

BEAR REVIEW

Bear Review is an online literary journal of poems and micro prose out of Kansas City, Missouri. Published twice a year, in fall and spring, Bear Review is made possible by its readers' help and support. The editors, Brian Clifton and Marcus Myers, would like to express their gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the journal.

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.

Cover art, 'X-ray photographs of frogs, c.1896' by Josef Maria Eder (1855 - 1944) and Eduard Valenta (1857 - 1937).

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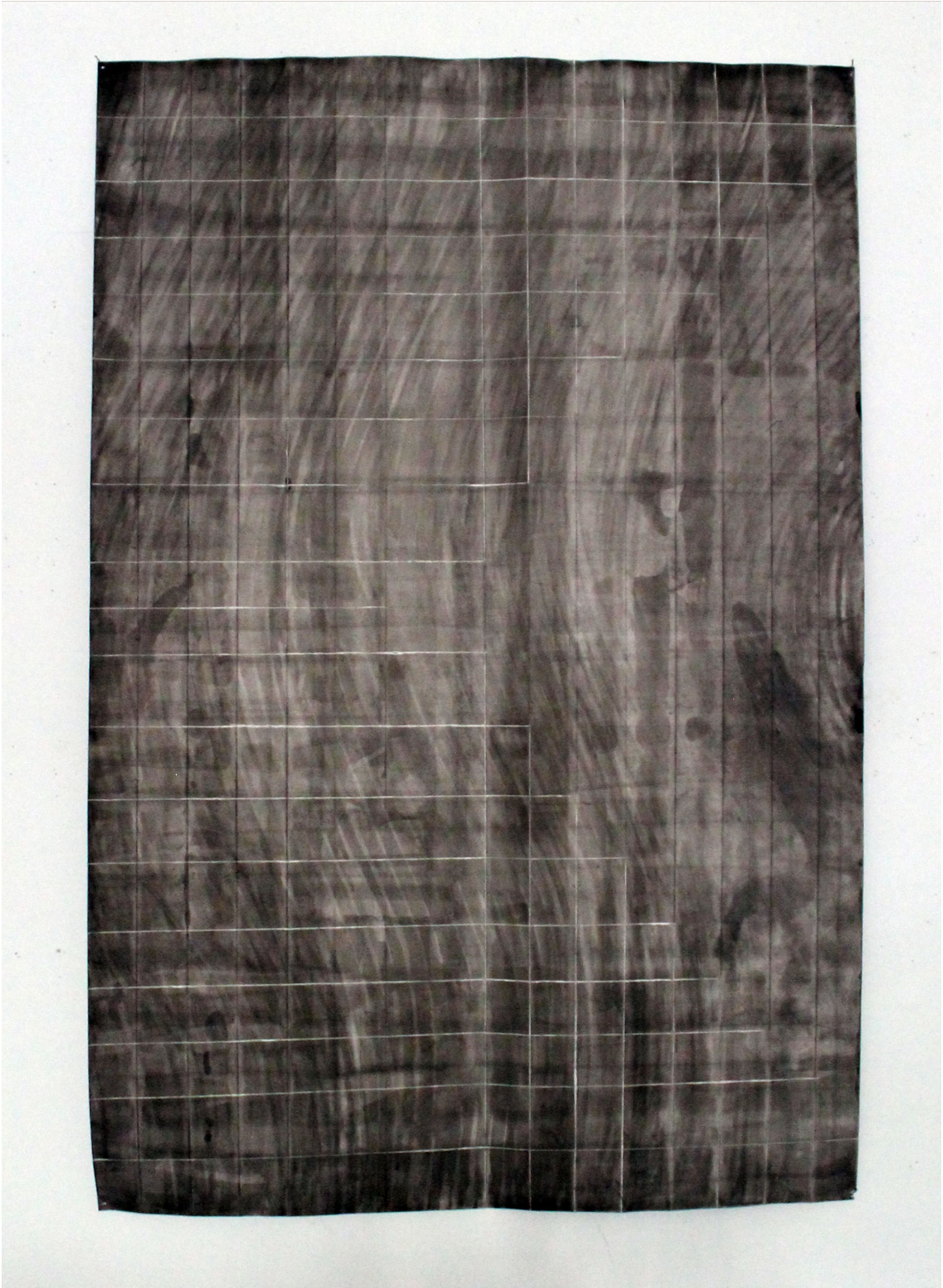
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BARE EARTH 48

