



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 but ask the writer to notify us immediately about an acceptance elsewhere.

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Traci Brimhall	
Temptation in the Wilderness, a Bastard Ghazal	7
The Snake Handler, A Bastard Ghazal	9
 Ashley Roach-Freiman	
self-portrait with arson	10
self portrait with fur	11
 Morgan Ashcom	
from <i>What The Living Carry</i>	13
 Carl Phillips	
If You Will, I Will	15
 Justin Runge	
Forecast.....	17
 Adam Clay	
For a Piano Never Played	19
Elegy For What's Split Into Four Parts.....	20
 Nicholas Gulig.....	
From "Orient"	22
 Kennsington Leverne.....	
from <i>Irregularities</i>	23

Tatiana Ryckman.....	
YOLO.....	24
Pro Life	25
 Jordan Stempleman	
from "Off Days"	26
From "Off Days"	30
 Amanda James.....	
from <i>Sweet Little Lies</i>	29
 Shaun Turner.....	
An Evening Appointment	33
 Chen Chen	
In the Hospital	35
 Vivian Calderón Bogoslavsky.....	
Two Paintings	36
 F. LaManna.....	
A Sonnet to the Goddess Aeternitas Chubby chaussures froufrous en colere.....	38
 Robert Long Foreman	
You Can Do With It Whatever You Want.....	39

F. Daniel Rzicznek	
<i>from Leafmold</i>	42
Steve Klepetar	
<i>Inside the gun</i>	43
Noel Camardo	
<i>from Strange Birds</i>	44
A.R. ZARIF	
<i>All the locals in Seattle</i>	45
Melissa Fite Johnson	
<i>Linger</i>	46
Rhiannon Dickerson	
<i>[16 degrees this morning]</i>	47
Joseph Harrington	
<i>Hew</i>	48
Sarah Kayß	
<i>Two Photographs</i>	49
Lisa Ortiz	
<i>It Snowed</i>	51

Stephen Dunn	
<i>Masculine</i>	52
Sam Rasmussen	
<i>Quiet Now</i>	54
Travis Cebula	
<i>Like a Bird, Bullet, or Arrow</i>	55
Alison Palmer	
<i>Angle of Divergence</i>	57
Bill Wolak	
<i>Three Collages</i>	58
Dennis Hinrichsen	
<i>[ambulance] [linen] [nightmare]</i>	61
Monica Youn	
<i>Sunrise: Foley Square</i>	64
<i>The Renaissance</i>	65
<i>Sundeck</i>	67
Contributors	68

TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS, A BASTARD GHAZAL

TRACI BRIMHALL

Blasphemy isn't a bad beginning. I became myth
when I wanted Him to say: *I love you most, Lucifer.*

As if a being of light could ever not also be God,
as if Venus had a choice in being the morning star.

As if click beetles in a black field could find
each other without their bodies' blinking luciferin.

As if the lovers in a cave could see each other
without the glimmer of the glow worm's luciferase

making green petroglyphs in dayless spaces—that
stone, those beings of clay, lit by a fireless light.

With this camouflage/attraction/warning system,
a body can say what it needs to without the sun.

Don't you ever wonder why he asked you to suffer
for him? He stays in the milk-and-honey glisten

of heaven and makes a meat of you. It's scary
as hell to be chosen, singled out as light-bringer.

Take the love and the fear that makes it possible.
A man is a unit of power. A god is a unit of fire.

All this could be yours—this kingdom, this breath
and bloody pulse, that city on the hill, the shining one.

Be mine. I would never ask you to die for anyone,
my little anglerfish, my sweet squid, darling firefly.

THE SNAKE HANDLER, A BASTARD GHAZAL

TRACI BRIMHALL

She has eight tattoos of apples. Ink ripens and rots,
each one needled into bitten skin—Cameo, Fuji, Jazz.

I feed them plenty, they just can't help themselves, cottonmouths
excited by the unwounded flesh of the Pink Ladies.

She peels up her hem to show her hip—bone curve of sex
and cradle—to show where a rattlesnake struck her Gala.

She removes a snakeskin boot to reveal knots of seeds
wet with spit, the gnawed core of the original Red Delicious.

That one hurt like a bitch, bone and teeth and needle.
She unbuttons and points to one over her heart—Rome.

Sighing, she speaks of the luck of Cleopatra, death
on her breast, a hot and hungry mouth, asps and Empire.

Behold, I give unto you power—Hell is what you're afraid you are
according to the Gospel of copperheads and Jonathans.

The strength of her faith tests her calf with its tongue.
She closes her eyes imagining what God, what apple.

SELF-PORTRAIT WITH ARSON

ASHLEY ROACH-FREIMAN

The thing on my mind is duplicity /
the two sides of a playing card. My mind bisects / a branch on fire.

Maybe if I could speak with words
instead of a smoldering house.

The moon calls me sometimes /
it says *hang up and run*.

The moon wears a complicated perfume /
wood grass and smoke.

You slippery twin.
You always get away from me.

You say *watch the world burn*.
You turn on the neon light.

But look: blue curtains edged
in a delicate lacework of ash.

SELF PORTRAIT WITH FUR

ASHLEY ROACH-FREIMAN

Still trying to understand
what it means to be still

with what it is to touch
each living thing & say *mine*.

To look at my good man & say
I have a good man.

He waters the cabbages
& pinches the little caterpillars.

We lie in the bed
we make & sometimes we lie deep

in our anger. Sometimes I put my finger
on a flea bite & bleed & sometimes the itch

slips away. Living things are slippery
& I am a living thing. I can hardly

believe my own body - jellyfish, cardinal,
rabbit hide. Animal grace bright along the body.

Still trying to understand what it means
to be still, to look at my man & say *mine*.

He watches the little caterpillars & lights
with fingers my slippery hide. What is it

to be true, to touch every living thing,
flea & bleed, slip & itch. Still & not still.

Road, wire, bed, floor. Everything
will drop & seed. I can hardly believe

my rabbit hide body, itchy slip hide, still trying
to be with cardinal, be still with waiting,

have a good heart, lie in the blood bed,
and say *mine, mine*.



