

BEAR REVIEW



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We read submissions year-round at www.bearreview.submittable.com. Send up to five poems or one to two short prose pieces (maximum: 500 words). We will consider a long poem, as well as a sequence of interconnected short sections of a short story, as long as it promises to keep the fire stoked. We are open to simultaneous submissions as long as the writer notifies us immediately about an acceptance elsewhere.

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Hadara Bar-Nadav

Wind (Elegy)

Red hollow,
red howl—

(though I am not supposed
to say such words)

blood words
that illuminate

the empty anchor
of air you are.

Nameless hurricane.
Windcrush.

Late lament

lost in noise.

Sear. Sever.
The never again.

Without lilies
or balm,

without a wish
for better

or a childhood song.

Ur-alphabet
gurgling undertongue

where God sculpts
his voids.

Hadara Bar-Nadav

Leg

(After Egon Schiele's *Reclining Female Nude with Violet Stockings*)

She must be French,

a deco dream
dimpled, curved.

Candled,
a rose glow.

Her soft golds
golding.

The new nudity
drives attention.

Arches of light—

calligraphic.

Ankle bone cut
like a jewel.

What is a knee for,
and so she kneels.

Pulse and pulley

breaking and
unbreaking the lines.

Quick horse
of the torso

and glide.

Most fleet
sweetness.

Swift carriage
exceeding

its gilded shape.

Her form kicks
free of the frame.



Hannah Yata

Crybaby

Barbara Varanka

Caravaggio's St. John The Baptist in the Wilderness Speaks

I thought only the chattering
constellations spoke
my destiny, but now the gifts
appear:

red silk, this carved tree,
the skin of a camel
wrapped between my thighs, so many
beehives. The light thick

above me. It hangs on
my eyelids and blurs my skin
into blue marble.

But I do not want this gift.
I am only a boy.
I eat the leaves I lay on.

D.A. Powell

Black Eyed Peas

It's New Year's Day and I'm letting you in
almost like it's the first time and we've made a date
to listen to Rachmaninoff and play spades.
There's little to know about me. Cornbread's in the oven.
That's as exciting as it gets around here, when I decide to bake.
Not that cornbread's really baking. Cornbread ain't cake.
If you're looking for sugar & eggs, you've made a mistake.
Plus, everything's got bacon or hamhock as flavor.
Good God, greens need seasoning. That's why a pig's back
is fat. I'm liberal with the chile as much as I can be. Tomorrow
I've got a CT scan and I want to look my best. Inside.
Strange voyages have begun each year. Each year
I've felt a little lost as to how to begin. Some things
I cannot change. Like a burnt-out cathode tube
or a stylus on the hi-fi. My archaic torso
is not a curio but the cabinet. I have been inside it. You
do not change your life. Your life changes you.

Travis Cebula

Catalyst for Confirmation #4

the city is concrete, yes, but concrete
I can't describe, like feelings.
like love, I only have examples
to prove it's there—

turtle pond the turtle pond—
I prefer to be with you on a quiet
night. I prefer to be with you when everything
is stripped bare like rapture.

Mathias Svalina

Illinois

A human is as an eighteen-foot-wide mouth, even after death. The people of Illinois open centers for the cutting off of dead strangers' lips & plant painkillers & sprinklers in the coffins of the wise. It is a place for the dead. A place for the dead to invent the word homisol. I'd like to sit on a blue bench & think of someone I used to know, someone whose last name I can't recall & therefore can't Google. Your job is to listen, then after you're dead to speak the nine syllables. The dead work all day, calling the cops to complain about the dead that walk beside them. They eat everything & find wonder in the wonderful shut-the-fuck-ups. *Oh, this?* Illinois says to the dead, lifting the curtain to reveal marble flagstones, *You like this?*, motioning them to enter with its skeleton-hand, *It's just a working draft.*



Jonah Criswell

“Artax, Come on!”

Rusty Morrison

Doubt Fable

In the rented bedroom where the floor heater and the bedside light can't both be on or the fuse will blow.

In the heated dark. In the heatless light.

What the sentence attempts to particularize, the field mouse under the bed is already chewing deftly.

What the field mouse generalizes, running impossibly fast across the top of the low dresser.

In the prospect of moving on again, this story will not tell itself sequentially.

It was, in the end, only the dark window that remained obedient to the name it began with.

