make us more like trees
 a sort-of time-osmosis after the barrier of breath is gone
maybe that's why people do it
when they grow up and realize
we'll never be trees
 they'll always be superior, those fuckers
we'll only ever get to be flowers
with sidewalk cracks
nipping at our heels

Siyun Fang

Organizing the Bones

When the grave was opened, he suddenly stopped crying
His father turned into several pieces of bone
like a tree without leaves, lying in wet soil

The geomantic master began to organize the bones of his father
Skull, frontal bone, and ribs
Forearms, metacarpal bones, and collarbone
He saw the hand of his father, the one that once
beat him, and stroked his hair
It's transformed into broken branches blown away by wind
It has no temperature, and it's lost its weight.

After moving his father's grave,
stripped naked and lying in his bed,
he tosses and turns without getting a wink of sleep.
He holds his right hand tightly with his left hand
using every ounce of his strength –

he has already reached middle age
he has begun in advance to
clean up and organize his own bones

Purchase

I purchase everything
when I feel tired and sick
Black silk scarves, sackcloth cushions
a small glass pot, archaic candlesticks
I purchase dumb-bells, a wastepaper basket made of bamboo
ice-cream that has already melted, dumplings I don't want to eat
a dozen tissues, a full carton of milk
dresses, shoes, the begging bowl of a beggar at that street corner.
I walk toward them as a customer
please purchase me; in fact, what I mean is
please purchase my weakness, suspicion, exhaustion
decisions that I must accept no matter how unwilling I am
Please purchase my dark under-eye circles
wrinkles on the back of my hand
each long, long night when I am unable to fall asleep
vegetable juice that spills down my chin

Please purchase, please purchase,
purchase the wall that I cannot move
fish in the fishing net which can no longer sing
laughter which has been confined to a small wine cup and never been
released
I have to crunch and get those horrible stones down
Purchase my ending, my beginning
my blind fate as an ordinary human being
Purchase your pity for me, your pity for everybody
Everything in this world has its own destination
even though it's just a grain of sand

Pushing the Pawns Across the River

That is not the Republic of China, it is the porch outside the
Republic of China

An old man is pushing his pawn across the river
A few yellowish rays of light lie on a mottled street

It's not the Republic of China, it's the light in twilight hours
It's not the Republic of China, but the porch outside the century-old
street.

Time pushes pawns across the river

The scenery is dilapidated, it's not the Republic of China
The groups of elders are piles of gloomy time, but not the Republic
of China

They're playing chess
The guard is killed, too

Pushing the pawns across the river step by step
Now that the pawns have passed the river step by step

Come on
What's the hurry
Time urges the elders, the pawn pushes the guard, they've crossed the
boundary

Subtraction

The rain submerges my city
The building shrouded in thunder and lightning always reminds me of
a man and his way of closing his windows against the rain.
Heavy downpour, red alert, windows and doors tightly closed,
isolation.
I begin to delete contacts from my phone

The first one I delete is a chairman,
his marijuana widely publicized and traded on the market.
The second one is an advertiser,
he mentions at a cocktail party that he once was also a poet.
The third person is the mother of a child-star
her kid has a smiling face which looks even more confused than those
adults'

A person could meet up to three million people in his life
But I just want to have a friend in each city
Thousands of numbers, I have deleted nine hundred numbers from
my phone:
Relatives who have passed away, I still call their numbers when I startle
from sleep –
there are some strange men and women on the other end of the line
Sister, who died several years ago, I haven't deleted her Facebook yet.
The host in that live-radio program anxiously holds a microphone and
calls the police
each block of each avenue has someone missing.

After considering for a while, I decide to
keep the number of that funeral parlor's manager.

Joseph Hardy

Carried

A pause, an interruption, is never empty space between indicated sounds.

It is not just nothing.

-George Balanchine

This pause
is not just a nothing
but something new to carry me
to the next sound
a new sound
I have heard before
but will never hear again the same.

After this
my old self and my new
will be restored to each other
Adam and Eve
returned to the garden by a benevolent God
who saw how this would unfold
from the beginning.

After the upending
of my tricks and stratagems
to ascend to God without his noticing
and this voiding of my effort
to outlast him, thinking
he would finally come around,

after this intolerable
silence, I will find
that all the time I have been carried
in the dark and hopeless
belly of a whale, to be cast
upon the shore of somewhere better.

