

lullwater review

VOLUME XXVII



A JOURNAL FOR THE LITERARY ARTS

lullwater review

VOLUME XXVII

Editor-in-Chief: Mattie Worsham

Managing Editor: Maya Bradford

Treasurer: Sarah Boyle

Head of Design: Maya Bradford

Editorial Staff: Victoria Basnuevo, Sarah Boyle, Sara Cunningham, Samantha Korn, Lucy Wainger, Meg Walters, Joelle Wellington, Wadian Massoud, Kelsey Perry, Rosa Kim, Ellie McAfee, Kristin Kuwanda, Emma Lazerson, Sarah Swiderski

Faculty Advisor: Bruce Covey

Cover Art: Pearse Anderson

Submissions: emorylullwaterreview@gmail.com

Guidelines: emorylullwaterreview.com/submissions

Queries: lullwatermanagement@gmail.com

Find us at emorylullwaterreview.com

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Editor's Essay

Mattie Worsham

In the fall of 2016 I received an email from *Lullwater Review*. They were seeking readers: are you a student with time to spare to join our editorial board? I looked down at myself — a newly sober sophomore and creative writing major, subsisting on iced coffee and cigarettes, nearly halfway dressed at one o'clock on a Wednesday afternoon— and decided I could spare the time.

"Poetry," Frost said, "is a way of taking life by the throat." While I don't make a habit of taking too much instruction from deceased men, I was in desperate need of this sentiment in my own life. Joining *Lullwater* was the beginning of me taking action, both in my writing and my student life, and I do not believe I could have picked a more inspiring community. There have been many moments in the past few years— or, maybe, centuries— that necessitated a lethal rhetoric in our artistic publications, times when words needed to be used as weapons. This method has affected change in our nation, but it has also inflicted wounds. As an editor, the balance of content and intent is a tricky and often grey area, one that has challenged and excited me. Most of all, it has taught the power only empathy holds— to both persuade and affect our readers. In the poems, stories, and visual art of this issue, I see the installation of a new tradition: these writers and artists strike with determined tenderness, their unflinching gaze and pointed empathy more compelling and persuasive than any throat-grabbing political rhetoric. A professor told me once that powerful writing is not just something you read, but something that reads you back. Now more than ever I feel that same magic working within the pages *Lullwater Review*; we are only speaking to our community, but speaking with them and giving our most marginalized members a sense of visibility.

As my time at *Lullwater Review* nears an end, I am more than confident in passing this journal on to another group of young women, ones far more qualified than I was at nineteen. While I'm grateful for that aimless September three years ago, for the seemingly inescapable void that somehow (luckily) propelled me towards this journal, I'm thrilled that the competence and compassion of our nearly all-female staff continues to expand and set the bar ever higher.

To the editorial board, my gratitude and admiration is inexpressible. Your continued dedication to this journal and belief in the profound powers of art has encouraged, inspired, and saved me.

To Maya Bradford, my managing editor and head of design: I am immeasurably grateful. I am lucky to know you, and *Lullwater* is lucky to have you. As you and Sara Cunningham rise to the positions of Co-Editors, know that you both have my utmost faith and respect. I cannot imagine two women more ready than you to take this magazine new places. Your devotion to art and truth will serve both of you well.

To Sarah Boyle, our fearless treasurer: there are no words. Your commitment to this journal and community has quite literally bridged oceans, and you're my hero. To Bruce Covey, whose kindness and patience is infinite: thank you for believing in *Lullwater* and the students who run it. And thank you to Emory University, for bringing all of these exceptional beings together under one masthead. I am forever in awe of the many editorial boards and issues of *Lullwater Review* that have preceded us, and without which this one would not exist.

Lastly, I would like to thank our generous and gifted contributors, whose remarkable work gives shape to our journal, and helps make sense of the world.

Gratefully,

Mattie Worsham

Lullwater Review Editor-in-Chief 2018-2019

Northern Skyline

Changming Yuan

At the same height of
 Every rocky mountain
 Above all seasonal change
You are widely and cursively cut

 As if to bite a whole patch of
Sky from heaven
With rows of rows of
 Whale-like teeth

Metronome

Angie Macri

Her part of the country had no brooks,
those part of a far eastern coast
or an old land across a sea where books
filled the walls of rooms like oaks
in the forest where she lived. Girls wore
ribbons in their hair, not bows,
and had names from plays
their mothers had seen on the stage
when they were young. Nightingales,
not mockingbirds, sang by pools, not ponds.
Men knew at least one language
besides their mother tongue, which they used
to explain love or war. She learned songs
named for the rivers in that other place
on the piano her mother had played as a child
while her mother kept time,
restless in another room.

For You Would Know at Mars Hill

Angie Macri

the soil red as a woman who filled
her heart with stone and more.
Her eyes threaded with red
like the road which ran due west
through burnt hickory,
past the substation, the waterworks,

past the pine mountains taken
for granted, only realized as stone
when the pines were gone.
When a sermon of pins
and needles ran down her left arm,
she said to an unknown god

it's high time you moved mountains.
All the blood in the world
runs the same inside
each running woman and over stone
at noon when the pines act
without shadows on the red road.