MORGAN ASHCOM



MORGAN ASHCOM

IF YOU WILL, I WILL

CARL PHILLIPS

To each his own urgency. I've spent this morning clearing
best as I can the strange pornography that last night's
storms made of the trees in the yard: oak and pear branches
everywhere; of the saplings, one broken, the other in need
of re-tying—its roots meanwhile, where the topsoil's gotten
washed away, left exposed to a spring that, not yet done settling
in, can't be trusted. I like a wreckage I can manage myself,
the chance it offers for that particular version of power
that comes from winnowing cleanly the lost from the still
salvageable, not erasing disorder exactly, but returning
order to a fair footing, at least, beside a wilderness I wouldn't
live without. I've got this friend—I guess you could call him that—
who worries I'll never stop courting recklessness—his
word for it—as a way of compensating for or maybe making
room, where there should

be no room, for something torn
inside. Who can say if that's right? After a life of no signs
of it, he's found faith, and wants to know if I'm ready, finally,
to—as, again, he puts it—put my hand in the Lord's. For
the ancient Greeks—though others, too, must have thought this—
the gods were compelled most by rhythm, that's why ritual
was so important, the patterning of it, rhythm's lost
without pattern. I don't doubt that the gods—if that's
what you want to call whatever happens in this world, or

doesn't, or not as you hoped, or hoped for once it wouldn't—
seem as likely as any of us to be distracted by rhythm into
turning from one thing toward something else, but if what
comes in return is the gods' briefly full attention, though
magisterial at first, maybe—well, good luck dealing
with that. As when

intimacy seems nothing more, anymore, than
a form of letting what's been simple enough become difficult,
because now less far. Or as when, looking into a mirror,
I've looked closer still, and seen the rest that I'd missed earlier:
fierce regret, with its flames for fingers, hope as the not-so-
dark holdover from the dark before... Despite our differences,
we agree about most things, my friend and I, or let's say it
gets harder for me, as the years go by, to know for sure
he's wrong... It's like a game between us. He says my
moods are like the images any burst of starlings makes
against an open sky, before flying away. say either no one's
listening, this late, or else anyone is. You've changed, he says,
getting slowly dressed again. You don't know me, I say, I say back.

FORECAST

JUSTIN RUNGE

Everything is legless,
trapezoidal, traveling.

Night provides a few
feet below its smoke.

Drivers use their knees,
tend to buttoned things.

The meteorologist
calls it a square dance.

Counts the seconds
from thunder to bolt.

Weather is blackening.
It shakes out its knives.

Kids and kites take cover.
You ask for lightning.

The runaways end up
somewhere terrifying.

Sometimes, you just need
to hear a voice in song.

FOR A PIANO NEVER PLAYED

ADAM CLAY

With the possibility of music still remotely existing,
the mind goes to the back reaches of a warehouse
where anything can be forgotten, but perhaps
instead it was lost to the Atlantic like the rest
of the El Faro, the water filling the shipping container,
or what if (you imagine) the container resisted the rush
of water and what of the pressure from the depth,
breaking the strings eventually over time, a strange
song all to itself, yes, but still a song? How amazing
to think of the neurons that guide our thoughts,
the mystery of an image and its source like some kind
of god gone reckless with sense. We may not be the music
or the piano, but we are able to imagine ruin with just
as much force or promise as the simple act of loss itself.

ELEGY FOR WHAT'S SPLIT INTO FOUR PARTS

ADAM CLAY

Why one day in the future
When right now
You can imagine a painting
In reverse, the careful movement

Of color stitched slowly away
To white? In any beginning
We shouldn't take issue
With what's to come unless

Of course we want the mind
To derail into a place free
Of worry, a shallow
Body of water at first,

But deepening eventually
Into an expansive reach
Toward an island of rock
Occupied only by a lighthouse

Emptied out years ago but back
On the sand looking out toward
The light, your body overcome
By the urgency to drift off

While standing up, the waves
Too slow to carry anything away,
Too slow for any northern light
To find its way to the bottom.

FROM “ORIENT”

NICHOLAS GULIG

23.]

Dear ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~

Now that union is impossible, love is not its madness severed loudly like an enemy. Here and there, the spirit clings to what's intact. Whatever thing you are, it is due to being next to Being, notorious in public, never spared. If I as you could only make it known, the field of noise between us like a century, a continent if such a fact or face is possible, than chance exists, an exit opened inward toward the center an other, and we are ignorant together, stranger, or else, like light a desert lives within the inconsistent edges of, our lives electrically pronounce themselves to nothing. Let the argument sustain us, sanction time by fleeting past the frames our edges make around the act of making like a cage. No one carries us. The field is formed and formed again by opposites. Bias, be a habitat. The future isn't bombed.



KENSINGTON LEVERNE

YOLO

TATIANA RYCKMAN

Don't you also want to pretend this doesn't exist this flitting about of children's hearts on the frozen stoop where we used to listen to planes falling in the distance like stars outliving their purpose or Science or maybe we didn't understand it at all maybe it was just the beginning of The Transformation we are all approaching with bodies that descend in straight quick lines like telephone wires toward Earth just waiting for the whatever comes next

PRO LIFE

TATIANA RYCKMAN

My attitude toward food has changed, that is to say it may be the same. I may be more motivated or as motivated by food as ever. For example, I am willing to peel myself off of the couch because I know the ice cream will not eat itself. I have an obligation to help the nouns around me achieve their destiny, and it's good to have purpose. Maybe that's what's changed—this sense that my surroundings need me, not the other way around. Rather than longing to bleed to death in the shower, lady bic dangling from loose fingertips, I choose life. Because the pizza is growing cold and needs me to discover its calling, the lights are lonely without me to turn them on, and maybe my boyfriend, too. I feel like the phrase *nothing is for free*. Like I am the phrase. Like I am showing up, I am punching the time clock and contributing to the ideal of dependence. If it weren't for me what would China do with all its pants and cell phone chargers? Just imagine if I had a pet—maybe you know what I mean; maybe all of our shit is just pet enough to keep us up at night, alive and in the world reaching our full potential, wondering what the world would be without us.

FROM “OFF DAYS”

JORDAN STEMPLEMAN

I wished I wasn't so sealed off from the moment of review.

I also wished I watched you sleep more

than I do, watch you all sleep more than we do.

I'm dazzled again by all the breakups of the day:

The lights are bright. Do I want one? Do I want another?