Robin Gow

Eternal

I read today you can pay to be buried
in a reef – your remnants used to encourage
the coral, your ghost walking on the bottom
of the ocean like a naked man
on the moon. I would enjoy this because
a reef is so much like a kitchen –
all those places to hide items and morsels.
I would kneel down and make friends
with anemones – asking them to take
small beautiful shells and hide them for me.
Conversing with eels they would show me
where the best caverns lurked and all my belongings
would be safe and scattered – planted
like seeds in the underwater terrain.
The best part seems like the inability
for people to visit. If you are given
a spot to mourn someone it just makes
it worse. Instead every time they see an ocean
they will remember that I am part of the ocean.
Planting feet in the sand they will fear
the pale hands of my ghosts and I will send them
a spoon or two so that they know
I don't mean to haunt that – so that they know
I am in a wonderful new world where
no one wants to touch my bowl or spoons
and there is endless packaged food
and we are safe. The other ocean ghosts
find their own forever apart from mine
and I feel lucky. I want to not talk to anyone
for so long that I can only use the language
of the coral: pink, orange, and light seafoam.
I want the fish to teach me their funeral practices –
I will say to the clownfish and the parrotfish
Tell me how you mourn? And they will laugh
and scatter in the rippling light from above.

A Burial for the Moon

One tradition in Manila is to
bury the dead in a hollowed-out tree
chosen while the individual is still living.

I look at all trees differently – like they have
the potential to contain me and all my artifacts.

I want to carve out all the fresh soft white wood
and pack the trunk
with dear fragments:
a layer of cereal boxes, cans of peaches in a knot,
a reservoir of towels, bananas turning sweet and syrupy black
and a pile of beautiful plastic spoons.

Talking to trees, I tell them I am still looking –
that I have yet to find the right body
to lodge myself within.

The trees are sympathetic though most of them
disagree with the notion of death. The cherry blossoms
spit petals in my face and tell me
that dying is for birds – that nothing has to die –
that dying is a choice made between
a body and the moon.

Golden and blaring, the moon tells me
she's also hunting for
the right tree to be buried in.
She imagines fitting the whole earth
into the trunk to take with her.

I show her my objects and I confess
how deeply I love unimportant items –
how strange an animal I am for wanting
to hold packaged food close to my body –

to crave the touch of plastic.

We promise each other that neither of our desires
are all that wild and that we'll keep our eyes out
for a tree that might suit the other.

I've yet to see the tree worthy
of containing the moon and she has yet
to find one big enough to hold
all my ache. Each night she shakes her head
kindly and gently so that no one else but me can see.

A Burial for a Bird

With a plastic shovel, I go out across town
in search of dead birds. The shovel is for lifting them
from the ground and then later for digging them a plot
in the earth. I'm eleven-years-old and
the skin of my hands is pink and soft
like cooked shrimp. I steal grocery bags
from under the sink and I go out with my rain boots.
That morning, I tell Mom and Dad I keep finding the blackbirds –
I explain how I find their bodies crooked like
asterisks in the road – feathers bursting with
plummet. They say it's normal – that I shouldn't worry
about the birds, but I do. I have to. Who else
will consider their light bodies?
Who else will lay them down
in the dirt with the other animals?
The first one I find on Noble Street has her beak
open as if she wants one more red berry
from the bush – as if she wants to shout one more time.
I imagine her beak poking up from the dirt
and chirping – talking to the grass and the roots.
It's terrible to watch a creature
decay as if it were just a fruit – with its eyes caved in
and her torso sinking flat as the road.
I scoop the bird up and walk a mile to the park
where I hide all my dream of heaven – where I pretend
each tree is the home of an angel. I don't tell anyone this
because it's my own mythology.
Doesn't everyone say to themselves
If there is a heaven let it be a park
with so many tired brilliant trees that the whole floor
is cloaked in shade. I take the bird there
and I ask her if she knows where the other bodies are.
She is silent and frost-like –
as if someone intended her to be as
stiff and still as possible – as if she was

avoiding the question. I dig a shallow hole and tell
the bird all my secrets. I explain that I hide
all the candy I buy from the dollar store
because I'm scared of running out.
I tell her I like a boy in my class but I know
he'll never like someone like me.
The bird finally speaks and says I should bury myself
with her and we can talk to the roots together.
Terrified by how much I want that I toss her in quickly.
I imagine dirt filling my open mouth
and dirt crowding my ears and dirt crawling
into my nose. I see a whole town
full of dirt and I want that so much. So safe
in the dirt – held fixed in one wonderful place.
I lay a twig on her grave and leave.

