

Electric Windmill

Spring 2014

Issue No. 009



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ELECTRIC WINDMILL PRESS

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ELECTRIC WINDMILL ISSUE NO. 9

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PO Box 230881

Boston, MA 02123

editorialstaff@electricwindmillpress.com

Editor: Brian Le Lay

Typography and Design: Jess Dykstra

Cover Photo by Brian Le Lay

Photo Manipulation by Jess Dykstra

Call for Submissions

*We are currently accepting submissions for
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The Death of Steve Watermeier

by Corey Mesler

The death of Steve Watermeier
comes from far away
and thirty plus years
since we last spoke. My memory
wants to forget we had
drifted apart and wants to re-
member that moment, when, in
introducing me to drinking,
he tenderly handed me
a bottle of cheap strawberry wine.
His face was priestly kind.
We drank in an abandoned
lot before pretending to sleep on
the wintry soil in sleeping
bags recently purchased from
Western Auto. And, also this:
he made me laugh every day we
were together. I was so
young then and he was ahead of
most of us. I salute him here,
across the eons, in my room in his

old home town, my head
full of medicine, my heart broken
by his ugly early death, which
arrived unwelcome for his survivors.

Rust

by Jeremy Nathan Marks

If rust should have a season
let it be that time after the last leaves.

Could it be November
book-ended by all the mist and rain?

Our bowl of a lake bevels
the wind with rain and it falls
slanting over land still warm but sleeping.

The rain feels like rivets
in our fingers and the locomotive in
the field and a pier made noisy by the wind
sound like kettle drums.

The Tonight Show

by Kevin Ridgeway

Lucille Ball hands
Johnny Carson
A fist full of worms
While Liz Taylor paws at
Sammy Davis Jr's
Glass eye
I watched in the dim
Room of bordello lights
Those years ago
When days seemed
Like forever and
Nights were
Hidden sanctuaries
With the glowing
Babysitter and her
Static face

Funny the Things

by Larry Duncan

The girl that seemed to have no palms—
at least no meatiness to them,
the distance from her wrist to her fingers
a smooth, soft line—
spent hundreds of dollars on psychics
and could slap the sense from your eyes
with a single strike.

She loved soups with little pasta stars
and pit bulls and sunflowers—
giant, hulking things in the backyard
that drooped their heads
down to the Mexican tiles
until they fell,
and lie like bodies
waiting for an outline.

We both loved Jack
but she preferred *Five Easy Pieces*
and I've always been partial to *Chinatown*
and he seemed like a decent enough guy,

standing in the doorway with the last box
of her things balanced on his hip.
He shook my hand before he left.
His thin fingers coiling around mine,
just before he closed the door,
leaving me to the hungry dust bunnies
born of absent furniture
and the empty spaces
I'd have to find some way to fill.

Three Political Truths

by Jeffrey Flannery

I. SERENDIP

A few years ago, on a trip to Sri Lanka, I decided I wanted to pay a visit to Arthur C. Clark, you know, the author of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. I was working with various agencies to help in the relief efforts following the tsunami of 2004 and so that gave me the opportunity to ask the Minister of the Interior if he could help me meet this famous resident of Sri Lanka. He proceeded to tell me that Sir Arthur was a very private man who had strict rules about visitors, but he would do his best to arrange a visit. Sri Lankans, you see, are the most polite people on the planet, and so I took his answer as a no.

I set forth across the countryside of Sri Lanka, an amazing island south of India, the place where Sindbad was cast ashore in *One Thousand and One Nights*, a place today that had been scarred by four decades of civil war following the end of British Rule and now recently devastated by a tsunami that killed thousands and left many more homeless.

Colombo, where this trip began, was a bustling capital crammed with Muslims, Buddhists, Christians and Jews who jostled together through the streets, separating when they went to their respective temples or churches, then flowing back together again for business or pleasure. My friends quickly recognized my clumsy American ways and tried to teach me the rules of traveling in this country.

I was warned against riding in the sputtering, three-wheeled tut-tuts as I could end up somewhere I never intended. That night I was told not to walk alone along the slums by the ocean as there were alleyways there where I would never be found. And I was told to ignore the young boys would beg to be my guide, as Sri Lanka was famous among certain tourists for its young boys. I went anyway and took pictures of old men squatting in their saris, singing to me with cloudy eyes. I also took pictures of those young boys posing seductively in their speedos, inviting me down to the ocean as if already forgetful that hundreds from this city still tossed restlessly beneath those tides.

The next day we traveled to the ancient city of Kandy, where Buddhism grew its fangs. Outside the Temple of the Tooth, I saw a beggar who had kept his hands clenched together in prayer so long his fingernails had grown through his palms and out the back of his hands. Inside the Temple I was not allowed to see the tooth of Buddha because I was not a priest, but I was told it looked like the canine of a baboon.

We then spent two days driving up into the higher lands where the famous Ceylon tea was grown. I was told not to talk to the women picking the tea, that they were trained to pick the most tender tips of the tea leaves and anything, even the unintelligible words from a foreigner, was enough to unsettle their fingers and bruise and ruin the tips.