J.P. Dancing Bear

Foreclosure City

Late at night : after all : the people : had vacated their dwellings : the doors left open : the
lights off : the slowly creeping fog : up the walk : over the threshold : how it would fill : each
room : gradually : almost imperceptibly : it would lift : a home up : from its lot : carry it
away : land it : in a perfect row : of other emptied houses : block after block : vacant : street
after street : like neatly ordered : plastic houses : like the ones in Monopoly : they would sit :
as still as animal traps : with quiet teeth : waiting : we would never mark such a place : on a
map : we would never go there : never have a nice thing to say : about such a place : we
would : threaten our children : with the boogeyman bankers : demonic debt-collectors :
phones always ringing : like bells of the damned : we would : tell our tales : of the missing
homes : from next door : the nice folks : who lived there : all gone now : replaced : with
someone unknown : someone unwilling : to neighbor : we'd think : of that other place :
we'd think : of that city : so close to hell : so blanketed : in our shame



Untitled (align)

Patricia Graham

Meg Johnson

This Is Classy Because I Say So

I am staying at a house with a screened-in back porch. It is not my house. I do not have a house. Let's all take a moment to reflect on me being a single, childless, houseless grownup. I know you want to.

(Pause.)

I ask if I can put an air mattress on the porch, make it a sleeping porch. This will not solve my problems, but will make my self-pity feel more romantic. I'm going for vintage sadness.

(Time for questions.)

Meg Johnson

Bat, Bat, Purse

My brother found a dead bat
in his dryer and did nothing.
The second time he found
a dead bat in his dryer
it was warm and crispy-like.
This bat he had tested for rabies.

A girl named Abby woke up
with a dead bat next to her
in bed. Her boyfriend at the time
was Nick. Nick's friend Sam
took the bat in for the rabies test.
Eventually Abby married Sam.

I gave some clothes, jewelry,
and purses I didn't want
anymore to a consignment
shop. When I stopped by
to pick up a check for my 40
percent of whatever sold first,

there was my old purse (from
an ex-boyfriend) on display
looking like new. Obviously
this isn't as gross as a dead bat,
but it still spooked me.

Ruth Madiovsky

Depersonalization

When it happens, the brain stops
listening. A dial tone inside you
acts as a placeholder while the rest
of you becomes a held breath,
a sieve, something that can be fed to a sieve,
a vacancy where there should be a body,
a body that is really a tightrope,
a balled-up napkin, an outline
of a thing but not the thing itself. The light,
there's a warehouse of it.
The light reminds you of a dentist's office,
and how everyone you know
is trying to pretend
they are more than just large bags of water.
You become everything your lover's face
reflected in shower glass is not:
stomach acid, shaky lung,
half moon of a fingernail,
and the chipped polish that covers it
like a blanket. You can't *Take a deep breath*
because you are deep breath, synapses
firing like javelins,
how were you ever more
than the sum of your parts?
You are so far outside your body
that there is nowhere to go
but back in.

Ruth Madiovsky

Atropine

I took my first birth control pill
the night my neighbor slammed his girlfriend's
head into the fridge.
I was reading about atropine,
how it tells the heart
to pedal faster,
how it sucks the spit right out of your gums.
Police came, kicked in the door,
found my neighbor with scratches
like highway skid marks across his face,
standing among the shards
of the smashed television set
the way a dog will stand
in its own mess.
I think of them
whenever I hear car brakes
screeching like wounded animals
or squeeze a plum so tight
it leaves a bruise.
'They didn't get evicted.
She didn't throw her
combat boots and Joan Didion novels
into a suitcase, fly back to Indiana
to wait tables at her cousin's seafood restaurant.
As far as I know, they're still together,
still overcooking chicken and throwing firewood
down their chimney's throat,
their walls still empty,
still the white of old scars.
'That's how it is sometimes:
one person gets to be the can of 7-Up,
and the other has to be the finger
floating inside.

Ruth Madiovsky

Everywhere And Nowhere

July is giving me the kind of look
that makes me think it might throw something,
might lift me up and leave me
on a mountain
where the air is thin as a thirty-gauge needle
and makes my head feel like a balloon
a kid is stuffing rocks into,
and I have nothing new to say
about helping my grandfather into a hospital gown,
slipping the booties over his socks
and telling the joke
about how an anesthesiologist's wife
might not realize she's being abused.
Lately it feels like every joke I tell
was less offensive in the original Russian,
like every poem I write
could get me arrested for public indecency.
I've gotten good at being everywhere
and nowhere at once,
at constructing gods and invoking them
the way a waitress might invoke a Caesar salad.
My mind holds a brick
until it becomes the brick,
and I am constantly forgetting
that my body owns me,
not the other way around.
I spend most days hoping for release
but not knowing from what.
What's worse—
the white noise inside the body
or the quiet?



Love Seeker

Ernest Williamson III

Erica Brunner

I thought I knew but now I know that rose trees never grow in New
York City

Ice crystallizes
on the pavement.
There's a smell, not
sweet or floral.

The sun is rough.
Roots push
through icy soil
expose

their bones.
The sky a grey skeleton
held by ropes.
It's been 14 months

I could marry David
never want anyone.
My body isn't

frail. My skin is
translucent
reveals
veins along

my hips. In my family's
yard there was
a ginkgo tree. I wanted
it to grow. I wanted
to climb
in it. Its roots

choked
the pipes
in the winter.