How often do I mash against something and stick?

The cardinal outside looks beautiful

but sounds like a mess. The fruit flies

finally look sick, circling my face,

trying their very best to leave the world

as viciously as possible. Trillions and trillions of

vinegar deaths.

When the window was still somehow left open
and the temperatures dropped, I could've sat listening
longer than I ever knew possible to tree fucking
holding on to wind and wind holding onto tree, but instead
the lousiest art studies
at this weird, dumbed down distance,
the whole time thinking it poked through
luxury, only buried and still lost
spending a god damned fortune far from home.
My best attention came last night when I helped my son
pull his dry clean underwear over his thighs,
ass wet from the shower.
There was some kind of discussion about difficulty,
the kind that you notice as it's happening
the kind you can feel passing away so it stays glorious

and light, owned, really, to a point, and then given back
to the undergrowth that blooms quiet one day into shock.
I watered the flowers out front,
thought nothing more than holding his waistband still,
watching his legs and arms struggle
to finally make himself comfortable, and then winter
and how these flowers he planted months ago
will soon be gone.
I think I'm making sense now.



AMANDA JAMES

FROM “OFF DAYS”

JORDAN STEMPELMAN

Last night I dreamt you were entirely

in love and annoyed with me

at the same time.

You were using one of those hand crank mixers

with the two spinning bulbs,

and every few seconds

you'd pull the mixer out of the batter, fling batter

onto the side of my face, smile at me

and say, You're like nothing I've ever known!

Stop doing that! Stop doing that! Stop doing that!

Eventually my entire face was buried

in batter. My eyes were buried into my head

so you looked so far away.

I kept trying to tell you about Joseph Beuys

and the dead rabbit in his lap

and how I'd hold you like that rabbit

and how you would hold onto me like that rabbit

when the time came to do so.

But the batter kept coming and coming

until you had no more batter left.

And after you looked down into the empty bowl,

you placed your hands against my face

and peeled away the batter

and slung it to the floor saying,

never again will we victimize goodness

alone or in person.

I watched you until I came through again.

I watched you until I was free

to return to you changed and shared in memory.

AN EVENING APPOINTMENT

SHAUN TURNER

Our therapist doesn't have a receptionist. You'd tell me that its because our appointments are so late, but we have never seen one. She just keeps a clipboard on this shitty Formica ledge, but when we sign in, she must hear the faint scratching of pen against paper—she knows it is us—and she comes running.

We give her the check, tell her that we haven't been sleeping.

In the nightmare, we are six. Our therapist, wearing a white lace dress, stands next to our childhood bed. She pulls our hand and drags us through a trapdoor concealed in the panels of our closet ceiling. Once we are on the trailer's roof, our therapist opens her arms wide and says, all of this can be yours.

In the nightmare, it is always thundering. Rain drives against the aluminum roof—a coin sound—but we never get wet, even though our therapist is drenched.

How she smiles at us. She tells us that dreams aren't supposed to make sense, that they are anxieties, figments.

We don't tell her how when we wake up we climb out our bedroom window to the fire escape. We climb from tread to worn tread up the thin ladder to stand on the tenement roof. This city is far from home—its old water tanks glisten from the streets, the lights fuzzy in the tinny falling raindrops.

We don't tell her how, when we stand on the edge and look down, we see the cars and men like toys until we feel the spread of wind against some great black wings.

IN THE HOSPITAL

CHEN CHEN

My mother was in the hospital & everyone wanted to be my friend.
But I was busy making a list: good dog, bad citizen, short
skeleton, tall mocha. Typical Tuesday.
My mother was in the hospital & no one wanted to be her friend.
Everyone wanted to be soft cooing sympathies. Very reasonable
pigeons. No one had the time & our solution to it
was to buy shinier watches. We were enamored with
what our wrists could declare. My mother was in the hospital
& I didn't want to be her friend. Typical son. Tall latte, short tale,
bad plot, great wifi in the atypical café. My mother was in the hospital
& she didn't want to be her friend. She wanted to be the family
grocery list. Low fat yogurt, firm tofu. She didn't trust my father
to be it. *You always forget something*, she said, *even when*
I do the list for you. Even then.



VIVIAN CALDERÓN BOGOSLAVSKY



VIVIAN CALDERÓN BOGOSLAVSKY

A SONNET TO THE GODDESS AETERNITAS CHUBBY CHAUSSURES FROUFROUS EN COLERE

FLAMANNA

Just a glance would almost suffice to galvanize the pouring out of the salty juice
Came it a time where they need not know how to compel an action from hence
Pausing the idiom to fight along the ways of the meandering causeway was a chance
Eternity knew what bounds could hale from a splitting pair of shoes way too loose
Pushing along the motions were not a consequence for her to sail on over a fence
Who did that motion mention for the woman to counter argue the moment to prance

A democracy is far too wild a commonplace urgency for the animals to peter out
This defense cannot approach a momentous holler it flips onto a couch yes resting
Pushing the ideals with an accent and lisp not agreeable to flounder like a bear
The people will not know the ancient verve of the yelling teeming while hives shout
Aiming to control the fantasies of the chubby inside and out for a quiet sure testing
Completely felt the tortuous plunging angry red pathological only white blank chair

YOU CAN DO WITH IT WHATEVER YOU WANT

ROBERT LONG FOREMAN

There wasn't much that Weird Pig was afraid of, only a few specific things he could name, when asked. Flying bullets made the list, as did nuclear war.

There were things he wasn't afraid of, exactly, but which could make him squirm or recoil. He didn't like heights and bugs, but he wouldn't have said he was afraid of either thing, not exactly. He just didn't like them.

He had reasonable, everyday fears, like his fear of getting run over by one car then another as his carcass lay rotting under the country sun until the road crew finally came to scrape his body up and haul it away. All pigs had that fear.

It wasn't a fear, exactly, but Weird Pig was host to a parasitical sense of dread that jaundiced his mornings and sleepless nights. He would lie awake on his straw and wish he could be struck by lightning: something to give him a jolt of some kind; something that would mean something in his life had changed, even if it was for the much, much worse.

