

# CARNIVAL Literary Magazine



©1999 Denny E. Marshall

©1999 Denny E. Marshall

# CARNIVAL

AN ONLINE LITERARY MAGAZINE

POETRY EDITOR  
Shannon Phillips

All Work © Respective Writers, 2015

[www.carnivalitmagazine.net](http://www.carnivalitmagazine.net)

ISSN 2164-2575

## CONTENT

### CONTRIBUTORS

### ARTWORK

#### *Page*

- 1 Behind the Billboard (cover) | *Denny E. Marshall*
- 4 The Set Up | *Allen Forrest*
- 40 Femme Noir 4 | *Allen Forrest*

### POETRY

- 5 Oblique
- 6 Books, Bourdon, and Blues—and The Cure to Writer's Block
- 7 My Son's Eyes
- 8 After a Fashion
- 9 If Poetry is Parked Car
- 10 untitled
- 11 Summer maid
- 12 "We Eat"
- 13 Li Bo and the Long Homerun
- 14 Titian: *Venus and Adonis*
- 15 Twin Revolutions
- 16 For me, she said
- 17 The Orchid House
- 18 Church in the Rain
- 19 Midnight
- 21 When the Saints Go Marching
- 23 Will we go on cruises when we're really, really old?
- 25 Tourists
- 27 Annika
- 28 Good Friday Morning
- 29 Adolph Erbslon: *The Red Skirt*, 1910
- 30 Waiting is the Hardest Part
- 31 In a Village in Eastern Turkey
- 32 South of the Border
- 33 Dear Leg Man
- 34 Sediment
- 35 Cherry Tree
- 36 Therein Lies the Sweetness
- 37 Looking Glass Figurine
- 38 Still Life with Apple
- 39 White Lights Flicker Indecision





**Oblique** | Joan Colby

A fossil captured in amber  
where the pirates of time  
demand ransom. The apparel

Of the hillsides drawn in black ink  
as darkness evolves  
in the wild grape and sumac.

A basket of napkins that fall  
onto the lawn where a picnic  
is being laid out.

One blink and a dog races across  
a meadow. Fixed on prey, it will not  
obey. So that's that.

The motionless swing on the porch.  
A Luna moth pasted  
against the screen.

**Books, Bourdon, and Blues—and The Cure to Writer's Block | Forrest Evans**

You came around and made everything magic.  
Dandelions were like fireworks;  
and smoke was a trace of that  
something spectacular happened.  
I'm exhausted trying to pretend  
that your magic is the best I've seen.

I'm tired. I'm tired.  
I'm the first to come and  
the last to leave.  
It's like picking dandelions.  
If I breathe, too hard, the right  
moment will ruin a good thing.

You tear me down, baby—you do.  
I'm just standing there staring  
at a temperamental flower.  
I guess I know how to pick them.

**My Son's Eyes** | Chanel Brenner

Your eyes are two Pacific Oceans.  
I want to be a boat,  
sail away  
in their endless blue.

They are blue silk,  
but softer and cooler.

I want to slip them on  
like perfectly fitting gloves,  
make silly hand shadow puppets on the walls.

I want to dance with them  
to the Red Hot Chili Peppers,  
preen in the mirror  
like I'm fifteen again.

They are two trampolines  
I want to bounce on until  
I am breathless and dizzy.

I want to fall  
into the featherbed of them,  
sink into the imprint of myself,  
never wake up.

Your pull me out of the gutter  
blue eyes.

If they were detachable,  
I'd take them with me.

Like two moonstones in my pocket  
clinking, *There is no place like home.*

**After a Fashion** | Pattie Flint

I want to touch you with my fingerpads  
and kiss you in an argument-ending fashion.  
Let me hold you like I just won a game of Monopoly  
and you aren't happy about it.  
Let me perch you on the kitchen counter  
like it's two in the morning and we're drunk,  
making pancakes. I want you to grab me  
like we woke my roommate up and she's pissed.  
She's pissed and yelling and there's pancake mix on the floor  
and flour on the counter and retreat with me,  
giggling, into my bedroom and I'll tip you in like potatoes.  
There, I will kiss you in an argument-ending fashion.  
Please, because of this, love me.



