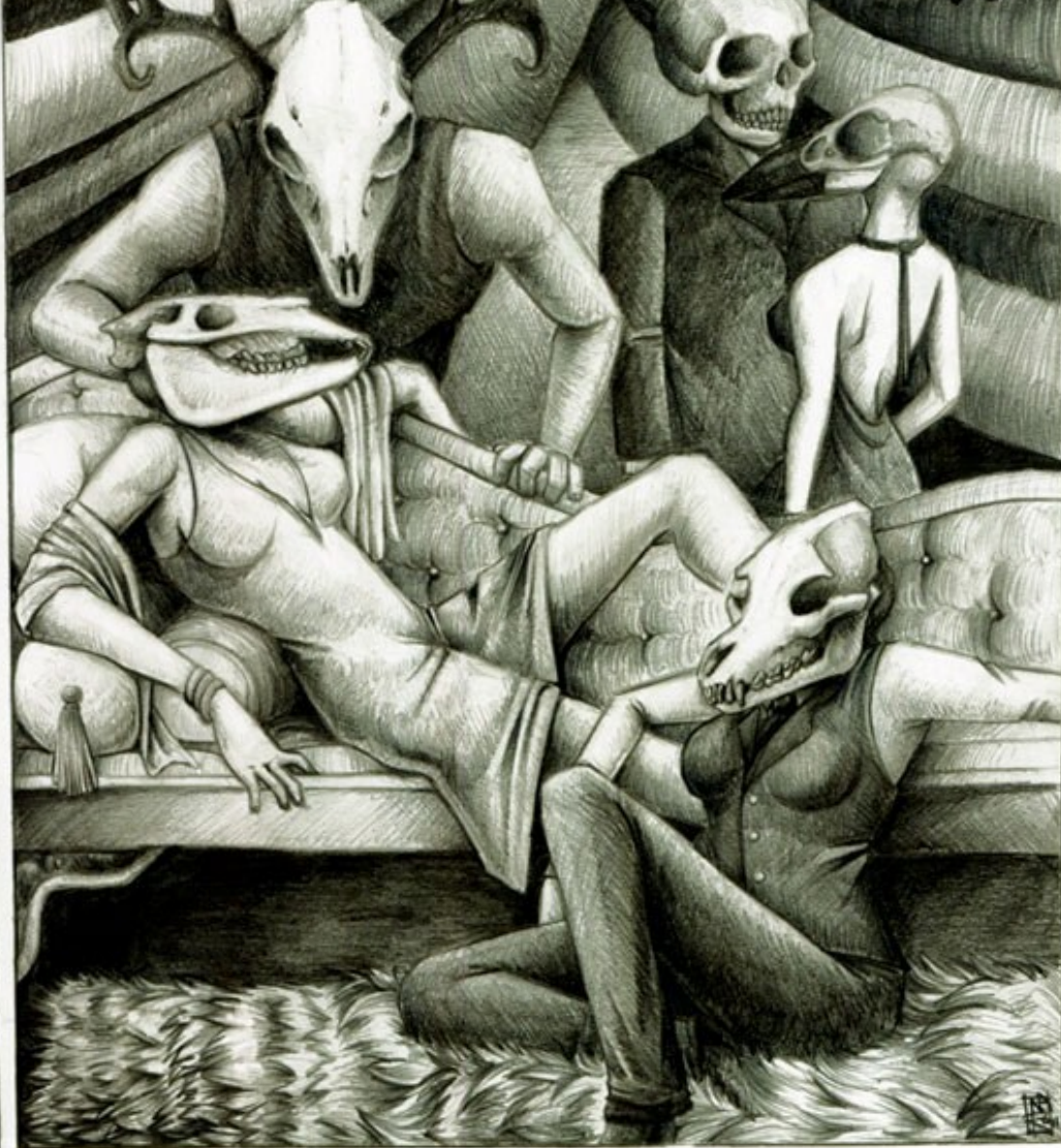


# CARNIVAL

LITERARY MAGAZINE



# CARNIVAL

AN ONLINE LITERARY MAGAZINE

Volume 1

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## ABOUT

You know when you workshop a piece and you receive some well-intentioned critiques from your peers and that brief moment when you actually consider it – maybe you even cock your head, ponder the page, but No. You like it just the way it is. Cause you like it. Maybe you even smile. You just like it. And that is all there is to it.