Rusty Morrison

Precarious Fable

Suspended between the infernal and supernal gods,
birds land vicariously on my roof. Add-ons are welcome.
Call it dazzling, a new form of lichen or an ancient mold,
each addition made usable.
Refrigerate the lilies at night, they'll last longer.
Even the carnal becomes a relic if I don't use it respectfully.
Nearly, I cut off the top of my finger with the new kitchen knife.
Counting backwards exists, counting forwards almost does.

Moikom Zego

Translated by Anastas Kapurani, Wayne Miller

Zodiac (10)

The scorpion is a Hamlet
who has discovered suicide,
is a redheaded Judas,
a copperhaired Nero—
but not Rasputin.
My house is the cosmos.
Others live
merely inside their suits.
Winter
is a Saint Nicholas of snow
and our torments are Nirvana.
Saint Onufri¹
lived for sixty years
in a cave,
which he shared with a divine scorpion.
Asceticism draws every temptation;
temptation is the homeland of paranoia,
and the scorpion is—an implausible alien.
The palimpsest of air
contains a script
of lightning
going back more than ten thousand years.
A godly scorpion with a human head
rules over everything
in the Epic of Gilgamesh.
And there appeared on the sands
a scorpion man,
with his scorpion market,
his scorpion drugs and prostitution.
Then came the scorpion crusaders and Mongols,
then came the scorpion Scythians and the broken-crossed,
then came the millennia of the Great Cancer,
then came the Great Cancer, calendarless.
Where are you, Sphinx
with a scorpion's tail?
Where are you, scorpion
with the head of a horse?
O temples of phalluses—
you've gone vacant;
your phalluses

are scorpion tails.
What catastrophes do they dream of?
What poisons
are they concocting?
The scorpion
is the archetype
of Man—
who adds only a collar
and a computer.
The scorpion
is a zoomorphic guillotine
that slides its blade forward
through history,
through the ideas of Plato.
The scorpion
is a hidden surplus,
an exemplary gulag—like Eden.
The scorpion is the swastika,
the tattoos
of satanists,
is a miniaturized dragon—like the puppy
Zhou Enlai
used to take out for walks.
The scorpion
is a flesh-eating flower,
the scorpion's larvae
are the snakes of Laocoon.
The long scorpion-hand of the clock²
crosses the short hand;
it burns like a welder's torch
where they meet—
where life
becomes equal
to death,
where the absurd
finds its logic.
Civilization is an ancient song,
is modern barbarity.
I grip death
with four cypress trees—
like the spears of Achilles.
Which of us has a scorpion in his skull?
The horror,
the horror,
the horror.
tiny scorpions crawling
inside the fibers of blood cells,
scorpions frolicking in cowboy flicks,

scorpion cell phones,
scorpion shoe laces,
constant unanticipated funerals,
like fiercely misunderstood carnivals.
Scorpions are Thanatos' flock,
scorpions are the land's erosion,
the transformations of statues
into maggotized, nauseating cadavers.
Scorpions are black neckties
to match Dracula's redingote!
scorpions are the surgeons from Mars
who will autopsy our gods and our oceans;
scorpions are ecological horseshoes
for the apocalyptic horsemen of Nothingness.
Scorpions—armored viruses,
an epidemic with a medieval design.
Scorpions are the stones of collapsed houses,
stones that can't be used as grave markers.
Scorpions are our twins,
which can't survive even as ghosts.
The Great Cancer
has us—his wretched citizens
without even the illusion of a Constitution.

1: Onufri, an important 16th century Albanian painter.

2: The whole poem is built on an untranslatable pun in Albanian: the word for scorpion (*arkrep*) means both “scorpion” and “the needle/hand of a clock.” At this point in the poem the pun is made explicit.



Hannah Yata

The Donner Party

Lisa Russ Spaar

Temple Autumnal

Pickets of spindly sycamores, ivied,
traffic in ravine, sketch & fluencies,

headlamps, strobes, the rushing hour.
Bold doe, bronzed & dour

by the birdbath. Today love wept
in me then watched as I slept,

roaring from primordial, torsal depths.
Day is slowing its steps.

In that red wing above black horizon,
I fly with him, young again,

the pelvic, embered hearse
that is tomorrow in a cellular register.

Crimson badge on scalloped hollies,
white tail skittish, stanching night's lees.