Grandfather Aneurysm

Daisy Bassen

While he scrambled eggs
Into chrome yellow, mounded
Like kidneys and sweetbreads
Before a butcher, it grew
Inside him. A hot air balloon,
Readied for launch, one piece of silk,
Seamless. Each foot to pedal,
He circled town on a bike. Sailboats
Came into the modest harbor.
Between his lungs, the diameter relaxed
Into the front wheel of a velocipede,
A giant, understandably threatening.
On hospital white, his hair shone
Chartreuse, traffic light caution.

Vellum and Dreams

Christian Buehler

I want to believe my dreams are full of parables
Bred by the rut (habitual passage) of Djinn teaching life lessons
By toying with the lives of priests and kings while I watch
From a nonsense perch, saturated in sedatives
Among old birds beset in the drum trees
Stagger planted by some drunken lush

Your mind is vellum
Others have rung it like a towel
To get out the snake oil and boiled nettles
But the landscape is still stained

My mind is vellum
Steeped in night words
Seen by such thoughts as that 'the stars are in a sea'
And the wind is a tide
Heavily involved with leaves and evergreens

Your mind is vellum
Archaic with its valuation of eclipses
Sizable fires
The usefulness of blood, and other omens

Old fonts inked on flesh
We are the occult stretched on a frame
Pattered in math, reason, but still old world

Breathe

Alan Elyshevitz

As expected, I see astral phenomena when my life
unmoors from that tidal clock we call the moon.
These people, however, won't leave me to my drift.
While shoving in staccato, they infuse me
with a canister of chemical stimulant channeled
through a durable transparent bag. Because ribs
are a great inconvenience, they impose upon me
new hematomas. I am a tantrum restrained by a fat
knee. It's worse than wet socks, worse than libido
losing traction. What are their criteria for this assault
which simplifies me to a replica of myself? I ride
green waves of gag reflex. The air tastes rubbery
as if tainted by latex. In this place, they follow strict
protocol: Wash hands. Or anyone you touch may die.

Nachtgesang in der Stadt

Sage

I investigate the meaning of my white
gleaming bone before tucking it back
into my thigh I try to determine the number
of people turned into pillars of salt every year—must be dozens
Must be nice to have a God so attentive I remember
going to church on Sundays with my mother
holding my hand pointing out the paths
the incense took to reach the vaulted ceiling
Down a dirtier alley than this familiar one
a tortoise-shell shrieks for her weeping baby that will not suckle
How many times have I yearned for him and gotten salt?
Nibbling at the edge of the sun we crumble into ash
The indigo serein surrounds us on the screened porch
as the morning pounces on our grief Little grace is left
to seep into our dreams like angels do:
sweet and sweet night-singing on the wet pavement
outside this four-story complex too small to call home
too close to call anything else Your bathrobe catches
on the tiny rusted nail jutting from the wall I keep
promising to flatten down I'm sorry for my lapses
in protecting you my love
I mean to keep every part of you safe even the smallest bits
The hair on your neck the scar below your hip
I mean to flatten the jagged edges of the world
is the only way I know how to love you
Let me fill this room with blue and sullen articles
of clothing A scarf for your throat
Gloves for your knuckles When you go into dark
you will never be cold o my love o my dear
You will know me by scents I have left on your skin

Oral History of a Touch-Starved Maniac

Sage

There was a Byzantine king who bathed not in water
but in oils, made his servants pick between his toes

and scrub his elbows until they were red.
Then the wolves came to the kingdom.

The story stops there, we can wonder what happens next
but all we really know for sure is the king enjoyed his wealth

in comfort and took pleasure in hygiene. I'd like to know
the feeling of such certainty, but the wolves, you see.

What else is life like other than what it is?
Like loose change in the cushions? Like gum

on the sole of your shoe? Like a box lovingly
lowered into cold earth? Life is life.

That is enough.
Some of my largest ideas come to me when I pick

at my face and my mind slips into that behind place
like behind your bed or the kitchen table or my eyes.

Maybe the Byzantine king was so focused on burning
his soul he needed others to do the picking for him.

I would like to achieve the same insubstantiality
the same bodiless hovering behind my eyes.

I bow my head like a horse bends to graze and I turn
into a salmon leaping right into the bear's mouth—

I graze my way through water, the oils of my body
sleek and running like salt, like tattoos sliding off the skin.

I've broken every taboo on touching the divine.
Someday I'd like someone to break their rules too, and touch me.

Orange

Ryan Sutherland

If someone tells me that God
Is not real
I will tell them to look at you
Eating an orange

Watch the fruit torn
The peelings fall
The juice drip
Off your chin

You told me once
That a fruit like an orange
Was best eaten
Naked in the bath
Because the juice
Always stained your shirt

But you always ate it clothed
Spitting the seeds, as I watched
The juice drip
Off your chin
Onto your shirt

Crane

James Fowler

Poet overboard.

Someone throw him
a Life Saver.

Note: Hart Crane jumped into the Caribbean Sea.
His father invented Life Savers™ candy.

