



CARNIVAL

# CARNIVAL

AN ONLINE LITERARY MAGAZINE

POETRY EDITOR  
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[www.carnivalitmag.com](http://www.carnivalitmag.com)

ISSN 2164-2575

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“His veins were dark with a vivid belladonna tincture, the essence of jealousy.”

— *Charlotte Bronte*

“It snowed last year too: I made a snowman and my brother knocked it down and I knocked my brother down and then we had tea.”

— *Dylan Thomas*

*Editor's Note*

This was supposed to be a jealousy-themed issue, but it didn't quite work out that way. Jealousy and jealousy-themed pieces are, however, layered throughout.

## **Railway Shooting**

They put me on the stand to put him away,  
but he was defending himself,  
accusing me of being a coward  
because I held on to that woman.  
Said I used her as a shield  
when the shooting started. I took  
three bullets—one just below my belt,  
one in my leg, and one in my side—  
they thought I'd die from all the blood.  
It soaked my pants like I'd peed myself;  
the warm was a strange comfort.  
The woman got shot too, just once  
in the shoulder. Six people were killed  
and nineteen of us wounded. Such  
sounds were coming from that train.  
Someone yelled, "Oh, my God!"  
Then the shots, the screams, the pleas,  
but everything went silent when  
he stood over me, staring down,  
pointing that gun right at me,  
looking at me like I deserved to be shot,  
the same look he gave me in court  
before the judge stopped him.  
Then he fired and the silence broke.  
"Are you alright? Are you alright?"  
she kept asking as we held on  
to each other like kids afraid of the dark.  
I couldn't answer, couldn't speak,  
words just wouldn't come out.  
Next thing I remember they were  
taking me away: "You'll be alright, buddy.  
Hang in there." And I'm thinking,  
This must be a movie. Then,  
with the pain, I passed out.  
It's been several months now.  
I'm doing much better,  
but I want to talk with that woman,  
tell her I didn't pee my pants,  
thank her for letting me hold on,  
for asking, like the judge, if I was alright.

— *Ronald J. Pelias*

## the end of a career

she abstains from interviews  
& prefers not to talk about  
her fleeing the ultra scene,  
last seen carving a single track  
thru the Sierra Nevadas  
in a tight race w/ dusky earth,

flushed cheeks & nobody  
else in sight to  
threaten the win at mile  
48 w/ four to go.

*ferocity*, the article pronounces,  
as if a word could  
validate the passion, obsession,  
the lunacy which brings a person  
thru 100 miles w/ frequency enough  
to diminish the magnitude  
& so efficiently as to nearly  
eclipse the accomplishment.

at their prodding, all she would say  
is that she's "not running, &  
it's hard to talk about it."  
so they let her be, & the article  
was kind, nostalgic, tentative.

I'd like to say that I  
understand just what she means,  
that I can sympathize w/  
her self-exile. I'd like to think  
I'd do the same, given  
such circumstances.

but it takes an impossibly  
stepped heart, a reasoning beyond  
a headline's encapsulation,  
to stop running  
before given a chance  
to catch even a fleeting view  
from the summit.

— Heath William R.

## **Dandelion Boy**

Dandelions,  
    he thought,  
        would placate her,  
with sun and green  
    and supple dew on the nose.

A foliate penitence.

She hides  
    behind  
the silver poplar,  
                    brooding  
in what she would  
    later call  
                    a Byronic fashion.

Leaf whispers  
    mask his tread,  
and his right hand  
    moves behind his back.

I brought you dandelions,  
    sorry for eating the last khrustyky.

She takes the sticky  
    bundle  
        from his hand  
and pops the golden manes  
    off,  
one by one,  
                    with her thumb.

Go away,  
    idiot.  
Tell Mom to  
    make more just for *me*.

He nods,  
    and feels stems hit his head  
                    as he turns around.



She strokes  
the head

— *Lauren Marshall*

## **Stones**

I.

Zach and I would always wake up  
an hour or two before my parents  
and walk out the front, careful  
not to let the screen door bang  
too loud, since we all slept in the same room.

At first, we both would fish off the dock  
for perch and the occasional pike,  
right up until our shallow stock  
bucket filled up with too many squirming bodies,  
their scales shining like water in the morning sun.