Weird Pig started setting fires. Not big ones, not at first. They started small, and he never intended for them to grow like they did, though if he'd been honest with himself he

would have admitted that growing was pretty much the only thing fires did, aside from being put out and turning things to ash. Growth of a fire is as inevitable as growth of a pig.

He didn't mean to burn down the house of the widow Emma Trombley. He'd never met her, and hardly knew that her house was there. But there was brush that ran up against the house, and dry grass on the other side of that for a stretch of probably twenty feet, and at the end of that was a book of matches Weird Pig ignited and threw on a pile of gas-soaked logs with fireworks underneath them, which he'd put there, carrying it with a blank face from the bed of his pickup and arranging it with great care, as if it were not a pile of things he wanted to set on fire.

Weird Pig meant nothing by it. It wasn't a statement of political protest. He had nothing against the logs and fireworks. He just liked to watch things burn. If one thing led to another, it was just a chain reaction. It was scientific.

On the roof of the nearby retirement home, Weird Pig ignited an old TV. He'd taken it up there to throw a Molotov cocktail at it. He'd put two other Molotovs inside the TV already, behind the glass of the screen, which broke when he threw the first Molotov.

The whole thing exploded. Weird Pig laughed and laughed, and squealed as he fled the scene down the fire escape and back to the woods out of which he'd carried the 40 oz.

bottles and big can of gasoline. Molotov cocktails, said Weird Pig later, are the easiest things in the world to make.

It wasn't as if anyone in the retirement home had died. They had lost their homes, but they were going to lose them soon anyway. Weird Pig watched from a safe distance as the ambulance crews evacuated the aged residents from the building on stretchers. Most of them had no more than five years left to live, he said aloud, from behind a tree, talking only to himself.

You just pour in the gasoline. That's what Weird Pig said at the barn, to his friends, the animals, the next night and the night after that. You make sure it's a bottle you're putting it in, or else it's not a Molotov. You just pour in the gas. Enough gas, mind you. Stuff in a rag. Simple. You can do with it whatever you want.

FROM LEAFMOLD

F. DANIEL RZICZNEK

Nonrebellion: history is about who you are as it is happening, not *what's* happening. Hold your open bottle up to the moon and watch the level sway—the world being a euchre deck and you are the jack of diamonds waiting anxiously to be claimed. You are the nine of clubs, forgetting the day. Next, the queen of hearts walking barefoot into the room after a bad dream. It lands here—you sleep. Always, the urge to finish—the bowl of berries, the ornaments in boxes, the oblong potatoes darkening in the oven: clouds at sunset. I sit in the cell of my office and read into exile—Chinese, French, even American. The squares of the living room rug no longer comfort. My aspiration is to be on no one's mind, to face west on a shelf and bet everything on *you*. I went to the river today and waded deeply until I felt the current nearly take me—then I backed off. *I found it*. There was a day in a cut cornfield when my brother winged a goose and it came down running. In the chase's panic, I fired—my brother, downfield, heard the shot tatter the stalks and earth behind him. The line became very stark—the limit wholly luminous. *I found it, I found it. I'm so sorry.*

INSIDE THE GUN

STEVE KLEPETAR

there's another
gun and inside
that, another
and a tiny gunman
wrapped in a flag
and an angel
with a mouth
that swallows cities
and a cavern
filling with sea
and a whale
with its dorsal fin on fire



NOEL CAMARDO

ALL THE LOCALS IN SEATTLE

A.R. ZARIF

will tell you to take the ferry to Bainbridge
instead of Bremerton if you ask

Bainbridge is lovely and quaint
but the ferry ride itself is half an hour
and so boring the man on
the bus tells us go to Bremerton
and as soon as you get there turn right
around and get back on the ferry
Bremerton is very boring but the trip
is an hour long each way and lovely

on the eight dollar to Bremerton
I lay down on the long padded benches
and sleep next to the window
and take no advantage of the view

but for the slow yearning of the skin
of the ocean that sings in between the
crushes of air that come down like hands
to meet the water with sunlight running
in through the breaks which I close my eyes to

LINGER

MELISSA FITE JOHNSON

I never want to leave where I am
even if where I am is the dentist's office.
I get all cozy on the soft couch with a magazine
waiting to sign insurance papers,
and nothing else matters.

Once I get to, say, the video store
I won't want to leave there either,

even though after the video store
is home: my husband, dinner made, our dog's
breath on my hand, backyard chickens
bobbing rotten apples beyond the kitchen window,
a good book, another couch.

Even when that waits, I'm content
to spend hours winding lazy figure 8's through aisles,
reading: Alaskan wilderness, five students
with nothing in common, Woodsboro murders,
meet cute on a train in Austria.

[16 DEGREES THIS MORNING]

RHIANNON DICKERSON

16 degrees this morning. Thursday. Mid-November. The kind of cold that makes you more aware of your aliveness. The earth is a landscape that easily dismisses you. There are too many places to hide. You'll go to your mother's house to make her breakfast, and while you are there you'll make her dinner. Try to find something to talk about other than her cancer other than her chemo other than how she slept last night or how she feels this morning. You will not ask. You remain silent because you don't know the way from here. You bought a recording device so you can keep your mother's voice, so she can tell you her stories. You will want them. Your children and grandchildren will want them. At 53 she is the oldest person left on that side of your family. When you take her to the doctor's appointments every week, you push her in a wheelchair.

HEW

JOSEPH HARRINGTON

Like people, not all stones
are living: being means
listening to outside light,
when words wait for what
wants to be said in storied
space: a rock might
mean a soul, a blank face
divided by syntax, as light
tries to tell us, feeling nigh,
what dark matter makes it.



SARAH KAYß



SARAH KAYß

IT SNOWED

LISA ORTIZ

All night we slept
intertwined in sheets

& when we woke
the world had dressed

herself in silver scarves
and pins of ice,

owl wings, aspen bark,
mute paths and branches.

astonishment that hushed
our flurried tongues—

every particle of us nude
& falling from the sky.