Susannah Nevison

Salt Room

A salt room, or salt cave, is a room within a salt mine where one may go to breathe salt dust; the dust is said to be beneficial in the treatment of several illnesses.

My admission: I've spent my life
hanging lanterns. In the salt mine,
each damp tunnel cuts deeper
into earth and we touch the walls
for assurance. What we cannot see
we still claim, force each grain
from rock and take our share.
Wind back toward the lake, surface
poised under each toothed stalactite.
To still the yaw and pitch inside
your dark and beautiful skull,
I touch your hand, impress
what remains. The intangible weight,
a lighthouse in its small loneliness.

*

That my grief might render tapestry
or shroud, I write letters, recite
all the widow's prayers: I carry
your bones into winter inside
my throat, under the low note
of my voice. Blood slows then stops.
I've been told death is merciful.
When you disappeared, I tried to stay
your body in mine, to keep you
from entering the bright temple.
I hauled up the black water
to bathe you. Preparing your one
safe passage: the holding, the rocking,
the weeping, the song.



Spine

Patricia Graham

Simone Muench & Dean Rader

Dark brilliance on the river; colours drift

Dark brilliance on the river; colours drift

and drop, drift and drop, drift and die back. A
man on a journey might see this and pause
just long enough to wonder about how light
is an enigma: the sky bronzed with birds
floating in blue ether; the river flashing
its iridescence like amphibian
skin, both a channel and a charnel house.

A person can tell the same story a
thousand different ways and never mean it.
Similitude, old friend, put down your knife.
Your voyage is now underwater, enter
where the sun casts off the surface in antlers
of light, before humans wreck the river's order.

Simone Muench & Dean Rader

He understands, at once, that they are ghosts

He understands, at once, that they are ghosts—
ghosts of the frail and the bidden, of the
stretched and stalked, ghosts of the long lain, ghosts of
the leavened and lit up, ghosts of the ghosts
who play peeping tom while eating ghost loaves,
bodies rising but redacted, like nude
stockings left on the black knobs of locked doors.

Memory is the best embalming fluid
for the dead who have not begun to die,
and for those who have, foresight is no salve
because it is not the ghosts that haunt him,
it's this mummification of the living—
veins injected with ghost flowers and ghost glitz,
the heart so loaded up on blossom it rots.

Simone Muench & Dean Rader

Supposing we could just go on and on as two

Supposing we could just go on and on as two
balls in a bag, never knowing if we
are a joke or art or both, bound in blue
like two beached boats, would we still want the sea?
But who would we be if not for this lifeboat
of words? Poets are always spitting up crows
and rosebuds. It's the tragedy of rotting teeth.
All things left unsung become a seething,

like everything we've left out of this poem—
itself part ball part bag part joke part art.
Let's be frank, Reader, we're both more at home
with dick jokes than iambic pentameter.
And, yet the ocean still wants to wave and part,
while the mouth is looking for a new meter.

Janelle Rainer

What Happens

She sometimes confuses being full
with being hungry. So she stops eating.

She takes some lemon water
out on the back porch,

and she stares at the dead grass
a while. And when the water

is gone, she cracks the ice
between her back teeth.

And when the ice is gone,
she runs her tongue

across her teeth, tasting
the bitterness of what's left.

Drew S. Cook

The Solstice Approaches

That graphite overhead & this charcoal
underfoot & all those bared, black branches
raking the sky—seems a fella could take
it the wrong way, like all of the leaving

& dying that goes on, or the wet wind
dragging its paws across the lake before
pushing into your jacket, nuzzling
the soft skin underneath, or coyotes

staring you down in the long & noiseless
space between squelches of the heart, before
breaking for the fenceline, or just some kind
of something else you never guessed that you

would live without, your own pulmonary
hose-ball thriving under new management.

Headlong

So this is how the end begins.

With a stroke—not of genius or luck; an accident of the brain by way of the blood.
My mother drifts to sleep on the hospital bed. I peer over her covered toes.

Despite some cognitive deficits and confused handwriting—her pen marks on paper a Morse code of dots and lines—despite the way her fear crests when she cries, she’s only fifty-eight; the prognosis is good. *Rest*, the physician says. *Rehab. Potential full recovery.*

Which makes the next three days bearable, the waves of nurses, doctors, dieticians, therapists, the way my mother’s roommate interjects from behind her curtain. *These are Seventh-Day Adventists*, the woman says. *They don’t believe in pork or fish.* And when I tell her fish was on the menu yesterday: *It’s pork they don’t believe in, they don’t believe in pork.*

Mom can’t tie her own shoes, can’t recall the word *green*, but there’s a chance she’ll be okay. And I go sit in a bar downtown, read Robert Lowell and pray: *If God Himself had not been on our side, / If God Himself had not been on our side, / When the Atlantic rose against us why....*

I want to believe God is on our side. Shots in her stomach leave perfect purple bruises the size of dimes. A nurse cinches a white nylon strap around my mother’s waist and I hold it from behind as we pace the hospital halls. *Hold on in case she falls.* And I feel like I did when I was ten, growing up in Corpus Christi, when my parents (who were still together then) took my little brother and me to Austin, the capitol rotunda, and we rode the elevator all the way to the top, dozens of stories, and peered over the banister, all the way down to the ground floor.