We reached the rebel border and the government soldiers told me as they wrote down my passport

information not to kiss the rebel women as any light skinned babies a year from now would be registered to me. When we entered the rebel village, we saw that many of the young men had a foot missing, propped on canes, they stared at us from dark empty eyes. The Sri Lankan government army instead of killing the young men in rebel villages, simply rendered them unable to fight. I did not even think about kissing the women.

When we met the rebel leaders, they were mere boys perhaps twenty years of age, if that. They asked if I knew Hannah Montana. I was later told that these boys were among the most sophisticated and ruthless terrorists in the world. I'd wonder what they thought of Miley Cyrus now, but I am told they are all dead.

When we got to the village where we were rebuilding the homes destroyed by the tsunami, I was surprised to see the Minister of the Interior talking with the construction crew. He smiled when he saw me and told me that Sir Arthur had agreed to see me when I returned to the West Coast. Sir Arthur was old and very ill, he warned, and I was not to expect more than a few minutes with him. And do not ask Sir Arthur to explain the black pillar in his movie, he said, or you may find yourself leaving sooner than that. After the grey haired Minister left in his Range Rover, some women from the nearby village began yelling at me, angrily shaking sticks. These women, mothers, wanted me to tell the government to stop kidnapping our workers, their boys, to fight in the war against their own family and people. It was occurring to me that Sir Lanka was a land of old men against young boys, and the young boys were losing.

A week later I arrived at the large seaside house of Arthur C. Clarke. An elderly Sri Lankan named Halamaguda (please call me Hal he said) greeted me at the front gate. I apologized for simply showing up like this but I had been told by the Minister that Mr. Clark would see me. Should I have called first? I asked, I did not know the proper etiquette in this case. Hal laughed and said, well, there is only one rule that is important for seeing Sir Arthur, and that is to make sure that he can see you. You mean he has left the island, I asked. Perhaps that is one way to look at it, Hal said wagging his head in that Sri Lankan way, but you see, Sir Arthur died a few days ago.

So I missed my chance but I was left wondering why Arthur C. Clarke lived in Sri Lanka as an old man. The answers I heard was that he loved scuba diving, loved the solitude of this island. Through that gate I could see a pristine swimming pool, and at the edge lying in the sun were a half dozen young boys, vague rumors, soon to be forgotten.

II. JULIO

It was a rather typical day. I began the morning listening to the woman next to me barf her guts up into a plastic pail. To be fair, morning was the toughest time for those in our business, not because we drank or carried on, no, it was more because we often woke up hating our guts so much we wanted to puke them into a garbage can. You see, as hard as we tried to consider ourselves *artistes*, really we were nothing but hustlers, commodity brokers of the flesh. You see, our job, when you got right down to it, was to sell the most beautiful bodies to the most generous bidders. We were dance promoters.

And on this day I was at the national booking conference for dance in New York City where I was once again consumed in this all-out war against all the Ballet Folklorico knockoffs. There were more and more of these shabby dance companies trying each year to steal away my business by pretending to be the best, the original, the one and only, when of course my company, the *Ballet Folklorico de Mexico de Amalia Hernandez*, was *el autentico*, the real thing.

I won a few of the battles on this day and with an air of satisfaction closed up my booth that evening to attend a modern dance performance taking place in an abandoned underground subway station, where I was distracted by an older woman with long gray hair, but with this young beautiful face, and a striking confidence in her stare. I lost her in the crowd, yet I could not get her out of my mind until as I was heading back to my hotel, the wom-

an who had been puking in the booth next to mine came up to me dressed like the Wicked Witch of the West, stuck her tongue down my throat, and with a poignantly wicked smile asked me when was the last time I'd been to Oz.

The end to another typical day. Or, so I thought.

At three am there came a knock at my hotel door. It was my partner Julio. All three hundred and fifty pounds of him. Naked as a cow's tongue. Well, so I thought until he walked past me and I could see a small strip of his bikini underwear wedged between his ample buttocks.

Julio Solorzano Foppa. This was a name you might scream the first time you jumped from the cliffs at *Quebrada*. This was a man larger than life, both literally and figuratively, fiercely Latino, with wavy black hair and a thick unruly beard. If you could mate a Che Guevara with a Chris Cringle, and I believe that can be done nowadays, you would get a Julio. And so tonight here he was now sitting on my bed. I am sorry he said, I know it is late, but I need someone to talk to.

Even though we had worked together for more than four years, I have to admit that I did not know Julio well at all. He arrived a few times a year from Mexico City, then disappeared to do his "business." So I was quite eager to hear what he had to say. I must start at the beginning, he said, you see my mother was the famous revolutionary Guatemalan poet, Adelaide Foppa, who had been disappeared, murdered during the dark years of the dictatorships and death squads in my country. After

that my father sent me to school in Russia for my safety.

It was in Russia, Julio said, that he learned the three most important things in life: how to drink vodka, how to play guitar and how to be a Marxist without losing one's sense of humor. He went on to describe how for the next ten years he traveled throughout Europe, living off the streets, singing protest songs, transforming himself from a shy toothpick thin young boy into a dauntingly large man who could make men cry with his voice and women melt with his stare.