He didn't know how to clean  
the fish, so that was left up to me;  
the knife found its own way  
through the scales and the guts  
the bones of the spine  
crunching as it went. I wasn't supposed  
to drop the offal into the river, but  
sometimes I would, just to watch  
the rock bass nibble at it as it dropped  
like a stone.

II.

I wanted to be like them, Zach and Chris,  
tall and cool, talking about girls as if they knew  
the secret to the world beyond our backyard.

I would let them tie me up in the garage,  
lock the doors, and wait to see how long  
it took me to give up or get out.  
I never gave up, and they called me Houdini.

We three would explore the gravel pits  
behind my house, and me being the best  
climber, they would say *Go down*  
*to the bottom. We'll wait up here.* I found  
a piece of foam the size of my body  
and Chris yelled down that I  
should hold it up, and he would use it

as a target, throwing rocks. I did.  
And when the rock hit me,  
glittering stars like fish swam around my head  
and there was blood in my mouth.  
My pride cracked like a stone.

III.  
When Zach and I went back there,  
after the stub of one tooth had been wrenched  
from my jaw by a dentist with a German name,  
and I had a brand new hard-scale resin tooth  
on a pink resin flipper, we couldn't find my lost bone.

Maybe it had been scooped up  
by bulldozers, delivered to the rock crusher.

Or maybe I had swallowed  
it, and still it sits in my stomach  
like a stone.

— *Corey Pentoney*

## **Bruno Wants**

Bruno wants to watch another cartoon  
And I say no.  
Bruno wants his pacifier  
And I say no  
Bruno wants to go to the movies...  
He wants another toy  
He demands fast food  
And I say no.

I have homework to do  
Dishes to wash  
Laundry to do  
But Bruno wants mommy to play with him  
And I shouldn't, but I have to say yes.

— *Ana-Lia Marinelli*

## **Bed Sheet Forts**

we should have stopped building forts when we were kids  
the couches will never survive this torture

the bed sheet ceilings cave  
and my blood boils lava hot  
as when I begrudgingly became a woman

finding that every milestone is a millstone

like braced bowed legs  
picket fenced teeth spit  
in the sink with showers of gums in sweaty dreams

— *Marcella Benton*

**Waiting in Line at McDonald's**  
**I Clearly Perceive the Need for Education Reform**

Teenage boy at one table,  
putting the moves on a teenage girl  
at a table nearby:

*My uncle gave me the Harry Potter movie  
for Christmas, and I watched it  
fifty-two times the same day.*

The girl scowls without looking up  
from her fries. And says,

*There's not even that many hours in a day.*

*I know*, he says, picking something  
from his braces,

*I had to stay up all night.*

— Lowell Jaeger

## **Six Feet Tall**

Her laugh sounds like sobbing  
*ha huh huh huh*  
and it kicks her head back  
like a horse rearing.

She was both man and woman  
upon exiting her mother's womb  
and womanhood won in the form  
of estrogen.

She says her boyfriend says  
he doesn't mind her infertility.  
She says it's nice not worrying  
and that they were made for each other.

But when I pop my BCP  
at three-thirty every day,  
she takes time with her poutine,  
squishing curds between her fingers.

In the pub bathroom she furiously  
kisses our bi-sexual friend,  
because her boyfriend knows  
and doesn't mind.

— *Lauren Marshall*

## Curious About Her Closet

No secrets revealed  
despite the opening of zippers, buckles and laces.  
Hieroglyphics of negligees remain unsolved.  
Are these shoulder pads?  
Is this a scarf?  
Bras and panties, wooly socks and nylons:  
how much of this do they wear out of the womb?

Hangers hum to your frisking fingers.  
Dresses high five each other.  
Blouses wrap around skin.  
Slacks are different from your own—  
you sense it—a pleat here,  
a narrowness there perhaps—  
no that's not it.

You forage through her bewildering closet  
When you are done, you're still a man.

— *John Grey*



## **An Unsolved Mystery**

I saw a man  
Photographing trash  
In an alley  
Between Queen and Prince streets  
Intrigued  
I walked towards him  
As he finished  
Lying on the ground  
Were two empty plastic wrappers  
Labeled butt plugs  
With a receipt from a local sex shop  
Being a bit naive  
I couldn't help but wonder  
What the fuck is a butt plug  
Who purchased two  
And why couldn't they wait  
Until they got home  
To open them?