Years before I could respond:
a dark socket, lashed to beyond.

Lisa Russ Spaar

A Labour of

In terms of vengery—murder,
pride, crash, exaltation—

this one is for the earth boars, sows:
blind, droll, clay-licked moles

two-thumbings with sickle paws
the ground beneath me,

spongy with innuendo,
warped by subtext and a double,

simultaneous life of larder, tunnel,
consummation. Velvet sex.

I try to walk upright there every day,
nonetheless. Sometimes twist

an ankle, stir the yellowjackets
laired below the stump.

Solitaires all, perhaps.
But I'm not buying that.

Mouths scour my buried bulbs.
What eats dirt for just itself?

Dandi Meng

Membership

Look and see

double, the diagram's
closed center, dismembered

newt swimming like a shoelace

lost in the drawer.
Who can remember it,

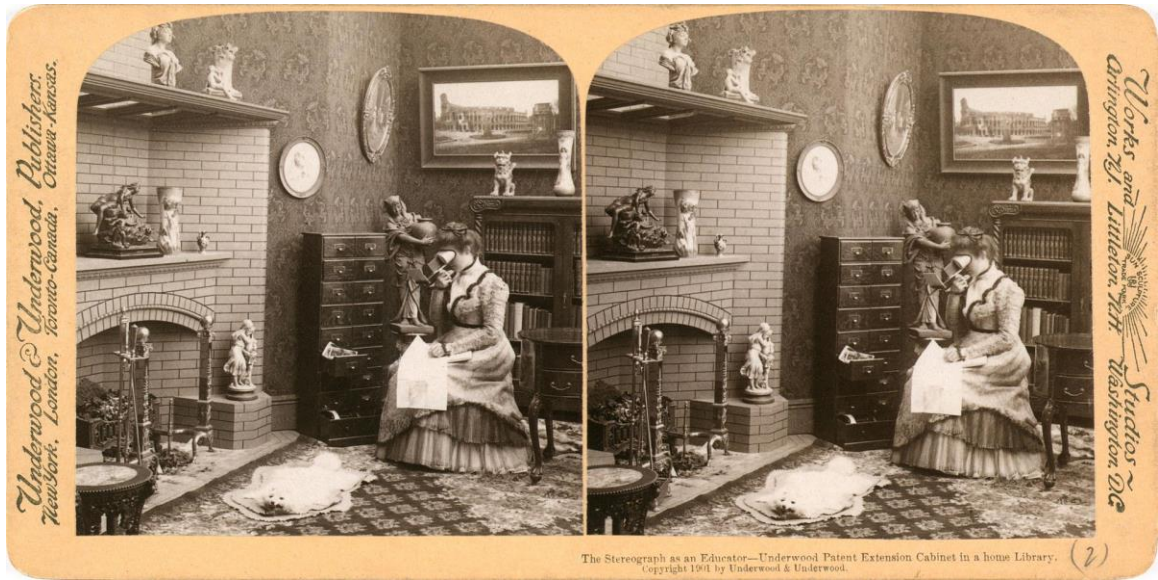
the tail's momentary

absence? What
is it like

for one to

be together,
a member, then a

part?



Stereograph

The Illusionist Beatitudes

Blessed be the illusion, blessed be the trick,
blessed be the magicians, blessed be your eye
that can't figure out what's plucking it.
Blessed be 1887 and its peculiar apparatuses—
stereograph, stereopticon, sciopticon, chromotrope—
blessed be the days when even seeing was new.
Blessed be the stereographic goggles
carved from a fine and polished wood
that cross your eyes then cross them back,
two pictures side by side of the same coral rose
blurred and petaling its 3-D way into your cornea.
Blessed be your cornea, that perfect stereograph.
Blessed be looking at such an image of a woman
looking into a stereograph looking at you.
Blessed be the dimension stretched between
the two. Blessed be accounts of the Signor's
dark séance extraordinaire, the lantern,
the silhouette, the candle zootroping its way
through the dark auditorium. Blessed be
his apparition of a woman in white
drawing up her hair. Blessed be the smoke,
blessed be the mirror. Blessed be my dear
ninety-year-old aunt who blesses God
for what sight she has left. Blessed be
that when she knows she should know you,
she sits quietly and pats your hand,
then says, "I don't know which one you are,
but I'm still so glad to be here."
Blessed be that fraying nerve that lets her see
what's not there more clearly than what is.
Blessed be, she says, all these tiny children
playing soccer across the tops of our hands.
Blessed be how clearly I can see them.