**If Poetry Is Parked Car** | Sarah Thursday

My heart is bottom-pink  
and raw, not knowing  
how many beats to give  
beats to exhale

All words crowd into the soft  
spaces, roof of my mouth  
cutting inside cheeks  
rolling off lips

All quiets are questions  
my voice too loud  
my hands too clumsy

How do I protect you  
when I've just been born?  
When my spit edges  
in the corners of your drink?

I'm dumb, backseat fumbling  
legs over knees  
arms over shoulders

If my skin in moonlight  
is softest, how do your hands  
melt into my scars?

I want to force your distinct, distant body against mine  
but you are like a castle of salt, a far-away wave exhausted with terror,  
a rabbit in night's thorny terrain.

can I forgive your animal trespasses and become a fish,  
or unbroken beam tethered to the vulnerable dusk—  
a wet and upright tree—when you coat me with your  
poison sap and my sleep is chased into my throat by wolves?

Who is this man rumbling next to me in the dark nest  
of a dream and where does he makes his nest of hair and bones,  
of the hollow twigs of my desire tossed about by the wind?

sometimes I do not believe in love,  
do not believe in the tenderness brought by the day,  
but only in the hard animal-like pain of connection and rupture,  
beasts that swim in the sea, the lotus-eaters of lore.

I want to forget the extension of my wound  
in your body and in the constellation of your hair.

I hold this wound like an oyster—  
delicately away from you and the light on my frameless bed.  
and now I am drinking a bottle of wine  
and recalling the harbor and fort of my aloneness,  
strength in dizziness, the bluish desire to wander the day tomorrow.

**Summer maid** | Timothy Pilgrim

Sommelier, one who tastes,  
likely from old French,

a pack animal driver.  
Imagine Provence, late July,

lavender field, lovers, picnic,  
checked sheet spread out,

morbier cheese, red wine,  
baguette, not a soul nearby

nibble, sip, dip, sleep.  
Sommelier, proud noun,

not sommelied, some verb,  
dreary, listless way to eat.

**“We Eat” | Joel Best**

A morning and an afternoon, played with and put away. Evening led me through a field and up a hill and down and into a shadowed thicket and a campfire and man by the fire, nodding hello. The night was a shroud, the stars blind eyes. Come rest yourself the man said. He warmed his hands over the flames. He spat into the fire and said I was just in this other place. There was snow on the mountains and a wind that tickled my bones. I trekked the wilderness and hunted elk and never saw a trace, but that was fine because I didn't really want an elk, it was just something to do with myself for that span of time. I was there and now here, isn't that funny. The man's words were a quiet and soothing stream. He had a way about him. I had not for an age been this blessedly calm, so clean and loose inside. The man held out a can of peaches and a spoon and I said ooh peaches hot damn and we ate by the fire. Soon there were others, I couldn't recall their arrival, they just were. I had a gut intuition the man had somehow spun the newcomers from ancient memory. Him and me and the rest, we shared around the fire. Soup. Jam. Crackers. Those little cookies shaped like seashells. The circle of us took a bit of what there was and passed the rest around. A taste was enough. The soup was hot and the jam sweet. I tried one of the seashells and tasted the ocean and a million years of history. A bottle of wine went round the circle and the second time it landed in my hands there was only a tiny bit of liquid slicking the bottom. You go ahead I said to the man who'd brought all of these people into existence, and maybe me as well. The man touched a finger to his forehead and closed his eyes and then the bottle truly was empty and he placed it on the dirt close to the burning logs and the rainbow flames danced and I became glass.