— *Richard Boas*

## **Tumor**

I thought it was a callus  
but it's you still stashed under my skin

I scrubbed you off till my knees bled miscarriages  
I wanted to keep

you  
and my body did  
squirreled you away like a tumor

just some tiny version of you  
scratching my skin thin as worn out linen

you are  
of course

malignant

taking over unknown parts of me

unknown to you  
out somewhere in the dark  
shoveling into someone else like coal

— *Marcella Benton*

A curve of wife, cruel storm of shadows, a thousand images they wet by in a dream and take away your headache, the storm crawls near on electric alligator switchblade that the wife holds dear to her black mass, a collapsing shadow box there in her chest of oranges and rainbow antennae, as in a deeper thirst of rose thorns and barbed wire and electric lines, her power is but a massive growth she has learned to carry, and watching her eyes roll back while she is destroying with her trimming scissors neatly plucking at the dead leaves of those trees, to stray here is the wandering heart she cannot yet destroy in full, because tarp shaped clowns wander up St. Claude watching the hours at great clocks made of tin foil and shoelaces, sheep skin and barnacles. A curve of the wrist, creole tongues lapping at the great water, tinsel, fish, pearl medallion drooling America, and neon, and blue hair from their stomachs, their shrimp guts, their intestine, baked in flour, flopped and grilled, and fried and powdered. A yellow righteousness, crazed, insistent on gravy, and winning cheap shots of neon, and America, and blue hair. spin wheels rotating fabric space, thin circles round and round big white swooping throwing wheels, rotating, revolving and the place spins passed, hair all a retard.

Curling snack, snack, snack, snack, curling rondevoie, and let it be known the turns, trigger fine hairs, speak a language under umbrella laughter, curling back a cloud or hay, a chimney or a mule, for a fourth night in paradise.

— *Zachary Scott Hamilton*

## **Sextina I**

I never had sex  
Where my soul moved  
And my mind sparked and my heart  
Sunk in, falling  
Deep as you sank in deep into my parts  
And I

Never had eyes  
Look into me as yours and my sex  
And other God given hedonistic parts  
Moved  
Into, along-side, outside each other and we fell  
Into each, other's hearts.

And like war drums, savage beats are born in our hearts  
As our bodies sigh and aye,  
I concur that indeed our current actions may fall  
Into the same category as declarations of war, our sex  
Launching a thousand ships to sail, to move  
Into unknown lands, your body, my body and all other parts-

Parts  
I never knew did this, felt that. Yes, my heart  
Included; I did not know the heart could move  
In such a way and the tears in my eyes,  
That I cry, is not from the realization of previous wasted sex  
But that I could have fallen

Into your embrace instead of falling  
Onto some other blunt flesh blade that had parted  
My sex  
And my naïve heart  
Into something I  
did not recognize any longer. When I looked at myself there was no movement.

I was a spoiling pond, still movements  
On the surface and Fall  
Leaves are the only creators of any stirrings I  
could possess. I realize now, what sets you apart  
is how you make love with your heart.  
Not simply using movement as a tool for greater sex.

My, Dear heart, I  
Never had sex  
Like how you parted and moved in me.

— *Ryan-Sally June*

**Beauties** (for MICKALENE THOMAS | Le déjeuner sur l'herbe: les trois femmes noires)

A defiance  
Multiplied by three

Copper and Gold and Brass  
They shimmer, sitting on the pastiche fabric grass  
And shine and sparkle even though it's night.  
Or maybe it's the sun, setting right behind them.

Like forbidden fruit,  
There are three orange flowers  
A Dionysian picnic  
Infused by the red of the blood  
And the fiery gold of Helios;  
The flower, offered not to us.

They keep staring,  
Waiting for us to leave  
Telling us  
That this moment is not ours to take.