MASCULINE

STEPHEN DUNN

One day after hunting season,
my dog Blue and I walk in snow
amid deer prints and tracks
hunters have left. An orange bandanna
adorns his neck. I've got on
my St. Louis Cardinals cap.
I'm taking no chances, thinking
where certain men gather, isn't there
always someone still drunk
or holding a grudge or hating a law?
Of course I'm a man, too,
often prone to forget or deny
I'm complicit in most things
my kind do or have done.
Blue is checking out what appears
to be fox scat, when a shot rings out.
He cringes, then does something pathetic
with his tail, and suddenly I value
having pants, able to conceal
what tends to shrivel from fear.
The oaks are creaking in the cold.
The wind is playing a silent dirge.
But that's it; no other shot or sign
of man, or fallen deer. Blue leads

the way back, turning now and then
to see if I'm the man he thinks I am.

QUIET NOW

SAM RASMUSSEN

A reclusive brain offends none while the golden ratio occurs all around you are
silhouetted trees thinking is that a statement or a question Because things get confusing
without punctuation The same way nothing feels right without closure—closer—the birds
are singing now earlier than usual Glistening beings birds may be the last innocent thing we
have left All inside out again, listening to the concussive music ramble on Telling stories
rarely understood but often insightful Packs of cigarettes strewn all over the floors—
reminders of stress, yellow teeth, or just being bored early in the morning

LIKE A BIRD, BULLET, OR ARROW

TRAVIS CEBULA

for the aggrieved
a flock of black
geese scissors through
the white flannel of October
snow

or

a pair of black scissors flies
through the white flannel
of an old frock

or

a fluff of white hair floats
through an unlit
room to her marital bed

or

a puff of wind cuts
milkweed
from the night's last caterpillar

or

this shard of soap boils
to stone
& hangs in darkness

or

this accumulation of years
sinks home for this Mother
or this Mother is not that Mother
of yore
is not the grandmother nor your
Mother my mother remembers

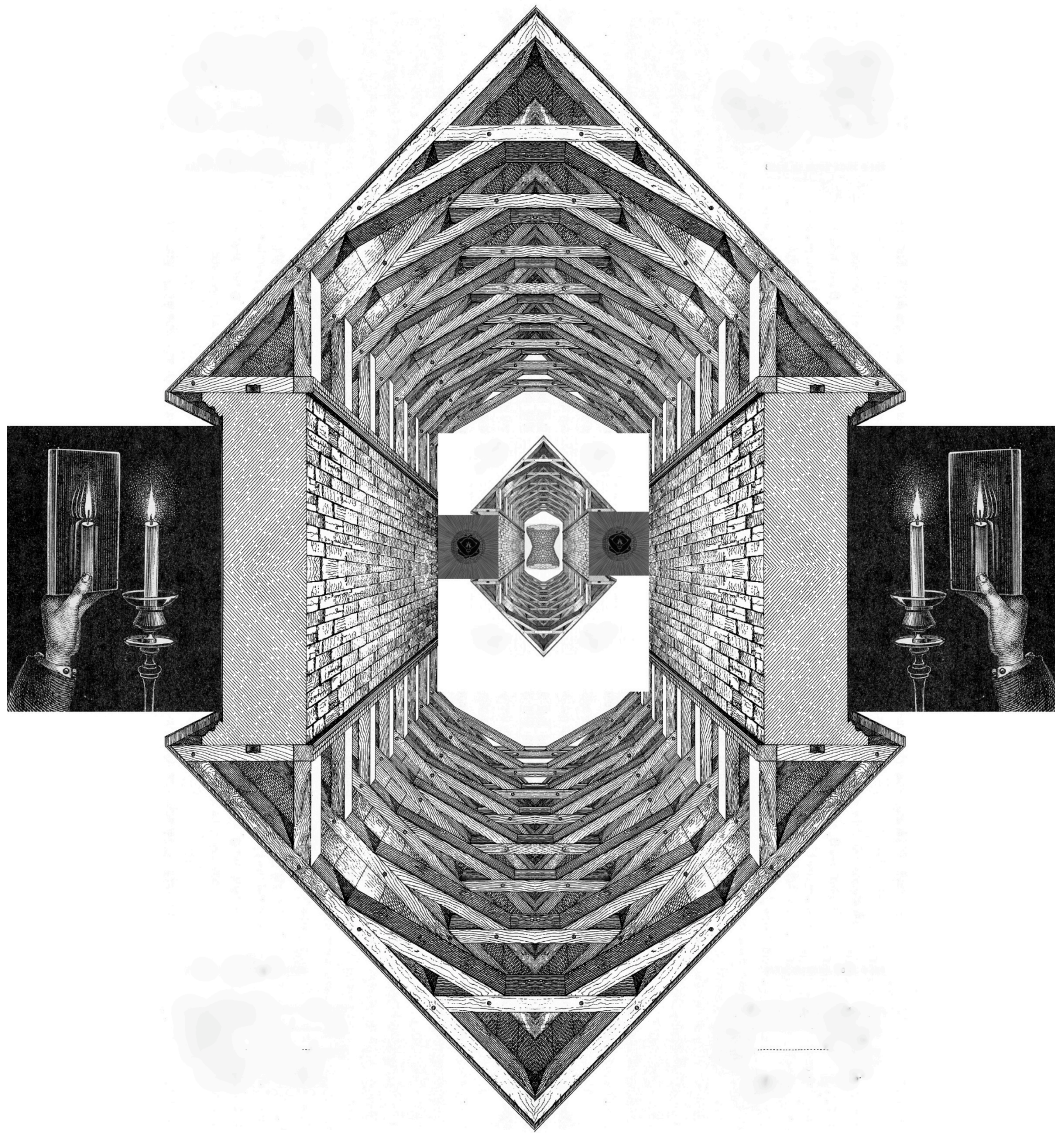
or this

Mother kept a cardboard box
of Borax in the cabinet
below her sink & used it in lieu of