Strawberry Wine

Laura Sobbott Ross

We walked boldly
out of the Kroger
& not as if we were
fourteen or guilty;
the bottle of strawberry wine
tunneled in a goose down jacket.
Weren't we caught
on security cameras, or
by patrons who knew our mothers?
Our own silent provocation
staring down every perceived
Oh, my word or Well, I never
in that small Southern town.
It wasn't as if we hadn't
whispered about doing it
before, but you see,
it slid inside so smoothly.
Around us, the Blue Ridge
lay in repose like muses
long given up their siren songs.
Our grandmas, aunties,
and wifely neighbors,
our pioneering foremothers—
a ruinous silhouette of
paunch and bosom, a horizon
we could almost lean into—
both judgement &
lullaby grown too familiar,
our mouths on the same lip
of the bottle, a pact
that rendered us fierce and giddy.
Every cell, not a carbon atom
of dust, but an aching bloom—
a communion between
she & she & she
& this wintered earth,
strawberries nectaring her breath,
its languorous texture dizzying
our adolescent bodies
right out of our cocoon-thick coats.
Those old mountains
smoothing their shadows
back across the tender length of us,

hushing us into echoes
swallowed not-so-furtively
down the neck
of the redbuds and dogwoods,
through the cool, clotted root beds
of clouds and mosses,
to limestone stopgap,
the red clay earth
of our girl-voices.

Common Pigeon

Anum Sattar

common pigeon
eats out of my palm
then *shits* on my head –
“I love you,” you promised
then dumped me

The Chronically Underappreciated Otaku DJ

Christopher Keaveney

I was banking on the last minute swerve
when we confronted him,
middle of the night
music blaring
from the apartment above ours,
but he came back with the one question
we weren't prepared to answer--
Easy does what?
the return volley as brash as turquoise,
delivered while busting moves in the foyer
in what looked like slow motion,
his head bobbing all the while to a rhythm all its own
as if driven by hidden currents
the rest of us could only dream of.

A Stack of 45's

Richard Luftig

I tried to explain them to a Millennial
once but it didn't take. How they looked:
squat, dressed in their sheer plastic.
Mouths wide open in perpetual surprise.

And always those B-sides:

I'm a Hog for You Baby.
I Won't Go Hunting with You Jake but I'll Go Chasin' Women.
Crunchy Granola Suite.
The Last Word in Lonesome is Me.

And I, living within
the monastery of my own
room, my own thoughts.
Always drawn to them.

Recorded as if an afterthought.
The ones no one knew about,
no DJ played, hidden in plain
hearing. They were our secret;

me and those orphan songs,
waiting to be discovered.
They, resigned to spin
their spindled tunes

unheard. Face-down,
away from the light,
cheek-to-turntable.
But always so close,

really just a single flip
of the disc away
from stardom,
from feeling that light

scratch of recognition,
the love of needle-on- groove.
Waiting until all that remained
of their future was consignment

to the bottom of the pile,
when some new, more popular sibling,
still asleep in the darkness
of a paper sleeve, would take their place.

Revelations of the Dog

Peycho Kanev

People say
Love will open
your eyes
You gonna see all

And I really see now

But only this vast
desert
and all around it
even larger desert

without
a single bone in it

I see

There is
a hook hanging in
the air

and attached
to the hook is

love

My meat

Your Imprint on Our First Bed

Lisa Krawczyk

Your imprint, a shadow kept by our bed—
a tender warning, or better said reminder
that we will return here tonight, after
the busiest weekday workloads.

That you rose before even the Springtime sun
to go to Nihongo—the light won't flood
through the window at the foot of the bed
until you're gone for the morning.

That I may rise with you,
if not temporarily, to see the first peep of light,
to fling myself back under the covers
in my own unemployment. My own

explorative pursuit for a dream.
When you return, exhausted,
your form will return to this spot
(even after my attempts to smooth it out).

Bee

JC Reilly

Grannie Boeuf Sibley's wedding quilt
is spread out on their laps,
the one Mama should have burned
during the Fever, when Grannie's skin
turned dulled saffron as the sun
behind the smoke from the cotton mill.

Stained from births and deaths,
from years of sleeps, its warmth
the fabric of memory, the quilt
hasn't lain on a bed in years.
Too delicate for such utility these days.

The sisters have taken it down
from the wall, as if they finally see its age,
as if its blemishes seem somehow
suddenly to be corrected: the hole
in the lavender linsey center star
has worsened, and Tallulah eases out
the seams of the block, pulling away
the cotton batting and the backing

with fingers gnarled as crepe myrtles,
trying hard not to rub away the fabric
like paper. She takes apart the star
as if unmaking the heavens, gives
Vidalia the pieces who sets them
against tissue to make a pattern
for the indigo worsted she has found

in a trunk, traces out triangles.
These Vidalia pins to fabric, cuts;
begins to sew tiny, even stitches
she could make were she blind, hands
so used to the in-and-out advance
of the needle, seams straight as compass points.

Star reborn, she returns it to Tallulah
who places the block back at its center,
checks for sizing. Vidalia offers the old pieces
to stuff into the batting; not a scrap
must be removed, nor history lost.

Tallulah secures the cloth, secrets within
a sprig of angelica and thimbleweed, recreates
the stitching of a hundred years past.
The star is not for wishing on.