## Li Bo and the Long Homerun | Steve Klepetar

We meet for lunch at a small Vietnamese market  
across from the mall. I order pork Pad Thai,  
he orders Pho with meatballs.  
The food is delicious, his bowl of Pho  
large enough to wash his feet in.  
“I could write a poem about this bowl,” he says,  
“the roundness of its edge, a universe without boundaries—  
expanding, then shrinking away to nothing.”  
“Your mouth is a black hole,” I tell him, as he sucks  
broth with such pleasure that his face becomes a star.

Later, we go to a ball game, sit in the bleachers  
in a light rain. No one is there. Both teams dress  
in red. The ball echoes loudly as it smacks  
the catcher’s glove. Umpires move like shadows  
across the grass. “How like a funeral,” he says.  
“See the lugubrious way men walk to first,  
how the manager paces to the mound, gesturing  
in that hieratic way? I am lost in a thousand  
slow movements, wandering without sorrow  
in a ritual of grief. In this steady rain, I am assuaged.”

That night, as he listens to the steady drum  
of rain, he writes a poem about a ball hurtling  
through space at nearly the speed of light.  
His eyes narrow as he writes. His pen scratches  
across the white page leaving black marks,  
crow tracks startling a wide, flat field of snow.  
How long he watches as it arcs up into the lights,  
then tumbles beyond the fielder’s outstretched glove.  
By the time it crashes into the stands, his hands  
are old, the paper brittle as if hundreds years had passed.

**Titian: *Venus and Adonis* | Gerald Locklin**

With a name like the painter's  
You'd think he would have highlighted  
Her tits,  
Not the crack of her ass,  
Opening upon sublimely squeezable buttocks,

And this was well before "credit-carding,"  
The joyfully, playfully, mischievously,  
(Criminally)  
Primitive practice of kitchen guys who,  
With the sweep of a blade-shaped hand,  
Sweep and stimulate the crack  
Of an absent-mindedly bending  
Aging female-worker's ass,  
From clit to asshole,  
Concluding with the flourish  
Of a matador's gallantry.



## **Twin Revolutions** | Woodrow Hightower

So this is how it goes:  
You put on your blue eye shadow  
I wear my best cheap cologne  
We manufacture tiny dramas  
Loud speak endless slogans  
Pick the locks on rabbit cages  
And burn down five-star eateries

Our friends follow our lead  
In steel toes throwing red bricks  
Believing we've figured out the low drone  
Of time unspun and squandered  
Our movement grows, goes viral  
The web ignited by our images  
A legion of cinderblock robots  
And smokestack love dolls  
Marching across alkali flats  
To the sound of pearl-black music

And then our falling out  
Egos as large as long-haul Peterbilts  
You go your way, I go mine  
Our army halved, torn down the middle  
You announce to the world  
That I was a fraud on a flatbed  
I proclaim you Jezebel Bimbo  
With shoebox fetish  
Momentum dead, message lost  
The ink on our coming out  
Smudged under ice and salt

It's sad  
Years later our disciples will reunite  
Around the latest food-court prophet  
Leaving us to live on as footnotes  
In someone else's dark memoir

**For me, she said** | Carl Boon

Write something beautiful,  
she said. Write something tender,  
even the soft and lively legs  
of ghost crabs will do.

You see, I'm lonely, and I can't  
describe the color of the sky.  
Everybody's busy filing papers  
and rattling keys. Everybody's

got somebody to talk to,  
even that strange, freckled girl  
in the corner with crossed legs.  
Write something I can touch.

Write about your mother's wrist,  
how it looks at dusk, ironing.  
Write something funny,  
like prom night when you knocked

over that table of lemonade  
and ginger ale, and Shari  
Dalessandro laughed. Let me  
know you at 17, embarrassed

skin and all. Let me see you now,  
and if you're disgruntled and lazy,  
I'll imagine otherwise. Know  
I've grown used to your journeys

and memories and fears. Please  
trust me: I take them all in  
the way the Zeytinburnu train  
opens its doors to chaos.

