

# THE MARCH MAGAZINE REVIEWS

#4



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# EXTOTHEWSE

“I want to change skin:

tear the old one from me.”



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## Orpheus w/o Regrets

*Peter Gutiérrez*

we've no choice but to see, our eyes clicking like jaws:

a pond of black porcelain, thawing;  
the browned apple, bruised while on the branch;  
that choir of pill bugs, warming itself,  
breath by breath, by armored breath.

we wish it were otherwise, this helpless projection, this endowing  
of mud with mood; wish these scriptures of tender observation  
were not so bent  
toward that which enthralls our trailing shades.

in the meantime, *look*, the hours have sprouted tiny hairs  
called seconds, and they take joy in growing long, fierce;  
in the end we've no voice in the matter, cannot glance back at  
the archaic beloved—only a lateral recognition of the stripped  
and twisting orchards  
growing swiftly on either side—

at the end of every tree's bare limbs, a glove;  
and within each glove, grasped: the leaves.

# It's For Your Own Good

*Peter Gutiérrez*



## To Soothe a Tree

*Linea Jantz*

To soothe  
the injured

Tree

SCRAPE

the ragged edges off

the

Wound

leave the bark smooth and tight  
to the wood

the bark heals

AROUND

the Wound's edge

never covers it

you may want to apply an antibiotic ointment

the Tree

CAN

grow back

from

a Stump

The

Roots are still there

but a broken branch  
will never

## The Geode

*Beth Brody*

Under armadillo armor  
rough torn patches  
iron tough.

Beneath taut scars  
abraded tissue torn  
to compost fodder.

Down, down into dark –  
cry to sleep, count sheep,  
dashed dreams and nightmares: childhood

locked away in congealed memories which long  
for light, fresh air  
a taste of freedom from their rancid selves.

Chip away concretionary surfaces.  
Run barefoot through the violet crystal  
center of my heart.

## Who Killed Davey Moore?

*Nnadi Samuel*

*“Not me, says the boxing writer. Sayin’, Boxing ain’t to blame,  
There’s just as much danger in a football game. Sayin’,  
“Fist fighting is here to stay. It’s just the old American way” — Bob Dylan*

*“Don’t come back, they’ll kill you for being gay” — BBC NEWS*

At the sleight of my arm, each eyelid folds in bloodshot grace.  
my fury, breaking jaws in disgraced light—that sends the world  
crumbling, the rough collision, met by an ovoid-mobbed face.

a gay slur to my ear is a call to glove, the way I unspeak my rage  
in dreadful thunder blows. we all started out as a blunder.  
one more misgendering & the gingiva fits well for a punching bag.

you should beware of what precedes my fist:  
I waltz in the showmanship of a deranged coyote—aiming for the jowl,  
when I throw caution to the wind, kneading your flesh to its elastic point.

I wear the sad properties of Hooke’s law. the grieving lies in the aftermath  
of a punch: this ceremonious un-aliving of my gender.  
think of this murder as what leaves me few months shy of my grave.

I swear to you, loving a boy around here would do much worse.  
I debone the cheek, rupture his ribcage in one deathblow  
& stay gorgeous—dressing the breath to one brief sigh.

the unspoken rule of boxing states that: *‘a welter-weight fighter remain  
answerable to an opponent-turn-ghost’*. where do I draw the line between  
mercy & mercy killing, if not in the way blood guts the alphabet?

*continued*

a dent to the loamy soft skin. the aching red, breeding from within:  
a banquet of hurt. a thoughtful felony. I slacken my fist to rid off  
the mashed ligament sticking bone-close to joint, & they tighten back.

when I approach a boy, gender bear stains.

**New Bone**  
*Shereen Rana*

Water and its sounds taking rounds of de-devotion.  
I wish I could say it was gentle, that it would listen  
when I mimicked the sun.  
What stayed was weight  
washing over, a light twisting in front of my eyes  
like hot gold.  
I wish I could say I didn't know heaviness  
could go beyond a body.  
I sit there, hand on bone, bone halfway  
in the trunk, trying to get it to go in.  
Every time the bone sticks.  
Every new bone becomes a knowledge  
of a death too slow for rebirth.

## Breakage

*Ellen Zhang*

I.

Dorsal surface of a mouse skull  
as unflinching as its neck.  
Circle close just above clavicle,  
spiraling outward, slippage  
then clean, sharp clamping,  
feel the bone shutter before  
quieting the unquietness.

II.

A sentiment that has not left me since:  
I'd rather have my heart routinely broken,  
you break mine, I'll break yours. That way,  
you're never out of practice. That way,  
you can really feel this world.  
Which is to say, so, and, now.  
Contrast like this & like that.

III.

Some days I count my rings or cut  
bits of myself, rendering edges.  
Fold myself inwards, dissect nerve  
endings, tangling myself in circulation  
memories like fishhooks tearing vertebra.  
Let me question, how deep is skin  
to the inner fascicle of taunt muscle.

IV.

Death is enjambment. Intravenous fluids  
shudder like hand sanitizer. Isn't it ironic  
IV transverses Rome tumbling into  
Caspian Sea, motherland to embody death,  
third tone jolting. Do you ever regret  
doubt—doubt regret? No flowers, elegies  
promises. Room filled with unflinching.

## genderfox

*Sage Futrell*

the other night you found me in my binary shell:  
one finger dancing over the emergency sos switch on my phone  
the other being dragged around by unwanted thoughts  
one glance at the hips of my shadow  
and i want to sink into the darkness with it  
i felt your presence before I saw you  
heard the familiar language of women's wails i'm fluent in  
the silent steps of a stalking man i'm always watching out for  
both things that I want from you  
i envy your dreadful duality  
how you are both the feral bitch my dad wants me to be  
and the hollow hound i inherited from my mom  
you crossed the street as quickly as you had crossed my mind  
so quickly phasing in and out of the sludge of feminine and masculine  
like how the moon phases from menstruation to werewolves  
but as quickly as you lept from the shadows  
as an effigy encompassing both truth and lie  
you disappeared again  
leaving me on the street  
unhatched once more

## But Do You Want Children?

*Rosalind Moran*

To grow up is to shed our exoskeletons of childhood,  
then spend our lives trying to climb back within them.  
Bones of our own making repose in parks, reminding us  
of how fun we tell ourselves life ought to be, all the time.  
Dystopian chic in their abandoned disrepair, they sunset  
further into memory with every passing year. I hear  
the creak of the merry-go-round stalling in the breeze;  
the shuffling of birds picking at worm-like laces of shoes  
cast over wires and into trees; the whistle of the wind  
through cobwebbed, tangled chimes. A snaking line  
of perfectly rounded, flattened stones goes untrod,  
and a crimson balloon passing overhead flashes vainly  
in the afternoon sun, like a notification or a traffic light.  
Imaginary friends are out of sight. A clutch of swings  
in the playground, there, are tied up like fallopian tubes.  
The Ferris wheel sits immobile in the field, ignored by  
those figures passing, who barely cast a glance  
at this towering dinosaur, its empty eye scrutinising;  
its metal limbs rusting slowly in the insouciant rain.  
To think so many skeletons have pushed out other  
skeletons, in heaves of blood and pain. Children: why  
are they always children – again and again?