Spoilers

Dan Weincek

The calls are coming from
 inside the house
 she's her daughter and her sister
 his mother is dead before it starts and the worst part
 is already over, falling down the drain from
paradise into screaming hospital light:

 the biggest
disappointment of your life
 makes a parody of all
 that come after and you
 don't remember it — never say
that life is unkind

 The guy in the mask
is the guy with no hand's father
 Everyone on the train's the murderer
 and the dog dies in the end

 Without hunger, absence
you have only contentment
 a fancy word for waiting around

 Chain a goat to the fence and bring
 in the New York Times, focus, zero in
 on this moment like a new mole
in the mirror — the hell, was that
 there last time? —
 before realizing
 you're looking at a star,
 the mirage that dissolves
at the eye's touch

 No moment is different
 from any other, moments
are excuse-making and your mother
 always wants to hear
 your voice, so no point
 beating yourself up over it

 The guy selling soap was never real and
 the other guy was dead the whole time

The girl you never asked to dance
was waiting for you to,
silently pleading,
she's still waiting right now

They save the town from the shark
it was Earth the whole time
the alien goes back home
and the guy lives in the end

Forms of Fitness

Yvette Schnoeker-Shorb

Twins—teens, pretty girls
with identical ponytails
high on perfect heads,
prance into the Fitness room.
I try to ignore them, but
oh to be young again,
I think, finding myself
stereotypically grieving
for my lost youth, looks,
flexibility, whatever,
while dutifully watching
the clock on the treadmill.

Suddenly as distance shifts
to calories burned, I hear
a soothing, female voice
from a nearby phone app,
the pink device set between
matching, of course, yoga mats;
it directs the slender sisters
through movements, counts,
repetitions—all so calm,
controlled, familiar until
a sudden shriek, then sharp
screaming shatters the air.

Sensing my spiked heart rate,
the machine stops. Getting off,
I turn to find the young ladies,
now motionless, watching
a tiny, gray spider crawl under
weights by the wall a yard away.
Offering the creature my hand,
I transport the little thing
outside as the two stare
in terror, then relief. I return
to restart the treadmill
and feeling particularly fit.



Pearse Anderson



Pearse Anderson

Alexandra Vogel

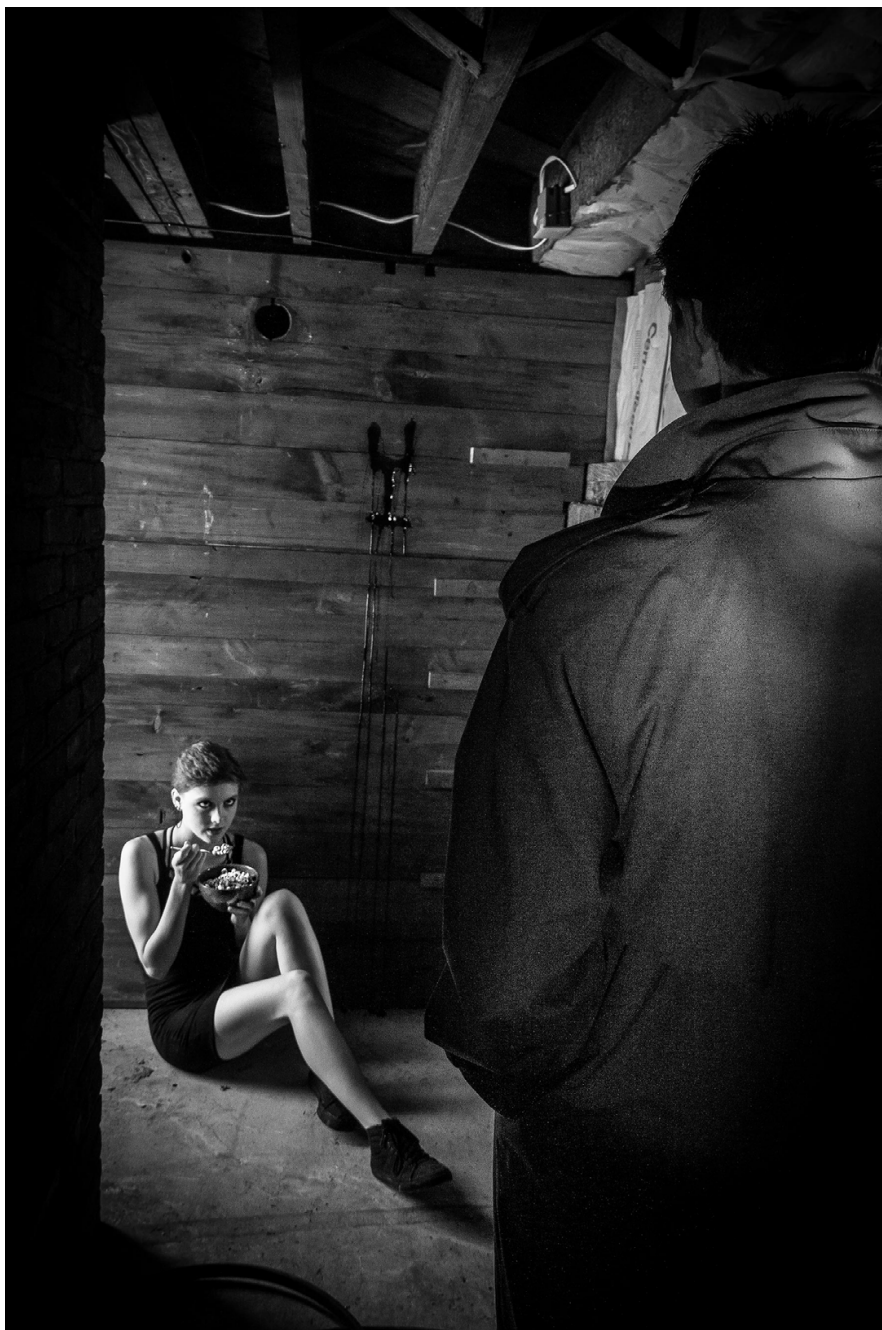




Alexandra Vogel



Pearse Anderson



Pearse Anderson

Will You Leave New Orleans?