He finally returned to Mexico, he said, because his mother's ghost, which had haunted him from the day he left Mexico, told him it was time to do so. He told me that he saw her ghost everywhere, describing her as an elegant woman with long gray hair, and a beautiful face which shined with this remarkable *confianza*. In Mexico, he rose from a singer of protest songs to one of the most influential producers of *Nuevo Cancion* in Latin America. But my people are poor, he said, and here in America, he said, there is money and there are ways to do things I cannot do in Mexico. So you probably did not know this, he said, but by helping with the Ballet you are helping me, and you are helping my people. He sat back and his face fell down to his chest.

And if that was all there was to my story, he said sitting up again, I would not be sitting here on your bed. He had just received a call a few hours ago from the Office of the President of Guatemala. An attorney told him that someone had been trying to reach him for days, but

unfortunately this man had now died.

My Papa? Julio asked. No the attorney said, this man was Juan José Arévalo Bermejo, you may remember him as the first real president of Guatemala. Why was he calling me? Julio asked. Arevalo, the attorney said, was also your real father. The attorney then said that he was going to tell Julio the truth, but once it was said, it would then be the truth no more.

You see, President Arevalo had an affair with your mother, and she became pregnant. Your Papa knew all of this and despite the betrayal and bitterness, the three of them worked together to keep it a secret. They were committed to bigger things – the freedom of Guatemala.

But, the attorney said, Arevalo loved you, his only child. He never lost sight of you. What do you mean? Julio asked. Well, who got you out of the Moscow jail for distributing posters of Brezhnev where you made his eyebrows and nose into a giant hairy *pinga*? How about all the fucking times you should have been killed in Mexico? You kept us very busy Julio. Personally, the lawyer continued, I think you are a colossal *pendejo*, even when *El Presidente* wished to speak with you on his deathbed all he could get was your greeting of *Viva La Cancion!* Not even room on your voicemail for a dying man to leave his son a last and final message. I am so sorry, Julio said, but what else can you tell me? I did not even know this man. That is all, the attorney said, and hung up the phone.

On my bed, Julio was shaking. I put my arm around him, tried to comfort him. He stood up looking at the floor and thanked me for listening. Then before he left, he told me that what saddened him most was not the lies all these years, it was not the truth, and it was not that he had lost a father he would never know, no, what was most sad was that the ghost of his mother had now left, had disappeared forever. And for the first time he was completely on his own.

III. SPANGLES

It was late at night and we were on a freeway that reached far into the interior of China, when suddenly a ball of sparks came hurtling towards us. As it passed on the road, I could see it was a downed motorcycle, the rider still somehow saddled to the bike. Aren't we going to stop? I asked our translator. No, he said in his halting English, we stop, we get blame.

I had the opportunity to travel to China several times, but I spent most of my time in a small village called SuiJung, a place that I thought was at the edge of the earth. To get to SuiJung from the U.S. required several connecting plane rides then a ten hour van trip which culminated in a harrowing ride along a cliff three to four hundred foot above the river bed on a road barely wide enough for two cars let alone all the trucks, families and farm animals we passed, no guard rails of course.

Suijung was a small village in China but that meant it had a population of about two hundred five thousand, the size of St. Paul. In many ways, it looked like a typical small town in a developing country. But early in the morning, before the sun came up it took on a different look. Then I saw tiny ancient looking beings, perhaps no more than three feet in height, walking on bowed legs, bent over like beetles, their faces as wrinkled as a shriveled apple, carrying these towering loads of sticks on their backs. Then there were giant, Biblical shepherds, with long black hair and thick heavy beards, barefoot in long robes herding their goats across the road. Women squatted, smoking cigarettes near tubs full

of live frogs or tarps on which skinned dogs were stretched. I watched all this and realized how little I knew about the human race, how little I understood about civilization. There were borders that I had never crossed, that I did not even know existed.

I brought my daughter here, she was studying Chinese and I had not heard a single person in this village speak English, so when she and I arrived in Suijung, a government van met us at the hotel and literally whisked her away along with my driver, who I asked to videotape everything. I was then ushered into a series of government meetings to finalize our agreement.

Ten of twelve Chinese Communist Party members sat on one side of the table, my translator and I on the other side. Every one of the Party members smoked and chewed a tobacco/coca concoction that turned their teeth black. The local head of the Party opened the meeting, banging the table with his fist, his mouth wrenched into a terrible scowl that cut deep into his heavy jowls. He squinted through his red-faced anger while he shouted at me as if I had committed some horrible atrocity. My translator was yelling into my ear: "He say he very happy to meet you. And he also say he especially happy for the visit of your daughter, who is a very lovely young girl." This meeting lasted for hours but the agreement was approved. The Party leaders who were required to sign this would be here first thing in the morning. But before then we had a dinner to attend.

