



*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, Marcus Myers, Andrew Reeves, and Ruth Williams, would like to express their gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the journal.

We read submissions year-round at [www.bearreview.submittable.com](http://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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Wendy Chin-Tanner

## How It Is Written

the cuckoo  
in the nest  
has got a

big mouth a  
beehive like  
a buzz in

the body  
of the things  
left unsaid

say it this  
is how it  
is written

Wendy Chin-Tanner

## Willow

Willow Street  
had only  
one willow

at the bad  
end of the  
block I lived

at number  
One Willow  
Street where the

BQE's  
sea sound shook  
the house that's

no longer  
the house is  
only a

house the gate  
a gate I  
tell myself

the city  
is only  
a city





## Balance

Marcus Palmquvist

Emma Winsor Wood

## The Nut

“It’s hard to love someone people think is not worth loving anymore,” the woman says to her friend at the café.

Later, they talk about dogs, how she likes to guess who the owner is when she sees one waiting outside. She guesses, guesses wrong.

I get up and go, and they go on talking.

The sun is shining but not hot, not too hot.

This is rare. Something is usually always too something for me.

This is because I am very sensitive, which is another way of saying perpetually unsatisfied.

It is difficult to find the right balance, any balance.

Good writing is not balanced but life is, good life, that is.

My life is good because it is increasingly balanced, or my life is good when it is balanced: both are true.

My balance has always been bad—that’s why I couldn’t ride a bike till I was 12, that’s why I was always falling off horses.

I am easily shaken, shaken off.

“His poems were just random collections of facts about himself. They were bizarre,” my adjunct friend says.

The sand in my pockets falls out of my pockets.

He is reading some of my poems now, I am guessing he doesn’t like them.

I am learning about comma splices and misplaced modifiers so I can teach my students how to avoid them.

I myself learned how to write correctly without learning any terms I can remember.

This means I'm lying to them, my students (that's an appositive), when I say it is "critical" they learn these terms themselves.

I met a college student who speaks two languages and doesn't know what a subject is, a high school student who thinks a noun is an adjective.

They were just given language and told to use it.

I guess a mechanic given tools without being told how to use them might eventually figure it out, but she would probably end up using a

hammer to crack open a nut. It works, but it smashes the nut.

Ali Power

## Mistranslation XXI

### or Any Given Sunday

*after "Sonnet XXI" by Francesco Petrarca*

Herb & foliage  
My Venture Capitalist  
Like a virgin  
Continues to consume in the light

But bless the locus  
With virtual gold &  
A graceful dick pic  
Allora—

This rosy matrix is also a dirigible  
Where juices taste better  
Because of the air pressure

I will drive you away  
Into the old-fashioned sunset  
Where no one can text you

Ali Power

## Mistranslation CCCLXII

### or Nothing Lasts

*after "CCCLXII" by Francesco Petrarca*

I wasn't personalizing  
I was squandering my chances  
Inside a gold-plated astrodome  
Conducting a Q&A

Between costume changes  
I applied cool gel to tremors  
While texting invitations  
To What's Temporary

I posed with a man for a pragmatic  
Portrait, alternating poses  
With and without a bucolic backdrop

"It's out of your control," he said  
Then slowly stepped away  
From the pixelated mountains