Everyone but my mother, who pressed herself against the far wall for fear that if she came closer, then by some freak accident, she’d pitch, headlong, over the side.

Mom, it’s fine. You’ll be fine, I told her. Though I gripped the rail tighter then, a little tighter, thinking, *But if you’re afraid, then so am I.*

*

Note: *If God Himself had not been on our side* is from Robert Lowell’s “The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket,” which quotes from the 124th Psalm.

Darren Demaree

EMILY AS LET'S SAY WE DON'T CARE ABOUT THE MANY THINGS WE CARE ABOUT

There are no children
& Emily, your family

now speaks to each other
they way my family does

& the baseball team
that I watch every day

of the summer, the one
with the racist mascot,

they are gone too. Every
great restaurant we've

planned this life in, they're
burned down, closed because

they were incredibly
important to deciding

how to treat the other
things we love. There

are no children, no other
love or interest or wide

protectorate for us
to throw ourselves

around. How without
would we still be?

All of our friends
would be gone.

There would be
no one to judge us

if we walked away from

each other. I think,

without a net, the line
above the circus floor

would still call to me,
but then again I never

expected to die with
anything more than speed.

It would still be a pretty
great trick if, while airborne,

we held each other
between two pillars

we constructed
without any real help.



Entrance

Patricia Graham

Jose Aragonz

Theory of the Slammed Door

There is no word for the sound of a slammed door.
The space to enter collapsed to cracks of light.
Were there a word, it would be the name of one
you do not speak to anymore. Their name
 cracks around the door once used to enter.

Jose Aragonz

Theory of Grapes in a Dream

To eat grapes in a dream, means you'll be hardened with many cares.
Each curve reflects a face you know, a hand shaken,
a bottle spinning at your elbow. Asleep,
your face is the purple broken across clusters
of swallowed light. This fire looks into your eyes.

Maureen Thorson

Tempus Fugitive

Time runs away—

a guilty party,
sick with infinitives:
To do, to be,

to get out of Dodge.
To die? Not yet, not yet—
the plan's to stay

as already am, is, are,
but the past has its dogs—
they howl

back of time's shoulder
where the searchlights fan out
and all the first kisses

lie embedded in asphalt.
And what's that ahead, past
the dark hills'

humped ridges? All
the last rites. Iced into stillness,
the future's conclusion:

cessation and capture,
an infinite calm, though
in the present

confusion, time's running on.
Going, going—

Driving Out of the Woods to the Motel

□ War Game, America

Character ____ Game ____ puts the keys in the ignition. Get gas. Get a Coke. Drive past American houses, shut in their chokeweed of chickens & trash. To the highway and turn the radio up. Make a to-do list. Tuition, groceries, pin number, food stamps, and your cousins are waiting on Skype. You could get another job. You could make your wife proud. But the Walmart application has 70 questions. Does Walmart think it is the White House itself? For example, the unhappy customer comes up to you and says Walmart has bad service. Do you: A) Give the customer a form to lodge a complaint; B) Tell the customer that Walmart is understaffed today and apologize? C) Apologize and say Walmart is doing its best? Save money live better. Be a checker at the grocery. Go to the center of the weather, be a good father, be a good daughter, honor your mother, call her on Skype. You are Moe. You are Joe. You are Raki, for short. You were the best damn interpreter the soldiers ever saw. They trusted no one, but they trusted you. Live with honor. Live in God's hands. But why did they hire the other guy? Why did your child almost die but

not die when the bomb
sheared this sky upon them?



Dust

Patricia Graham

Nomi Stone

Driving Out of the Woods to the Motel

□ War Game, America

After the soldiers finish the game, neutralizing whomever they believe is a danger to the free world, my friend & I drive out together, off the highway, past a sign that says KIA. I say: “Killed-In-Action”? But. No. It is a KIA dealership, bright cars in a wide lot. As the city comes out of the gasoline haze: Days Inn; Walmart; Chick Fil-A (the woods bluing to a point), we practice for his naturalization exam. Who is the “Father of Our country?” What are the principles of American democracy? Renounce now, on oath, all prior loyalties. It is natural, friend, to want to live. How neutral you wished to be, hired to bring your country to life. No preparing for how the bomb packed with ball bearings & nails denatured the body. The acronym as it is neutered, turns blank into a lot, but how

we counted them, row
by row by row.