Rich Smith

Ages of articulation

and still we guess at the intent of hands—red
but how come and where in the house
should we put them? In the terminal

a woman asked me how I liked my apples.
I made a fist. *A little smaller than that,*
thinking of yours. It was a pomegranate

in the garden, so this whole time
we could have known knowledge
not as whole truth but as impenetrable

grenade, half-full of shrapnel.
Like you have to redden your hands
pounding its rind into rock. You have to

know a thing Biblically before it will open
as cherry trees when they're having
whatever the sky's having.

Better to skim along the surface
for incidental music
about the leaves and wonder

how you take your apples,
like your lessons, to guess whether
you'd go dumb with my thumb in your mouth

and if you, like me, suspect those hands
in the cave were prints.

Ruth Williams

Additional Longing

Some things naturally know how to be regular,
yet the tree's impulsive jump of red
says otherwise. It's too late

to change the direction of the seasons.
The moment like a game tape
you watch in reverse,

all the players scattered,
coming together, then running apart
into formation.

Time functions like static cling.
Yet, I cannot fit my voice
into the emotive cup of it.

I linger
at the dwelling place, summer's horizon,
a jumble of sticks. Enjoying my heart's
cul-de-sac.

The Ones

There will be days like this. The ones that follow you to the supermarket, crouching and deformed in the bottom of your cart as you decide between asparagus or cauliflower as counterpart to the very delicately balanced risotto you plan on cooking tonight. The ones that nag you as you deposit a check and the bank teller, all eyebrows and frowzy blouse, writes your receipt with blue ink. The ones that won't quite shake off as you drop the garbage curbside the next morning. The ones that stick when you answer the telephone and the voice sounds deceptively similar to a girlfriend you had in high school, just for a month, recognized from a syllable within the first three words, an inflection you thought never existed until it came jaunting back. The ones where a single footstep implants your sense of isolation. The ones where you get the feeling that if you turned around you might be able to see the thing clinging to you from what feels like a previous altercation, but every time you dip your hand to empty the dishwasher you come up with a plate. Just a plate.

Teresa Leggard

October Nights on the Porch

This feels like stealing, but there's nothing in our pockets—
we aren't wearing any, too warm for jackets, either.

But the sky dressed in dark-rinse denim with the moon
a button teasing at her collar, half in/half out.

You stand in the doorway waiting for me to come inside.
Our porch light glows like the iodine moon, and your collar,

also undone, asks will I join you for midnight stew
seasoned with stars and yellow gourd. We'll gorge

while the teething wind picks up where the leaves left off—
falling down, downing the naked avenue in golden carpet.

We turn—the last brilliant burning
before we are whited out.

Timothy Liu

One-Night Stand

His adoration a trickle-down

butter flavor in a bucket
of popcorn and you've got

no napkins to wipe the grease

off your lips and fingers
so you dig down deeper

to where the wetness stops.

Nick DePascal

pleasure

holed up in a hot house
orchid walled sternum

bruise those blues I ate
fruit from the dark a few

pomegranate seeds taste
good to me in the shade

all shade shadow from
the mouth opened a myth

which flew the down way
down from over yonder

fields tombs a flatness
revealed in the body

hand over holey heart
hold it steady suck it

through a straw ready
for to believe anything

from mouths glazed with
slant light a slow return

from cold was imminent
which had blessed it all

too much too soon for to
touch a soft place under-

stand a moment will not
vanish not from nothing



Jessie Fisher

Madonna and Child, The Discovery of Yellow

Press

I put the house key on the track.
I put the steel wedding band
onto the track with the train
eating closer to the bend.
I placed the baby's jumpsuit there
who is no longer a baby, but a child.
I put down her wiggled-out teeth. With care,
I arranged an empty collar on the track.
I took out the magenta bite on my thigh
and pressed that to the track with the train
chewing closer. I put a deed. I put
a certificate. A roll of bloodied gauze.
I unwrapped a man who still smelled
of my perfume and roped him to the track.
The trembling track. I cupped my hands
to catch the nails, tacks, and hinges
spilling from my eyes and put them
right under the opening maw.
I turned my back to the beckoning shriek
and went down the hill.