## Untitled Blue #4

e r o	b a a	t c t	w m o	y p a
v i u	e l n	o a i	e i f	o a n
e n r	a i e	g r r	l n h	u t e
r s b	k f l	e e e	l o u	r t n
y e o	e e a	t l d	r r m	b e c
t d d	d a s	h e b	e c a	o r o
h r i	b d t	e s r	a h n	d n r
i i e	i d i	r s a	d o i	y a e
n p s	r m c	l v n	k r t	m b e
g e b	d i m	i o c	i d y	y s m
w u e	s t i	t i h	l s i	b t p
a p c	s t n	t c t	l b l	o r t
s o o	t a d	l e h	e e o	d a i
c n m	a n m	e g e	r c v	y c e
o r e	i c i	s a o	s o e	w t d
m o b	n e s	t u w	p m d	h i o
i c o	e o t	o z l	i e i	a o f
n k d	d f i	f e s	e a t	t n a
g t i	t l n	w d a	r m b	i s p
a i l	r o g	e g r	c b u	t h p
s d e	e s t	a u e	i i t	m i l
i e s	e s h	t i e	n e y	e s a
w c s	s l i	h t x	g n o	a t u
a l b	s o c	e a a	t t u	n o s
s o l	p s k	r r c	h w m	s r e
g c a	r t b	d s t	r h o	t i t
o k c	e l a	a t l	o a s	o e w
i s k	a i s	w h y	u t t	b s i
n a f	d s s	n e a	g l o	r o n
g n e	l t f	p n s	h i f	e f n
y d l	u e a	u a t	t v a	t t e
e s t	n n l	r c h	h e l	h r d
t h b	g s s	p o e	e s l	e e s
r i e	s n e	l u y	b a	e e k
e f c	l o b	e t s	l m	s i
s t o	u w e	d i e	a o	h e
i c m	n n l	g c e	c u	i d
d a e	g o l	r d m	k n	s b
u r s	e t b	e r	d t	t e
e c	n s e	y y	e t	o g
a	o i l	l v	o	r i
s	t l l	e o		i n
s	e e i	a u		e a
	s n n	v r		s g
	t g	e u		o a
		s s		f i
				n

Laton Carter

## Pinhole

The highway is on the ceiling,  
and the clock tower

stretches down  
to prick the carpet floor.

The world on its head — camera obscura.

A child holds a mirror like a miner's pan, looks  
down into it, and walks through the house — step

over the light fixtures, don't trip  
at the doorjambs.

Insight means to not see with the eyes.

But the pilot, the effortful brain  
maps each discovery

as light.

The upside-down city advances into the dark room.



## Black, Brown, and Biege

Eric Weeks



## Self Portrait as Penelope

I wake to someone standing at the edge  
of the bed. It isn't you.

You are breathing  
like a tide beside me. No—  
you have been gone these ten years  
and I wake to no breath.

When finally the sun  
soaks the room in gold, only  
my own breath—distant as a wave  
from a hundred fathoms down.

How am I this small?  
How have I stayed with you this long  
a tiny blue velella  
gripping your ship's stern  
through foreign water.  
Last night in the gunroom of my mind  
the hall was full

of my twenty geese  
heaped as dead leaves  
all their necks broken.  
And you my husband had broken them.  
See what feathered ruin

swells around us? I loved

to feed the birds            when I grew  
tired of waiting for you.       How many times  
a winged thing has saved me  
from a knife. Here is the puzzle:  
in the dream  
you killed my pets because you loved me  
and because they were only symbols—

Every time  
you turned your head  
you meant something else.  
The gesture, lost on me.  
In your disguise, as you watched

how long I would wait for you  
I knew it was you the whole time. And yet  
there is a gate through which  
my strange dreams come.

Julia Bouwsma

## Midden

Coiled umbilical of a dried daisy petal, toenail  
shell, pilfered spoon, three teeth left  
in a weasel's yellowed jawbone, rusty fishhook  
still lucky, scratch of granite you chiseled  
from the wishing rock, words  
white as bones never buried in earth—

for every sorrow that's been dug from you,  
here is a pile of rubble twice as high.

## Full Bloat Moon

The worm moon will drink until she floats  
if you let her. She'll suck the dirt clots right out  
of the dissipating snow and the runoff from the road,  
guzzle sap from the bucket on her knees or take it  
straight from the tree. Glutton-mouthed moon,  
you've found her belly up in the ditch on one  
of your night walks. A kernel of hominy, she swells  
languidly, kicking her legs like the ticks you pluck  
from the dog. Tonight she hangs high in the dark  
as the doe goat kids, quietly fevering in the straw,  
udder hard and white as the pail at your feet, then black  
as a new moon. The hunger in the sky winks at you  
unrelenting through the trees as you do the deed,  
as you wash the blood from your palms. Each year  
she wakes this way, and each year you feed her  
ravenous. She never gets full, but then again  
neither do you, anymore.