It does so every evening  
no matter the weather, the  
whispers of fright, the birds  
distantly peeling off the sky.

**The Orchid House | Michael Paul Hogan**

The girl stood  
on the burning deck,  
wearing a silk kimono  
on two sides of her  
like a half-drawn curtain.

She stood there  
smoking a cigarette,  
watching the heat ripple  
along Eaton Street  
like a ghost river.

She was unaware,  
is always unaware,  
of the writer next door  
sitting at his table  
beneath the window,

behind the black  
and white parallel lines  
of the window blinds,  
in his zoo cage  
of sunlight and shadow.

\*

The writer watches  
(it is now, now)  
while his fingers crapshoot  
the typewriter keys  
against the paper.

She turns and stares  
in his direction,  
voodoo-smart,  
for whom walls  
are only rice paper.

The writer grins  
through a glass of bourbon,  
and lights a cigarette  
with a match struck  
on the ball of her eye.

## Church in the Rain | John Grey

Cab pulls over  
to sidewalk  
blackened by rain.

She pays her fare,  
steps gingerly  
over swirling water,  
is dumped on by deluge.

Gargoyles outside,  
their big noses running,  
give way to teary  
stained-glassed saints within.

She slips into a back pew.  
Her hair, her clothes,  
are blown by wind from organ pipes.

By the time the mass is over  
she's completely dry.  
That's as good as saved  
for some people.

**Midnight** | Brian McCarty

I was once a certified barista  
at My Cup Overfloweth, a trendy local coffee shop.  
It's not as impressive as it sounds:  
certification required proper cup-marking etiquette  
and a degree of self-loathing;  
the final step was to fix a super-cal-a-frag-a-diddly-umptious  
with extra foam, caramel swirls, peppermint sprinkles  
and an added shot of insulin.

On weekends, I closed with Evelyn.  
She had this routine: she'd exhale onto the glass case  
full of prepackaged lemon loafs and snicker doodles  
and scrawl "fuck my life" into the condensation.  
She was a real knockout in her smock and visor,  
greasy ponytail bobbing and weaving behind her  
manic as an exorcism.  
The palpitations from lattes we gulped  
mimicked the symptoms of love: nausea  
and clammy hands, a pulse that thudded  
like my damaged card against the time clock.

We considered ourselves dealers, but with name tags  
and minimal health benefits.  
My batches of decked-out espresso  
allowed me access to places  
lovers would never touch, deep inside the heart,  
not the commodity where nutty chocolates  
are stashed on Valentine's, but the actual throbbing muscle—  
quickenened pulse, ventricles with emphatic contractions.

During finals week, professors and students  
seemed pop-ups from a book about Lazarus,  
the way the drinks transfigured them  
from chalk outlines with charred eyes and poor postures  
to Youtube highlight reels  
of Nic Cage's most manic moments.

Evelyn antagonized them all;  
she'd scribble pop culture references and adverbs  
onto their cups, barking them over the hubbub  
as I tipped the pitcher of milk beneath the steamer wand

for maximum froth.

On one December's night, Amelia Earhart, Groucho Marx,  
and, from *Nighthawks*, the stranger turned perpetually away,  
all huddled over a window table,  
strip malls gnawing at their partial reflections.

Jesus came in, late one night, just about closing time—  
I'd already turned off the dancing neon palms—  
and ordered a passion tea. I looked at him,  
then at Evelyn. She laughed, "Enough already!  
Why don't you order espresso like the others?"  
"Steamed in apple juice," he said,  
though the juice had run out, and, in truth,  
the tea had expired.



## When the Saints Go Marching | Joan Colby

The two Johns are being canonized.  
It's like a double wedding,  
White and gold. The square is jammed  
With pilgrims who pay to witness.  
I think of the poor the new pope  
Advertises, but the poor also yearn  
For cathedrals, for the jeweled glass soldered  
With lead, the heavy and saturnine element.