There were about forty people at the dinner. We sat at a large circular banquet table, a lazy susan in the center spun at least a dozen plates of food, all spiced with a local pepper I had quickly grown to dislike. But I did not have to eat as I was being toasted by all the Party members with this vile local cherry distillate, which tasted like kerosene and so I was pretty drunk when my daughter finally arrived and everyone stood and applauded her as if she were a celebrity. She was so embarrassed by all this attention that when I asked her how it all went she told me to leave her alone and wait until later. Well I couldn't wait and looked at the video which showed her swarmed by perhaps a few dozen Chinese boys and girls. She was a good foot taller than any of them; she was smiling as they reached to touch her blonde hair. I put on the ear buds and was shocked to hear the boys and girls shouting at her: Hey, do you know Madonna? Do you like Harry Potter? It was then that I learned that China is the largest English speaking country in the world. Every child in every village from the age of five was taught to speak and read English.

The next morning we were all waiting for the Party dignitaries to arrive. But at ten am, they were still not there. I was told that they had to travel from Chengdu and that the roads, as I knew very well, were small and could be difficult to pass. At eleven am I could see many of the other members were talking on their cell phones in an agitated manner. Right before noon, the mayor and my translator came over to me and told me that there would be no meeting today. Why? I asked. It seems the Party members... my translator began to say as the mayor spoke quietly into his ear... it seems the van ... it

seems... you see... they have gone over the cliff.

It was a shock to all of us. I made the decision right there and then to pack up and go back, to leave China altogether.

Our driver drove much slower and cautiously this time, which we appreciated. When we came around this one bend along the cliff, we were stopped by a man with a red flag. A winch was parked alongside the road and as we idled its cable eventually brought up the body of a man dressed in a wet black business suit. His body was dumped in back of the pickup and we knew immediately that this was one of the men I was supposed to meet that morning. It was a narrow, impassable road and we were forced to follow this truck for more than an hour to the next village, watching those lifeless feet rock back and forth, while teenage boys sitting on each side of the truck bed tossed out bits of gold foil.

We sat in silence but could not escape the realization that we could have been those men and I reflected on how travel always had an edge, a point where you could decide to go forward or retreat, and edge that sometimes started you on a new journey, or if you were careless brought you to an end.

I asked my Chinese translator if we should follow this truck, go to see the others and offer our condolences. No, he said, someone will get blame for their deaths, why you want it to be you?

The Paintings

by Uniel Critchley

*After Caravaggio's St. Francis in Ecstasy, The Taking of Christ
and Salome with the Head of the Baptist*

They hold me, in their stillness

rocking me back and forth
like a weary child.

Splashes of light
in a shadowed corner
make me want to touch
where the painter touched,
strained eyes and stiffened hand,
to play out a story in his mind.

Only the light touch of the docent's footsteps—
and I know I am all alone with these pieces.
I tip-toe so close to St. Francis, inching my finger
toward the stigmata on his chest, my breath heavy.

The paintings call me
far from home,
to a place where grief
is someone else's.

Perhaps a man laying a soft kiss
on a charcoaled cheek, eyes looking away,
while the savior—*taken*, casts
a pained brow, and barely parted lips
to tell the world: betrayal.

Perhaps, a head on a platter—
each player standing guiltless
while blood drips in little pools.

They tell their stories
outside of me
while I try to run away into them

silent grief rocks me
within and without.

Rear View Mirror

by Dennis Hernandez

golden sparks fly out from underneath the gray sedan
somewhere on the highway just outside of chandler
turner turnpike turning damp from cold december rain
fishtailing marriage of rubber and oil
sets this scene in motion
and i am watching this reel in reverse
trucks carry produce from california
to the nation's blood-red beating heart
they jockey for position just ahead
the sedan slowly spinning just behind
dream like thick like quicksand
and i am one eye steady to the highway
and i am one eye trained behind
hands fall off this nightmare clock
hands on ten and two
alternating pressure
accelerator / brake
alternating pressure

you must turn into a skid
this interstate replaced the mother road
so her watchful eyes have left us
and this soul behind me now spins in circles in the dark
axis in slow motion
wheels careening like a top
i'm looking for a father's hand
to reach down and make it stop
as I8 wheels times 20 now come up from behind
as the blast of an air horn cuts this through this silent
 reverence
as the singing screech of tires denies us this deliverance
and the sedan tumbles backwards
down the embankment that divides us
its headlights pointing upward
into the dark oklahoma sky

Materialized

by SC Stuckey

I didn't know you were there.
but you always have been
whispering in my ear
nudging me
reminding me
who I should be
what I should do
persuading action

I began to notice you
to hear your derision
to question your motives
bringing you into the light
I not just heard you
I saw you

Snide, sarcastic
you hid in the gloom
whispering, don't do that
you'll fail. Don't even try.
in the crevices of grey matter
my psyche a playground for you
to dance upon, the pied-piper
I no longer wish to follow

There are judgments
where I now see you
you appear for what you are
the fissures in my reservations
becoming wider, spreading open
to shine light on opportunity