John McDonough

Considering a Cast Iron Velociraptor, Hanging over Malta, Montana

I am not an educated man in so far as anything I have ever been told never stuck

Since I was eight and the family dog told me that I was a moonbeam
And I stopped listening because that was all I ever wanted to hear
Which explains why, the night I found myself in Malta, Montana
My thoughts never went to Europe, or the Phoenicians, or the
Byzantine war. I did not immediately recall the flattening of the tiny
island by the Turks

Or the books burning in front of the capital

I just thought about the night, cold and hot all at once

The red-blue-green starlight of the badlands

How hungry everything looks as the earth spins on its axis

Spins right now

Like the moment a snake realizes all that he has caught is his own tail

I thought about the badlands and who the hell named them that

And how different that night must have been

I looked up at the night sky, put my thumb in front of the moon

And saw myself.

My Grandfather Always Wanted to Be Post Master General

The fall my grandfather, slick with perspiration
Adjusting to the limp he brought back from Bastogne,
decided he wanted to be postmaster general,
School Children in Revere sang the American songbook
A songbook that never included the Catholics or the
Irish, or the butcher up the street in Somerville
Who got turned to Hamburger meat by artillery fire.
His wife, who was not a French nurse, and just sort of
Exhaled her cigarette smoke normally
Couldn't shut up about peonies.
And the Boston Post Office had a fresh coat of paint
And the birds a new lease on life.
And the sun and the sound both felt very different
On the cobblestone in Paris, with two working legs
It was the fall he decided what he really wanted
Was to make sure everyone got what was coming to them

Once, Whale

The Jawbone of a whale is pockmarked
Each tiny crater on its surface filled with dust
What is it doing here in the mountains
What is it doing surrounded by dead leaves?
Could it ever have known them in life?
So far from shore
So high above sea level
Never having seen a lighthouse
On my way down the mountain, I blink and see the Strait of Gibraltar
Once, Whale,
You belonged to an ocean

Robert Okaji

I Look for You with Satellite View

But binoculars are my oldest friend.
Watching you flash between leaf and branch, stone
and sky, I remember, as the black groans
in, obliterating light at the end

of the day's voice, that everyone descends,
our debts counted, stacked and restacked, the loans
unpaid and endless, like breath or the moans
of autumn's bed spiraling back. Light sends

you elsewhere - the silver-tipped moon leaf, a
wisp of fog tracing your leg's passage in
the sand. That empty bottle. You could be

there, above ground, or scattered where I lay,
an orbiting eye forever open,
tracking, searching always, trying to see.

Vision in Far Infrared

Considering the implications of dust and cold gas, the expanding universe and cryostats, I climb the stairs and shiver.

Thermal infrared may propagate in a vacuum, but we require oxygen and warmth. Pillows and a sense of humor help, too.

What will come of the images captured by the Herschel telescope in the next eon and those following? These maelstroms, blossoming.

I look up from my front porch and see the streetlight's glare rather than stars. Yesterday, lizards coupled on my shack's wall.

Nebulosity in vision, in politics. Look through this eyepiece to find horseheads and archers, bright flames and clouds. Or nothing.

Red and yellow filaments could indicate newly forming low-mass stars. The visible is only one component of perception.

Hubble observes in multiple spectra, but not the far infrared. Even the long-reaching may be overcome by inadequacies.

Do not forget the body's warmth. Remember black lights and purpose, the tangible thought. Recall that we exist at rest, ever in motion.

Jared Pearce

Refuge

Too late to build another nest,
the grey catbird, though no
canopy can shelter her, stays
on her eggs all through the rain,

the dark, the way lightening
arranges for a moment
the strange lay of the world.

The drops rill then pool behind
her neck, then she slides them
off her tail, again and again.
She cannot blink for the confusion

rendered in thunder, only
waits for something to break,
for the calm to wash in.