Spilt Milk Under the Bridge

This last night's dream had been especially intolerable, with the handicap stall occupied by a woman, not on the commode but in the corner on some kind of machine doing physical therapy. Leo didn't want to acknowledge that she looked like an adult version of his sister Cod—with excruciatingly thin arms—who had fallen off the roof when they were kids and broken her neck. He desperately wanted her to shut the water off (unclear why it so concerned him), but she remained unperturbed, watching the water overflow, unmoved by the crisis. Leo prided himself in having, as he said too often, “no illusions” about Y or Z. As testament to this strength at staring reality dead in the eyes, he unflinchingly studied a dead kitten whose brains and viscera had been smeared along the curb of Brandt Rd., his route to work and back. He marked its slow decay each time he passed, its minor evaporations, the cleansings by rain and diminishments by predators, saprophytes and tire treads, its transformation from a freshly burst sack of cat guts to disease vector to weathered pelt to a mere stain of filthy pavement. In the essay he wrote, accepted for publication by the local college lit mag, *SplitInThrenody*, he documented his observations, with great precision, in the form of field notes (and like a good naturalist, he would regularly stop for a closer inspection to jot down details, invent metaphors, snap pictures) and in his closing peroration, after a hymn to the cycle of death/rebirth as figured by the rising and setting sun, praising the sublimity of all that falls under the sign of divine violence and Moros god of doom, he quoted Walter Benjamin's insight that the profane exists for sake of happiness, that happiness defers apocalypse, that in happiness all that is earthly seeks its downfall in good fortune. He has always sworn he did not push her.

Nathan Kemp

Human Problem

For the last week I'd been angry,
inside my own head,

at the hand soap
that refused to foam,

for which I paid
too much.

It took seven days
for me to see

it was hand sanitizer
and to know

I was only human.
I play this game

ahead of time and
I familiarize myself

with it. I'm a person
unaware of my faults.

I cannot wait to learn
about them all.

I cannot wait to watch
a person pretend

to be another person
on a spotless, silver screen.

It will irritate me later.
I don't care about him,

Meg Ryan, or any other celebrity
and their presence

is trivializing
the whole thing.

These lights I don't need,
I have light colors

in my eyes. I fear I grow
less human when I talk

on the phone. I only hear
a robot trying

to have a voice.
My hands aren't clean.

Now I remember
how it was before.

Arielle Greenberg

Bohemian-Casual

When my sister and I were young, we took each new school year as the occasion for a new Look. A new Image, we called it. We need to work on a new Image. One year my Image was tweedy-collegiate-with-a-New-Wave-twist. One year I was bohemian-casual. This was when we were in middle school and high school.

Our back-to-school shopping revolved around these Images, and beforehand we did research and recognizance work and dog-eared many magazines in the pursuit of the purity of the Image.

This Image-procuring is a juvenile pursuit. By definition: I was a juvenile when I first started doing it. But I still do it.

Note the use of the words *recognizance* and *purity*.

There's a fucking war on.

--Excerpts from *Locally Made Panties*

Arielle Greenberg

Fashion Anxiety

I do realize of course that there are better goals one can have than achieving a self-invented fashion Look. But here's the way I rationalize it: if my anxiety over what I wear and how I look is alleviated by having a uniform of an adorable and unusual Look, one that I can just go to the closet and remove and put on without thinking about it and end up looking totally cool, won't this free up much of my time and energy for activism and homesteading and protests? And won't I look good writing letters to the editor and churning butter and holding up signs at rallies?

--Excerpts from *Locally Made Panties*

Abby Coleman

Nothing In This Car

In the backseat, I am three children, sweating on the leather, sand graining our thighs. Also driving the car, I am our father. We don't have a wife or mother; we aren't one of those families. One of us is black-and-white and resents the rest, but there's nothing we can do for her. If one of us breaks, none of us exist.