— *Ana-Lia Marinelli*

## **Jailbird**

can't keep you off my lips  
when did you become such an outlaw  
stealing into my feather bed pen  
swooning broke  
to the tune of this maladied melody  
singing jailbird jailbird  
maybe you'll trade your cage for me

— *Marcella Benton*

## **Jealous Blues**

my red-hot mama  
looking at another  
leaves me

red-hot  
and steaming  
dreaming of a knife

what's miz foxy got  
that's so red-hot  
used to be mine

now it's not  
and everything I  
touch burns

skin of cinders  
everywhere I look  
stings leaves me tender

red-eyed and seeing red  
wanting to strike hard  
while the metal's

red-hot

everything leaves me  
spitting out bitter ash  
everyone leaves me

leaves me  
red hot

— *Melissa Cannon*



## Coffee

i wish i didn't need you,  
but each morning  
i wake up alone and tired and  
needing  
something, anything  
to push me out of bed, out of  
sleep's gravity  
into entropy's frenzy,  
taking pieces of my soul

and you fit inside my palm,  
molding to my skin,  
warming me  
through icy mornings,  
dilating my eyes, making  
my blood beat  
a bit faster,  
letting my fingers fly until.  
crash.  
boom.

the post lunch

d

r

o

p

when time thickens into  
a slow march  
through sleepiness'  
sticky swamps, yearning to  
pull me under.

later at night, when my eyes  
stare into the dark,  
i swear i'll never  
touch you  
again.

but the alarm rings  
too soon, too loud.  
suddenly,  
nothing sounds as sweet  
as your name.

— Katie Simpson

## **The Return of Smoking**

I wanted a cigarette today more  
than I think I've wanted anything  
in months. Years, maybe.  
I wanted you but didn't think  
I'd really get you  
and it turns out  
I didn't.

But I can walk to the corner and  
get a pack of cigarettes.

Too bad it's so difficult  
to find a place  
to smoke these days.  
I guess I'd have to sit in my car.

I suppose I could drive to the beach  
and roll down the window  
and put my feet up on the dashboard  
and smoke whatever I wanted.

Only I know I can never do that.  
Ruthie says "they don't own the west"  
but you do. You and your Avenue A  
sweetheart. What would I do if  
with my feet up and my cigarette searing

I saw you walking  
her ridiculous dog?

I know I have to give you up.  
Just like I talked myself out  
of buying cigarettes by repeating  
*heart disease* to myself,  
the same could apply to you.

Time to get used to loneliness.  
Time to come to grips  
with flying solo from here on out.  
Time to understand that no one  
cares whether I smoke or not,  
walk around the corner or not,

sit at the beach or not,  
ever come home.  
I see my two cigarette-holding fingers poised  
and ready, and feel for their emptiness.  
*Sorry, pal*, I think;  
there's always tomorrow.

— *Terry Ann Wright*

## Family Vacation

It's where heaven got most of its ideas:  
the beach, half pebble, half sand,  
the unwitting eternity of waves,  
back and forth, back and forth,  
and beyond the shore, the village,  
narrow main street, quaint shops,  
the sainted smell of fudge,  
and the candied window  
that offered a child's eye view  
into the heart of its maker.

And, in the rented cottage,  
it's where memory overtook  
the date on Mo's Garage Calendar,  
my mother talking honeymoon,  
my father, fish,  
and grandpa reminiscing  
of the time he met his wife  
by the painted ponies of the carousel

It's where we parted ways each morning,  
one with rod and reel,  
one to swim,  
one to poke about the souvenir stores,  
one to sit upon a bench,  
resume his warm communion with the tides.

It's where we reconvened come twilight,  
to put us back together,  
with sea bass, damp trunks,  
a mermaid painted on a shell,  
and a grin big as the day,  
as a hundred days just like this.

Even I remembered the year before  
so vividly, so madcap wet and salty wild,  
so sweet on the tongue,  
my first time looking back  
in a life that was all forward.

— *John Grey*

**Storm** (for George Inness, Medfield Landscape or Clearing, 1865)

The frame  
Like something right off  
My grandmother's wall  
    Painted in a pastel green  
    Her ceiling peeling off

Gold and thick,  
Telling me: this painting is important

The frame  
Almost more important  
Than the image itself.

Inside,  
Thick, bursting and plump  
Like something off  
My Buenos Aires Microcentro sky  
Full and black, transforming  
Taking over the landscape  
That a few seconds ago  
Was pastel yellow hints  
cotton candy, dancing in the breeze  
Of the sunset sunlight.

I've seen these too, as a child  
On our way to our summer holiday  
Splattered in the sky of  
Argentina, the country side  
Hardly moving  
Over grass eating, free roaming, sunbathing cows.  
A time when looking out a window  
Was like practicing slow art.