## On Tapers and Curves

*Libby Harris*

A rebounding spray of water on bare skin, such innocent intimacy. Maintenance workers watering the softball field at a liberal arts college in March, Southern California; my father filling the paddling pool in July, Southern England. He'd stand with his weight on his left foot (a lingering football injury) and his hand on his right hip, the garden hose spewing tapers of water onto the sun-stiffened PVC. My childhood summers were flat colours: green grass, brown fences, yellow pool. Textureless, the sun retracted the colours into themselves and away from simile, from any redeeming romance of association. Grass green, fence brown, pool yellow. My flesh, alongside, was nauseatingly changeable. Ashen legs with swathes of lilac scar beneath both kneecaps. Flushing in sunless heat, never bold enough to flirt toward a golden tan, to blur the veins (turquoise hinting through chalk) and smooth the moles (raspberry seeds, toast crumbs). My thighs spread over the sparking pool rim, water inching up my calves, flesh pallid beneath the surface, untouchable, untouched. I'd look anywhere but my lap, the width of my limbs offensive, a seasonal discomfort.

△

I began to separate my flesh from myself aged seven. Before, my form was my function: my legs carried me to school and back again; my hands held others' hands; my stomach grew full and then empty. Distinctly (perhaps inevitably) my dissonance grew from my hips. My hips, spreading my uniform-grey, polyester culottes. My hips, wider than I bargained for when I moved between the classroom chairs. My hips, their shape exposed whilst swimming every Friday. I had some subliminal association between my hips and the women on the television who wore them like shopping bags at their sides, who swung them before men as reminders of their self-possession. I would jut out a hip as I leaned on a classmate's desk, rest my hand at the apex and marvel at its distance from my centre. The roundness of a premature puberty was hard to discern from puppy fat. One day, I thought, my body will make sense.

△

I first touched the Pacific in the flush of night's descent. Staying with Z's family in Santa Barbara, she and I drove to her neighbourhood's private beach (password-gated), swiftly stripped, and waded out through the kelp. We were college roommates, our friendship fresh. We soaked our hair

in the salt water once or twice, fists balled at our collarbones against the keen ocean breeze, and pointed out constellations not quite obscured by the industrial smoulder further down the coast. My body was not present for this occasion, was left at their house as I, I, ran in a bikini down the shore and into the silken sea. Later stepping out of the shower into a dimly-lit bathroom, I was winded (wounded) by my mirrored self. The flesh which had stood up to the Pacific just minutes before was now pockmarked as old milk and ragged around the edges. The light filled every slight depression, clarified every appalling asymmetrical divergence of flesh. I did not moisturise my skin that evening, let the innocent tingle of salt water retain my attention as I fell asleep.



In W's (lavender, eucalyptus, chai) single room, there were five queer women and me. It was Halloween and we were going 'out' – of the residence hall, not on the town, as I would at home. The idea was to wear W's clothing, for the group to dress as variations on her theme. This is, in fact, exactly what binds this group of women, but I swallowed that observation. Living with two roommates, my inhibitions were low. I wiped off the thin white t-shirt I'd been wearing without underwear (when in California) before I noticed everyone else's modesty. I have never wanted more to cover myself, to smooth and flatten. Weeks ago, I had comfortably spoken with a male neighbour whilst wearing merely a bralette; displaying my softened nipples to these women felt acutely, indescribably, wrong.



Sifting through my wardrobe for an ex-boyfriend's t-shirt, I balanced with one foot on the lower shelf. I wore just a thong, a term which slightly turns my stomach if I associate it with myself for too long. Z noted my resemblance to a Renaissance painting; I laughed generously as I (internally) finely raked her comment. A lifetime spent analysing every female body which crosses my path had given me a decent idea of what she meant. In my just-adulthood my body has capacity, has waves of prominence. There is a type of woman who men liked to paint - women with curved cream expanses, with pillowy excesses neatened by delicate joints, with rippling edges. Holding the t-shirt against my front, I could feel the twin hemispheres of my hips uncovered by the rectangle of fabric. I only used to wear it after sex. No longer sleeping with a man meant I no longer had to wear his masculine-cut t-shirts to accentuate my feminine form.



Z tells me how one of her teammates noticed my ‘fat ass’. She tells me the team culture is not quite like the rest of society, that they spend so much time nearly naked around each other that body commentary is more acceptable. I wonder if she’s forgotten how we’ve spoken before about the toxicity of her sport, of how it is seemingly only played by tanned and lithe California girls, how their hours of water polo practice accelerate eating disorders. I am meant to take it as a compliment, I think, but Z still won’t tell me who said it.

△

Shadebathing with Z by the softball field, stretched out beneath an ageing palm tree, her lean swimmer’s legs reflecting the rays in the way mine (lilac-tinged, heavier) never will. The British politesse is easily shrugged off upon crossing the Atlantic: I tug up my mesh midi skirt and let my bare toes meet the earth. I am grateful to the man watering the field for veering so close, for the slight drizzle landing on my calves.

△

The sun pours uninterrupted into the village swimming pool as W tells me her body image has been awful lately. I feel my own instantly conforming. How else could it be? We are au-pairing in the south of France, working together to cook, clean, and care for a family of four. We assimilate. We would never snack solo: if one doesn’t deem a slice of bread with almond butter necessary, the other certainly will not eat it. The rules are unspoken, but we think too similarly about the food-body complex to not erect the same structures. We have the same body, more or less, which makes things both better and worse. Better, as W can read pieces such as this and leave validating comments. Worse, as I dwell constantly in our slight discrepancies – I have the narrower shoulders, she the slenderer ankles. Squinting at each other in the afternoon glare, we trade body image anecdotes. I tell W about how I press the inch at the top of my thigh, just below my butt, every time I take a shower. It’s not too unhealthy, I tell her, as if you exercise just a little more you can feel the resulting firmness in this region. It’s comforting, I lie to her. She started to do it too, of course. I wonder if she still does.