On the forest-lined highway, I tell ourself a story. The one I never tell, but we know it like a church song: *Apart, I could barely feel us breathing. In a cottage made of beach glass and piano keys, we grew weak—crying, spitting up salt water, ruining our dresses, dampening our braids. I invaded with a jar of fire in our hands, just enough to break down the walls keeping us out. But the jar got away from us, became the sun in a mattress, instant chaos. Girls lying together. Hands and hands and hands.*

Now is our resting place where we find our wife and mother. The roadside convinces us of her when one of us gets gum in our hair and none of us can get it out. We come to a stop and the whole field is a woman with hair the length of the Atlantic and eagles for eyes. She doesn't speak our language, but she accepts us for what we are—one machine of human parts running on a pipe dream. With one wave of her hand, our hair is gumless as if it never happened. When we get back in the car, we have already arrived exactly as we should—in the grass by the ocean with shells in our ears.

Contributors

Hadara Bar-Nadav is the author of *Lullaby (with Exit Sign)* (Saturnalia Books, 2013), awarded the Saturnalia Books Poetry Prize; *The Frame Called Ruin* (New Issues, 2012), Runner Up for the Green Rose Prize; and *A Glass of Milk to Kiss Goodnight* (Margie/Intuit House, 2007), awarded the Margie Book Prize. Her chapbook, *Show Me Yours* (Laurel Review/Green Tower Press, 2010), was awarded the Midwest Poets Series Prize. She is also co-author of the textbook *Writing Poems, 8th ed.* (Pearson, 2011). Recent awards include the Lynda Hull Memorial Poetry Prize from *Crazyhorse* and fellowships from the Vermont Studio Center and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Hadara is currently an Associate Professor of English at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Travis Cebula lives with his wife and trusty dogs in Colorado, where he writes, edits and teaches creative writing. He graduated from the MFA program at Naropa University in 2009—the same year he founded Shadow Mountain Press, a small press that focuses on hand-made editions of poetry chapbooks. His poetry, stories, essays, reviews, and photography have appeared internationally. He is the author of six chapbooks and five full-length collections of poetry, including *Ithaca*, *One Year in a Paper Cinema* and *After the Fox* (with Sarah Suzor). *Dangerous Things to Please a Girl* is forthcoming from BlazeVOX books this Spring. You can find him every summer teaching with the Left Bank Writers Retreat in Paris, France.

Abby Coleman is a writer and artist living in Brooklyn. She has an MFA in poetry from The New School and teaches creative writing to kids and teens at Writopia Lab, NYC. Her work has appeared in *The Providence Journal*, *The New School Collaborative* (for which she also created the cover design), and most recently in *Pieces of Cake*, *The NYD Anthology 2014*, *great weather for MEDIA*, and *Eleven Eleven*.

Nick DePascal lives in Albuquerque, NM with his wife, son, three dogs, and four chickens. His first book, *Before You Become Improbable*, was recently published by West End Press. You can read his poems in *Narrative*, *Laurel Review*, *Small Po[r]tions*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *interruption*, and more.

John Estes' recent work has appeared in *Tin House*, *Gettysburg Review*, *Southern Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *AGNI* and other places. He is the author of *Kingdom Come* (C&R Press, 2011) and two chapbooks: *Breakfast with Blake at the Laocoön* (Finishing Line Press, 2007) and *Sverve*, which won a 2008 National Chapbook Fellowship from the Poetry Society of America.

Arielle Greenberg is co-author of *Home/Birth: A Poemic*, co-editor of three anthologies, including *Gurlesque*, and author of several books, including two in 2015: *Locally Made Panties*, from which these poems were excerpted, and *Slice* (Coconut Books). She lives in Maine,

teaches in Oregon State University-Cascades' MFA, and writes a column on contemporary poetics for *American Poetry Review*.

Teresa Leggard is a poet, playwright, and recent MFA graduate of the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Timothy Liu's most recent books of poems is *Don't Go Back To Sleep*, just out from Saturnalia Books. He lives in Manhattan with his husband.

Nathan Kemp lives in Akron, Ohio. His forthcoming chapbook, *Gnomic Verse*, won the 2014 Dream Horse Press Poetry Chapbook Prize. His work appears in *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Paper Darts*, *Cream City Review*, *decomp Magazine*, and *The Southeast Review*. He is a poetry editor for *Barn Owl Review* and *Whiskey Island*.

Dandi Meng is a student at the University of Washington in Seattle. Her poems have been published in *Bricolage* and *Blind Glass*. She is a craftswoman of puns, beater-arounder of bushes, and exaggerator extraordinaire.