Still Life with Dead Birds & Game Bag

Willem Van Aelst

august

these unrelenting weeks; everything grown sweet and dull. A lethargy sets in. I am tired of being the reliable one, that reflective surface—what we see is what we expect, what we remember. It's useless to claim anger, worse to act on it. The crickets drill without pause while the Internet suggests blockbusters, easy reading. All the recipes for ice cream involve the preliminary step of scalding milk. When someone who ought to know better asks the usual irrelevant—are you seeing anyone and what inspires you—I could argue a friendship is not a checklist. Instead I hedge and pivot, dream small animals are placed in my care. I kill them. It's pure neglect, a humid front. But such errors accumulate over time. Plants wilt and lawns fade. We throw rocks in the pond, wait for the heat to break

## On Tether, The North Star Does Move

The soccer ball aging in the field  
misses the foot that put it  
there. I have gone through so many  
water bottles. I recall when I was four,  
my father wrenching a car vent  
open to get the twenty I slipped in  
through the air conditioned breeze.  
*My bank*, I called it, after watching him  
stuff money into an envelope  
for deposit. Just the other day, the world  
opened a little more than usual  
at daybreak, when my daughter, who's one,  
kicked my cheekbone because she was  
awake and I was not. That moved me  
More than gravity in the bed.  
Like the sun does without me knowing  
I'm moving. And maybe the stars  
not struggling to quiet,  
know the beauty I do. It must be  
bright, this knowledge. Maybe  
when they feel, if they do, the sun  
heating their backs, they  
save it up, that power, for something,  
some big day when they can weigh more  
to what made them. Even a planet  
needs its resources to live. Maybe  
when stars dream—everything dreams—  
they get, finally, what they've been  
saving up for all their lives.

Lisa Ampleman

## XI. Hole

*(from) Courtly Love  
for Courtney Love*

Girl, watch out what you wish for. Headless dolls  
like chicken corpses, empty cavity  
and floppy toy arms: these fiends caterwaul  
in corners, creepy mascots, stage debris,

beautiful garbage. Their abandoned heads  
have Os as mouths, their skulls as hollow as  
crack houses. Greedy desperate, never bled  
nor breathed, they really want you, second-class

performer. They really do. Garb yourself  
in frilly dresses, ape their vacant look.  
Well-versed in crafting and carving the self,  
you pose like fish bait dangling on a hook.

*No matter what you tell yourself, doll heart,  
the missing parts make possible the art.*





Untitled

Nadine Rovner

J. Bailey Hutchinson

## Cherry Blossom Impact

*for Haruno Sakura, Kunoichi of Konohagakure*

*“You think it’s your duty to save him from the darkness. That’s the kind and gentle girl you are.”*

I remember the first woman I hated—hair pink  
as a sucked melon, knuckles bread-dough clean  
under her chin. Her little knives. I hated her enough  
to wish her dead (by ice! or opened-throat! whatever  
so long as she’s gone from the story)—but fear  
is an easy-sleeved thing in a child. Hate a quick jacket.  
She was a child, too—one who lived with me  
in many bedrooms. A girl, growing, very much in love,  
early-spilling into the loose palm of a bra. Violent  
in the way of twelves. Listen: this is who I didn’t thank.  
A woman who made atomic the mace of her hands,  
who pulped a man and howled in the doing. A woman  
whose fist rubbed the bluff. A woman who bit the finger  
from her forehead, saying through a mouthful of bone:

*shannaro.*

## What we say

I am a Lapp *you say mottled bruised*

Yes I know *I say to you*

I love the North and Northern snows and Northerners:

Men with black beards in rough wool make me hot.