Saints were once declared by proclamation,  
Martyred in their faith, there was no doubt.  
Now rules govern ceremonies. It's said a million  
Dollars is required to investigate the  
Qualifications. Two miracles prerequisite, yet  
To be clear, one John lacks the second cure  
Of a terminal patient. That's being fudged  
For a dual celebration, as so much has always been.  
Science will never squelch  
Faith. We want our scapulars, missals and litanies,  
The lifted chalice of transubstantiation. The penitents  
Crawling to the shrine bearing roses.

When my uncle was made a Monseigneur, he purchased  
Expensive robes and went to Rome  
Where the Holy Father blessed him.  
After mass, we'd count the collection haul  
At the dining room table. He was locally famous  
For building schools and churches. An avid baseball fan,  
He had the first satellite dish in town. He drove  
A Cadillac and wore his roman collar on vacations  
In case he was stopped for speeding. Addressing students,  
He displayed a paddle called the Board of Education.  
He was acting bishop after the old one died, but turned down  
A permanent appointment, not wanting to move  
To Great Falls. He was a good man and I suppose  
Religious, silently reading his breviary every evening  
Before his favorite TV shows came on.

So that's religion, perfectly human,  
Full of fault and trickery, hoping also  
To do good or even be good

Though that is harder. In a small town in Italy,  
A huge wooden cross topples and kills  
A passerby. One who believes in omens  
Might consider the missing miracle,  
How nobody but Jesus was ever credited  
With raising the dead.

I feel sacrilegious in these flimsy ironies,  
How the stickers of faith pasted on the baptized child  
Cling as if an EKG is to be performed  
To measure the activity of the heart.  
A heart that logic tells me is mechanical,  
Not sutured to the sacred breast of Christ  
In the bad painting over my mother's bed.  
St. Francis Xavier said "give me the child  
Until the age of seven and he is mine forever."  
I shake my head stuffed with information  
About the cosmos. Compelled to wear the hair-shirt  
Of the agnostic with its intolerable itch.

Meanwhile, the two Johns are rising  
In an immaculate hand-hold. Twins  
Of a blessed certainty flying up into  
The Calendar of Saints.

**Will we go on cruises when we're really, really old? | John Swetnam**

Will we go on cruises when we're really, really old?  
I can imagine that, though now  
The thought of cruises leaves us both aghast  
There will come a time, when the trip  
From upstairs to down is an adventure  
My aged hand grasping for the banister  
Each trembling step secured before the next  
Is ventured. Tales of friends who stumbled  
Shattered hips or wrists and spent  
Months in casts waiting for osteoporotic  
Bones to knit nagging at the corners of my mind

In such a time a cruise might seem  
Preferable to captivity in this old house.  
There would be stewards eager  
To help us up the gangway, guide us  
Down confusing hallways to a stateroom  
With a porthole view of the Pacific,  
Ready at a moments notice  
To tuck a blanket round us as we sat  
On the second deck there would always be  
A bathroom close in case of sudden need  
And if illness struck (an unexpected cold)  
We could have breakfast served us in our cabin.

Will the child, whose turn it is  
To wrestle luggage, parents, to the dock  
Check the dates of passports, paperwork  
Dutiful, exhausted by the panic when the cab  
Pulled up three paces from the curb,  
Wonder if once I again I'll drop a camera overboard  
Leaning on the rail to get a shot of Barcelona from the sea  
*Why does he take those pictures? They're all the same*  
*A ragged line of buildings under a cloudy sky.*  
*He lost the first off Buenos Aires, the second, Venice*  
*A sacrifice to the sea gods of the Adriatic?*

Will he or she, turning to find a way  
To fill the demands of occupation, children  
Wonder, and to be honest, halfway wish  
This voyage will not end, that somewhere

Sailing to Oahu, Pago Pago, and beyond  
A coronary artery will clog, a stroke will strike  
Or that the stewardess, checking the bunks  
Will find a traveler forever gone  
To another destination, a land unseen.