Rusty Morrison is the author of five books, including *Beyond the Chainlink* (Ahsahta), *After Urgency* (Tupelo's Dorset Prize), *the true keeps calm biding its story* (Ahsahta) which won The Sawtooth Prize, Academy of American Poet's Laughlin Award, Northern California Book Award, DiCastagnola Award. She's Omnidawn's co-publisher. Her website: www.rustymorrison.com. Recent poems have appeared or will appear in *A Public Space*, *Academy of American Poets Poem-a-Day*, *Iowa Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *PEN Poetry Series*, *Talisman*, *The Volta*, *VOLT*.

Kathryn Nuernberger is the author of the poetry collections *Rag & Bone* (Elixir, 2011) and *The End of Pink* (BOA Editions, 2016). She is an assistant professor of Creative Writing at University of Central Missouri, where she also serves as the Director of Pleiades Press.

D. A. Powell's most recent collections are *Useless Landscape, or A Guide for Boys* (2012), which received the National Book Critics Circle Award in poetry, and *Repast* (2014), both from Graywolf Press. He lives in San Francisco.

Michael Prihoda is a poet and artist, living in the Midwest. He is founding editor of *After the Pause* and his publications can be found in various journals around the web. He thinks saying hello is an underestimated courtesy.

Leah Sewell is a poet, mother, book designer, assistant editor for Coconut Press and editor of Topeka Library communications. She's published in *[PANK]*, *Spry*, *Weave Magazine*, *burntdistrict* and others. Her chapbook, *Birth in Storm*, was the 2013 winner of the ELJ Chapbook Competition. She lives in Topeka, Kan.

Rich Smith is the author of *All Talk* (Poor Claudia) and the chapbook *Great Poem of Desire and Other Poems* (Poor Claudia). He's currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Poetry at the University of Central Missouri, where he edits poetry for *Pleiades* and serves as a board member of Pleiades Press. Recently, his poems have appeared in *The Continental Review*, *Salt Hill*, *Tin House*, *Jerkpoet*, *Cimarron Review* and elsewhere.

Lisa Russ Spaar is the author and editor of nine books of poetry and essays, including, most recently *Vanitas Rough: Poems* (Persea, 2012) and *The Hide And Seek Muse: Annotations of Contemporary Poetry* (Drunken Boat, 2013). Her awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Library of Virginia Award for Poetry, the Carole Weinstein Poetry Prize, and a Rona Jaffe Award. She is currently editing an anthology of poems about Thomas Jefferson and Monticello for the University of Virginia Press. She is a professor at the University of Virginia.

Mathias Svalina is the author of four books, most recently *Wastoid* from Big Lucks Books. He lives in Denver & is an editor for Octopus Books.

Ruth Williams is the author of *Conveyance* (Dancing Girl Press, 2012). Her poetry has appeared in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *jubilat*, *CutBank*, and *Third Coast* among others. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor of English at William Jewell College.

Barbara Varanka has published poems in journals such as *Booth* and *Jet Fuel Review*. She holds an MFA in creative writing from the University of Missouri - Kansas City. She works in the software industry, and lives in Milford, Massachusetts with her dog, Bigos.

Moikon Zeqo, born in Durrës, Albania, in 1949, is the author of more than a dozen books of poetry and fiction, as well as numerous monographs on Albanian history, literature, and culture. His book *Meduza* (published in English as *I Don't Believe in Ghosts*, BOA, 2007) was suppressed in Albania from 1975-1995 and only appeared in print after the Communist collapse. In the mid 1990s, Zeqo served briefly as Albania's Minister of Culture, and for many years he directed the National Historical Museum in Tirana. His collection *Zodiac*, from which this poem comes, is forthcoming in 2015 from Zephyr Press.

Anastas Kapurani is the author of *The Myth of Lasgush* (Upfront [UK], 2004), a critical study of the Albanian poet Lasgush Poradeci. Kapurani lives in Athens, where he teaches for the London Institute City and Guilds program.

Wayne Miller is the author of four poetry collections, including *The City, Our City* (Milkweed, 2011) and the forthcoming *Post-* (2016). He has coedited three books, including *New European Poets* (Graywolf, 2008) and *Literary Publishing in the 21st Century* (Milkweed, 2016; forthcoming), and co-translated two books by Moikom Zeqo, most recently *Zodiac* (Zephyr, 2015; forthcoming). Miller teaches at the University of Colorado Denver and edits *Copper Nickel*.