— *Ana-Lia Marinelli*

## **A Man Named Child**

I once had a way in through the side door;  
there are no more yellow noons; sloth and slug;  
bombs made of sharp bones are kept in the house made of fragile marrow;  
the best of my bliss was crude bliss at best;  
I'll die my death hopefully slowly—  
it's what I deserve [all those I have forsaken];  
may my big baby brother remove me  
from this prominent permafrost of the mind?—

born into a suburban world of blonde on blonde violence  
and the snobben psuedorich—

you spoke of Eve's ribcage;  
I was the town drunk of the Endless Summer  
of the first summer of the Millennium,  
moonshine brandishing bright as the palest moon—  
bright as the brightness of the multitude of Epiphanies  
that were to come to me, through my suffering, years later;  
thoughts of our common duality and poetic mindrot,  
or Manmade and Universal realities;  
all here, all had under the sky mostly blocked  
by the of branches of anemic suburban trees.

— *Heath Brougher*

## Signs and Portents

In the bluing sky of dawn  
in the park where I walk in concrete circles  
the moon rises.

*O moon, o goddess, help me.*  
Even as I say it, I know  
there is no goddess of the moon.

There are no spirits in the trees,  
no God who cocks his head  
or Demon Lover who helps orchestrate justice.

The nine of cups: the solution will  
either break my heart  
or be impossible to carry out.

Thanks a lot, tarot cards.  
But that's what I get  
for looking for signs and portents everywhere.

There should be a ritual for the end of a relationship.

Something more primal and more final  
than driving that sad circle between your  
house and your lover's.

A month out of time:

white rose petals scattered on your walkway;  
steak, pork fat, and bourbon;  
a corkscrew, a guitar, and scrolling lyrics.

You poured battery acid on the earlier days  
and set them on fire. All that's left  
are these browning petals

I shoved into a pocket one day,  
a totem against the inevitable.  
Back to more minor rituals:

walking in circles, crossing days off  
with heavy black ink, trying to find promises

in thin air that it's worth the effort  
to begin again.

— *Terry Ann Wright*



## **A Plushen World**

At the helm of an aimless vessel,  
twist contort and rise; trading  
honey for kisses as we are hungry for kisses  
laid to the lips—iffy, steering wild,  
the no-stale thick liquid ooze  
until we petrify  
halfway up and down the atmosphere,  
silverless dots nonexistence, the suiciders  
have slat so may wrists, taken so may risks,  
so we bleed like air bleeds when the air is bleeding;  
at the helm of an aimless vessel,  
twist contortion rise up to a yellowrose,  
coming up contortion twists, silverless nonexistence nips,  
at the frozen blood halfway up the sky  
we petrify and love these suicides.

— *Heath Brougher*

Appearing and disappearing, this gate  
you wave between one hand  
after the other and doves on cue

break through the way each flourish  
opens midair, is helped along  
clearing the rooftops, palms up

—on your back as the aimless path  
that has such low windows  
—from nowhere, no longer white

each stone is closing its wings  
letting go the sky, the graves  
and just as suddenly your shoulders.

— *Simon Perchik*

## **Hypnopompia**

During the unconnected moment  
when darkness lets go and thought  
breaks the horizon, a rocket ship  
could not bridge the distance  
between any sense and objects  
outside skin. The costume and role  
need nothing from the embedded body.  
The rays from passion define the world  
and engagement embraces blank sheets.  
Waiting for feet to be thrown  
from the bed to certainty, emotion  
scorches every muscle behind lids  
and marches from cranium to toes  
carrying bones for torches to rouse  
farmer and slicker to arms and legs.  
Desire rages, turning to ash  
undeserving neighborhoods  
along the way. (Compromise  
hasn't been invented: The butt  
for the mid-day jokes can walk  
onto the movie set with a grin.)  
Once a sole human hits the floor,  
sublimation fleshes out the details  
with thumb whorls and taste buds.