John Baum

Barron works to remember his mother's voice and her face, a fading memory strongest in the morning dark as dreams fall away, absorbed into the familiar cold smell of his pillow and rough sheets. Her hand on his forehead. His father says he remembers too, but Barron doesn't think he cares about anything before the flood.

In the before-days, his father played guitar. When Barron tries to play like him, sliding a bottle-neck, what he plays sounds like sickness.

Their neighbor sits on her porch all night, writes letters to the government. It's their fault. They don't care. We the bug, they the windshield. The power's been back on a long time now, but she writes by candlelight and the boy's father warns him against going next door.

Barron's mother used to laugh on that porch.

One night, with the front-porch hum of the muttering neighbor drifting to their steps, the father says again it's just about time to go.

"We got to start off right, again. We gotta move. No other way to live down here."

"They never found her." Barron has said this before. His father's face, a stone.

"That doesn't mean she's alive."

"Not dead neither."

The lakefront curves away as the train moves towards Mississippi. Pine trees line the track, blurred green. Barron slows them down by staring at each one, whipping his neck as they go by. His father once told him trees made people look small because the trees were patient and beautiful all the time. Sap was their blood. That was long ago.

As the train moves on, Barron dreams of trees and storms and an ocean that unfolds and smooths out before him, and he feels again his mother's hand on his forehead.

Solo

Sam DiFalco

I no longer have a clan. My parents are gone, aunts and uncles. Cousins have written me off as the madman of the family. Every family has one. I don't blame them. My behaviour over the years hasn't exactly given them reason to embrace me. I won't get into that now. And I'm not going to make excuses. A break or two and things would have been different. As it is, my world has dried up. Finding love, work and hope no longer apply, are no longer viable. Love, at my age, is an attempt to stave off death, worthy in itself, but doomed to end in disappointment. At least when I was married there was something called the future that lay ahead of us, full of promise, rainbows and lush greenery. I've recently discovered I'm unemployable, my skills no longer needed by society. My age prohibits retraining. My attitude prohibits rehabilitation, which is to say it prevents me from buying back into the dream of a normal, fulfilling life. Once that dream is gone, once the hope for a fulfilling life is gone, then what? But no one wants to hear your tiny violin whining. I ran into Gaylord, my old next door neighbour. He asked how I was doing. Fine, I said. What else was I going to say? That I was at the end of my tether? That sounds so old-fashioned. Gaylord is an old-fashioned dude. British with a diluted accent after decades in Canada. Retired teacher. No wife, no kids. Rides an old ten-speed bicycle around the hood sporting a mushroom-shaped white pith helmet. He used to bring empty bottles into his apartment and pile them in crates on the balcony. I figured he was cashing them in for deposits, but one day he explained he donated the bottles to the Salvation Army. I know people laugh at that name but it was popular at one time in some circles. Gaylord, in his 70s, moved out of our building a few months before it was to be demolished, into a two-bedroom flat up the street. Before he left he gave me a giant pasta bowl with a knowing look and said I could probably use it. I don't know what he meant by that but when I moved out of the building, a month before the wreckers were due, I gave the bowl to a young woman who had moved down the hall with her little dog only months before. We had never exchanged a single word or even a silent greeting. She looked like an emaciated Liza Minelli, her dog one of the smallest I've ever seen. It fit in her hand like a rodent, and had keen, yearning liquid brown eyes and a sadness suffusing its demeanour that made me want to rescue it from its reality. This happens on occasion. I get the overwhelming desire to save something from its pain, sadness, disappointment. When I offered the young woman the pasta bowl she looked at me suspiciously. I reassured her that I was moving out the next day. I'm not angling for a dinner invite, I said. That's good, she said. The tiny dog bared his teeth at me.

Music from the Blood Machine

Frankie Lyon

The trick to these falls is that the stomach area need not be hit. It's about the total force, the gravity-trauma, sudden heavy stop of your body to the ground. Backyard, basement, garage floor, riverside, hardwood kitchen. A deep inhale count to three and drop. Have faith. Believe you will come back out of it, bruiseless face and ready to begin again. One-two-three drop.

The belly is Hanna's sun and moon. Constant in changing -- in prayer for great eclipse, darkness and disappearance of the life-thing.

The single biggest challenge is reflex, is fighting the automatic pull of your hands as they try to reach out and break the fall. Sometimes keeping your hands locked together by your chest, other times in a sweatshirt pocket. Falling backwards — it will properly restrict your hand-reflex but is dangerous for the head. Besides, how many kids used to snap their arms trying to run backwards, trying to break the inevitable fall?

It was a cheap test she peed on. Clay waiting outside Hanna's bathroom for privacy, tried not to listen to the splash. Blue line. Another go. Blue line. They took the test and packaging to the other end of town to drop it in someone else's trash bin. All for that snap of the final condom, warm turquoise, transparent sea. The impossible darkness of the room disappeared around them -- float, spank, echoless.