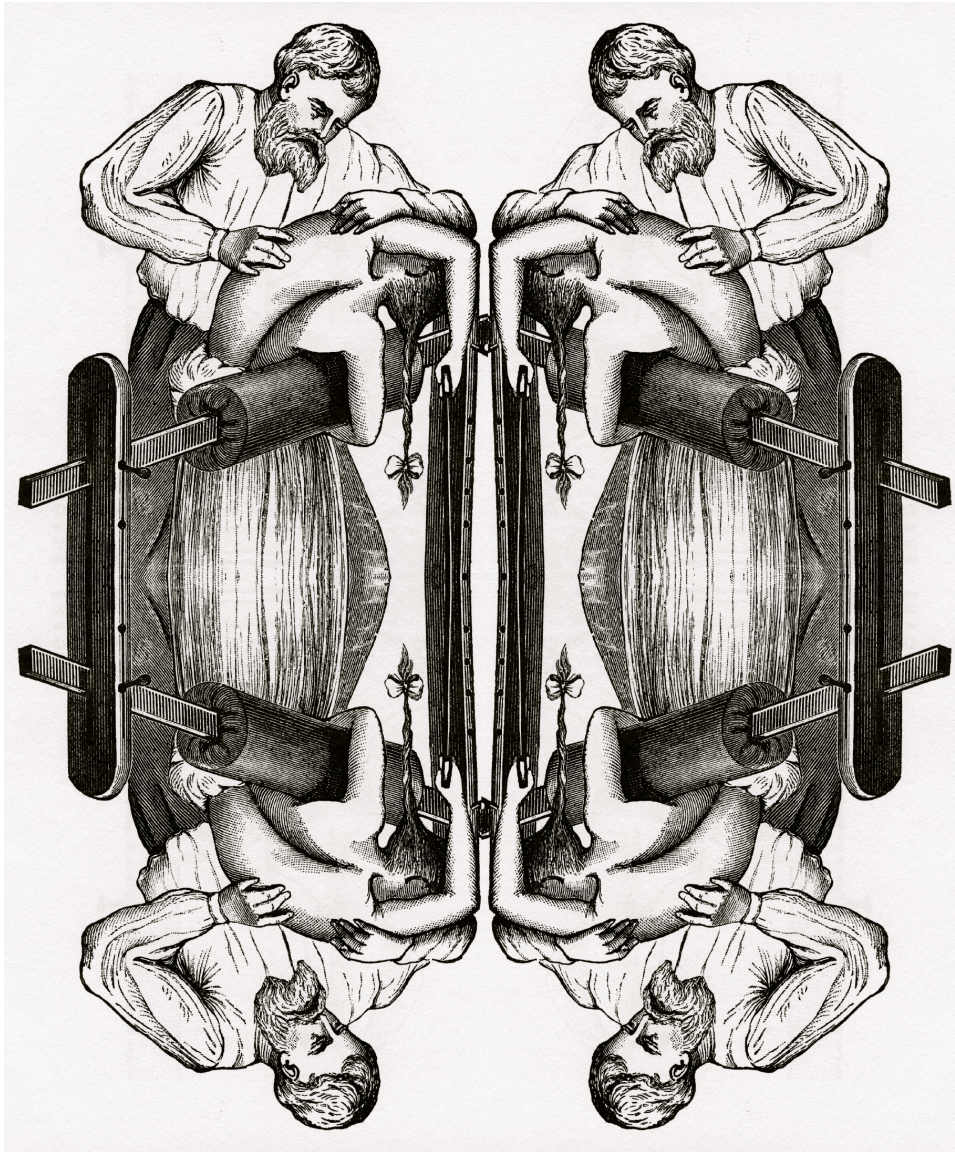
ANGLE OF DIVERGENCE

ALISON PALMER

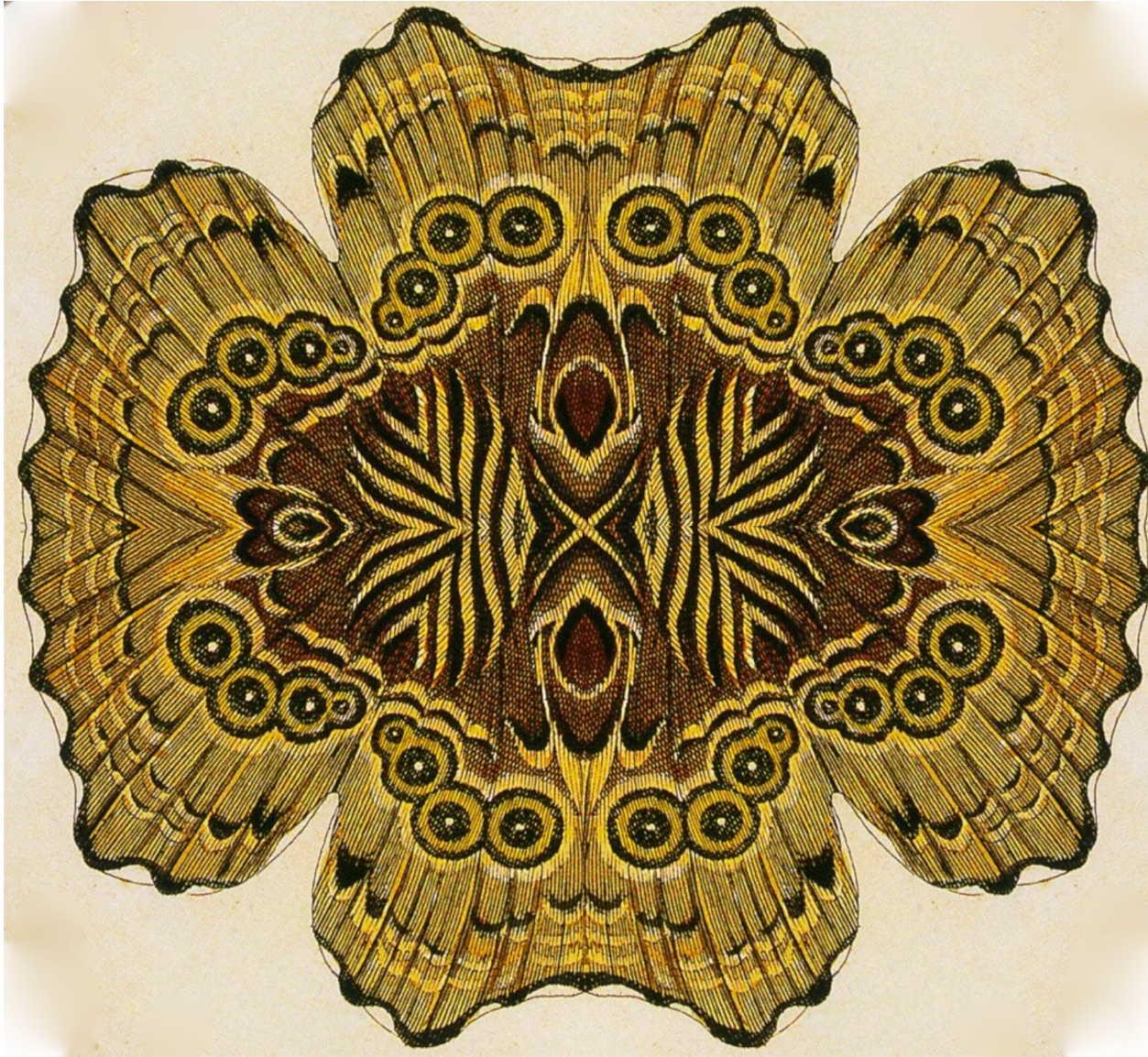
We are
 never quiet; we will never
be quiet. Books
 and the dark and our hands
 that beg to gods once here, who come
not when they're called, cold and hard
 in their own world waiting for the fire
engine to break traffic. Fire in
 the library lit to the ceiling
 with words begging at sealed windows. Now
 is the hour
of understanding the red house won't last; we
 won't last. This
 is the closing down sale—claim me
 and pay the price. Nothing
spares us, not even the moon's white blade.