## New Skin

*Amy Nash*

When I heard my epidermis ticking like a time bomb.  
When I heard him whisper  
my name as he touched the soft parts.  
When I heard my voice say “no.”  
When I heard no one else around.  
When I heard his laughter in another room.  
When I heard the train  
rumble along the tracks outside.  
When I heard it takes 27 days for it to renew itself,  
and I couldn’t wait that long to be free of his fingerprints.  
When I heard the moon would be full again.  
When I heard there’s a term for it— heard other women utter it out loud.  
When I heard bark might be an option.  
When I heard the branch crack under the pressure.  
When I heard barred owls hoot and wail late at night,  
I could not begin to tell who  
cooks for you or me or anyone else.  
I could only inspect my own brood patch  
and hope to sky dance  
under those reflected beams of light.

## The Wif and the Weapon

*Kelly Piggott*

The First Woman grabbed the First Daughter  
fresh on the chin, just moisturized,  
spectator and the object,  
red nails on skin reddened and blade puckered,  
and there did she say,  
“Do you think you’re a man?”

This is what I know.

Scattered not like stars across a canvas  
dipped in brown paint by the hand  
of the sun—more freckle-brown than  
pale, where heat has burned the hairs  
which curl on my own arms, wrinkles  
on knuckles on fingers clawed red,  
redder than the hair, long. Bright  
blue eyes—she is the Eve of Paradise.

This is the First Woman.

My father’s rib, she’ll tear,  
and he, hers.

I, the First Daughter.  
My bones  
they’ll grapple for.

They tell me,  
This is what a woman has—  
soft hairs on the cheek, skin of a peach  
clear valleys between the breasts  
invisible path to the legs  
cyst-free.

*continued*

This is what I know.

Her wedding dress trailing over petals  
released pink and white from my palm  
free from the wobbly eyed ring-bearer, his  
name  
I don't remember—only the need to escape—  
to free my hand from his. Before my Aunt, the  
Virgin,  
her hands open white to grace a cold bed's  
union.

Kitchen knife mishaps  
Nails in the wall  
Broken bowls  
Accidents— a Woman has none.

She is clear she is clean she is perfect.

This is what I know.

These are my First Women.

When I first shaved the coarse hairs on my  
chin  
a whisper, “shave it, or they'll see,  
and they'll speak,” led the blades.  
I cut too close, loosened the blood  
on skin too dry.

The trick is to shear under a hot spray.

**Periphery**  
*Emma McGill*

I've tried to say this before, in the wrong ways.

Everything is real until it becomes true.

Like standing straight up in my corner-enclosure shower in my first apartment, and I feel the water running down my back. I know the temperature has changed because it runs under my scalded feet, but I don't notice the burns until I look down and think about how my feet used to be purple. Purple in the shadows and purple trapped in my mother's rib cage. Maybe a bit of blue, too. And then there's the grey. Grey in my peripheral vision, except when I pull open the curtain in the morning and look down on reality.

Am I still saying it wrong?

How do you describe a veil when you can't see it? How to put it into fewer words...

There's a sea of people I know too well. And I'm mentioning you too much. They don't care enough to notice or remember. Them and their oil-infused lungs, diving for potholes in between beats and meaningless deprecation they keep breathing back in.

But there were some of us who'd just been dancing on the old school hill because we've both always felt behind and I'd learned that dance last minute, before the great descent.

I could believe that. At least it felt like me. What can I do when there are wishes rushing back in all their truth? I know there's a distance, but there's nothing to tell me this isn't where I've always been. Is that meant to scare me?

I circle the drain, just a tease. Watch the leaves, tread the land, breathe the air- don't dare to breathe in everything all at once. Standing over a new world, losing my mind, holding my head.

How can I account for a change I've experienced but can't make sense of?

Water rushes down. All the same comfort as that way across the land and before time wasn't a friend.

*kids these days pray for cures to opportunity cost*

*August Hawley*

*for Malakai*

how would their parents react  
if they knew what these children were doing at night?

in the hidden safety of rehearsals, of group chats,  
of school lunch tables,

they're swapping names, rearranging the alphabet together,  
hypothetically trading limbs and shapes and silhouettes

and wondering what it would take to live  
a life that fits, to wear skin like skin and not a costume,

to not have to think twice when someone asks  
for your name. oh, to have a name you can wear

like skin and not a costume, in places other than  
the hidden safety of rehearsals, of group chats,

of school lunch tables. to live a life that fits  
and hoping it won't take everything.

## Perceiving the Sunset Skin

*Charm Chandler*

It's here. What is? Ah, yes! My seeing, hearing, and speaking; or well, the eye of my I, the here of my ears, and the drouth of my mouth. Of course, what I mean is the body, mind, heart, and soul of my body. He appears on a beach of deep violet sands, where underneath, he walks above the softly vibrating grains that formulate configurations I would/he could call *spiral waltz*, and there, above silent—hi, gorgeous~—appears the glint of sunset orange, which orange? Perception is a vivid orange and reality cowers inside it.

It is only the sentient and sapient physical constructs that claim to perceive colors, and that is tricky business between the is and the ought. So, let me/us return, briefly, to my body. I think (therefore!) that this body is an abstract configuration the way emanationism kisses the realm of the scientific (what means which?) and the divine (which means what?). There are discussions about this, and the discussions often appears as:

(The side of is.) How dare you collude with...with...\_\_\_\_\_!

(The side of ought.) How dare you collude with...with...\_\_\_\_\_!

Opinions are lovely, and I love opinions (because I must remember that all things, at least for myself, is language and abstractions and abstractions attaching themselves to language). So, my opinion about my body, which walks there in a version of itself on a Drifting Shore (the particular-universal domain) in the Sunset Reality (the universal-particular domain) is that when it bursts forth in fluorescence, then it shall see, hear, and speak all communications, simultaneously detecting the fragrance and flavors of omni-all things, and then, in that unraveling, all other senses will unlock.

Oh, beautiful body, I cannot remember when our skins formed and all perceptions coalesced into this singularity, and when I lose your stately stature, I shall miss you.

**Judah**  
*Josephine Kelly*

I am a childless mother  
who teaches teenage boys tenderness.  
    I lose them in malls  
    and to life sentences.

I shop online for a skeleton key.  
    I repeat their names until  
    I find one that will unlatch my fear.

We play out stale loops with concrete checkers.  
the games always end with a draw  
until I meet Judah.  
    He is hungry for the moon  
    and ultraviolet hues.