*Carnival* is here to celebrate that feeling.

— *The Editors*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"Circus Love" was first published in *Verdad* and in *What We Ache For* (Moon Tide Press, 2010). "For Kathleen" was previously published in *The Beatnik*. An earlier version of "Neurotica" was published in *Subliminal Interiors*. "Summer: Three Ways" first appeared in *Poetry Magazine* (March 2010).



## Souls in Purgatory

"As we passed the time thus pleasantly I saw death go by, along yonder corridor...she was with a friend of yours." – Mike Carey, *God Save the Queen*

Moments doled out  
like a morphine drip –  
or, of course, in coffee spoons.

In the heat,  
we twist and fray like ribbons tied around tree trunks.  
Trace that plastic circle,  
trace it again.

Sweaty sleep,  
knuckles so dry they bleed.  
The low rattle of the rasping lung,

The slight hitch in my breathing as the sun rises.  
Walk home and you will smell the sprinklers,  
the hanging floral perfume of water.

At home, the blue television  
a blade of light beneath the door,  
  
the first notes in that forgetting song.

– Scott Creley

**A SMALL POEM IN WHICH SOCRATES,  
MOZART, MATISSE, CHEKHOV AND  
EINSTEIN ARE ALL SQUEEZED IN**

Poor old Socrates had so few geniuses in history  
to keep him company. He never had Mozart's  
piano music to listen to. He never had Matisse's  
colorful observations to find pleasure gazing at.  
He never had Chekhov's letters to read, one  
in which he mentions enjoying a bowl of rich  
sorrel soup in a train station. None of this was  
available to him to help take his mind off matters.  
We know this is not true of Einstein. We know  
that he loved Mozart. But god only knows what  
precious thoughts went through that brain of his  
while listening. Perhaps, one evening, he thought  
about the lovely young woman he had seen while  
walking across campus lost in thought,  
flakes of snow coming to rest in his hair  
like the tiniest of birds, chirpless and blind.

— *Ronald Baatz*



## **Propulsion**

I'm smiling and waving like a Kennedy. Minus bullet to the brain ripping through the cranium, and murky depths of Chappaquiddick. Sometimes the sky becomes a personal umbrella of acquittal. Day doesn't care about cover-ups. Let the black night be the bad guy. I'm a dreamer lost in a modern day Camelot. A sucker for sultry birthday ballads and Norma Jean flings. An honest man. A love affair. Jackie O, O, O...

— *Daniel Romo*

## PO\_ta\_to\_ETRY

*You've got it  
all wrong!*  
she snapped  
as he cut  
the spud  
julienne.

*I want  
crinkles  
not shoestrings!*

He cut  
patiently  
each stick  
just like  
the last.

"We always  
have crinkles..."

Sea salt  
sprinkled  
generously.

Her nose  
wrinkled  
disgustedly.

"Tonight  
I want  
shoestrings."

— *R L Raymond*

## ATTRaversiamo

You make me purr and roar and grrr,  
jaywalk the joy  
with cat plans being leopardized.

You make me hop-hop pam-pa-pam,  
jump in juicy-harsh  
pillows of  
the baloo-bagheera-faced.

You make me charm  
les mots comme papillons,  
you make me call for  
solange dress on hot-air moan.

You make me reign and pillion,  
whisper-scream  
tree-prayer rays and rain,  
drink your thirsty stream.

You make me (b)race myself,  
observe, absorb,  
compose, shine,  
indomitable.

You make me hurl (feline fatale),  
swirl safari twist,  
the Letha-tester,  
bubble wrap I'll miss and I'll mist.

I am the dream running for, from.

You jungelize my days.