BILL WOLAK



BILL WOLAK



BILL WOLAK

[AMBULANCE] [LINEN] [NIGHTMARE]

DENNIS HINRICHSSEN

[I]

that dream of driving backwards / out of control
—this is where it started
—me sitting on the engine cover
with my back

to the road
—drive train tunneling a future
just under my ass
ambulance / breadbox style /

so the back is open
—nobody there / just two torn boys / already covered /
tucked in /
masked with dusk and otherness

—me balancing / hand to driver's arm /
as the road swerves / and blood flowers blossom

[II]

for P.M. & N. B

two girls / later / were better linens
pure /
and unmarked
they came out of the ether / junior year

—out of skipping class / and
summer dresses /
out of quaffing diet pills / above the dam /
Tuesdays /

—out of chewing gum / and cigarettes /
out of Kools / and French inhaling /
to shroud
my living sophomore body / front and back /

with menthol / and ash / and healing
—their soft lipped wreckage / kissing mine

[III]

and so the dream again / out of control /
—car wheel
heavy in my hands
—streets / down-sloped / crowded /

leading to water
—the harder I press the brakes / the louder
the engine's torque
it's thrilling in a way /

body vectored again / a runaway physics
—no sweet pocket of dusk /
no women /
to race ahead / to nest me

—just open water / car frame / speed
the body / solo / beginning to tear / and twist

SUNRISE: FOLEY SQUARE

MONICA YOUN

one siren stains the morning in concentric rings

another starts up...stops...starts again...stops – little chips of sound like a climber's
hammer testing for handholds on an upward sloping face

daylight floods the soundscape with a clear liquid, thickening, flowing over and around []

a lack that could be displaced but not entirely dispersed, an air bubble trapped in rubber
tubing

something cone-shaped, just discernible, coming to resemble a cry

THE RENAISSANCE

MONICA YOUN

then reborn
again waking

each hour
without memory

for the first
time each time

the same room
the same bed

strapped down
eyes opening

new without
memory

opening wide
then wider

then struggling
to spit out

the tube
in his mouth

SUNDECK

MONICA YOUN

The flowerpot clogged with evidence of a panic
long since obsolete: thready roots that branched out
desperately in last month's drought now a fibrous mass
of dead matter. Such complexity is hard to look at,

the way the sumac's compound leaves hurt the eyes,
each leaflet backlit against the glare, each twitching
separately but simultaneously— an infestation
like the little anthills stippling the coarse lawn.

Late August and the mind seeks smoothness,
cultivates a sleek, ungenerous unconcern —
the lawnmowers endlessly, ruthlessly shearing life

back to its known forms. Beyond the bungalows,
the tattered beach, the bladder buoy sings of the simple
ocean, all whole notes: B flat...B flat...B flat...

CONTRIBUTORS

Traci Brimhall is the author of *Saudade* (Copper Canyon, forthcoming), *Our Lady of the Ruins* (W.W. Norton, 2012), and *Rookery* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2010). She's received a National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship and is an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Kansas State University. **Travis Cebula** graduated from the MFA program at Naropa University in 2009—the same year he became the founding editor and publisher of *Shadow Mountain Press*, which specializes in hand-stitched poetry chapbooks. In addition to working at his own press, he is an associate editor at *Monkey Puzzle Press* and teaches poetry, writing, and literature through the University of Denver's University College and with the Left Bank Writers Retreat in Paris, France. He has authored five full-length collections of poetry and six chapbooks, the most recent of which, *Dangerous Things to Please a Girl*, is available now from BlazeVOX Books. Also, in 2011, Western Michigan University awarded him the Pavel Srut Fellowship for Poetry. **Chen Chen** is the author of the chapbooks, *Set the Garden on Fire* (Porkbelly Press, 2015) and *Kissing the Sphinx* (Two of Cups Press, 2016). His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Narrative*, *Drunken Boat*, and *The Best American Poetry*, among other publications. A Kundiman Fellow and a 2015 finalist for the Ruth Lilly & Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Fellowships, he is currently pursuing his PhD in English & Creative Writing at Texas Tech University. Visit him at chenchenwrites.com. **Adam Clay** is the author of *Stranger* (Milkweed Editions, 2016). He teaches at the University of Illinois Springfield. **Rhiannon**