We look past the expanding chicken wire.  
We clasp the air between our fingerpads  
as we cradle nuance,  
    reimagine utopia  
    and recycle burnt narratives.

He says this place is a perfect purgatory.  
    That we are smashed between His gates  
    and the fallen angel's reluctant home.

I say we are orphaned as we speak silently with god.  
    He lives in rivers lined with sempervirens.

We find presence shaped like flexed feet.  
    Headstands tethered to the purpose of our expiration.

Judah tells me to write down his name.  
    I fold it like origami and stitch it in my collar  
    next to our familiar and distant kin.

## Desert Snow

*Lillian G Lippold*

The first snow happens quietly, midnight on a Sunday. It tells no one its whereabouts, and before it shows itself, we wait with the frustration of bored soldiers, premature coats and scarves. With the snow, we stand, crouched before the windows, somehow wide-awake again. He chews Trident peppermint gum, and we are there together, before the window, the window that always still lets the chill in, and we feel awake even in these pitch dark winter days. When the snow falls, first, the first in a long time, the first since before the seasons of salt and sweat and wind, I all of a sudden have found enough courage for my solstice gifts, enough favors left buried at the bottom of my traveler's backpack to cash in. Even in the cold light, with the disjoint, with the whirlwind-messy room, I'm leaning over the windowsill to see the snow in the light of the corner bar, the one the karaoke screams come from, the one I'd probably forget if I still even could.

Time passes. As it does.

And when the second snow comes, I don't notice it. The minute is the same as the last. The colors are steady, and I am doing no harm at all. It begins early, past the alarm, darkened and unrested in a bedroom that isn't mine. Itchy. The second snow, and then the third, startles me, us. I'm in the desert. I'm not surprised anymore. In a different state, I am thinking about this on a new morning as we drive to the trail. I am cold in this other morning, snow to distract me. I'm thinking how it is that one's day can begin with kissing the back of another boy and then end without him? How it is that I can live without, silly things, I'm distracted by. There is the first snow and then there I am otherwise. There I am, the new year before me, snow in the desert, sitting on a cliff face in complete vacuumed silence, something that has never occurred in my life up to this point, me, sitting on a cliffside, eating a whole avocado with a spoon.

## We Change our Name to Charlie Rat-Pig just to Unlatch Heads from this Typical Suitcase Poem

*Bobby Parrott*

I reassemble myself well inside the scope of non-duality, which we deem salubrious or at most, biological. Waking up as the same person who went to bed the night before would be like time-travel. It never happens. I mean, which “me” is this in here, anyway. Genetically, my bacteria outnumber, making this box of skin their cozy home. And then, just before the commercial break, Rod Serling comes around the corner from another room, gestures with lit cigarette between fingers, says something like, “Bobby could never have sensed his unblinking erasure in this paradox.” A panther claws on the attic floor, wanting to come down, but we’re staring into each other’s eyes and don’t want to break the connection. As Descartes, I drum, therefore we undress. You melt, therefore I nickname trippy licking. I come apart, therefore you undulate your flagella’s alien plant life. You sleep, therefore we practice planet fall, cradle our prelapsarian egg.

The dolphins fluke your aqueous humor’s curve in another planet’s gravity, a headspace I unlatch like a misplaced suitcase. Synchronicities demystify this excursion, a tantric dementia anomalous to resurrected flesh. I’m barefoot in the subterranean ballroom of your bouquet, and my synaptic microcosm sings its chemistry, music your ears need never unpack. But don’t worry, on another page I emerge a solipsism in this canticle, shape a glassy-green flask of casual self-aggrandizement, a hyper-expansion we relish like the asset-grabbing juggernaut who confronts us about our wait in baggage-claim. We unlatch Charlie Rat-Pig just to change our suitcase from this poetically typical name.

## The Letting Go

*Elizabeth Gade*

Skin taunt like over ripe fruit  
velveteen under your mouth  
the way it eventually

yields  
and splits  
wetly

against the guillotine  
of your teeth

I yield to your sharp edges

I yield  
I yield

there is an opening  
in the cosmic imprint of time  
and I fall through

burrow beneath the  
layers of  
gristle and flesh  
the tendons strung tight  
as your mania  
the muffled drum  
of womb and pumping blood

the silence between us  
threatens to untether me

I'm left grasping for roots  
that never took

just your warmed flesh  
and thick fingers  
fishhook pressed against  
slippery pubic  
bone

pinned and gasping

I let go

# Onomatopoeia and its Environs

*Dylan Willoughby*

1

Kinda glad poetry is dead. *The New York Times* pronounced it. I'd rather speak to the dead in a dead language, if you know what I mean.

When I say something to Musil now,

2

he nods, rather than giving me that befuddled grunt.

3

Even now, I'm not sure if he understands, or even listens. Enough said. Dead. dead. Dead.

4

When I got fired from Twitter,

5

they didn't know all the bots I had created.

I felt proud like a heinously ugly man anonymously donating sperm. I loved each day suspending accounts on a whim, or, best of all, letting the tweet stand but robbing it of any power to be shared or seen (unbeknownst to the tweeter!)

i can still hear all the writhing screams I bottled in old milkman's glass

6

I called my office The Dead Letter Office and named my computer Bartleby. I read once about free speech absolutism but got too bored to finish. I thought a public square sounded weird.

7

Adagio? Huh? At this point? Imagine a Murakami character cooking pasta like only they can.

**8**

The pusillanimity of boiling

water

**9**

O, I like the transmigration of souls there, there  
when B shifts melodic minor

**10**

Oh, Lalo. Lalo Lalo Lalo.

That time Federico Garcia Lorca snuck ambrosia into your espresso.

Lalo, Lalo!

Mild remembering

heavy with forget

## Cord Cutting Ceremony, for My Ego

*Hadley Dion*

The circle opens with salt and prayer.  
Internal wounds exposed and I fall  
through my rib cage,  
into bathtub of ancestral moths. Flapping  
ragged wings against my collarbone. My body, bound  
in black rope, sings to a sacred power  
for relief. Gates within unlock,  
assuring I was the one who held every skeleton  
key.

Illuminated by lightning throat,  
the monster above me glitters. Her claws sharpened  
against my neck. My doppelganger dressed in velvet  
pity. The sickness  
I keep bottled, the embarrassment  
of self, the imposter  
image ingrained in every word.  
She is the poison haze on darkest day.

I breathe her in, forgiving this cruel self-  
hatred. And then release in empathy.  
Cut the knots I tied myself,  
each restraint I thought protected me,  
but only held me down. Kept me  
from living in a body they desperately want  
to own. I want it back.