— *Agnes Marton*

## Circus Love

You're a big top circus—everything a boy dreams  
of discovering under a red tent. The most dazzling woman

I've ever seen in a sequin leotard on top of an elephant.  
You smell like peanuts, and I love peanuts, almost as much

as your sticky cotton candy kisses. When you perform  
your acrobatic feats I want to enroll in contortionist school

just so I can learn to bend like you. You've got a flair  
for the dangerous—you swallow swords, juggle knives,

and breathe fire all while riding a unicycle. Baby, you put the *pa*  
in *panache*, so much so that those Ringling Brothers have

forfeited the title *greatest show on Earth* to you. If I could,  
I'd be the trapeze you'd swing from, the tightrope you'd walk on,

and the safety net just in case you decided to fall for me.  
What I wouldn't give to be the facial hair on your bearded lady,

your strongman's handlebar mustache, or your human  
cannonball act. You make me want to wear over-sized shoes

and pants, change my name to Bozo and dance with a grizzly  
bear in a tutu if it meant I had any chance of squeezing

into your clown car heart. But you are too savage a beast  
for silliness like that—a wild lioness I'd never try to tame.

Instead, I'd gently request you open your mouth just wide  
enough for me to rest my brow on your pink tongue,

where I would then wait patiently for your jaws to clamp shut,  
so I could finally feel what it's like to lose my head.

— Eric Morago

## **carnival love music**

she was like a lost love of Charlie Brown  
strolling across the campus village green  
in her long coat of murals with eyebrows fluctuating  
laughing at the thin air and causing people  
to wonder if she was as dark and sharp as  
her eyes amplified behind coffeehouse poetry  
glasses  
we met at the plastic toy farm exhibit in my white  
barren room after my sisters and I finished off a bottle of  
rum to reveal a bikini clad Puerto Rican, who we cast  
in the farm scene as the town drunkard  
the strange girl meticulously arranged the animal  
scene and with such majesty and won the weekly contest  
and I stole her pom-pom winter hat in lieu of the entry fee  
the naysayers forbade me to see her again, but I climbed into her room  
lantern boxes and pictures of all of her favorite presidents and the  
rare Bowie record playing in the background as she jumped on a  
trampoline.  
the room became a museum of stolen toys, a bonus she gave to herself for breaking  
into retail  
and I took a full breath for the first time.

— *Kevin Ridgeway*

## Neurotica

Neurotica is the art  
of perfecting control,  
the gut-aching desire  
to witness the old moon,  
surrender itself  
to the arms of a new one --  
a precise pocket of time  
at the speed a dandelion  
burns, faster than stars  
smoldering away the miles.

Neurotica is the hunger  
of destruction to create,  
the interlude  
right before  
fissuring the wings  
of a diaphanous emerald dragonfly,  
a nebulous addiction  
like the constant peddling scheme --  
of getting dirty to make clean.

— *Jacqueline Pham*

## The Dying Gaul

"You're such a baby when you're sick,"  
my second wife rebukes. Why be  
heroic, I wonder, as if my agony  
were no worse than anybody else's  
cauterized surrender. My bowels  
last night were like Niagara Falls  
and I was vomiting enough as I shat  
on the floor to make me wheeze  
like a whore sucking off the toilet.  
I'm not a fan of using images  
from famous works of art, but  
isn't it more ennobling  
to feel classical, I think, as I push  
against a mattress edge like that warrior  
refusing to let his elbows squint  
lower than shock's presentiments.

"You act as if you're dying," my first wife  
would sneer at my desire to get up, to keep walking  
to find out how to balance my way *across*  
some unfamiliar space of uselessness.  
Moaning by myself, my grunts  
blend with a helicopter's perforated gasps.  
I remember eating at a wobbly table,  
one leg too short, each press of knife on dish



a searing wish to extract the ensconced  
barb of oblivion. End this pain's  
mockery of my nimble yearning,  
I beg, but everyone else is dead –  
I alone am lingering with gravity's kiss,  
the rumble of disemboweled brevity  
haunted by a blue scream.