About the Grocery Shopping I Was Too Tired to Do

by Allie Marini Batts

about last week's loaf of bread,

starting to smell heavy of yeast and sprouting
bluish freckles

about the toaster,

that only works on one setting: burnt

about the black-crusted toast,

cloaked under a butter quilt and cinnamon-
sugar blizzard

about the unreliable toaster,

that you can't fix but just won't throw away

about the money

we may or may not have to buy a new one

about whether or not

we even need a toaster in the first place

about my mother

who brought it as a housewarming gift for us

about the in-laws visiting,

because the house still isn't ready for company
about how it never is,
never will be
about our household,
a constant chaos of unfolded laundry and
unwashed dishes
about the trash,
that it's neither of our turn to walk down to the
dumpster
about the dog,
cringing tail-tucked under the
table, *soloudsoloud*
about my temper,
so short, and my harping, so shrill
about my nagging,
and how if I stop, I'd end up carrying the whole
house on my back
about the grandma ash,
always dangling careless from the tip of your
Pall Mall

about the television,

always blaring, while I do homework and you
try to sleep

about the trust,

how it falters, a hopscotching *gotcha* game of
skinned knees

about a little girl

who thought no one would ever love her,
playing hide and seek

about a lonely little boy

who hid under the house and grew up

ollie ollie oxen free

Recuse Oneself from Relation to an Other

by Gary Lundy

as when you walk into the house to find the door ajar. it's a matter of fractions. left unattended on a counter top. to name a few of the fallen objects. bound in strips of cotton rope. you press the favor unable to permit any slippage. to gauge oneself sans outside agitations. everyone lives inside their minds. forget what manner of force might drive forward without plan. wheels. pens writing on a small paper tablet. rain dwells in the street lighting the outside. instead role atop a previous plan. rehearse the rationale for departing before dawn. you press a small purple flower between prone bodies. dying in weight. earlier he reads a note you left over a year ago. you have moments of charming clarity.

Face

by Matthew Guerruckey

Arthur had always seen the face. In grade school it appeared on the chalkboard as his teachers lectured, on the canvas face of his Trapper Keeper, over the waving stripes of the flag as he stood to give the pledge of allegiance. At recess he would sit alone in the far corner of the schoolyard and look into the sky, where it stood outlined against the blue like a signal light.

As a teenager he tracked every appearance of the face for five years, searching for a pattern, but there was none. Some weeks he dreamed of the face every night, and some weeks it made no intrusion. During one stretch, it disappeared for so long—almost six months—that he assumed it was finally gone for good. It finally returned one evening as he was driving on the freeway. The shock nearly sent him careening into oncoming traffic.

By that time he was glad to have it back. He'd been sad without it. It was a female face, and beautiful, oval with tan skin and green eyes. Arthur estimated her to be in her late twenties or early thirties, but without the rest of her hair and body it was difficult to be sure. It was a pleasant face, but its lack of expression had always troubled Arthur. It was the template of an idea of a person, with no real life in it.

He had always assumed that others saw faces of their own. When he went away to college he asked his dorm mate what *his* face looked like, which led to a prolonged, awkward silence. Arthur's dorm mate began sleeping with a baseball bat by his side.

Arthur would never mention the face to anyone

again. He found in his science classes a convenient explanation to his problem: the face was the result of random neurons firing in his brain. Nothing more.

In his more idealistic post-college years he began to think that the face held some secret meaning for him. The face represented the whole of humanity, and Arthur's own responsibility to it. The peace that radiated from the face became something to aspire to—the empty, feminine face of a loving, serene creator. He worked with Amnesty International and Habitat for Humanity and the Peace Corps. He flew overseas to feed starving children in Africa. He explored the world, and everywhere he went the face was with him: on the sides of tin-roof shacks in the slums of Rio De Janeiro, shimmering in the depths of the long reflecting pool in front of the Taj Mahal, and hovering, ethereal, in the mist of Victoria Falls.

As his thirties neared he began to hope again, as he had in grade school, that the face belonged to his long-lost love, the woman destined to be his. Each woman he met paled in comparison to the face. Some of the women he dated were far more beautiful, but they would never become more ensconced in his psyche. The mystery woman had become his benchmark for the rest of the world. He inscribed on those blank features an intelligence, altruism, and warmth that a flesh and blood woman could not compete with.

Then one day, as he stood at the corner of a busy street, he saw *her*, standing across the street from him, waiting for the light to change. In person she was as beautiful as he had always hoped. Maybe her eyes didn't flash with the same clear, reflective beauty that they did in his visions, and maybe the rest of her body wasn't

blessed with the pornographic features which Arthur had supplied her in his lustiest fantasies, but she was undeniably lovely. Arthur's breath caught in his throat as he made eye contact with her.

If there was some shared connection, if the moment was as holy for her as it was for him, her expression betrayed no sign of it. She broke eye contact without acknowledgment. The light changed, and they began to walk toward each other. Arthur wondered what he should say to this woman, this mystical creature who had transfixed him for every waking moment of his existence. Their eyes met again. He opened his mouth to speak to her, but his words were lost to the jagged screech of tires on asphalt. They both turned to see a delivery truck skidding toward them. The driver, his eyes filled with terror, blared the horn and screamed at them to move.

Without thinking, Arthur pushed the woman out of the crosswalk. A jolt of electricity passed through them as his hands touched her slim shoulders. She fell to the ground with a gasp, out of the path of the truck, which slammed into Arthur and sent him flying twenty feet through the air. His head met the street with a sickening crack.