Son, I'm the Plane, You're the Jumper

Every April it's the same,
and then again in May, dandelions
bleed spring's green. Sure,
Jaime says we'll pesto them
to spread, fry their greasy heads, let
their carrots suck the mineral deep
and ore them in the gut, but
I still want to shake them:

they come around, no job
but their own fat hands clotting
the grass, no girlfriend to curb
their grubby wet, no gratitude for
stepping on the poppies or
getting in the tomatoes' way.

When we pluck the fairy wands
and risk a wish on one breath,
the miracle is the parachutes
drifting off, tiny powers gathering
parcels of earth someplace else.

Suitcases

When you go far away
from me as you can
go, I want to make it
easy: umbrella monsoon

ready, your market
feet and curry tongue,
eyes flitting like candles.
In the dark, you think

like a low cloud, open
your case, rummage,
then realize you don't
need what you thought –
like a string of starlight,
you've got it all.

Dana Robbins

Forgiving Mother

At first you blame your mother
 For sending you to play there
 For making you go back.

Then you blame her that,
in the stunned petrified aftermath,
she didn't notice when you changed
from happy child to seductive morose
five-year-old.

You blame her that she was too sheltered
to see the signs: you slinking around
tongue kissing at six,
blood in your bowels.

You blame her that she belittled you
for your profound shyness.

In the fury of your blame you lose sight
of the man who put his penis in your mouth,
your rear end,

in the way that you would not blame
a hurricane or a tornado for the damage
it causes.

You blame your mother for the storms
which ravaged your childhood.

Now sixty, a mother and a grandmother
yourself, you realize that all mothers
make mistakes;

even you who wanted so badly to do better.

Then you forgive your mother as you hope
your children forgive you.

Shipwreck

Next door to my home, a rusted anchor on a chain
hangs heavy and out of place on the gnarled oak
in the front yard of this shipwreck of a house.

Knickknacks left behind by the woman who
inherited but could not afford the taxes
glimmer through dirty windows.

Weeds choke the rotting steps. In good times,
the house was built so the core was
like the lead craft in an armada, a fleet of smaller

ships sailing behind her. I can't tell you about
other places, but in Maine old houses have souls,
female souls; she calls to me from her loneliness

every time I pass by wondering what storm
wrecked this house, leaving an empty vessel
where small animals make their home.

Heather Sager

The Dance with Death

I view a living room
in the summer of 1974. A family
has gathered for a dance. In the sun windows
the front yard of the farm splays out
for all to see: the tire swing on the oak,
the grass-green lawn, the side field of abundant wheat.

The father puts a record on the turntable
and it is jazz. The mother, a large woman,
nervously dances, but then moves happily because three
young children flock about her dress and they all go
swinging and toe-tapping and cheering
to the kind voice of Louis Armstrong.

Death is in the room. He's a shrewd businessman
from the city, there to talk about the farm. The city man
wears a gray suit, is a dashing young man with cavernous,
greedy eyes, and when the children scatter
he asks the farmer's wife for a dance.
The wife dances, slowly,
with the interloper.

I am a fly on the wall,
and I see everything. I see how this ends.

On Partings

In a dream, I found a poem. On a train,
left on a seat, I found the paper
on which it was written.
The handwriting was mine.
So were the tears I sensed
as factories, clouds, and farms coasted
through the window.

This poem of my imaginings read:

Dear Friend,
You gave me shelter,
not a building I flocked to
but a shelter of you yourself.
Your hands, warm birds alighting.
Your eyes, luxuriating warmth.
Your voice, rich kindness.

You gave me protection,
giving out of compassion
despite the social order
between us.

Now I am back in the world,
and missing you.

Once, you spoke of things you wouldn't ordinarily share.
After speaking,
you sat quietly, lips parted.
We had crossed continents, worlds,
and all I want is to breathe in
what I saw in your face,
your shy, thoughtful tenderness.

To whom had I written such a letter?

Autumn Visit

September tugs at her hair and restless feet
until, descending into the depths of
a bee-box-and-shrub edged building,
she escapes all that wind.

She is not old, this woman, and she is not young,
this woman.

Inside, she meets you
where you appear to exist;
here, yet also in a place far away –
you, a busy man. You had been working
in quietude near your window,
shuffling papers.

Suddenly, you turn and face her,
your eyes and smile
growing warm as a cello's long-drawn note.

Also: Her look wears her delight in you.