— *Bill Mohr*

## New York Minute

The rain surprised us  
and of course, all the taxis  
dried up and disappeared.  
We settled for one of those  
glassy hotels  
with clean restrooms and  
a piano bar  
cozily serving up hors d'oeuvres  
and standards,  
like "Violets For Your Fur"  
and "September In The Rain."  
I think we were drinking Manhattans,  
more as a salute to the moment  
than anything else  
because we were sophisticated,  
but not yet romantic.  
Romantic came later.

— *Dorothea Grossman*

**in our sun room,**

on the wall nearest the  
table,  
i notice  
three greasy streaks  
of what had  
once been  
salad dressing.  
we had  
a party there the  
other day  
and i'm surprised  
the streak wasn't  
wine.  
i got a wet cloth  
and wiped  
and  
wiped  
until the spot  
was totally gone.  
it was a  
great meal  
and a great night  
and i have other ways  
of remembering.

— *John Yamrus*

## Our Lady of the Jukebox

caresses the sides of the mean machine  
as if they could interconnect, as if she  
could, somehow, slip inside the music,  
the colored neon, and become the light,  
through the simple act of a laying on  
of hands were a fusion point where sound  
could be converted into thoughts that  
could be projected inside her as a life force,  
animating her cold gray eyes, making static  
elements like tattoos on her skin, livid,  
objects of the will of their own, wild and  
unmanageable as the bar they were  
released into and somewhere, out there, in  
the fractious night, there would be singing  
and music, but no one would know where.

— *Alan Catlin*

## THE PALACE

Gary was one of the regulars in  
The Palace where we hung out  
every Thursday and Friday evening.  
Beer was twenty five cents a glass.  
On those nights we would sit at our  
same table and discuss things,  
mostly politics.  
Sometimes, philosophy and sociology.

Two of my favorite people were  
Gary and Marlene.  
That story goes back to the sixties  
when I first started hanging out there  
during the Vietnam War and met  
people who knew what was going on.  
What the score really was.

I first noticed Marlene there who seemed  
to always be sitting on the same stool  
with a glass of beer.  
She was good looking, not beautiful,  
good looking, probably in her thirties.  
I know Gary noticed her, saw him go up  
and ask her if she'd like to join us.  
There had never been a woman  
at our table.  
No one objected.

I had known Gary for a few years, quiet,  
forty, divorced twice, no kids.  
Twice divorced guys his age are lonely  
and don't stay alone long.

Marlene, reluctant at first, sat down.  
People's lives were their own business.  
The first few times she was quiet,  
listened, then joined in the conversations.  
She was smart. Gary was impressed.

In the weeks following, Marlene was  
at the table, always with Gary.  
One thing none of us didn't do  
was ask anyone about their personal life.  
There were things some of us preferred  
to not talk about.

Although I liked spending time with the  
people at our table, I didn't socialize with  
them outside the Palace.  
I was surprised when Marlene said to me,  
"Please, I need to talk to you.  
Can we have coffee sometime?"

I didn't know what she wanted to talk about  
and I was apprehensive.  
Maybe I read too many romance stories and  
I didn't want was an affair with a woman  
who hung around a bar like the Palace.  
And I wouldn't do anything to upset Gary.

I agreed to have coffee with her  
the next evening. Dinner was added.

"I feel I can talk to you,  
that you'd understand.  
Gary is getting serious and I know he's  
been married twice.  
Guys married twice feels it's the only  
way to be."

I asked if she thought that was such  
a bad idea if she cared for him.

"I know you can't tell because  
I don't show it,  
but I'm an alcoholic.  
Light wine and beer in small amounts  
during the day, then in the evening  
at the Palace.  
I'm a good actor."

I asked if Gary knew.

"He doesn't because I make sure  
I'm not with him all day.  
When we sleep together,  
it's at his apartment and I leave at night  
or early in the morning.  
If I tell him, it'll be over.  
Do I tell him or not?"

When I saw Marlene next, she was  
sitting at the bar in the Palace.  
Gary hadn't come in yet.

— *Ray Foreman*



## Thomas And The Hummingbird

Thomas learned to dance from a hummingbird  
who moved like sweet tea.

In the space between  
buildings and trash  
they swayed in and out of the broken  
lights like a memory I can't remember all of  
that comes and goes like Santa Monica waves.

connected at the ear by white ear buds and a wire.