This is Hanna's summer: wake, fall, sleep. Find newer harder places, deeper drops. She needs to fall and keep falling. There always is the perennial staircase, but she's saving that for last resorts — mom's house here has no staircase, it'd need to happen at Clay's, and she hasn't told him anything yet.

But Clay will come over every couple of days. Hanna plays calm, hides the hips and bruises. Mom will get home from work and say Hi Hanna Hi Clay and retire to bed until husband Joe gets home to her and they make talk over frozen dinner. Clay and Joe will talk of weather, in astonishing detail — both of them intent on adjusting to the summer heat with certainty: Yes, Joe says, tomorrow I'm off work and I'll wear thin shorts, keep a cooler, he says, a cool rag at six for the humidity.

And meanwhile Hanna sits beside, suffocating of fear. Her hand drawn compulsively to her belly. Three or four times a minute, and her conclusions change just as often. Grown. Showing. Shrunk. Dead. Please dead.

School begins again in three months. Clay only just graduated, so he's coasting for the while, but Hanna has her final year left. Mother once told her pregnancy is a full-time job. This was with Dad, back in Omaha, under the dust sky and welfare and petrol-smell that leaked in from the next-door station, before the market-crash and sister Janie's runout and the divorce, before moving west, before just Mom and Hanna. And so Hanna approaches it with full-time dedication: force, force, alcohol, cigarette. Kill-kill-kill. Full time.

June 1.

It's getting harder to hide it from Clay, he keeps wanting to fuck, I'm not giving him any reasons. A couple more really good falls and I think I'll be done. Maybe shoot for the concrete this weekend.

He'll want Iowa. A proper abortion. He'll want his mommy's insurance card and a famous doctor. It will be my fault if he sees the bruises — he'll be mad I did this, such a savage stupid thing, instead of the proper. He'll lecture me about respecting my body and how You don't have to do this if you don't want to. — Of course I don't fucking want to.
Remember rotate the bottles.

Alone, bedside. Hanna takes the bottle and pulls, fast enough not to taste the liquor. Only feels the acid scrape on the root-back of her tongue in her throat. Becoming conscious, these past weeks — parts and cells of her body she had no prior consideration of: same unraveling as first sex, each new part of her given another shade, birthing new meaning to her hands and mouth and throat, the muscles in her legs, a new register and cadence in her voice, a new vocabulary — these things that were all already there but needed only be brought into the light of use, of new function, new physics, language... And now the same process, same parts. Back of her throat. Legs and the strength of her hips. The force of a new geometry and stretch... blood everything.

In a state of so constant a deprivation that the nightmares feel alive and the living feels just like this, here — gin from a plastic water bottle, cough, haze and moonlight. Listening to the television leak murder mysteries from Mom and Joe's room. Always a blanket, a hand over the belly.

The house is dead-quiet. A bedroom each for Hanna, for Hanna's mom and stepfather Joe, and the gone room of her older sister. Janie left home five years ago, seventeen and engaged, the boyfriend Russel fresh out of Navy basic training and begging her with a ring. Janie's room still has its purple wall paint, the taped-to-wall posters, a four-dollar lamp at the bedside. A couple fantasy novels on top of the dresser. Still the mess of clothes in the closet corner, same as the day she left. An antiquated laptop charger still plugged in next to the mirror.

That day was a cataclysm. Janie wasn't hardly fighting their mom. *I'm going! I'm going!* Joe had moved in the month prior. He stayed the whole ordeal at the television couch.

Mother simply wept. Wailing, drip snot and tears into her bare hands onto the counter.

Janie walked out of her room with two backpacks, a streak of eyeliner come just too far off her left eye. A pair of shoes were tied around one of the backpack handles. Then a single roller suitcase with plastic zippers and pink accents, the small face of her cartoon character hero patched onto the pocket.

Mother didn't move an inch. The door-shut, the receding of boyfriend's truck in the window of the night. No more Janie.

"What is this?" Clay says, tries to unravel Hanna's jeans. The marble constellation of bruising on her hip somehow glows in the lamplight of her bedroom. The depth of the black splotch, the sheer number of impact... "What?"

August 5.

He gave a look, like he's trying to guess.

She's showing. Mother's sewing tape, stretched secret the past twelve weeks round Hanna's belly... grown, expanded. None of this is working.

Clay is coming in an hour. For now Hanna is alone in her parents' house, the summer heat beginning down for the evening, orange into damp violet. The living room windows are wide open, TV off, bottle of gin dwindling on the coffee table. For the first time this summer, she wears a dress — with the seam just below the breast, puffy breathing room thereunder.

The fear haze that has gripped her for the previous counting months is gone. Instead only there is a blank wall, a fact. She cannot get over or under or through it.

She is ready to kill, or whatever you want to call it — she'd kill Clay, she's reasoned, if it came to that. Could strangle him right there. Or get him mixing gin with his benzos, quick and faultless. She could drive the both of them into a highway pole, careful to unbuckle his seatbelt beforehand — hers, too, if the feeling claimed her.

A knock from the back door and Clay walks in barefoot. Hear his car aching in the hot.

"How are you," he says.

Hanna stands. "Come here."

"Alright," Clay walks toward her and moves to hug her. She grabs him by the shoulders.

"Hit me," Hanna says.

Clay idles.

She shakes him — "Fucking *hit* me," takes his fist in hers —

He falls back, wide eyes, hands up in surrender.