I sing for Finland for the lost Nordic homes.

But you are not Norse *you say to me*

In fact you are a bit of a Greek.

Yes *I say* I agree *I agree*

But you are a Lapp.

And what does that mean? *you ask*

*I say* I cannot draw you a map.

It doesn't work quite like that.

A Greek and a Lapp. But where will they live?

*I say* I know you can answer this.

Yes *you admit*

We live in the world.

Where Lapp is a term I'm not sure you should use.

We live inside us: twinned souls *I insist*  
Serpents twined round the staff of Asclepius.

Twinned souls yes yes *you respond*  
Who is Asclepius?

A surgeon a healer raised by a centaur.

Centaur *you say* I can understand.  
Cousins of a sort.  
We Sami's husband reindeer if Sami I am.  
The world began in fire and ice.

There now:  
You see?

We came from the armpits of two great giants.  
The North is a place of darkness and cold.  
The threat of the North is shaped like a woman or  
*you say mottled bruised* Or a giant.

Oh that is more sad.  
Perhaps you are not a Lapp after all.  
After all when do we choose.  
The healer was able to raise the dead.  
Sometimes a scandal: he even got paid.

You are indeed a bit of a Greek.

Yes I *can reason* all choral tragedy.  
Trips back and forth from the land of the dead.  
But not for too long I *max* I am in love.  
I am trying very hard not to look back.

Orpheus sang his sweet songs so direly.

And who is Orpheus?

A tender young wretch wrecked.  
Wrecked.

I am trying very hard not to look back.  
It's a long way from Finland *I suppose*

Longer *you say*  
Longer from Lapland.

This all makes me sad.  
I don't think Greek is a good fit for me.

Then what will you be?

Whatever you are.

I am a Lapp *you say to me*  
I have a zither made of fish bones.  
The whole of nature delights when I play.  
I don't know why I hadn't thought of it before.  
Are you following?

O yes *I agree*  
I try *I say*

Ben Swimm

## Summer Pastoral

July and the flax blooms drop their petals daily,  
    covering the soil in a wilting blue.  
    The prop planes overhead

turn on and off their engine noises;  
    climbing toward something,  
    letting go.

Guns everywhere this summer. This morning  
    we rose to a couple rounds  
    from one neighbor

or another and we heard later on the radio  
    you can bring an open carry  
    to the RNC

but cannot have a tennis ball.  
    The garlic is hung and drying,  
    early

from a spring of record heat.  
    At the post office,  
    there's a girl dressed all

in lavender sitting under the counter who  
    asks her mom,  
    "Can I watch a movie

under here? I don't think it's dangerous."  
    The man in front  
    of me is shipping his

rifle to Oregon and the postal worker asks  
    about it being liquid, fragile, perishable,  
    or hazardous

as if it were lithium batteries or perfume.

    Zucchini pour out their juices  
when we cut their stems.



*from* Secret Lives

Maciek Jasik





*from* Secret Lives

Maciek Jasik

Amy Strauss Friedman

## Insurance Salesmen

I question protection  
and those who offer it.

Its throbbing, paternal sing-song  
composed to protect the protector's ego.

Every day needs a damsel in distress  
for a man to find a reason to go on.

Rapunzel forsaken  
if short haired.

My dog bit me yesterday  
while going after another dog.

My hand got in the way  
caught like a baseball.

Punctured the peach  
and unleashed the juice

like so many before him.

Justin Phillip Reed

## Of the Question of the Self and How It Never Quite Gets Answered

My continual kitsune doesn't approach but merely appears

as if here, human-footed on the crushed leaves, a decision  
to let fall the veil occurred to it like a dewy accumulation.