He spun her, but had to follow,  
was as fluid as plywood, and  
was just drunk enough to fake the confidence  
he needed to dance in work boots

the hummingbird still nuzzled her head on Thomas' chest  
when their MP3 orchestra played  
the slow songs.

— *Michaelsun Knapp*

## **The Two-Headed Man**

The man was always fighting with himself  
because he had two heads. One played the role  
of optimist, as airy as an elf,  
the other, dark and hairy as a troll,  
would grouse and wheeze like a pneumatic drill.  
And people made cruel jokes. "A man who got  
ahead," they said, or "Look, it's twins!" The dull  
one had no love but the blonde head did get  
some dates, until his counterpart's crude leer  
murdered the mood. "I must be free," he said,  
and slipped an earwig in his brother's ear,  
which ate the brain. But then he felt half-dead.  
I've killed myself, he thought and held it near,  
whispering through the night, "Dear head, dear head."

— *Tony Barnstone*

## Attraction

I say rain. You say pyro. I say Spain. You say Cairo. I say The Mexican-American War was actually started over a woman. You say tell me more. I say her name was Lupita Conchita de la Macarena. She batted her eyes and spread her thighs one too many times for a certain Anglo general. Her *novio*, Hilario the Hothead, took offense and killed the general's mother. Saddled up his stallion and raided her place at dawn. Woke her from her dreams and doused her frail body in kerosene. Lit the fuse of her limbs until the blaze took apex in her stomach—her burning flesh the voice of her son's transgressions. I say what a painful way to go. You kiss my cheek, run your hands down my chest, and whisper in my ear. Sizzle. Sizzle.

— *Daniel Romo*

## THE CYCLE

I get a lift home from work with a colleague  
most nights. We drive towards the sun  
and lately I have noticed some of the beautiful  
sunsets that have been occurring as we make  
our way home. It occurs to me that I should be  
recording these moments in some way, so  
I had the idea of bringing a camera with me  
and taking photographs of the stunning  
crimsons, oranges and reds that fill the sky  
as we drive home. I would call this project  
“12 Sunsets Through A Car Window”  
or something equally pretentious.  
But the camera has no battery and every week  
I devise a plan to buy a new battery, bring  
the camera to work with me, and finally begin  
this project ... and every week I forget.  
Months have passed. It is summer now  
and the sun is higher  
when we finish work, the sky bluer and  
clearer, the postcard-like sunsets  
of winter and spring long gone.  
Now I will have to wait  
until next winter, autumn at the earliest,  
to begin this new artistic venture,  
when once again, day after day I will  
inevitably forget the battery, forget the camera,  
the whole sorry process reactivating once more,  
like the eternal cycle of the sun itself, with  
its terrible rising and falling, rising and falling.

— Glenn W. Cooper

## Willie's Favorite Bartender

She tops the pitcher, slices the foam,  
knows to bring six singles for his change  
instead of a one and a five, which may force  
a decision between the pair when he tips her.  
She brings a single glass without asking, or judging.

So when she asks where he's been hiding himself,  
he confides the truth – tells of his DUI, the CHP, the DMV,  
a sleepless night in lockdown. In return, she opens herself to him –  
her beloved convertible, gone, with half a dozen parked cars  
damaged in its wake. “How do *you* deal?” he asks.

“What works for me is taking taxis and drinking more,” she says,  
which cracks them both up, and for a moment they're more than  
server and patron, more than friends, and it's something like love  
when she sympathizes the only way she knows how  
and hands him a drink chip.