"Hit me." Her eyes swell, wet, drip.

Clay looks at his hand. Listen: her breathing, papery, desperate. The car metal ticking outside.

He shapes a fist and takes it slowly to Hanna. "That?" he says. Voice shaking.

"Mhm," she says.

He inhales sharp, draws his hand --

But slow, staring... backs out of the kitchen, out of the door, hands up. Between him and Hanna he cracks open the vacuum, and before her stretches the abyss. Through it radiates the car door echo. The last roar of Clay's engine, gone the face of never coming back.

She hears herself spread-legged wailing on hospital sheets as mother stands watches in shame and Joe sits in the waiting room below the television and Janie ignores mother's twentieth phone call and tends back to her own new babies. The inexorable future brings itself into Hanna as time time time pierces and pulls it out of her and into this bloody new thing, this baby, breathless mutant, dying in its first knowledge of light.

contributors

Pearse Anderson is a photographer and writer specializing in environmental change and environmental portraits. Previously, Pearse's photography can be found in places like *The Tishman Review*, *Bop Dead City Review*, and *Bad Pony Magazine*, while his writing has appeared or is upcoming in *Strange Horizons*, *Tales From the Crust*, and *Weird Fiction Review*. He is currently studying climate change in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, though he resides in Northeast Ohio. He would like to thank Nora for being a great model, friend, geologist, and owner of crop tops. Get it, crop tops? Heh. More of his work can be found at pearseanderson.com or on his @pearseanderson Instagram.

Daisy Bassen is a practicing physician and poet. She graduated from Princeton University's Creative Writing Program and completed her medical training at The University of Rochester and Brown. Her work has been published in *Oberon*, *The Delmarva Review* and *Tuck Magazine* as well as multiple other journals. She was a semi-finalist in the 2016 Vassar Miller Prize in Poetry, a finalist in the 2018 Adelaide Literary Prize and is doubly nominated for a 2019 Pushcart Prize. She lives in Rhode Island with her family.

John Buam's work has appeared in *The Blue Mesa Review*, *Booth*, *Whiskey Paper*, and elsewhere.

Christian Gerhard Buehler lives in Salt Lake City, Utah who has been writing for more than 20 years. He has had work published in the *Flint Hills Review*, *Rosebud Literary Magazine*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Old Red Kimono (ORK)*, and the *Wild Goose Poetry Review*. Christian wants to be Jim Harrison when he grows up.

Yuan Changming started to learn the English alphabet in Shanghai at age 19 and published monographs on translation before leaving China. With a Canadian PhD in English, Yuan currently lives in Vancouver, where he edits Poetry Pacific with Allen Qing Yuan; credits include ten Pushcart nominations, the 2018 Naji Naaman's Literary Prize, Best of the Best Canadian Poetry, BestNewPoemsOnline and 1,496 others across 42 countries.

Sam Difalco writes short fiction and poetry from Toronto. His work has appeared in print and online.

Alan Elyshevitz is the author of a collection of stories, *The Widows and Orphans Fund* (SEA Press), and three poetry chapbooks, most recently *Imaginary Planet* (Cervena Barva). His poems have appeared in *River Styx*, *Nimrod International Journal*, and *Water-Stone Review*, among many others. He is a two-time recipient of a fellowship in fiction writing from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. For further information, visit <https://aelyshevitz.ink>.

James Fowler teaches literature at the University of Central Arkansas. His poems have recently appeared in *Futures Trading Magazine*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, *Valley Voices*, *Elder Mountain*, and *Cave Region Review*. He has pieces forthcoming in *Common Ground Review* and *The Poetry of Capital*.

Peycho Kanev is the author of 4 poetry collections and two chapbooks, published in the USA and Europe. He has won several European awards for his poetry and his poems have appeared in many literary magazines, such as: *Poetry Quarterly*, *Evergreen Review*, *Front Porch Review*, *Hawaii Review*, *Barrow Street*, *Sheepshead Review*, *Off the Coast*, *The Adirondack Review*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *The Cleveland Review* and many others.

Christopher T. Keaveney teaches Japanese language and East Asian culture at Linfield College in Oregon and is the author of three books about Sino-Japanese cultural relations. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Columbia Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *The Minetta Review*, *Stolen Island*, *Faultline*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, and elsewhere, and he is the author of the collection *Your Eureka not Mined* (Broadstone Books, 2017).

Lisa Krawczyk grew up in Milwaukee, WI, and graduated from UW-Eau Claire with a degree in creative writing. She currently resides in Wilmington, DE, tutoring 8th grade students, where she spreads the joys and challenges of poetry and writing. You can find her sestina "Urban Heat Island" in *Levitare*.

Richard Luftig is a former professor of educational psychology and special education at Miami University in Ohio now residing in California. His poems and stories have appeared in numerous literary journals in the United States (including *Lullwater Review*) and internationally in, Canada, Australia, Europe, and Asia. Two of his poems recently appeared in *Ten Years of Dos Madres Press*.

Frankie Lyon lives in Portland, Oregon, and attends Portland State University.

Angie Macri is the author of *Underwater Panther* (Southeast Missouri State University), winner of the Cowles Poetry Book Prize, and *Fear Nothing of the Future or the Past* (Finishing Line). Her recent work appears in *The Journal*, *Quiddity*, and *The Southern Review*. An Arkansas Arts Council fellow, she lives in Hot Springs. Find her online at angiemacri.wordpress.com.