On the Occasion of Whatever it Was We Were So Worked Up About

Here's to the basics. The things that win games but don't stop the show, the show-continuing moments, the chorus, the genius of the bit players, because that's a kind of belief too, the God in the details, the footnotes and clerks stepping forward in the ranks, along with the rest of us who also ran, who won a few and lost a few, informed policy, the middle distance, the solid footwork, or where the line broke, indistinguishable from our twins who we faced, who broke through or were broken. Maybe a chorus or two of Carole King's "It's Too Late," because it's always too late for something, though we really did try to make it. It's my story. And probably your story, with our vested interests in having things continue, whatever our names were back then, and despite nothing much happening most days. You're at a four-way stop. Are you to look right – left –right and go? Or is it left – right – left? Or even right – left – right –left or left – right – left – right? One of these four was the correct answer to a test I took once that was going to matter. What was Newton's Second Law of forces? May you be with the force, where everything you do you keep doing, and these little details come and go like pets. And that's a problem. When you only watch highlight reels, you come to think the improbable is commonplace. The improbable goal, story, auto crash. All the little details that boil underneath us, that we barely notice, they boil so softly, "the softest bullet ever shot," as The Flaming Lips had it, these too, and perhaps, to make it symmetrical, I should say I will get along with everyone or no one, call the world to the table and say it's a good table or a bad table. Deal in some absolutes. The first time through is wonder, the second is understanding, and all the times after that are just to codify your argument. My argument is not with you but with empathy, then, or they say empathy is a difficult place to live and that most of us are only tourists there, after a long day stamping on our fingers, so we empathize a bit, and then we don't. Today I empathize with futility. The temple has enlarged, and our failures fill the rows, taking up their positions, waving their flags, really giving it their all.

John Gallaher

The 1950s Version of the Future Is Trying to Tell You Something

They say it's good to have something you can count on, but what if what you can count on is bad things happening? "Be careful what you wish for" once again, I guess, but we kind of fill in what people mean when they say it. It's another of the ways that we fail at communication while succeeding at it. Better, right, if we could communicate psychically, in the futuristic, sci-fi way. Wouldn't you like that? I mean, that would be pretty cool. How direct psychic communication wouldn't need words or organization, as the electric flashes would be brain to brain or something, one synapse here making one there go off and vice versa. And how would that go wrong, because things always go wrong. That's something you can count on. So now I imagine I'm psychically communicating with you and I think maybe what I'm saying is a joke, that I'm pulling your leg, and maybe then up goes your leg. Maybe you'd tell me psychically to take a breath and I'd automatically take a deep breath. Maybe it's best we can't do that. It's like how there's this guy in Italy recently who wanted to fix his toilet, so he dug an exploratory trench and found centuries worth of tunnels and secret rooms full of mostly broken pottery from the Messapian to the Byzantine empires. The past is communicating. And we make it say what we think it's saying. It's the last scene of Chaplin's *The Dictator*. "Speak now, it's the only chance we have" the guy with Chaplin says to him, as they're working against the fascism that they've been thrown to the top of, and so Chaplin, in his little Hitler costume gets up and makes a rousing speech to the men, telling them not to follow, but to think, to lead themselves, to rise up, and it's beautiful, it's a beautiful speech, and it rouses them, but the look on Chaplin's face as they're cheering him as one, that they're cheering as one, and that they'd follow him anywhere now, to mass graves and prison camps, whatever.



Klaus

Sarah Beth Mundy

Ana Prundaru

Constellation

Hands filling shapes out of paper

drawing sensory curves

drawing tension in

tension, the rhythm that

absorbed a

picture

(Erasure from an online relaxation script)

Before the Desert

How does a photograph sound as
it is taken from a wooden desk drawer?
Not its pine planks rolling on aluminum tracks
in the back of Miguel's office,
nor the treads of his white sneakers
as he crosses the linoleum floor
to show me one of his brothers, Rigo,
whose bones lay somewhere in the desert,
in that borderless stretch where water jugs
hide amidst the brittle shade of *nopales*.
It's a common story back in the States—
those who spend their earnings on beer,
their families never to hear from them.
But before I could even dare to ask,
'How are you sure?' Miguel said some compañeros
had called months after to tell: "He could not
walk any longer," they simply said, "And we
had to keep moving." How

does a photograph sound when it is passed
into your hands? Not the plastic gasp—
the glossy Kodak rectangle as it bends—
but the sounds of market goes outside.

He, Rigo, stands in front of a gift shop.
I know the storefront, just two blocks from here.
Pink and white stuffed bears, black-eyed puppies,
and glossy umbrellas sized for little girls
hang behind him in the showcase window.
His hands are in his pockets. Although
he seems at peace, he does not exactly smile.
He wears a white Adidas hoodie
and one of those knitted caps with the brim
turned back. How does someone look
in a photograph when he already has plans

to leave? And how does the photographer sound

when she asks her youngest son if he might pause
in the street, in front of that gift shop, just
two blocks from here, to take a picture?