— *Rich Murphy*

## Hypnagogia

When the head looks behind  
to rest, accomplishment  
or achievement feathers  
falling asleep. Any semiconscious  
compositions paste hope  
to the forehead for the morning  
mirror. Atlas can encourage  
progress enough to a point  
to ignore the critic and villain  
entering the room at night.  
An effort that exhausts muscles  
also weights brows and weakens  
lids open for business so  
that the skull could sleep  
on a curbstone: An emergency  
exit padlocked. Ditch diggers  
rejected the shovel-leaner long ago.  
However, a half-baked idea  
or a loafer in the garden  
for an hour ensures insomnia:  
The prince suffers a pea  
when in the soup on a mattress.  
The ceiling cursor winks word-ready.

— *Rich Murphy*

## Genetics

Be transient. Pass in silence:  
the gene pool is the skin

of a zebra, striped black and white,  
rippled, ripening like a banana.  
You remind me of your mother:

number two pencils, justice,  
redemption, black garbage bags in

shopping carts, beer-crusted bottles,  
dented cans, crumpled lottery tickets,  
used condoms wrapped in the American flag,

potential, the town of your birth.  
Wings are chaos in symmetry.

Sandpaper burns as rough  
against your fingers as you allow.

— *James Croal Jackson*

## **Clear & Intelligent**

Motorbike's lights bend light at speed  
While Pill symbols lean into curves, into  
Night roads that lead nowhere as  
Neon frosts the broken streets.

The circles predict we'll destroy this all again  
Matured habits, primal instincts.  
Rebuild on bones with ones and zeroes  
Patterns create complicated codes

Clear & Intelligent gonna come you know  
Gonna come destroy what you know

Neo cities, future's dirty diamond  
Pressurized from a prehistoric past.  
Eventually even the skyscrapers decay,  
And they'll lie  
Me in digital graves.

Some'll pray to their Stoned age messiahs,  
Medieval magic, and answers with violence.  
And from the clouds comes the summoned god, but  
He aint no match for the

Clear & Intelligent don't you know  
Clear & Intelligent gonna come destroy what you know

— *Eric Mattson*

## **Change or Die**

Nobody likes a fat girl.  
Do I want to live?  
It all depends.  
"Change or die".  
I appreciate your loving advice.  
Enough of your doubt and disdain.  
Enough of your sneers and snickers.  
Enough.

Round is a shape,  
In case you didn't know.  
*Change or die:*  
Words barely carved in stone.  
Don't take this the wrong way—  
You're fat too.

— *Sarah Gurney*

## **bacteria**

“all this scrubbing &  
scrubbing & scrubbing,”  
he says, “w/ soap that’s  
ninety-nine point-nine  
percent effective  
in wiping out the  
persistent little fuckers.”

& finds it most interesting,  
he tells me, that nobody  
else seems to have realized,  
as he appears to have  
realized, that this  
remaining point-one percent  
could simply be  
Earth’s subtle method  
of scrubbing clean  
its filthy hands of us.

— *Heath William R.*



## **Psychobabble**

Prefabricated Tower of Babel riddle  
that creates and devours itself  
every instant it lives

— *Thomas Piekarski*

## January Frostbite

It's snowing and you're walking ahead of me  
People are looking at me  
or you  
but probably me  
(I don't know why)  
from behind curtains that make their faces look like half-moons  
You're running  
and maybe moving erratically  
I get the feeling that you're trying to lose me  
but I have the key to the apartment  
are you trying to freeze to death?

— *Jeston Dulin*

## Everything Slides

Off the bed and onto the floor  
starting with the comforter  
fluffy and stuffed with dead birds  
and now my feet are cold

and when I turn over  
the thick green quilt  
a memory of my mother's mother's mother  
falls slowly into a crumpled heap on the rug  
at the foot of the bed  
the rug that my wife bought  
at a rummage sale last summer  
the one with the stain in the corner  
and the little white flowers.

Shivers run up my legs  
raising hairs and goosebumps  
under my pajamas that are too small.  
All that's left now is the persimmon  
sheet, wrapped around me like a cold  
hug

when suddenly, the sheet is unwinding  
from my body, spiraling away  
pulled by some invisible force to join  
its brothers in the pile  
and I'm left with nothing but pajamas  
shaking in the winter air.

Before I have time to get comfortable  
with the chill  
before I can sidle up to my wife  
share the blankets on her side of the bed  
my body loses its grip on the bottom sheet  
on the mattress  
and tumbles to the floor with a crack  
of my ribs into the hardwood.