JC Reilly writes across genres and has received Pushcart and Wigleaf nominations for her work. She serves as the Managing Editor of the *Atlanta Review*, and her recent work appears in *Poetry International Online*, *South Carolina Review*, *PoetrySouth*, and *POEM*. When she isn't writing, she plays tennis or works on improving her Italian. Follow her @aishatonu.

Laura Sobott Ross has worked as a teacher and a writing coach for Lake County Schools and was recently named as Lake County's first poet laureate. Her poetry appears in many journals, including *Blackbird*, *Florida Review*, and *32 Poems*. She was a finalist for the Art & Letters Poetry Prize and won the Southern Humanities Auburn Witness Poetry Prize. Her poetry books are *A Tiny Hunger*, *My Mississippi*, and *The Graffiti of Pompeii*.

Sage is an MFA candidate and Teaching Fellow at St. Mary's College in California. Their work appears in *North American Review*, *Penn Review*, *Pittsburgh Poetry Review*, *The Rumpus*, and elsewhere. Find them on Twitter @sagescrittore.

Anum Sattar is a senior studying English at the College of Wooster in Ohio, USA. Her poems have been published the *American Journal of Poetry* (Margie,) *IDK Magazine*, *Door is a Jar*, *Ribbons*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *Typehouse Literary Magazine*, *The Charles Cater: a working anthology*, *50 Haikus*, *Stuck in the Library*, *Broadkill Review*, *Poetry Life and Times*, *Triggerfish Critical Review*, *Packingtown Review*, *Blithe Spirit*, *The Mythic Circle*, *HOBART*, *SurVision Magazine*, *Literary Juice*, *Coal City Review*, *Crack the Spine*, *Lowestoft Chronicle*, *Taj Mahal Review*, *FIVE 2 ONE: An Art and Literary Journal*, *The Linnet's Wings*, *Ragazine*, *Better than Starbucks!*, *The Florida Review*, *Grey Sparrow Press*, *Oddball Magazine*, *Artifact Nouveau*, *Off the Coast*, *Strange POetry*, *Between These Shores Literary & Arts Annual*, *Conceit Magazine*, *A New Ulster*, *The Cannon's Mouth*, *The Journal of Contemporary Anglo-Scandinavian Poetry*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Poydras Review*, *The Cadaverine*, *Verbalart: A Global Journal Devoted to Poets & Poetry*, *The Wayne Literary Journal*, *The Ibis Head Review*, *Avocet: A Journal of Nature Poems*, *Poets Bridge*, *Deltona Howl* and *Tipton Poetry Journal*. She won the first Grace Prize in Poetry and third Vonna Hicks Award at the college. Whenever possible, she reads out her work at Brooklyn Poets, Spoonbill and Sugartown Bookstore, Forest Hills Library in New York City, and the Cuyahoga Valley Art Center at Cuyahoga Falls, OH. And she was recently interviewed at Radio Free Brooklyn.

Yvette A. Schnoecker-Shorb's work has appeared in *Clockhouse*, *AJN: American Journal of Nursing*, *Medical Literary Messenger*, *About Place Journal*, *Hamilton Stone Review*, the Jungian journal *Depth Insights*, *Mount Hope Magazine*, *Watershed Review*, *The Conium Review*, *Terrain.org*, the anthology *Talking Back and Looking Forward: An Educational Revolution in Poetry and Prose* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group), *The Blueline Anthology* (Syracuse University Press), and others, with work forthcoming in *CHEST Journal*, *Weber--The Contemporary West*, *Colere: A Journal of Cultural Exploration*, *Front Range Review*, *Earth's Daughters*, and others. In addition to past Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominations, her work received more recent Honorable Mentions in 2016 from both Port Yonder Press and Erbacce Press. She has been an educator, a researcher, and an editor, and is co-founder of a 501(c)(3) nonprofit natural history press.

Ryan Sutherland is originally from St. Petersburg, Florida, but has been living in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, and Madrid, Spain, for the last few years. He presently resides in New Haven, Connecticut, as a Master of Public Health student at the Yale School of Public Health. His work focuses critically on sexuality, mortality, jealousy, solitude, and adolescence. He is a graduate of the Emory College Class of 2016. He is listening to Erykah Badu as he is writing this biography and likely will still be listening to her when you are reading this.

Dan Wiencek studied writing at Western Illinois University and Purdue University, working with writers such as Tama Baldwin, Chuck Wachtel and Patricia Henley. His poems have appeared in such publications as *Hypertrophic Literary*, *Milk Journal*, *Crack the Spine* and

New Ohio Review. He also contributes TV and music reviews to *Popdose*. When not writing poetry, he writes and edits for a luxury travel company and has walked in the same pair of shoes on the Pyramids, the Serengeti plains, the Great Wall and the Abbey Road crosswalk. He is currently working on his first collection of poems.

Alexandra Vogel has been painting and drawing since she can remember. Now a junior at Lafayette College, Alex is pursuing a dual degree in Neuroscience and Studio Art. Since being at school she has taken a variety of art classes, and has been a painting assistant for Ed Kerns, with his recent new collection and gallery showing of *The Octopus Meditations*. In her free time Alex loves to draw and paint and has recently gotten into digital design and media.