Arthur's ears filled with blood and the light began to fade from his eyes. The woman stood over him as he bled out. He couldn't hear her voice as she spoke soothing words of gratitude and stroked his hair, which was thick with grease, blood, and bits of pavement. Her face—no longer serene, but filled with compassion for Arthur himself—was the last thing that he saw before he passed to the place that we all go.

The woman attended Arthur's funeral, and made a trip to his grave, on the anniversary of the accident, for

the first two years after, but the third year she forgot. Soon the event faded from importance, and became a story she would tell at cocktail parties filled with strangers.

The life she lived was good, if unspectacular. Three years after the accident she met a man. No great cosmic design had brought them together, but she loved him, and she married him. They had three girls together, and those girls grew to have children of their own, and so forth down through the ages.

There was no genius in the family line. None of them would cure cancer. None of them would ever write or perform any great masterpiece. They were no great humanitarians. They helped others only in the accidental way that people do every day. They carried on, living uncomplicated lives unbowed by the weight of destiny.

Know the Signs

by Olivier Bochetti

from the Bardö Thödol

If in morning dreams these days

you ride a southbound white-furred red-faced monkey,

or fuck, repeatedly, a black buffalo or minotaur,

if a sexy black woman beside you plays with your bowels,

or a black rope, tied to your neck, drags you along,

if you wear yak-hair, bound to the ground by iron-chains

and attempt, desperately, to pluck red flowers,

if you enter a warm womb, drowsy, and fall asleep,
or are swallowed by a fish after diving in mud
so as not to be shaved by a perverse dragon,
if you eat feces, trapped under a wicker-basket,
surrounded by crows and corpses,
or if a blacksmith cuts your head off and parades it around,
you will die within a year.

If a black mole suddenly appears at the tip of your penis,
or your menstrual blood is unceasing and whitish,

if when you sneeze you piss and defecate,

and your hair grows upward at the nape of your neck,

if when you press your eyes with the palms of your hands

there are no circles of light in the lower-left eyescape,

if your hair stops growing at the bridge of your nose,

and you cease to sweat from the crown of your head,

if for two days you hear no buzzing sound when you cup your ears with your fingers,

you will die within two months.

If on a bright morning no evaporation from your shadow emanates,
you will die within two days.

If you sit on your sofa, congratulating yourself for showing none of those signs,
and two flies suddenly fly into your nostrils,
you just had your last breath.

Time Goes by (the Perfect Creature Returns)

by Bradford Middleton

Walking down a new road in this old town
I hazard across an intersection with my past
A glorious beauty of a time long gone

A buck-toothed, be-spectacled, full-bodied
beauty

I hadn't seen for years

And who I was convinced was one we lost

But there she is, sitting, laughing, sipping at her
tea

I know it's her immediately

The way her face smiles as I walk past

It's almost as if she knows who I am
But that can't be true
As back then I was nothing more than just a
nervous kid

She had been queen of the scene
I saw her everywhere I went
Hanging out with the coolest bands whilst I just
stood back

Nervous and anxious about how to behave
For I had no clue as what to do
With a woman like that and some would say I
still don't

Heroes of Horticulture

by Colin James

Plastic roses that reveal a presence.
Such exclamations are usually ridiculed.
An alcove with white bums pumping.
A team's televised, "Notice Me!"
The bench had curvature of the vestibule.
We were followed then taken,
followed the follower.
At first it was awkward, the lack
of movement just standing there.
A staring contest with these wild eyes.
Then the hedge swallowed him.
Pistol whipped his labyrinth.
We sought him, you and I
crashing through this godless habitat.

Alpha Beta Gaga

by Olivier Bochetti

Alphabet from shadows in the past. Geez—

Zanzibar, there too. All the way there: alpha

beta—king and queen of pens and tongues. Happy

yodelers once, before Babel fell—now baffled, hardly babbling. Neither can Bob,
captain of bebop, draw his mystic mind. It's world war X:

Xystuses building Urizenic,

diabolic prisons of graphemic imagery. Low

winding means becoming ends.

E-L-E-V-A-T-E-D: many-a-drawing for a simple thing. Kalashnikov,

vending machine,

froufrou.

Urizen: what are these words? Get off!

GRAMMAR: by dragons built,

teasing senses in hellish caves' mouths. Clogs

holy vibrations. Turns thought into calculations.

Silent snake of jiberish.

In thy linguistic roar,

Rintrah, notre ennemi,

joue à cache-cache avec nos langues. Cinq
 quenottes calculées pour ne pas pouvoir prononcer : HADJ !
Kronos himself dissatisfied by human names. Stop
 pushing. Babble freely—name rightly. Mock
laws of language—oppressors of momento,
 of poetic genius. Laws lull
magistrality of creation,
 numbs thy poem
of divine proportions into bashful,
 low-vibrating fiasco!

Polish after polish, words like crack

kiss thy reason goodbye, pop
quaintly thy creativity, thy swaraj,
juggles with your I.Q.

Risking death of imaginaire, illuminati

idolize the word, the symbol—all darker
systems of inspired breath.