— *Luke Salazar*

## Lollycup Parking Lot At 10 PM

Tonight the sun is on our shoulders  
Making the asphalt feel like California  
Mid-July beach sand, but this time —  
This time, I'm wearing my laced up boots  
And not those flimsy flip-flops that  
I kick off to be buried.  
This time, in one dazed and lazy inhalation  
Does the skunk-musk marijuana fill  
My nostrils as well as when as a child,  
I'd bury my face in my grandmother's  
Herb garden, rubbing into the mint leaves  
Until my flaring nose burned against the texture.  
This time, the thin smoke sinews unwind themselves  
From a small window crack of a parked car  
Baked in whiny orange lights.  
This time I am planted in the plushy long grasses  
A miniature island in this paved lot of  
Hushed foreign conversations  
And cylindrical corpses that are cigarette butts  
Left unburied on the warm blacktop.  
And Jorge is talking about vaginas and about us  
Always being the 'bad guy' somewhere.  
And we're laughing about it.  
And when he sucks air through the straw of his  
Now empty milk tea, I get thirsty this time.  
But this time I don't drink, because I like  
The way it feels to be insatiable,  
And to have to wait.

— *Charlotte San Juan*

## **Cantilevered Creek**

upstream, the lingering  
    waterfall of  
    late july  
bounces with all  
    its pulse  
engorged and curls  
    around the flat  
    hump of rock  
I'm squatting on  
    downstream the  
fastidious meandering  
    of my breath wobbles  
back with mingled  
    dragonflies  
  
    once, two lovers  
arrogantly fucked  
    in a cove across  
from here. ledge  
    bound, I glimpsed  
her legs pummeling  
    the air. surely they  
knew a straggler  
    might glance at  
their muted, tingling



efflorescence, each  
kiss as guesswork  
of insatiable haste,  
yet my illegibility  
oozed like opaque  
mist smoldering  
in spirals towards  
their vanishing joy,  
their returbulent  
vanishing joy.

— *Bill Mohr*



*Natalie Robles*

## **dos mundos**

she lives among Joshua Trees  
and teaches English in a 2-bit college on a hill  
i live in a suburb 15 minutes east of East L. A.  
and work for a 2-bit air-conditioning outfit  
off the 10 freeway

we've been locked up in here all day  
in this over-priced motel room somewhere in Redlands  
the geographical half-way point between us  
we have cigarettes, munchies and plenty to drink  
as she snoozes on the bed  
down for the count after another 3 rounder  
and i try to get it all down by lamp light

this one here, she just can't get enough  
like me she has apparently been starved for some time  
everywhere we go she wants to get down  
once in a parked car, a few times in public restrooms  
and the other day i was leaning on an ancient rock formation  
at the Joshua Tree National Park with her rubbing up  
against my thigh, like a dog, until she reached orgasm

the women of my past, i pushed them in the well  
hidden in the deepest part of me and didn't even say goodbye  
i hear their voices now, as i write this, screaming up at me  
to get them the hell out of there or throw down a gun  
so they can put themselves out of their misery  
i wonder if this one will end up down there with them...

— *Jose Arroyo*

**Jan van de Cappelle or Follower:**  
*A View of the River Maas before Rotterdam,*  
**1645**

The harbor is calm, but clogged  
With all manner of craft,  
From many-masted to single,  
From crowded decks to deserted,  
From single-oared to synchronized,

Not so different from the congestion  
Of the Los Angeles and Long Beach  
Harbors today: the tankers of oil  
And natural gas, the containerized cargo  
Ships, the holiday cruise liners.  
The docks with dinosaur cranes,  
The wharfs and jetties with solitary, ethnic  
Anglers.

I suppose their highways weren't often  
Much less congested than our freeways either.

Ports of Call then; Ports of Call now.

We seldom realize how much we are  
A product of our topographies:

Pittsburgh's Three Rivers;  
Portland's Big One.  
All the urban lives along the Mississippi;  
All the deaths south of the Rio Grande.

— *Gerald Locklin*

## Theft

They chased the black homeless man  
down aisle four to the front  
of the store  
and forced him to remove  
the bottled soda from his soiled pants.

They kicked him out through  
the automatic doors,  
back-slapped each other,  
congratulatory on catching  
the thief and preventing a crime  
from occurring.

Then the employee  
who held the bottle  
pinched between his fingers  
like some strange dangerous insect,  
turned to the manager and said,

"I'm going to throw this out,  
after all  
he did have it down his pants."

— *Wesley Francis*

**Monet: *Vétheuil in Winter, 1879***

The frigid cold of 1879-80  
Froze the color right off this canvas  
Of a town whose molecules  
Have almost stopped moving.