**Tourists** | Brian McCarty

We're planning a road trip.  
Brochures from across the Mississippi River Valley  
litter our coffee table,  
alongside maps and a bowl of waxed fruit.

We'll stay at 1 star motels,  
not because they're affordable  
but because their clerks have hairy backs  
and, when exposed to black lights,  
the rooms blaze like Centaurus.

We'll detour to see Interstates 55 and 70,  
pause on the shoulder to ogle the interchange outside Topeka  
as we munch on Pimento sandwiches.  
We'll marvel at billboards in southern Alabama,  
evangelically-crazed bubble letters shouting in Technicolor  
the rapture to be found  
at the outlet mall in Daphne.

We'll visit all the tourist traps  
so we can savor the damp heat  
of bodies pressed too closely together,  
bumping shoulders with families dressed  
in the garish colors of shoppers at discount stores.  
We won't even see the attractions;  
instead, we'll flip through the gift shops' creaky revolving racks  
for postcards, plunder shelves for koozies  
that encapsulate us in a clever phrase.

We'll stop at Truckhenge, Mt. Rushmore, Graceland,  
garble the names of the King's favorite drugs—  
Ethchlorvynol, Diazepam, Dolophine, Hydromorphone—  
as though they were mineral deposits at Mammoth Cave.

We'll stop strangers on the streets  
of Bismark and Des Moines,  
bald men with lush moustaches,  
just to mistake them for someone else,  
yelling above the crowd, "Hey Dad!"

In the evenings, we'll go to strip shows,

which consist of our shadows,  
elastic and sparse like shallow water,  
unraveling in empty fields  
as we do the monster mash and hokey pokey.

We'll eat at Main Street cafes,  
not because they're cheap,  
but in hopes of finding a waitress named Flo  
who fills our cups like no other,  
calls us "hon" as old timers at the counter  
discuss their ailments and the Middle East.  
We'll trip until we find her.



**Annika** | Adam Ward

I'm yellow paper, chipped ink  
and watching Bastet pirouette.  
She moves like a lava-lamp  
tangoing with the shadows,  
and I'm a *Danse Russe*.  
Watch the dust spiral a moment,  
settling on the skin she soaked  
in the cracks around my eyes,  
you might see sand freeze mid-air  
as an hourglass draws breath.  
Her mouth prints an 'oh'  
as if her name will flutter forth,  
like a crisp white butterfly,  
beneath those Bambi eyes  
that belong on a peacock's tail.

**Good Friday Morning** | Sarah Thursday

You, cocked smile  
and smirking eye  
come down into my open  
waiting like a teenaged sunbather  
happy to risk the burn

You shadow me warm  
with sentinel arms  
my hands will not  
rebel against you  
both of us clinging  
to this fragile ease

Tomorrow you return  
to the gnawing thirst  
lock me outside while  
you fight those demons  
eating at your skin

I return to the fullness  
of poetry and fire-fed dreams  
empty of your shadows  
empty of skin-fueled  
present tense

**Adolph Erbslon: *The Red Skirt*, 1910 | Gerald Locklin**

I'd never even seen this work before,  
But I'm fascinated by the simple  
Sensuality of the red skirt itself,  
And the in-your-face power of the single  
Fully exposed breast, with nipple and areola  
As brazenly red as the skirt, rouged cheeks,  
And psoriatic inner arms.

The overall effect is stranger  
Than if both tits had been rendered  
Naked: the one alone demands  
To be either sucked on or  
Tweaked, pulled, and twisted.