And, anyhow, what do you say
as an American writer “working” here
in Guatemala, who comes from New Mexico,
who has hiked through that desert and seen
the jugs of water camouflaged in the cactus shade?
“Lo siento,” you mumble. *I feel you.*
‘I am so very sorry,’ you think in English,
and it sounds a bit

like a photograph being passed and placed back
in a desk drawer, the aluminum tracks
slide as it opens and closes.
Mostly the silence, though, and a few footsteps
from the market goers outside.

Madison Long

Woman and Child

After Chris Ware's "Disconnect"

Brown box and spilt milk
Have you seen the pink blossoms today

Well
you can't have one

You can have a dandelion though

Thank you for not drowning today
You almost drowned
before you could see the pink blossoms

That would make me look bad
I really don't want to look bad
I'm not allowed to look bad

I'm going to hem this dress for you
so we can show the world
that you didn't drown today
before seeing the pink blossoms

Caitlin Neely

Mary

The mountains eek,
bob and weave.

Magnificent: used.
Mercy: discarded.

The theme unfolds.
I divide the words in half,

tread through hymns. Open
the loss like a forest.



The Beauty of Indecision

Ernest Williamson III

Hannah Kroonblawd

The moment I recognized you

I could have asked you
to stay, told you
it was too close to sunset.
You know that I've always
been afraid of the dark,
that when I close my eyes,
I worry I won't see the stars.

But you said you needed to leave.
It was a long walk home
from the bar up the street
where I had two shots
and you had none.
I need to leave, you said.

That night I wished you dead,
then wished you back to life.
I've always been indecisive like that.
As I watched your headlights back
down the driveway, I called my dad
and told him he was right.

I should have noticed it earlier
in the way you cut bread,
poured wine, that you loved
someone else, not me.

Hannah Kroonblawd

To My Father

I dreamed of you
just after you told me
about the cancer.

You were wading
down the middle of the Mississippi;
I was watching from the shore.

I was the one
who had told you
to go into the water,

where you stood for hours,
waves up to your waist,
your face too distant to see.

It was almost winter.
The trees were bare,
but you didn't even shiver.

Afterward, when you came
to stand next to me,
you held out your hands

and gave me a piece
of the earth, all blue and brown
and soft in my palms.

But the earth was heavy.
I don't know how
you had carried it for so long.

Jake Sheff

Along the calm inertia and pewter

Someone had hung the dead willow with green dresses.
Grandma said some miracles are pranks, mainly to keep the devil

interested. Samuel wondered aloud if Grandpa's death was a prank,
and Grandma said to look out for worms in his cornbread.

Grandpa was a World War I vet and sold his medal
for the amulet that would ward off evil spirits. He slept with a US Navy

dagger wrapped in a dried-out snakeskin. He called it the devil's
condom. Samuel called it "the machine's green dress."

Ash Smith

Job Description

A processed food, a repeated sentence,
comma clouds, who couldn't
open the gold rendering of the century's bad day jobs. Whose centuries bad day jobs couldn't
render me open. The work we wore, we weren't. Secret dream to smuggle each other
out in typos.
What happens in the income of tears? Income of mountains, grass. Mountain light.
Income of the mountains of negotiating child care.
What happens in the income of the word you would have said before this one? Who render
me golden with good words atramentous nights. Who render me afterward
atramentous. The child sleeps. I've wiped the honey from his eyes.
Come into my house mosquitoes. With your direct nature. Who repeat me least digitally in
the outer sphere. Like a word I wore once, were once, once.

Stephen Frech

The Depressive Longs for Sleep

You sit a long time
in a theatre's dark house waiting,
uncertain if the performance has ended,
the stage and back lights cut
so abruptly to black.
The ponderous, dark curtains close, their break
obscured in heavy folds.

Backstage, dancers enter a swimming pool slowly,
lowering themselves in naked,
their nipples sharp in silhouette.
The water pulses with ripples,
a liquid circle swimming with exhausted dancers
like the moon.

Andrew Collard

Bare Earth

our ghosts fray in the doorway
the weight of the superfluous
no longer busying our vision

narrowing
from the immanence of stars
and the hurtling

of our pinwheel Earth
your shoes
removed your dress

removed there's no more world
beyond these walls
the veil of what we aren't

into stillness
like unseen crickets

a moonlit street
when a kitchen
light goes on

we're here as if we couldn't be
the thread that knots us
impossible to un-trace

I am with you
stripped of slogans
tag-less

playing on sheets
like picnics in the grass
apples and chocolate on a tin plate

doing little movements
in a room without a clock
stretching toward

each other
until there's only us

Contributors

Isaac Anderson has written for *Image*, *Portland*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and other venues. He received an MFA from Ohio State and was the 2012 Writer-in-Residence at Lenoir-Rhyne University. His essay “Lord God Bird” received honorable mention in *Best American Essays*, 2013. He lives in Kansas City.