Certainly its commerce had.  
Certainly its fishing had.

The old town dead in the cold,  
And, in the heat,  
The old die of heart attacks.

Nature conspires to keep us  
From living forever.  
Sometimes, with all our science,  
We seem to be keeping nature at bay.

Then bolts of lightning  
Level our electrical plants,  
And even our technologies  
Seem to be turning against us.

Still we struggle to survive  
Until bells in our biological clocks  
Begin to toll for us.

— *Gerald Locklin*

## *LEAVE US TO HELL ALONE*

Deja vu, and it's not yet 2012.  
It's just around the corner, 1930,  
I feel it and I'm not  
the only one.

Men, mostly men, some women too  
come to the People's Kitchen  
on Garfield Street for  
an afternoon meal.  
For some, more lately, their only meal.  
They sit around on the three  
benches outside, or on the ground,  
waiting, don't bother anyone,  
just sit or talk to anyone  
who feels like talking.  
A few share a yesterday's newspaper  
rescued from a trash basket.

Some lucky ones pick up day  
labor work on a few nearby farms.  
No factory or store jobs.  
At night one or two sleep sitting up  
on the bench in front of  
the day labor office hoping  
to be the first in line.  
An unnamed person in the office  
will leave two or three refrigerator  
boxes in the rear every night.

To some who pass by and see  
the line for the afternoon meal  
at the Kitchen, their stomachs quake.  
If circumstances don't change  
soon, some may join them.

It happens every day, they see it,  
they hear it, they read it.  
The fear is real and comes  
like a pronouncement by a doctor,  
"there is no cure for the disease,  
it is spreading."



It's especially because the economy  
has been good for a long time,  
since the end of W.W.II.  
Most people got used to them.  
They had decent jobs,  
had homes, newer cars,  
large TVs, better toys.  
cell phones.  
"The times they are a changin',"  
Bob Dylan sang in the sixties.  
He's still singing it today.  
Some of us weren't listening.  
Some still aren't.

Chicago, the early 30s,  
a kid could count on a place to  
sleep and food, not a lot, enough  
to keep him alive.  
And shoes, penny candy and  
a double feature movie for a nickel.

One doesn't need a gypsy to read  
tea leaves about the future  
when rivers are overflowing and  
a rush of water is coming  
down the streets.  
I don't need to read the best economists  
in the land write on the web  
that America has changed.  
That life for some, or many,  
will be an experience  
our great grand parents,  
rode out in the 30s.  
It's foggy, I don't know how well  
we can do now.

Maybe all we can do right now  
is sandbag some cash, keep our  
expenses low and yell  
in the streets,

“Back to hell you lackey  
bastards in Washington,  
we want our country back.  
The next time your concoct  
a Vietnam, an Iraq, and an Afghanistan,  
you go and leave your blood.  
Leave us alone is all we ask.

— *Ray Foreman*

## Kids

I am a kid again. Superman  
on a bicycle, no hands on the handlebars,  
looking for you  
down the street. We are kids  
running through sprinklers, like kids  
in the 80's  
around Brooklyn fire hydrants.  
Laughing at the water and music around us.  
Kids, on the couch  
in front of the swamp cooler,  
legs kicking, feet dangling from the edge,

eating popsicles. If anyone asks, I  
don't like you but  
just between me and you,

Red is my favorite and I want you to have it.

I am a kid again  
and if you really are too  
maybe you can take that postcard of me  
and stick it in a time capsule and bury it.  
And years from now  
when you're  
all grown up  
you can dig it up so that  
it can remind you  
how it felt

to not think,  
the way adults tend to do.

— *Michael Torres*



*dANIEL cUESTA*

### Summer: Three Ways

I've been learning English  
all my life,  
so I'm pretty good at it,  
but every summer brings  
my throat and brain  
new challenges.

Here, where rain is so rare,  
I've lost my sense of smell,  
but late at night,  
under a sheen of oil  
that feels very much like rain,  
the city tastes like fish.