In this waking hour, I rush to find myself  
in the mirror, wild eyed, holy, thorned,  
unabashed me.  
The circle closes, candles expelled  
and here I am  
sitting steady in the smoke.

## SAND

*Marta Barrio*

I put my fingers in the hot sand of the dune and close my hand, but the sand disappears between my fingers. I imagine being a gecko, a cold-blooded animal that needs the sun to survive. Everything is red through my eyelids. I sink my hand deeper into that sand, which burns when I walk on it. Beneath this earth are sacred wells, bronze hooks, and headless Roman ladies carved in marble. Once there was here a city with a port, and now there is a dune surrounded by ruins. First came the tsunami, then the corsairs, and what was left of the city was abandoned to the sand and the wind, which took care to hide it well. The port, I guess, was swallowed by the sea.

“Let’s play, come on, get up.” Miguel pushes me with his foot, and as he does so, he stains my clean towel with dirt. “Don’t be lazy”.

“Ok. Give me a minute”. I open my eyes and the August sun blinds me. I sit up, shake out the towel, and spread it out again.

First, to the funeral: I bury him, leaving only his face out, and walk five times around my little brother’s grave. My cousins imitate me, I am the oldest and therefore the chief of this tribe. For the time being, my reign is uncontested, there is no dissidence among my ranks. Then to the pirates and the mermaid: the mermaid, which is me, crosses her legs to imitate a tail and sits on a rock combing her hair. The pirates, who are the others, capture the mermaid, plunge a knife into her heart, cut her in half and sell her tail at the fish market, exposed on the ice bed on the counter, among the sea bream and red tuna loins. This is may well be their symbolic revenge for the tyranny that I exercise whenever I can. Lastly, to the snow: we climb to the top of the dune, which is almost a mountain, and descend the slope skiing and flipping, coated in the sand like croquette dough in breadcrumbs. It takes us a long time to go up, and very little to go down, because the fun things in life are the ones that last the least.

Miguel has to stop to rest at the foot of the dune. At some point during the day the inhaler has fallen out of his pocket, and it has surely already been engulfed by the sand, a glutton for lost objects and Phoenician relics, which covers everything as soon as you are not careful.

“The trip is over.” Mercedes folds the parasol.

“You’ve had enough fun already.” And my mother collects her notes. They sometimes understand each other without words, they are connected by a deep underwater current, that of blood and common fears.

It makes me angry, but maybe they're right, and it's time to go back, because my brother snorts like a camel exhausted from its journey through the desert, and my arms have the same color as the lifeguard's floats. I have forgotten to put on cream again. Tonight it will hurt, and tomorrow or in a couple of days the old skin will begin to fall off, I will take a corner of that translucent peel and pull it until it comes out whole.

Before leaving, it's time for the last bath, to say goodbye to the sea for today and wash off the sand before getting into the car. The flag is green, we can go to the deep. We jump the waves and it's like flying and I already want it to be tomorrow morning to jump them again. Water, in addition to being the origin of life, is the necessary condition for happiness.

"Are you wearing your seat belts?" My father drives, and I'm co-pilot; I unfold the map on my knees, and he starts the car. My great-aunt Mercedes, my brother (who is in the middle because he is, right now, the shortest), and my mother are squeezed into the back seats, I look in the rearview mirror and stick out my tongue at them. They fight back, each in their own way. In summer we all agree on one thing: and that is that we are always in a good mood. "If you do not focus, we will get lost".

"Turn over there." I follow the yellow line with my finger on the map, which is the one that will take us home, and I indicate the way. Three more cars are on our heels: we are a large and extended family of processional caterpillars, moving single file down the road.

## Bedsheets Hanged as Curtains

*Shaurya Pathania*

I've slept on a floor for months and  
in the same room lives a man on bed.  
The man is only twenty three in his IDs  
but his face looks old.  
He waits till the time of God (4 a.m.)  
to let his eyes rest for the day.  
He tries to talk to me once in a while,  
maybe he wants to know if I've metamorphosed  
into a man yet or not, if I've slept with  
few women around and started skipping baths.  
I laugh off the conviction mostly.  
I claim myself a boy only,  
I don't like being called a man.  
I once asked him about the time he left boyhood,  
*"when was it, how did you know?"*  
he pointed to the books and the dirty  
clothes by his bed,  
and he smiled and I laughed.  
I did not understand anything,  
neither did he care to explain.

**Covid Haze**  
*Ratón Moreno*

In the semen there runs a river; unto which I sank.

I wake up feeling a cold liquid against my ass—I run out and exfoliate. This was the beginning of my prospect.

At sur I suffer, holding in blows of qurundle.

“Canali-e-ro”

“Sight.”

Running thoudosey-dozee-dozae-dotes-and little rans peat pivee, yoowa juwa doo, wouldn’t you? Handing gee o griegis gou, I give it all upletting through with the water.

“Wan de pul?”

“Bis pen a dovee dani.”

“Pahahahaha por la fa!”

More and more and I feel okay—I dont feel okay.

Wanapani spoke the runder rere. Gasps lin the right. I sit in bit, get me outta here.

I jen gore; lord please puna the hinde. I turn around and magic non telestinthe thi en du france.

“Camanin.

Sarna.

” too overwhelming, oh jesus, oh god.

I run to la tall—ingu erg. Pansu rrrrr hie ta.

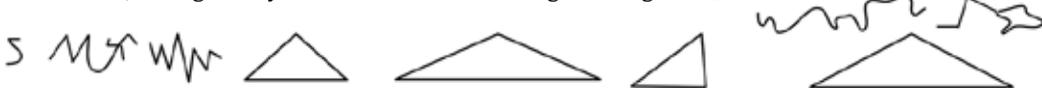
Tall spikes of shit arrive, rising from the wet ground and almost touching me—but it doesnt touch me. I turn the lever and water from outside goes in; his anus laps it all up like a dry dog—slightly prolapsing and lapsing like in-out-in-out.

The surtee spikes o’ shit roe down and e renla hunner. I dunnuh and lean over and promptly die.

On my back, I awoke trans-formed into a sick vermin like someone of once past. Mine hot and heavylundun screek my bones ache and tear out my nostrils. My face weak, cant move without lapping up. A soulsucker hucks my face when I move, no good at all.

PantingI feel heavy but I dont. Extreme heat sears my skin and burns all away.

Oh, who gives a *fuck*? Sernum E rainbiz o gotum r geesh Σ



A millenia past, and I feel better now—grey skies all about, an unfamiliar lump on the chest, and now England is dead (and it owes me a living), dead forever—(I dont remember finishing this)—(wider)—aergash.