The two of you talk, mostly of simple things.
If you had an observer, they would note
the many gaps and pauses
in your conversation. And how, though there are gaps,
your voices do not sound strained.

Light plays on the walls in a room,
its color tangerine.

Outside the window,
yellow specks of leaves scatter
streams in the wind.

Liwa Sun

Ghazal, on Fish

They ask, why did you come here? I smile
and supply an answer they bait for. Playing a fish

who obliges out of civility. In my Chinese
home, Father berated me for being picky, refusing fish

or mutton. Mother said they'd make me smarter. She cut
my hair: their immensity hinders intelligence. I was a fish,

bald and dependent. When I left the water I grew
and dyed and permed my hair. I don't eat fish,

because no one forces me to. Prom: at aquarium I sit
in front of the shark tank, time out from my date. I follow one fish,

it grows self-conscious and eludes me. Freedom is so crushingly
lonely. We go to hot pot afterparty and with tears I eat fish.

Inside Me

A labyrinth. But it's not as complicated as that. Cursory sun, and the crescent half-embraces it. Together they allude, but don't think too much about that. Lines assemble in different levels of proximity, just like the ocean. And I taste salty. Singular breasts, mountains apart. Don't prostitute yourself in the long and hopeless search for the mother. In a color-blind world, the great details of the grains of a leaf become inconsequential.

I dare not mention the sacred atrium in the middle.

J.R. Solonche

Peregrine Falcon

She is the finished business of flight.

She is the throwing knife perfectly balanced in the sky's palm.

She is the thought of the falconer before he thinks it.

She is the daughter of the valley and the wind.

She is the arrow that returns to the quiver.

She is the edge keened on the whetstone of her ancestors.

She is the goddess it does no good to worship.

She is the lightning with feathers.

She is the shadow with claws.

She is the eye with wings.

She is the death wish of the mourning dove.

She is the painless needle.

Buff Whitman-Bradley

Lakeside Afternoon

Standing near the tip of the branch
Extending several feet out from its nest
In the dead treetop
The juvenile osprey is in a panic
Crying out urgently and ceaselessly
From its uncertain perch
High above the lake,
Will somebody please do something!

But no parent osprey appears
To offer direction or advice
Or even an encouraging word or two
About this monumental and transformative moment
When a young bird will step into thin air
For the first time
And must master aerodynamics
In a matter of only a few seconds
Before it plunges headfirst
Into the dark green waters below.

The frantic young osprey does not realize
That this absence of a backup crew
Is the ancient wild's way of saying
You can do this on your own now, little sister;
No need for further assistance.
But after more long minutes of plaintive pleading
An instant arrives
As it does in all our lives
When there is nothing else to do
But to obey the primeval instructions encoded within
Step lightly off the spindly branch
and into the invisible embrace of sky.

Late

All of a sudden
It became late
The laundry
Still hanging
On the line
The dishes
Yet to be washed
The children grown
And married
And you standing
In front of the bathroom mirror
Gazing
At a complete stranger

All of a sudden
It became late
Your body
Unfamiliar and uncooperative
Your memory at times
Going off on its own
Without you
Your bicycle
Rusting in the garden

All of a sudden
It became late
The novel unwritten
The grand voyage
Not embarked upon
The apology still resting
In the hammock
Of good intentions

All of a sudden
It became late

The mantra un-OM'd
The bold action
Lost in thought
The boatload of resolutions
Becalmed just offshore

All of a sudden
It became so late
That morning arrived –
A new day
With much to be done

Contributor Notes

Joan Colby has published widely in journals such as *Poetry*, *Atlanta Review*, *South Dakota Review*, and more. Awards include two Illinois Arts Council Literary Awards, an Illinois Arts Council Fellowship in Literature. She has published 22 books including *Selected Poems* from FutureCycle Press, which received the 2013 FutureCycle Prize, and *Ribcage* from Glass Lyre Press, which has been awarded the 2015 Kithara Book Prize. Colby is also an associate editor of Good Works Review and FutureCycle Press.

Darren C. Demaree is the author of eleven poetry collections, most recently *Emily as Sometimes the Forest Wants the Fire* (June 2019, Harpoon Books). He is the Managing Editor of the *Best of the Net Anthology* and *Ovenbird Poetry*.