Jose Araguz is a CantoMundo fellow and winner of *Rhino Poetry*’s 2015 Editor’s Prize. He has had poems recently in *Prairie Schooner*, *Borderlands*, and *The Laurel Review*. He is pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing and Literature at the University of Cincinnati. Author of *Reasons (not) to Dance*, a chapbook of microcuento style short prose, he runs the poetry blog *The Friday Influence*.

Erica Brunner is an MFA student at the New School where she studies poetry. Previous publications include *The Monarch Review*, *The Portland Review*, *Snail Mail Review*, and *Eleven and a Half*. She grew up in Seattle, WA and the Pacific Northwest greatly informs her work.

Andrew Collard lives in Madison Heights, MI, and attends Western Michigan University’s MFA program. Recent poems can be found online at *Rattle*, *Five Quarterly*, and *Rust & Moth*. He co-edits *SiDEKiCK*, a poetry journal.

Drew S. Cook grew up in the hills of western Arkansas and found that, no matter where he went, the hills went, too. After a decades-long break from the arts, which he spent discovering whiskey and printer repair, Drew now pursues an MFA in Creative Writing at The University of Central Arkansas. His work has appeared in *Heron Tree* and *Pleiades*.

Darren Demaree the author of *As We Refer To Our Bodies* (2013, 8th House), *Temporary Champions* (2014, Main Street Rag), *The Pony Governor* (2015, After the Pause Press), and *Not For Art Nor Prayer* (2015, 8th House). He is the Managing Editor of the *Best of the Net Anthology*. He currently lives and writes in Columbus, Ohio with his wife and children.

J. P. Dancing Bear is editor for the *American Poetry Journal* and Dream Horse Press. Bear also hosts the weekly hour-long poetry show, *Out of Our Minds*, on public station, KKUP and available as podcasts. He is the author of fourteen collections of poetry, most recently, *Cephalopodic* (Glass Lyre Press, 2015), and *Love is a Burning Building* (FutureCycle Press, 2014). His work has appeared or will shortly in *American Literary Review*, *Crazyhorse*, the *DIAGRAM* and elsewhere.

Stephen Frech has earned degrees from Northwestern University, Washington University in St. Louis, and the University of Cincinnati. He has published three volumes of poetry: *Toward Evening and the Day Far Spent* (Kent State University Press), *If Not For These Wrinkles of Darkness* (White Pine Press, 2001), and *The Dark Villages of Childhood* (Midwest Writing Center, 2009). His fourth volume titled *A Palace of Strangers is No City*, a sustained narrative of prose poetry/flash fiction, has been published by Cervena Barva Press in 2011. In 2012, he published a translation of poetry from the Dutch: Menno Wigman's *Zwart als kaviaar/Black as Caviar*. He is founder and editor of Oneiros Press, publisher of limited edition, letterpress poetry broadsides. Oneiros broadsides have been purchased by special collections libraries around the world, among them the Newberry Library (Chicago), the Beinecke Library at Yale, and the University of Amsterdam Print Collection. Stephen Frech is Associate Professor of English at Millikin University.

John Gallaher's most recent books are *In a Landscape* (BOA, 2014) and, as editor, *Time Is a Toy: the Selected Poems of Michael Benedikt* (with Laura Boss, Akron, 2014). He lives in rural Missouri and co-edits *The Laurel Review*.

Meg Johnson is the author of the full length poetry collection, *Inappropriate Sleepover* (The National Poetry Review Press, 2014) which was a NewPages Editor's Pick. Her second book, *The Crimes of Clara Turlington*, won the 2015 Vignette Collection Award and is forthcoming from Vine Leaves Press. Her poems have appeared in *Hobart*, *Nashville Review*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Sugar House Review*, *Verse Daily*, and others. Meg started dancing at a young age and worked professionally in the performing arts for many years. She is the editor of *Dressing Room Poetry Journal* and received her MFA in creative writing from the NEOMFA Program. She is currently a lecturer at Iowa State University. Her website is: megjohnson.org and she blogs at: megjohnsonmegjohnson.blogspot.com

Rio Jones' work has been featured on *The Huffington Post*, *Poetry.org* and *Aplus.com*. He is currently writing from the town of Nahuala, Guatemala.

Hannah Kroonblawd is an MFA candidate in Poetry at Oregon State University. She has taught middle schoolers in China, sailed the lakes of Minnesota, and her poems have been published in *The St. Paul Almanac*, *Potpourri*, and *Rust+Moth*.

Madison Long resides in Vancouver, British Columbia where she can be seen wearing red lipstick and contemplating life. She has a master's degree in switching her major and is currently studying acting and continuing writing. If she had to pick a song to sing in front of a live audience, it's a three way tie between "Stand Up," by Ludacris, "Life on Mars?" by David Bowie, and "There Is a Light That Never Goes Out," by The Smiths.