Hail to the means!
to gog and magog!
Go for it, accept

Urizen, your reason, as your master—grant him ownership of your creative soul if

FOOL you want me to call you.

VALA: veil of mortality, by Blake

elevated to the rank of immortality: his leitmotiv.

Woe—taken out of the original word.

Desire injected—made into a show.

Xerotic

carping tongues on the Styx—

yawning & lazing—succumb

backfire—receive no laurel bay.

Zigomatics now tired of “alpha beta gaga”

A to Z.

Bullhorn Sermon

by Dennis Hernandez

At this intersection, of these fading boulevards of ache and broken glass, there's a movie house on the south and bank on the north. On the east and west, two gas stations fighting it out in one cent increments. Cigarette burning in my left hand, pinched by the fore and the thumb. Smoke clouds the air that asks for no such assistance. In my right hand, a nozzle pumps the cheapest possible fuel into a beaten down car and the radio cries, Mary. I heard a voice as loud as Sunday shout, "Jesus!". Every sentence punctuated in cadence with Jesus. Salvation is offered to all, says the messenger in $\frac{3}{4}$ time through a bullhorn's blast. His hair is as black and gleaming as a pair of imperials, shined for the dance at the legion hall. Pants pressed sharp as the edge of a switchblade, once the local weapon of choice, fallen from favor in the era of the 9mm. Jesus, he pleaded, Jesus had delivered him from sin and could do the same me and everyone in earshot of the bullhorn. And he was convincing enough in his outreach that it seemed victory in heaven could be mine. The door of hope had been unlocked and someone said, behold. With arms outstretched to be received, the clouds opened up and it began to rain on this

Passion Play in the shadow of the Calvary Cross and Chevron Sign.

It took a while, but finally I remembered his name, this man with the offer of redemption. Jimmy, Sir Jimmy, back when I knew him. Back when the lines were drawn a bit more clearly but mattered a lot less. Within a week of each other, we ended up in the same alternative high school-slash-pre-prison warehouse that stood in the shadows of the dairy farms, the bakeries and the dye casting plants of a once promising lower middle class town. We had seen each other before on the outside. Our separate tribes had always stayed clear of each other, but now, no more. The cage is small but amazingly, does not breed more anger. It's common ground, hallowed ground. Something the 70's cop shows called "Neutral Turf". It seems that the keepers of this zoo have a kindness that it is hard for even the wildest of animal to recoil from. Some even saw their wounds healed. The rest of us, we quietly marked time. And in the fields and abandoned warehouses that surrounded us, however temporary, we would find a salvation of our own. And it might last for an hour or a night or half a lifetime, but not forever, not for eternity. Jimmy knows that now and deep down, so do I.

The thunder claps out a roar and Jimmy matches it note for note with his bullhorn. As if this rain of redemption will somehow help him in washing our sins away. And I'm lost in this moment, this frozen frame, this glazing gaze, when the gas tank begins to overflow, soaking my shirt, running down the length of my sleeve, until it reaches my still-lit cigarette.

Coffee & French Fries

by Kevin Ridgeway

He towered over me
The thin raconteur from
The Garden State
With his way with
Words and his well
Articulated observations
Over a steaming styrofoam
Cup of arabica beans
And salted potato sticks
In the Burger King lounge
Adjacent to the Kids Zone
And his swirling asides
Us penniless poets
And the tin foil roofs
Of our whimsical imaginations
Brought us to this intersection
The sea air tickling our
Noses and fogging our eyewear
Me and this boogie woogie
Post modern beatnik wizard
Meet eyes from opposite

Bookshelf alcoves
During the open mic
Quiet but full of knowing screams
Of rage and beauty and
Reckless hunger.

Stopping for Coffee

by Jeremy Nathan Marks

Stopping for a cup of coffee

I look down into the river

It is nearly two hundred miles
to the national capital but the river
makes it over rocks and runoff.

This town, which clings to a cold
granite hillside, is still in my state
but the mountains close it in.

I imagined once that in these
mountains, which are not so high,
the sky was closer and that there
were elk up here

They scraped the sky with their
antlers and ran without even a
sound giving them away, alerting
the hunters.

This coffee is good –it's imported.
I feel imported. The paths through
the snow dusted hills are followed
by hunters.

Contributors

Thank you to each of our contributors!

Corey Mesler has published in numerous journals and anthologies. He has published 8 novels, 3 full length poetry collections, and 3 books of short stories. He has also published a dozen chapbooks of both poetry and prose. He has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize numerous times, and two of his poems were chosen for Garrison Keillor's *Writer's Almanac*. His fiction has received praise from John Grisham, Robert Olen Butler, Lee Smith, Frederick Barthelme, Greil Marcus, among others. With his wife, he runs Burke's Book Store in Memphis TN. He can be found at www.coreymesler.wordpress.com.

Jeremy Nathan Marks is an American who has been living in Ontario, Canada since 2006. His poetry and photography have appeared in numerous places including *Lake: a journal of arts and environment*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Futures Trading Lit*, *The Blue Hour* and *Front Porch Magazine*. His poetry will also appear this summer in *Up The Staircase Quarterly* and the forthcoming *Proost Poetry Collection* published in the UK. Jeremy and Michelle are expecting their first child, a daughter, in June.