## **Waiting is the Hardest Part** | Woodrow Hightower

I wrote my name on sandstone  
Upstream past a silo covered in Spanish moss  
“Boxcar Savant was here” spelled in Krylon spray  
Evidence I’m still breathing  
In a place no one ever goes

Feeling dry as a rain shadow  
Obsolete as a dancing triceratops  
I wait for you to walk this way  
Your holy-water self  
A solar flare under heavy clouds

How does a belly dancer in Chuck Taylors  
Discover an Idaho sword swallower  
With the ears of a jackrabbit?  
As usual the canyon walls have no answer  
As usual my disappointment grows

I’ve worked hard to stay forgotten  
But what’s the point?  
In my head I’m ripe for the taking  
Like a starfish in the shallows  
Praying low tide reveals me

For days I’ve watched for you  
Your jet-black beehive  
Your blue-flame eyes  
Your hands clutching cardboard sunflowers  
Long days of empty  
Listening for a whispered voice  
To speak my name

**In a Village in Eastern Turkey | Carl Boon**

She lives in a place without landmarks,  
this girl who's never been kissed.

She lives for her father's hands  
and her mother's soul, and listens

for the train, the street vendors  
selling strawberries, the call to prayer

that moves her from erotic dreams.  
She doesn't know the taste of whiskey,

nor why her grandmother's clothes  
lay folded in the closet. Still, the morning

brings the scent of apricots to her,  
and she scrubs her skin in it, and grows

hungry for what she cannot know—  
Istanbul, boys in leather jackets,

the cinema. She is bound to grow  
tall and strong in her unknowing.

And though she's memorized her book  
of hadiths and covers her head

to strangers, she notes some force  
beyond the garden and the mountain,

something holier than her. Something  
waiting with the patience of prophets.

**South of the Border** | Michael Paul Hogan

I have been here before,  
to this cantina on the edge of town,  
or maybe it's merely *déjà vu*  
that gives this dive an air of familiarity.

Across the floor  
a scorpion sparks like a trolley car,  
caught in the light of a whiskey-colored bulb,  
projecting its B-movie shadow on the wall.

Is it **Baedecker**?  
Mexico's "**21**" **The Black Hole of Chihuahua**?  
Somehow, señor, I doubt it.  
Not with tat whore in the left-hand corner,

wearing a dress made of carbon paper,  
or the man with impossible clockwork hands  
dealing out cards like a ceiling fan,  
or the kid over there with a knife.

*Dos Equis, señor, per favor.*  
I can feel the sweat down my back  
as I listen for the click of the switchblade  
and mentally break for the door.



**Dear Leg Man** | John Grey

That's what happens  
when you stick your nose  
where it's not wanted.  
Someone lops it off  
with a bread knife.

Likewise your ears  
And your eyes  
Two sliced auricles—  
is that what you want  
to leave for your grandchildren?  
A poke in those curious sockets  
with a sharp stick—  
believe me,  
those bloody hollows don't suit you.

And you can't speak up  
about what you've witnessed  
because your tongue's been severed.

And nor can you write it down.  
Not with your fingers  
now part of someone's wind-chimes.

The butchers are done hacking away.  
They leave you to your thoughts.  
But watch out, "I should have known better."  
"What the fuck" has it in for you.

**Sediment** | Sarah Thursday

I've been sifting you for weeks  
but there is no gold in your sediment  
pebbles smooth against my tongue  
I bed in your silver-grey sand  
sleep in the warmth of your current  
I keep losing daylight hours  
forget my quest for real worth  
I need to get up, get feet forward  
find the strike to wealth me old  
foolish river, with your glittering light  
I won't find gold in your sediment

**Cherry Tree** | Thomas R Thomas

sitting alone  
quiet in the  
cherry tree

book in hand  
treasuring the  
moment

she spies  
Daddy as he  
meets a man

this secret the  
man tells him  
about the Navajo

their forbidden  
language can  
win the war

she hugs her book  
glowing in her  
cherry tree

**Therein Lies the Sweetness** | Kathy M. Buckert

Outside the bar at closing time  
A girl sat perched on a motorcycle  
Not her own.  
It was the bouncer's ride, his pride and joy.  
He let her know he paid for his bike,  
his truck,  
his home.  
Mommy and daddy didn't  
pay for anything  
like the rich little brat  
ready to ride against the wind.  
She spit on him, a fight ensued  
Five gunners with fists like mortar  
exploding against his face with fire  
Bruises and cuts heaved against the  
wind as he rode home  
Venom seeped from every pore,  
A sweet revenge twisted his gut,  
a thousand ripples of hate and poison.  
They had to pay.  
In the trenches of warfare, he planned  
He calculated  
He devised a scheme.  
The sweet nectar of revenge  
became a rancor, a bitterness of spirit  
Until he called ceasefire  
He knew he had to let go  
Forgive  
Forget  
Therein lies the true sweetness  
And it set him free.