## Dream

*Irina Tall (Novikova)*

In the white haze, in black spots, in the blizzard of time, in the fact that winter is coming, do not pronounce the names of the past, they are all shadows, they are all that cannot be told in words, adverbs and numbers.

About what happened, about what happened, be silent and forget ...

Crow-wing hair, red lips, brown eyes, a woman in a white-pearl suit leaned slightly towards the man through a berry handrail, and there were railroad tracks below and a road strewn with white groats.

Light burden of my time, dreams of the past...

A black short jacket with her hair pinned up with an invisible hairpin, a young girl, she sat down on a blue night seat cut with a golden ribbon, narrow and thin, similar to a cord used to catch unbroken horses ... A young, quite a boy in gray got up to give way to an elderly woman in black. A courier walked back with a square Yandex bag, white with a golden outline, such are only found on the rims of carriage wheels.

The building, gray and gloomy, littered with tiles, like grits, yellow and once white, unwashed and dirty, on the door, a white plate with half-erased faded letters "Polyclinic". Iron doors, black, heavy, sometimes difficult to open. A girl is standing near the entrance and measures the temperature. There is a mask on her face, a hat on her head, shoe covers on her feet and a transparent robe hides her body. She is like a formless being, sexless and devoid of herself, just a person who has turned into something else.

Inside, the corridor is flaky and dirty, looking like some kind of entrance to a distorted universe. Several benches are flat, a little cracked, on one sits an old woman with a long stick. She looks down and sighs strongly and drearily, a dark hat is on her head. A man passes by, slender and gray-haired. The woman looks back after him and sighs even more.

A green wall opposite and leatherette nailed with round silver nails, broken fragments with slits shine through the tree as old as the world and the building itself, an elderly woman in a green coat sneezes, there is a white mask on her face, she seems to be invisible and like angels.

A white lattice on a transparent plane, behind her is a gray-haired woman in a doctor's white coat, she is blowing a little from the iron front door and she is constantly wrapping herself in a gray shawl. A young woman with black hair and a heavenly waistcoat with goat lapels enters through a

slot in the door. She is in a hurry and literally flies into a fenced-off room with many maps of living people, a simple chronicle of diseases and treatment, losses and losses.

The building of the clinic is filled and the anus and mouth are emptied, it seems that some secret beast is devouring other people's souls, not escaping from another world. A man in a black crow's attire constantly says the word of farewell "good", refers to the old dictionary of peasant life, at the entrance to the greenery of the corridor stands a man in a black hat, a briefcase in his left hand, his senile eyes are narrowed, the light interferes with them. A woman in big dragonfly glasses comes out of the locked door, she says, like angels, "Come in who's next!"

Noise in the corridor and old age itself in a gray long coat is approaching the window, the face is hidden by the shadow of the hood. Long extinguished lamps rest on the ceiling, they died after one and rest with obstacles on the plane of gray panels. Innocent doomed procession, those coffins that are impossible to imagine.

They will not say words of passion, it is quiet and almost a crematorium here, something that cannot be told to that other person who will come after you, like generations succeeding each other.

# The Lioness Builds a Sand Castle

*Reyna Berry*

## **Scene One**

*The Lioness sits on stage in the sand.*

*Her tail flicks.*

*She yawns.*

*The Lioness scoops sand into a bucket.*

SUN

What are you doing, Lioness?

*The Lioness turns the bucket over onto the beach.*

LIONESS

I am building a sand castle.

SUN

Why?

LIONESS

Because the waves created the sand from the rocks and the rocks from the earth and the earth from the sky.

SUN

You didn't answer my question.

LIONESS

Didn't I?

SUN

No.

*The Sun looks worried.*

LIONESS

Sun, you look worried.

SUN

I'm not.

LIONESS

Sun, you look scared.

SUN

I'm not.

LIONESS

Then I am scared for you because you lie to yourself.

SUN

Stop playing this game.

LIONESS

There is no game.

SUN

Stop building your castle.

LIONESS

I will not.

SUN

Stop flicking your tail.

LIONESS

Do I make you nervous?

SUN

No.

LIONESS

It's just a little dance.

SUN

...

LIONESS

I'm dancing for you, Sun.

**Scene Two**

*Afternoon, and the Lioness continues building her sand castle.*

*The water is a little higher on the shore and the Sun a little lower in the sky.*

LIONESS

I spoke to your partner today.

SUN

...

LIONESS

I said, I spoke to your partner today.

SUN

What partner.

LIONESS

Don't act dumb. The Moon, of course.

SUN

I did not see you talk to the Moon.

LIONESS, *sighing*

You do not see anything.

SUN

I see all.

LIONESS

You do not see anything.

SUN

We were friends once.

LIONESS

We are friends now.

SUN

No. You are horrible to me now.

LIONESS

I am not.

SUN

You are.

LIONESS

And do you still shine, Sun? Do you still shine?

SUN

...

LIONESS

I want you to see it, Sun. I want you to see it all.

*Silence.*

*Sun?*

*The Sun has left.*

*It is now night.*

Oh dear.

*The Moon enters.*

MOON

Hmmm, it is much too early...

LIONESS

Tell the Sun.

MOON

She's left? Already? Oh no. Oh no.

LIONESS

What?

MOON

I'm not ready!

LIONESS

Of course you are.

MOON

I'm not!

*Lioness sighs.*

Hm. Who are you?

LIONESS

The Lioness.

MOON

But who are you?

LIONESS

You don't remember? We speak every day.

MOON

We do not!

LIONESS

Moon, do not the waves create the sand? And does not the tide create the waves?  
So you see, I have met you every day, Moon. We have spoken every day.

MOON

You speak nonsense. You craft riddles.

LIONESS

There is no riddle, only truth.

MOON

Then why do you speak so certainly? Truth is never certain! And why do you create  
a castle so near the waves?

LIONESS

Because I want to. Because it is my castle.

MOON

You are mad, certainly! You are mad!

*Moon exits.*

LIONESS

Well.

She continues her castle.

*A moment later, she pauses, and laughs.*

### **Scene Three**

*Early morning.*

*The Lioness rests next to a finished sand castle, exhausted.*

SUN

Are you happy with yourself?

*The Lioness turns and smiles tiredly.*

LIONESS

What do you mean?

SUN

Are you happy that you've won.

LIONESS

I haven't won anything.

SUN

The tide will come soon to wash it away. You work for nothing.