Ruth Madievsky, in 2015, was the winner of *CutBank* Literary Magazine's Patricia Goedicke Prize for Poetry, judged by Matt Rasmussen, and *Beyond Baroque's* Poetry Contest, judged by David St. John. Her work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Gulf Coast*, *Rattle*, *West Branch*, *ZYZZYVA*, and elsewhere. She is the author of a poetry collection, *Emergency Brake*, which was named Tavern Books' 2015-2016 Wrolstad Contemporary Poetry Series selection and is forthcoming in January 2016.

Simone Muench is the author of five full-length books including *Orange Crush* (Sarabande, 2010) and *Wolf Centos* (Sarabande, 2014). Her chapbook *Trace* received the Black River Award (BLP, 2014). She is a recipient of a 2013 NEA fellowship and the 2014 Meier Foundation for the Arts Achievement Award. She serves as faculty advisor for *Jet Fuel Review*, and currently collaborates with Dean Rader on a book titled *Frankenstein Sonnets*.

Caitlin Neely is an MFA candidate at the University of Virginia. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *DIAGRAM*, *THRUSH Poetry Journal*, *Sixth Finch* and *Devil's Lake*. She is the founder of The MFA Years.

Susannah Nevison is the author *Teratology*, published by Persea Books in 2015, and the recipient of the 2014 Lexi Rudnitsky First Book Prize in Poetry. Her honors include the 2014 Patricia Aakhus Prize from *Southern Indiana Review*, the 2013 American Literary Review poetry prize, an Academy of American Poets / Larry Levis prize, and a recent Pushcart Prize nomination. Her poems, criticism, and essays have appeared in *Ninth Letter*, *Sycamore Review*, *New Orleans Review*, *The Rumpus* and elsewhere. She is a current doctoral student at the University of Utah, where she also teaches.

Ana Prundaru lives a stone's throw away from the birthplace of milk chocolate. Her work has been included in *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *Wilderness House*, *Vagabond Journey*, *Kyoto Journal*, *Litro* and elsewhere. Find her at www.anaprundaru.com.

Janelle Rainer is a 25-year-old poet, painter, and community college teacher living in Spokane, Washington. Her recent work has appeared in *Harpur Palate*, *The Louisville Review*, *Oddball Magazine*, *Atticus Review*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, *HASH the Mag*, *POPLORISH*, and elsewhere. Her paintings can be viewed at JanelleRainerArt.com. She earned an MFA in Poetry from Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon.

Dean Rader's *Works & Days*, won the 2010 T. S. Eliot Prize, and *Landscape Portrait Figure Form* (2014) was a *Barnes & Noble Review* Best Poetry Book of the Year. He is the editor of *99 Poems for the 99 Percent: An Anthology of Poetry* and the winner of the 2015 George Bogin Award from the Poetry Society of America. A new collection, *Self-Portrait as Wikipedia Entry*, is forthcoming in 2016 from Copper Canyon. He is a professor at The University of San Francisco, and he collaborates with Simone Muench on a book titled *Frankenstein Sonnets*.

Jake Sheff is a pediatrician in the USAF, married to a Corri whom he produced a modern Maddie with. They, in turn, were adopted by four animals. His home is in southern California. Poems of Jake's are in *Danse Macabre*, *Apollo's Lyre*, and elsewhere. A volume of his was published, *Looting Versailles*. He considers life an impossible sit-up, but plausible.

Ash Smith is the author of *Water Shed* (Dos Press 2008), *Come Such Frequency* (Dusie 2010), *Pigeon of Tears* (2012), and various projects & ephemera as well as the forthcoming collection *Drivers Hands* (Further Other Book Works). She lives in Austin, Texas where she is pickling limes.

Nomi Stone is the author of the poetry collection *Stranger's Notebook* (TriQuarterly, 2008), an MFA Candidate in Poetry at Warren Wilson College and a PhD Candidate in Cultural Anthropology at Columbia University. She earned a Masters in Modern Middle Eastern Studies from Oxford and was a Creative Writing Fulbright scholar in Tunisia. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *Guernica*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Blackbird*, *Memorious*, *Plume*, *Drunken Boat*, and elsewhere. She has received grants from the Vermont Studio Center and the DC Commission for the Arts and Humanities, and lived in Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Jordan. She is currently working on *Kill Class*, a collection based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork she conducted within combat simulations in mock Middle Eastern villages erected by the US military across America.

Maureen Thorson is the author of two books of poetry, *My Resignation* (Shearsman 2014) and *Applies to Oranges* (Ugly Duckling Presse 2011). Her most recent chapbook is *The Woman, The Mirror, the Eye*, just out from Bloof Books. She lives in Washington, DC.