## Looking Glass Figurine | Mikey Bachman

Passing by the bathroom mirror,  
I gaze to catch my wakeful eyes,  
smiling as my face turns  
to examine my own body:

My eyebrows slide along my forehead  
like the asphalt of broken pavement  
on a Sunday afternoon and my eyes shine,  
deeming myself worthy of self-loathing—

The hair on my head, dark brown and slicked back,  
appears black, except in the right lighting,  
where the real colors can be seen, along with the streaks of gray,  
ever deepening under such seamless strains—

My beard and mustache haven't grown all the way in yet:  
I find myself not of an age; I find myself not of a time,  
letting my stubble pour over my meaning like lost thoughts,  
ordaining myself in a masculine phase of self-glory—

Every pimple, every decimal of myself that I wish to scrub  
off the mild grossness of my being protrudes  
across the gaps of all my solemn pores,  
as my white specks of pus shine in every straining light—

My body, an exasperating pour of dirt and sweat,  
breathes into itself a world of grimy muck and smudge,  
organic along its epidermis, an outside organ  
that my will to look well can't shape a musical tone on—

Man breasts slight shapely from my plain brown shirt  
as a swamped belly, like a razor blade gone too far,  
haunts my self-conscious gauntness of an imagined me,  
and the lymph nodes of my love handles extrude like swollen eggs—

I'm lost in the lime yellow of my teeth,  
concorded like an uneven, synchronized ballet of overgrown vines,  
spreading the fattening corners of my mouth,  
forcing my lips closed; keeping my eyes clamped shut.

## Still Life with Apple | Douglas Clark

At his atelier in Aix,  
the artist takes an apple, a glass,  
a carafe of wine, and places them against  
a backdrop of blue drapery.  
Finding the light inadequate,  
he straps an easel to his back,  
and goes out to paint his mountain  
another tribute.

Two lovers invade the picture space.  
The man fills the glass with wine,  
the woman drinks, takes the apple,  
passing it lightly along his cheek.

Warming to the game, they crash to the floor;  
impassioned tongues in tumult,  
they feed each other the forbidden fruit.  
The artist, returning home,  
flies into a rage, takes a palette knife,  
and chases the pair  
out of the house.

## White Lights Flicker Indecision | Edward Kos

If you ever wanted  
To pick up white girls  
Some advice  
Go to forever 21  
A center for bored rich white girls  
Who want  
To feel twenty one forever  
Even if they're still sixteen and seventeen  
They want to feel older  
Developed, beautiful  
At a peak with golden days and months and hours and minutes  
Ahead of them  
Be warned though  
Hunters of prey  
Some may yet be too young for you  
While they won't stop some  
It certainly deters me  
I prefer to wait in star bucks  
Ordering pumpkin spice lattes  
Waiting  
Looking disinterested in them  
As they pass by  
That always gets them  
But I'm off limits  
It's the beauty of a girlfriend  
While everyone is scrambling to fall in love and fuck  
I've got my girl for me  
More than just a fuckbuddy  
Who'll crawl out of bed  
Before the sun has even risen from her own  
Go to pull on her pants  
And grab yours instead  
Change will fall out of the pockets  
And rouse you even though you hadn't been sleeping  
What was that, she'll ask  
You turn slightly and say  
Your tip babe, pick it up  
You can still feel the sting on your cheek when you think about it for too long



— *Allen Forrest*