The unwound sheet is the first to come  
back, to bind me to the floor and add  
its warmth to mine, then the quilt  
and the comforter snake their way back over

me. The shivers are gone so I stare  
at the ceiling and wonder how my pillow feels  
all alone in my bed  
with my wife.

— *Corey Pentoney*

## Italian Eyes

Your eyes spoke  
a language I understood,

the only rope stretching  
between us, everything else

separated by a universe  
and droves of years.

Your tall, dark and handsome  
youth wanted me in a big way

and a bigger way when I sat alone  
as my husband meandered into the w.c.  
and you gave me a moment of you.

I pushed to ignore the short-lived  
intensity of our magnetic attraction

because in the end it wouldn't matter,  
but as a woman entering her sixth decade

your desire ripped me from my complacency,  
until there in The Naples airport you put on your

sunglasses and wheeled your suitcase out  
from baggage claim, turned around

and slid them to the tip of your nose,  
licked your lips from side to side,

smiled and walked outside, thrusting into your  
world and sending me back into mine.

— *Diana Raab*

## **Smoke and Mirrors**

There was a sign, a feeling, a premonition running through my body, telling me to check his laptop even when I thought it was wrong and it made me feel controlling and insecure, but I gave in because I knew that I only had till he returned from work before he realized his mistake of leaving his e mail on, and I told myself that at least I would know the answer to my question, and maybe it was not what I thought, and that would be a good thing. An invisible hand had me by the throat, making it hard to breathe. My hands felt sweaty and cold, and my stomach felt like I was being stabbed, over and over again. I was in pain, but I couldn't throw up. Then I found it, the letter that would confirm what I already knew in my heart. Lines and lines of words that he never used with me, that I had never heard him say but surely she did before I met him: his phone number, her phone number, not hers but her mom's in case her husband was in town, and a promise to be lovers whenever they were in the same city. I knew he would deny it, so predictable. But the words were there, for my eyes to read, with a time stamp and a real name, as in "not in my mind", and a number I could haunt, if I felt like it. That's when I knew, in my heart. I was done.

— *Ana-Lia Marinelli*

## **Cracker's Place**

Bins of arms, bins of legs.  
Shelves of heads and headless  
torsos. Replacement lashes.  
Doll paint. Doll wigs.

Most pieces snap-fit.  
Takes a special hooked rod to rubberband  
transplanted appendages  
which Eileen, proprietor, manages  
with a surgeon's dexterity,  
her arthritic knuckles nimbly  
stitching whole whatever's torn.

Cracker limping about the aisles  
on mismatched forelegs and hind legs  
as if pieced from castoff parts.  
Sway-backed. Gut ballooned.  
His whiskered chin twitching  
a fool's toothy grin.

I stumble in from the cold  
suddenly, a streetkid dripping rain,  
wide-eyed and blinking in the dim.  
Walls of glass eyes, smiling.  
*Come in*, said Eileen. *Come in, come in.*

— Lowell Jaeger

## Woman Charged

Fawns are so cute. I just added a touch.  
I was taking good care of it. Put it  
in my car when it was hurt, wrapped  
its wound, gave it blankets for the ride.  
I kept it in the yard while I nursed it  
back to health. It learned to take food  
from my hand. It would come running  
when I opened the gate. Her eyes grew  
soft with appreciation, took me in.

Then, I just couldn't give it up.  
I didn't think one pair of zircon-studded  
earrings would cause such a fuss.  
I can't believe that I'm being charged  
with illegally possessing a wild animal.  
They let those hunters shoot them  
but I can't dress one up a bit for the holidays.  
They say it's animal cruelty. What's cruel  
is keeping me from my calling,

keeping me from going to her. This brown  
coloring on my face and these long lashes  
made her feel more at ease. I'd wear the skins  
so we could hide behind those few trees.  
I only wore the antlers one time. Stomping  
and kicking up the dirt must be what got  
my neighbor's attention. That's when  
she called the police, that's when I saw  
my baby's little wound begin to bleed.

— *Ronald J. Pelias*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Beauties” was first published by the Chicano Latino Association at the Claremont Colleges in “Almas Unidas: Nuestra Vision.” Also, “Do you remember Rebecca Resnik?” previously appeared in *Quail Bell*.

## CARNIVAL