Kevin Ridgeway is a Southern California native in search of a tan, as he is always hiding in books and scribbling poems in the dark. Recent work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Trailer Park Quarterly*, *My Favorite Bullet* and *Illya's Honey*. His latest chapbook of poems, *All the Rage*, is now available from *Electric Windmill Press*.

Larry Duncan lives Long Beach, CA. He graduated from Chapman University with a BFA in Creative Writing and received his MFA at California State University, Long Beach. His poetry has appeared in various online and print magazines, *The Muddy River Poetry Review*, *My Favorite Bullet*, *Citizens for Decent Literature*, *The Mas Tequila Review*, *Red Fez* and *Dead Snakes*.

Uniel Critchley has a crush on James Joyce and deeply appreciates that Ralph Waldo Emerson said things like, "Imitation is suicide." After teaching high school English for several years, she decided to pursue an MFA in Poetry at Southern Connecticut State University, where she is in her second year. She is currently the Art Editor of *Noctua Review*, Southern's Graduate Literary Magazine, and also sits as poetry co-editor. She recently had some of her ekphrastic poetry displayed at an International exhibition at Gallery LeLogge in Assisi, Italy, where she was a writer in residence at Arte Studio Ginstrelle. uniel.critchley@gmail.com; www.unielcritchley.com

Dennis Hernandez is uncertain of his origins. This much is known, his live birth was recorded in Los Angeles, California a long time ago. From Long Beach to Long Island, he lives half his life in airport food courts, mid-rate efficiency suites and compact rental cars. He remembers things, sometimes correctly. He has written some of these things down.

SC Stuckey is a Canadian enjoying the Los Angeles sun who passionately loves her home country, her husband, and her rock-star cats. Her writing has previously appeared in *Drunk Monkeys*.

Allie Marini Batts is an MFA candidate at Antioch University of Los Angeles, meaning she can explain deconstructionism, but cannot perform simple math. Her work has been a finalist for Best of the Net and nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She is managing editor for the *Nonbinary Review* of *Zoetic Press* and has previously served on the masthead for *Lunch Ticket*, *Spry Literary Journal*, *The Weekenders Magazine*, *Mojave River Review*, and *The Bookshelf Bombshells*. Allie is the author of the poetry chapbooks, "You Might Curse Before You Bless" (ELJ Publications, 2013) "Unmade & Other Poems," (Beautysleep Press, 2013) and "This Is How We End" (forthcoming 2014, Bitterzoet.) Find her on the web: <https://www.facebook.com/AllieMariniBatts>

gary lundy work has appeared in a variety of magazines and journals including most recently: *My Favorite Bullet*, *Cedilla*, *Indefinite Space*, *The Prague Revue*, *Assaracus*, and *Otoliths*. gary's fourth chapbook, *when voices detach themselves*, was published last fall by *is a rose press*. He lives in Missoula, Montana.

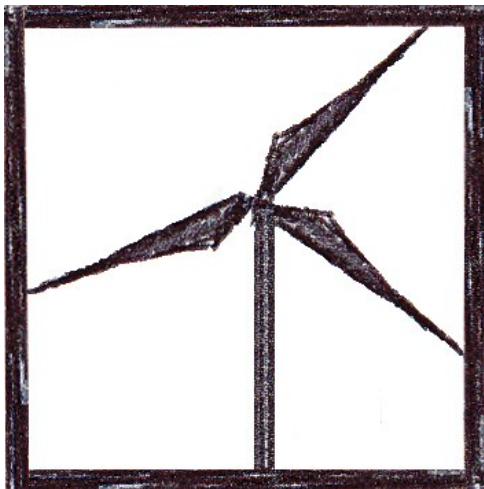
Matthew Guerruckey is the founding editor of the online literary magazine *Drunk Monkeys*, and a fiction writer. His short fiction has previously appeared in *The Doctor T.J. Eckleburg Review*, *Connotation Press*, *Bartleby Snopes*, *Cease Cows*, and *The Weekenders Magazine*. Matthew lives in North Hollywood with his wife, poet SC Stuckey, and their cats Harrison and Lennon. He is working on his first novel.

Born in the French Alps, **Olivier Bochetti** recently migrated to Long Beach in order to join the local community of poets. He has a B.A. and a M.A. in Literatures in English from Stendhal University, France, and was granted the EAP Scholarship in order to spend his last year of undergraduate studies at UC San Diego. He is currently part of the M.F.A. in Poetry at CSU Long Beach, and recently co-founded *American Mustard Magazine*. His poetry can be found in *Cadence Collective*, *Rip Rap*, and *Remedial Art Class*, and his critical works in *DUMAS Archives* and *The William Carlos Williams Review*.

Bradford Middleton was born in London, England in 1971 but only began writing poetry in 2007 when he moved to the south coast town of Brighton. He has been published widely online, including at *Empty Mirror*, *Zygote in my Coffee*, *Word Riot*, *Mad Swirl* as well as many others. This year he will complete his debut novel *Dive*.

Colin James

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Brian Le Lay/Jess Dykstra
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