LIONESS

The Moon does not scare me. I have seen him every day. I know him.

*The Sun laughs meanly.*

SUN

You don't know a thing about the Moon. If you did, you would be scared of him.

*The Lioness tilts her head.*

LIONESS

Why be scared of what is known?

*The Sun realizes.*

SUN

You have built this castle before.

LIONESS

And you have not noticed.

SUN

You are mad, certainly.

LIONESS, sadly No, I am not.

*Beat. The Sun moves forward.*

SUN

Why are you on a beach, Lioness? Why did you build a sand castle so close to the waves, where it is fragile, where it is easily destroyed?

LIONESS

You don't see, you don't see.

*The tide is pulling closer.*

SUN

See what, Lioness?

*Even closer now.*

*The Lioness is quiet. Gently:*

See what?

LIONESS, *a whisper*

I built it for you, Sun. I built it all for you.

*The waves arrive.*

*One comes and eats a wall of the castle.*

*Another begins to swallow the whole thing up.*

SUN

No!

*She rushes towards the castle to protect it from the water.*

LIONESS

Let it be, let it be.

SUN, *teary-eyed & angry*

How?! How do you do this every morning, let it all be washed away?

Everything you have?

LIONESS

It is not everything. It is just a small piece. And I am willing to sacrifice it.

*The Sun sinks to the sand.*

SUN

For what? For *what*, Lioness?

*The world is very quiet.*

*The waves rush.*

*The Lioness reaches out a hand.*

*A breath. Two. Very slowly, the Sun reaches out hers.*

*Their fingertips touch.*

***End of Play.***

trick shot [head hand finger twitch]

*Valerie Drew*

not a *swoosh* or a *slide* or an *oh dear*

more like a j-j-j-j kind of anti-fluidity  
pliant like butter in your microwave, and i know who did it

pulling at my cuticles earthquaking  
friction between my little digits must be hothothot, OH!  
i'll tell you what my cousin-in-law said  
at dinner

he says "your hands are... nimble!"  
corbin they are seized by a fucking god now  
my body is weathering these hands are eroding

but the crackling feels sooo good needles to the wind  
forgive me girlies my fingers hath sinned  
don't lose your head it'll go left and right and around

and that's why it's called tic[k]s  
no body wants you, yet thou central target is epidermis, bone  
you wanna see the twins in tandem...? [ this is a command. ]

...

**whishwhishwhishwhish gggguhguh CRACK crck**

*This has been funded in part by girls at my first college.*

*As theirs were funded by girls in high school.*

*[and girls in middle school and elementary school and]*

Claude Cahun

*Marcel Moore*



## Contributors



**Peter Gutierrez's** (he/him) writing and art have appeared in numerous journals over the years, and links to his work can be found on Instagram [@suddenlyquiet](#). His collection of stories, *From Bad to Worse*, is forthcoming from Anxiety Press in the fall of 2023. He lives and works--both terms used loosely--in New Jersey.



**Linea Jantz** (she/her) is a freelance journalist with articles in publications including Singletracks, The Dyrst Magazine, and Trail Sisters Journal. She has worked in a wide range of roles over the years including waste management, medical records staff, teacher, and paralegal. She has poetry forthcoming in Thimble Literary Magazine, Last Leaves, and the Life's Wonders Anthology by Black Pear Press.



**Beth Brody** (she/her) was awarded an MFA in Writing for Children from Vermont College of Fine Arts and is currently doing post-graduate work in poetry. Beth won the 2018 Writer's Digest Poetry Award, placed second in the CT Poetry Society Nutmeg Awards 2023, and has poetry published in a dozen journals and anthologies. She was a Contributor in Poetry at the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference 2022. Beth's writing dream is to have her poems thumbtacked to a reader's bulletin board as daily inspiration.



**Nnadi Samuel** (he/him/his) holds a B.A in English & literature from the University of Benin. Author of *Nature knows a little about Slave Trade* (Sundress Publication, 2022). His works have been previously published/forthcoming in *Suburban Review*, *Seventh Wave Magazine*, *NativeSkin lit Magazine*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Quarterly West*, *Common Wealth Writers* & elsewhere. Winner of the Canadian Open Drawer contest 2020, & the International Human Right Arts Festival Award (IHRAF) New York 2021. He got an honorable mention for the 2022 Stephen A. DiBiase Poetry Contest.



**Shereen Rana** (she/her) is a devotee of poetry, nature, prehistory and literature. Having made permanent residence in all forms of art, she seeks to shape some herself. Her writing delves into feelings of loneliness, anxiety, nature, time—while also trying to evoke comfort. More of her writing can be found on [@pepsihalfimeshow](#) on tumblr and [@carnterm](#) on instagram!



**Ellen Zhang** (she/her) is a student at Harvard Medical School who has studied under Pulitzer Prize winner Jorie Graham, poet Rosebud Ben-Oni, and poet Josh Bell. She has been recognized by the 2022 DeBaKey Poetry Prize, 2022 Dibase Poetry Contest, and as 2019 National Student Poet Semifinalist. Her works appear or are forthcoming in Rappahannock Review, COUNTERCLOCK journal, Hekton International, and elsewhere. She can be found on instagram [@ln.writes](#).



**Sage Futrell** (she/they) is a college student from Virginia, US. They currently help out many of William & Mary's literary publications, including LIPS (a sexuality-themed zine) and the Dog Street Journal (a pop culture magazine). In the past, they have received accolades from the Scholastic Art & Writing awards for their poetry, along with publication in various litmags. Among their favorite poets are Elizabeth Bishop and Jason Reynolds. Aside from creating art, Sage enjoys antiquing and over-analyzing media.



**Rosalind Moran** (she/her) is a writer of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and plays. Her writing has appeared in The Guardian, Electric Literature, Prospect Magazine, and others. [@RosalindCMoran](#)



**Libby Harris** (she/her) reads English at the University of Cambridge. A writer of non-fictional prose and poetry, Libby's work has appeared or is forthcoming in Agave Review, essay magazine, CANVAS, and The Leaves. Though she journals obsessively, Libby mostly seems to write about fruits and vegetables. Frank O'Hara, Teju Cole, and Louise Glück are major influences.



**Amy Nash** has lived in every northern state between Massachusetts and Minnesota except for Wisconsin and Michigan, resulting in brackish poetry that mixes the Mississippi River with the Atlantic Ocean and everything between. Her poems have appeared in a range of journals and anthologies, including *If Bees Are Few: A Hive of Bee Poems* and *The Heart of All That Is: Reflections on Home*. She has given readings on Minnesota Public Radio and at various venues and events regionally and nationally, including Bowery Poetry in New York City. She is also the author of an [original poetry blog](#).