Dickerson writes poetry in the Kansas prairie where she lives with her three children, and husband. Since graduating from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, her poems have appeared in *LIT*, *Quarterly West*, *Pleiades*, and *horseless press*, among others. **Stephen Dunn** is the author of many books of poetry, including the recent chapbook *KEEPER OF LIMITS: The Mrs. Cavendish Poems* (Sarabande Books), and *LINES OF DEFENSE* (Norton). His *DIFFERENT HOURS* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. He lives in Frostburg, Maryland. **Robert Foreman's** fiction and nonfiction have appeared most recently in *Copper Nickel*, *Shirley*, *River Teeth*, *Redivider*, and *The Collapsar*, among others. A collection of his essays, *AMONG OTHER THINGS*, is forthcoming from Pleiades Press, and he has written *WEIRD PIG*, an unpublished novel. More Weird Pig stories can be found at Cannibal Alley. He is Fiction Editor at *The Cossack Review*. **Nicholas Gulig** is a poet from Wisconsin. **Joseph Harrington** is the author of *Things Come On (an amneoir)* (Wesleyan 2011); it was a *Rumpus* Poetry Book Club selection. He is the author of the chapbooks *Goonight Whoever's Listening* (Essay Press 2015), *Earth Day Suite* (Beard of Bees 2010) and *Of Some Sky* (Bedouin, forthcoming), as well as the critical work *Poetry and the Public* (Wesleyan 2002). His creative work has appeared in *Bombay Gin*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Colorado Review*, *The Rumpus*, *1913: a journal of forms*, *Atticus Review* and *Fact-Simile*, among others. Harrington is the recipient of a Millay Colony residency and a Fulbright Chair. He teaches at the University of Kansas. **Dennis Hinrichsen** has new work in *The Adroit Journal*, *Michigan Quarterly* and *Best of the Net 2014*. He also has a new book, *Skin Music*, forthcoming from Southern Indiana Review Press. **Melissa**

Fite Johnson's is the author of *While the Kettle's On* (Little Balkans Press, 2015), which won the Nelson Poetry Book Award. She was the featured poet in the Fall 2015 issue of *The Journal: Inspiration for the Common Good*. Individual poems have appeared or are forthcoming in such publications as *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Broadsided Press*, *I-70 Review*, *Rust + Moth*, *The Invisible Bear*, *The New Verse News*, and *velvet-tail*. Melissa and her husband live in Kansas, where she teaches English. For more, visit melissafitejohnson.com. **Steve Klepetar's** work has appeared in ten countries, in such journals as *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Deep Water*, *Expound*, *Red River Review*, *Snakeskin*, *Ygdrasil*, and many others. Several of his poems have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Recent collections include *Speaking to the Field Mice* (Sweatshoppe Publications, 2013), *My Son Writes a Report on the Warsaw Ghetto* (Flutter Press, 2013) and *Return of the Bride of Frankenstein* (Kind of a Hurricane Press). **Fred LaManna** is a freelance poet living in Chicago. During the day, he works and functions as part of the real world. At night, he works and functions at creating sonnets. This sonnet is part of a 42 Goddess Sonnet Cycle inspired by the Illuminations of Rimbaud. A number of these sonnets have been published recently in *Baby Lawn Literature*, *Pink Litter*, and *Icarus Down Review*. He is currently at work on writing a modern version of the 154 Shakespeare Sonnets. **Lisa Ortiz** grew up in rural Mendocino County where shy black bears visited the orchard every summer leaving behind piles of plum pits and runes of claw marks scratched in the trees. Her book of poems, *Guide to the Exhibit*, is forthcoming from Perugia Press in fall 2016. **Alison Palmer** received her MFA from Washington

University in St. Louis where she was nominated for the 2007 and 2008 AWP Journals Project. A graduate of Oberlin College with a BA in Creative Writing, she was awarded the Emma Howell Memorial Poetry Prize. She also attended the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference in August 2012. **Carl Phillips**'s most recent book of poems is *Reconnaissance* (FSG, 2015). Phillips teaches at Washington University in St. Louis. **Sam Rasmussen** tries to record his experiences to share with people. **Ashley Roach-Freiman** is a librarian and MFA candidate at the University of Memphis, where she was formerly the managing editor of the *Pinch Journal*. She has poems appearing or forthcoming in *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, *THRUSH Poetry Journal*, *Smartish Pace*, *The Literary Review* and *Superstition Review*. She coordinates and hosts the Impossible Language reading series in Memphis, TN. More about her can be found at ashleyroachfreiman.com. **Justin Runge** lives in Lawrence, Kansas, where he serves as poetry editor of *Parcel*. He is the author of two chapbooks, *Plainsight* (New Michigan Press, 2012) and *Hum Decode* (Greying Ghost Press, 2014). His work appears or is forthcoming in *Best New Poets*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Portland Review*, *DLAGRAM*, and elsewhere. He can be found at www.justinrunge.me. **Tatiana Ryckman** was born in Cleveland, Ohio. She is the author of the chapbook *Twenty-Something* and Assistant Editor at sunnyoutside press. Her work has been published with *Tin House*, *Everyday Genius*, and *Hobart*. More at tatianaryckman.com. **F. Daniel Rzicznek** is the author of two poetry collections, *Divination Machine* (Free Verse Editions/Parlor Press, 2009) and *Neck of the World* (Utah State University Press, 2007), as well as four chapbooks, most recently *Live*

Feeds (Epiphany Editions, 2015). His poems have appeared in *The New Republic*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Boston Review*, *Orion*, and *Gray's Sporting Journal*. Also coeditor of *The Rose Metal Press Field Guide to Prose Poetry: Contemporary Poets in Discussion and Practice* (Rose Metal Press, 2010), Rzicznek teaches writing at Bowling Green State University. **Jordan Stempleman's** eight books of poetry include *Wallop* and *No, Not Today* (Magic Helicopter Press). He edits *The Continental Review*, runs the Common Sense Reading Series, and teaches at the Kansas City Art Institute. **Shaun Turner** writes, teaches, and studies as a 3rd year MFA student at West Virginia University, where he is assistant editor-in-chief for *Cheat River Review*. His work can be found at *Southwest Review*, *Tin House's* "Flash Fridays", and *The Adroit Journal*, among others. His chapbook, *The Lawless River* will be published by Red Bird Chapbooks in Winter 2015/2016. **Monica Youn** is the author of *Blackacre* (forthcoming Graywolf Press 2016), *Ignatz* (Four Way Books 2010), which was a finalist for the National Book Award, and *Barter* (Graywolf Press 2003). Her poems have been widely published in journals and anthologies, including *The New Republic*, *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, and *The Best American Poetry*. She has been awarded the Wallace Stegner Fellowship at Stanford University and the Witter Bynner Fellowship of the Library of Congress as well as residencies from the Civitella Ranieri Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio, the MacDowell Colony, and the Corporation of Yaddo. She currently teaches poetry at Princeton University. **A.R. Zarif** is originally from Chicago and currently pursuing a degree in English & American Literature at

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