Having just dreamt my hips into the hands of others' husbands

Having held neither the albas nor the acts in my mouth

Having always been a sucker for earning my head's heaviness

I wake to the motion of wind between my shins  
and the woods, remaindering the nuance night  
demanded of its shadows, thickening in distinctions.

I can't recall from the dreams anything the men said and  
this is proof of the dreaming. Into their necks their faces  
nod away from precision: Lamps, in the axils of dying limbs.

The venom-green beacons reveal me wived by their wiles.

## Basic Needs

There will be work  
By late fall  
Raining in  
Habana Viejo  
It's so hard  
To not think of you  
Privacy is complicated  
The famous hotel  
By the sea  
Where did you come from  
Where did you come from  
Sometimes the verbs  
Aren't important  
Thank you  
For this organization  
The conspicuous absence  
Of logos  
These mountains I believe  
Will absolve me  
When I remember  
To look up  
Money doesn't always  
Mean what I think  
It does  
It sounds lovely  
Such red  
Red berries  
I could live  
In your country  
I could never  
In your country  
We can't always  
Be so kind  
The real question is not  
Will we hurt

But what do I do  
With this happiness

## Contributors

**Lisa Ampleman** is the author of a book of poetry, *Full Cry* (NFSPS Press, 2013), and a chapbook, *I've Been Collecting This to Tell You* (Kent State UP, 2012). Her poems have appeared in journals such as *Poetry*, *Image*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *32 Poems*, *Poetry Daily*, and *Verse Daily*. She lives in Cincinnati, where she is the managing editor of *The Cincinnati Review*. **Julia Bouwsma** is the author of *MIDDEN* (Fordham University Press, forthcoming 2018) and *Work by Bloodlight* (Cider Press Review, 2017). Her appears in *Bellingham Review*, *Grist Online*, *Muzzle*, *Salamander*, *RHINO*, *River Styx*, and other journals. She lives and works on an off-the-grid farm in the mountains of western Maine where she serves as Book Review Editor for *Connotation Press: An Online Artifact* and as Library Director for Webster Library in Kingfield, Maine. **Laton Carter's** poems recently appear or are forthcoming in: *The Brooklyn Review*, *concis*, *The Citron Review*, *Sonora Review*, and *The Inflectionist Review*. **Wendy Chin-Tanner** is the author of the poetry collection "Turn" (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2014), which was a finalist for the Oregon Book Awards, a founding editor at Kin Poetry Journal, and poetry editor at The Nervous Breakdown. A former academic specializing in race, identity, and culture, she continues to write and educate on these topics. Some of her essays and poems can be found at xoJane, Alternet, The Huffington Post, Apogee, RHINO Poetry, Denver Quarterly, Vinyl Poetry, The Collagist, and The Mays Anthology of Oxford and Cambridge. Wendy was born and raised in NYC and educated at Cambridge University, UK. She is the mother of two daughters and the proud daughter of immigrants. **Amy Strauss Friedman** is the author of the poetry collection *The Eggshell Skull Rule*, forthcoming from Kelsay Books, and the chapbook *Gathered Bones are Known to Wander* (Red Bird Chapbooks, 2016). A two time Best of the Net nominee, her poems have appeared in The Rumpus, Pittsburgh Poetry Review, Escape Into Life, Red Paint Hill, decomP magazinE, and elsewhere. She was born and raised in Chicago where she taught English at Harper College and at Northwestern's Center for Talent Development. She recently moved to