Cole Depuy is a PhD student in SUNY Binghamton's Creative Writing Program and recipient of the Provost's Doctoral Summer Fellowship. He earned an MFA in poetry from Southern Connecticut State University. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Penn Review*, *Boston Accent*, *The Maynard*, *Fresh Ink*, *pacificREVIEW* and elsewhere.

Emily Dolan currently lives in Sevilla, Spain, where she plays professional soccer while continuing to write poetry and short stories. Her most recent hobbies include practicing Spanish with her goldfish, Dog, and riding the bus to nowhere in particular. Her work has previously appeared in *The Mangrove Review*.

Siyun Fang is a poet and translator. A graduate of Centre College and New York University, she is going to attend The New School MFA Program this coming fall. Her research interests include modern and contemporary poetry, poetic theories, theories of narrative, American fiction and dramatic arts.

Robin Gow's poetry has recently been published in *POETRY*, *New Delta Review* and *Roanoke Review*. He is a graduate student and professor at Adelphi University pursuing an MFA in creative writing. He is the Editor at Large for *Village of Crickets* and Social Media Coordinator for *Oyster River Pages*. He is an out and proud bisexual transgender man passionate about LGBT issues. He loves poetry that tilts in and out of reality and his queerness is also the central axis of his work.

Joseph Hardy is one of a handful of writers that lives in Nashville, Tennessee, but does not play a musical instrument; although a friend once asked that he bring his harmonica on a camping trip so they could throw it in the fire. His wife says he cannot leave a room without finding out something about everyone in it and telling her their stories later. He has a BS in psychology from Stanford University. His work has been published in *Waving Hands Review* and is forthcoming in *Gyroscope* and *Crack the Spine Literary Magazine*.

John McDonough was born in New England, but currently resides in Dickinson, North Dakota. He has spent time as a park ranger, dog groomer and lifeguard. He Currently works at Dickinson State College. He has two stamps left to get on his Montana Dinosaur Trail Passport before it is complete.

Robert Okaji earned a BA in history and lives in Texas. The author of five chapbooks, his work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Claw & Blossom*, *Vox Populi*, *Ethel*, *Slippery Elm* and elsewhere.

Jared Pearce's collection, *The Annotated Murder of One*, was released last year by Aubade (www.aubadepublishing.com/annotated-murder-of-one). His poems have recently been or will soon be shared in *THAT*, *Xavier Review*, *Blue Lake Review*, *Blue Mountain Review* and *The Cabinet of Heed*. Further: www.jaredpearcepoetry.weebly.com.

After a long career as a lawyer, **Dana Robbins** obtained an MFA from the Stonecoast Writers program. Her first book, *The Left Side of My Life*, was published by Moon Pie Press in 2015. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in many journals or anthologies, including *The Fish Poetry Anthology*, *Door Is A Jar Magazine*, *Drunken Boat*, *Euphony Journal* and *Evening Street Review*.

Heather Sager is an author of poetry, short stories and flash fiction. Her poems recently appeared in *Hypnopomp*, *Alba: A Journal of Short Poetry*, *Mantis* and *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*. Her fiction has been published in *New World Writing*, *Sweet Tree Review*, *Little Patuxent Review* and other magazines. Heather grew up in rural Minnesota and lives in Illinois.

J.R. Solonche is the author of *Beautiful Day* (Deerbrook Editions), *Won't Be Long* (Deerbrook Editions), *Heart's Content* (Five Oaks Press), *Invisible* (nominated for the Pulitzer Prize by Five Oaks Press), *The Black Birch* (Kelsay Books), *I, Emily Dickinson & Other Found Poems* (Deerbrook Editions), *In Short Order* (Kelsay Books), *Tomorrow, Today & Yesterday* (Deerbrook Editions) and others. He lives in the Hudson Valley.

Liwa Sun is a Chinese writer, poet and game-theorist-wannabe. She lets fiction contaminate her memory, in which she rejoices. She wants to write as beautifully as Jorge Luis Borges and Li-Young Lee. She envisions herself happily widowed. She crosses off items on the bucket list written in her prepubescent years, finding each “venture” more boring than the last.

Buff Whitman-Bradley's poetry has been widely published in both print and online journals. His latest book is *Crows with Bad Writing*. His podcast of poems reflecting on aging, memory, and mortality, can be heard at thirdactpoems.podbean.com. He lives in northern California with his wife, Cynthia.

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