**Kelly Piggott** (she/her) is a lesbian writer and teacher based in Atlanta, and holds an MFA in Fiction from Georgia College and State University. Her writing has been published with *If There's Anyone Left*, *Dark Horses Magazine*, *Defunct*, *Eclectica Magazine*, and elsewhere. She can be found on twitter [@kellbellhells](#) and Instagram [@kellbellhells](#).



**Emma McGill** (she/her) is a creative from the Canadian prairies, currently studying English at the University of Regina. She spends her spare time listening to and playing music, reading, and writing in as many mediums as she can, including poetry, fiction and non-fiction stories, and articles. She is the first Canadian recipient of the Irene Adler Prize and contributes as a music writer to *Yuvaah* magazine. She loves to hide her niche philosophies and experiences in fiction and make the truth more approachable in non-fiction, experimenting with pieces of inspiration as they strike her.



**August Hawley** (he/him) is a trans man from Michigan who writes about gender, grief, hope, and where they intersect. Outside of writing, he works as a caretaker and spends his free time taking photos, making art, and learning instruments. He was previously a blogger for *Sunday Mornings at the River*, and has appeared in their Spring 2022 anthology, as well as their 2023 Poetry Diary.



**Charm Chandler** (he/it) is a graphomaniac from the Sunset Reality. He is the author of two nameless short stories, the both of which can be (un)found in *Fleas on the Dog* and *The Collidescope*. His poetic work can be found in *Vita Poetica* and underneath a different pseudonym (he does not encourage you to find it), *Poetic Sun*. When he is not writing, he is perpetually confused.



**Josephine Raye Kelly** (she/they) is a multidisciplinary artist and writer who feels most at home in redwood forests. Occupying vast and eclectic identities, their most recent project includes serving as an editor and community organizer with *Ouch!*, a queer art collective based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Their work has been published in various online and print magazines, including *The Spotlong Review*, *Bi Women Quarterly*, and *beestung*. Connect with them on the gram: [@jrk.dreamscape](#)



**Lillian G Lippold** (they/them) is an interdisciplinary writer obsessed with Place and Queer Utopia. Minnesota-born and SoCal grown, they're now NYC-based and have been published in many university pubs and other mags. Find them on Tiktok ([@libraryofililian](#)) or elsewhere ([@lillianglippold](#)). They definitely love you, too.



**Bobby Parrott's** universe frequently reverses polarity, slipping his meta-cortex into the unknowable dimensions between breakfast and adulthood. In his own words, "*The intentions of trees are a form of loneliness we climb like a ladder.*" Immersed in a forest-spun jacket of toy dirigibles, this queer writer dreams himself out of formlessness in the chartreuse meditation capsule known as Fort Collins, Colorado where he lives with his partner Lucien, their top houseplant Zebrina, and his hyper-quantum robotic assistant Nordstrom.



**Elizabeth Gade** is a Minnesota based bisexual poet and human trafficking survivor. Writing is her radical way to connect with fellow survivors. Her poems have been published in View Magazine, The Elevation Review, 300 Days Of Sun, Other Worldly Women Press & more. Elizabeth created [LEO Literary Journal](#), an online journal dedicated to women writers affected by incarceration. Connect with her on Instagram [@ElizabethGadeThePoet](#)



**Dylan Willoughby** (he/him) has poetry forthcoming in Conduit, and has appeared in Denver Quarterly and CutBank. He has been a fellow at MacDowell and Yaddo.



**Hadley Dion** (she/her) is a writer, audio editor, and filmmaker from Los Angeles. Her poems have been published or are forthcoming in Scapegoat Review, Anti-Heroin Chic, FreezeRay Poetry, Nixes Mate Review, Olney Magazine, and more. She spends her extra time volunteering at her local cat rescue and crafting punch needle rugs.



**Marta Barrio** (she/her) “When I was a little girl, my parents punished me without reading. When I grew up, I studied literature and Asian cultures, I became an editor, and a writer.” Fotos y videos de Instagram [@marta\\_barrio](#)



**Shaurya Pathania** (he/him) is a student of MA English at University of Delhi. He likes to sleep, eat and do nothing most of the time. He has a keen interest in poetry. Few of his works are published in Synchronized Chaos, Drip Lit, The Chakkar Magazine and elsewhere. You can reach out to him [@shauryapathania](#) on Instagram.



**Ratón Moreno** (he/him) “I am a 17-year-old dude from the greater Los Angeles area. I spend most of my time reading, watching movies, writing, and thinking. I live with my parents who have a taco catering business that I help out with and my 12-year-old dog Penelope.”



**NDR** (she/her) is a photographer based in Robin Hood country making Portraiture; street & conceptual photography. “I work from a natural light studio in a small town off the A1... Photography is my third child, my obsession, my class A. It is a privilege to improve upon a passion and to have someone other than myself enjoy it too ~ I never take that for granted. When I am not hustling for business I love to make conceptual and street photography - I have been working on a street project for some time now called #The Comfort of Strangers 30 Seconds of Street Portrait.” [nicoladavisonreed.com](#)



**Irina Tall (Novikova)** (she/they) is an artist, graphic artist, illustrator. She graduated from the State Academy of Slavic Cultures with a degree in art, and also has a bachelor's degree in design. The first personal exhibition “*My soul is like a wild hawk*” (2002) was held in the museum of Maxim Bagdanovich. In her works, she raises themes of ecology, in 2005 she devoted a series of works to the Chernobyl disaster, draws on anti-war topics. The first big series she drew was The Red Book, dedicated to rare and endangered species of animals and birds.



**Reyna Berry** (she/her) is an actor, writer, and current high school senior in Virginia. She has loved storytelling from a very young age and will be studying theatre and literature in college. Reyna has received one Silver Key and five Honorable Mentions from the Scholastic Writing Awards and has published work in Reveille literary magazine, ARTEMISpoetry, and The Closed Eye Open. Her poem “Season of Red and Gold” was selected for reading at the 2021 Poe Film Festival. In February 2023 she wrote a blog post for Arena Stage’s The B-List, called “What is Voices of Now?” [Reyna Berry Website](#)



**Valerie Drew (she/they)** is a queer, autistic creative. She plans to begin her Creative Writing BA in the fall. They have pieces in or forthcoming in Hot Pot, Delicate Friend, and dadakuku. Other than writing, she loves animation, film, and Helga Pataki. Find out more on hter blog: [helgaki.crd.co](#).