Denver, Colorado where she teaches English at Columbia College. Her work can be found at [amystraussfriedman.com](http://amystraussfriedman.com). **Vanessa Jimenez Gabb** is the author of *Images for Radical Politics*, which was the Editor's Choice in the 2015 Rescue Press Black Box Poetry Contest, and the chapbooks *midnight blue* and *Weekend Poems*. She is from and lives in Brooklyn, NY. **Ceridwen Hall** is pursuing a PhD in creative writing at the University of Utah and reads poetry for *Quarterly West*. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *The Moth*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Rattle*, *Tar River Poetry*, and elsewhere. **J. Bailey Hutchinson** is a poet from Memphis, Tennessee. She is currently pursuing her MFA at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, where she works on *The Arkansas International* literary magazine, co-coordinates the Open Mouth Reading Series, and makes lots of pickles. Hutchinson has work featured or forthcoming in *BIG LUCKS*, *Front Porch*, *Beecher's*, *Hobart*, and *LIT* magazine. **Steven Karl** is the author of ~~*Sister*~~ (Noemi Press, 2016) and *Dork Swagger* (Coconut Books, 2013). Recent work has appeared in, or is forthcoming from *Elderly*, *Marsh Hawk Review*, and *Dream Pop Press*. He is an editor for the online journal, *Sink Review* and lives in Tokyo, Japan with his wife and daughter. **Rachel Mindell** is the author of a chapbook released last year by Dancing Girl Press. Individual poems have appeared (or will soon) in *Pool*, *DIAGRAM*, *Bombay Gin*, *BOAAT*, *Interim*, *Forklift*, *Ohio*, *The Journal*, and elsewhere. She works for Submittable. **Jenny Molberg's** debut collection of poetry, *Marvels of the Invisible*, won the 2014 Berkshire Prize (Tupelo Press, 2017). Her work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Ploughshares*, *The Missouri Review*, *Copper Nickel*, *Redivider*, *Poetry International*, *Best New Poets*, and other publications. She teaches at the University of Central Missouri and is Co-editor of *Pleiades*. **Brian D. Morrison** completed his MFA at the University of Alabama, where he was an assistant editor at *Black Warrior Review*. His poetry has appeared at *West Branch*, *The Bitter Oleander*, *Verse Daily*, *Copper Nickel*, *Cave Wall*, and other journals. He is a former administrator and event coordinator of Slash Pine Press. Currently, he works as an Assistant Professor of English at Ball State University. **Ali Power** is a poet and psychotherapist. She is the author of the book-length poem *A Poem for Record*

*Keepers* (Argos Books, 2016) and the co-editor of the volume *New York School Painters & Poets* (Rizzoli, 2014). Power's poems have appeared in the *Brooklyn Rail*, *jubilat*, *LIT*, *PEN*, *Stonecutter*, and elsewhere. She curates SOLO, a reading series at Wendy's Subway in Bushwick, Brooklyn. **Justin Phillip Reed** was born and raised in South Carolina. His work has appeared in *Best American Essays*, *Boston Review*, *Callaloo*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Obsidian*, and elsewhere. Coffee House Press will release his first full-length poetry collection, *Indecency*, in Spring 2018. Justin lives in St. Louis. **slp** is a poet, songwriter, musician, and educator living in Colorado, who can be found vaguely under-promoting her first studio album *widow's daughter* or hermette-ing with her Smith-Corona typewriter and her melancholia. Her manuscripts have been finalists multiple times for the Ahsahta Sawtooth Prize, as well as the Ashahta, Slope, and Gazing Grains Chapbook Prizes. You may find more of her work in the Taggart tribute at *Jacket2*, *Better: Literature & Culture*, *Denver Quarterly*, and in miniature from Gazing Grains. She lived with a dog named Fred. Originally from New York City, **Ben Swimm** is an MFA candidate at Oregon State University, where he is the poetry editor for their literary magazine, *45th parallel*. His work has recently appeared in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Cirque*, and *Hamilton Stone Review*. He co-owns a vegetable and flower farm in Palmer, AK. **Emma Winsor Wood** has received fellowships from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, the Napa Valley Writers' Conference, and the Squaw Valley Community of Writers. Recent poems have appeared in *DIAGRAM*, *The Journal*, *The Colorado Review*, *The Seattle Review*, and *BOAAT*, among others. She teaches undergraduate writing and edits *Stone Soup*, the literary and art magazine for kids, in Santa Cruz, CA.