Sometimes, in my green retreat,  
the weather makes a joke,  
with early falling leaves  
and snowy flowers.  
It's August;  
nothing will change  
until we tell it to.

— *Dorothea Grossman*

## The Yellow House

As you talk to me  
The yellow house in your eyes  
Flecks painted stories and  
All the voices coming from you  
Stem from that place.  
The you that eats gummy bears  
And patrols your street on bike.  
The you that paints walls  
Without permission.  
The you that worked the drive-thru  
Before I really knew you.  
All of this comes off you in waves  
Of thermal energy as hot winds  
Push us around town,  
Through water spigots  
That make the ground dance.  
And people stare but we're  
Two kids with cool lips  
Reading Popsicle stick jokes  
That they know nothing of.  
And we make moves like  
A bowl of watermelon  
Dripping and juicing in the heat.  
The you with a mouthful of black beans  
And a door hinge that squeaks for me,  
Turns left and waves out the window  
As I keep on going straight, but —  
The warmth of that yellow house  
Sits on my wet lap like a sun  
Who can't decide whether to set  
Or to rise.

— Charlotte San Juan

She - stands on the beach  
black in her wetsuit - smiling  
her blonde hair flows

frozen in the Kodachrome  
in wonder she is fading

— *Thomas R Thomas*

## The Cracks

The cracks in their marriage had appeared after their elder son went to, and failed, his first rehab. She had thought nothing could hurt more than that, but she was wrong. The fault lines were widening and, with each tremor, they all tumbled deeper into a cold and jagged chasm.

"Come on," she said to her husband, "If we don't leave now, we'll be late."

"I'm coming, I'm coming, hold your horses," he replied.

They got into his car, but she drove. He stretched out next to her in the passenger seat, like a sultan.

"I don't like this guy, you know," he said to her.

"Really?" she answered, "Why?"

"I think he's not straight with us," he answered.

"Why would you think that?" she asked.

"I don't know. It's just a feeling I have," he answered.

"Why would he be dishonest with us?" she asked, "What would he stand to gain? What would be his motive?"

"I don't know," he shrugged, leaned his head back and closed his eyes. Conversation over.

She drove eastbound on the #91, towards Riverside, and wondered. She liked this guy. She had thought a male marriage counselor would be a comforting thing to her uptight husband, that he would think he already had someone in his court. She wondered if it had more to do with the man's color than his honesty.

She gave a loud sigh and turned on the radio news.

*Two shot in a bank robbery gone bad in Palm Springs,* she heard the voice say.

*Probably some morons who needed drug money,* she thought and tried to picture who the shooters were.

At the moment she was daydreaming and only half paying attention, she saw a small, dark blue sedan speeding toward them. *Toward them.* How could that be? The car was going the wrong way on the freeway.

Her eyes took in the scene, knowing they'd be dead in seconds. It would be quick, painless. She would never have her heart broken again by her sons or her husband. It would be an easy way out. Maybe there was a God and maybe He had noted her unbearable pain. She closed her eyes and maintained her lane.

Only, nothing happened. She opened her eyes two seconds later, when the displacement of air, caused by the little Honda screaming past her to the left, rattled their own car.

She let out a small, strangulated cry of what-- disappointment, relief, anger with God?

She looked over at Carl. His mouth was open. He was snoring away, peaceful as an old cow lying under a shady tree in a pasture. God, how she had come to hate him.



## Icon, Koan. But not really

The eyes came off smoothly, unpeeled like dreams, then the nose which was a bit more of a chore cracked off with crumbs, then the mouth, no bother, and the eyebrows, and lastly the ears, with ease. These last cephalic components, detached by hand, came off with minimum discomfort and one might even say: aplomb. His hands had also gone for the hair, but decided at the crucial moment to leave that dog where it lay. Now he laid out his features on the desk before him, his desk which was a kitchen table, his kitchen table which was a workbench as, it should also be noted, his kitchen was a shed, as was the rest of his home.

He left the flop of hair on mostly because he thought it amusing; the tufts plopped on his conical head as if from some halfway abandoned sketch that had come as a result of one of these 'How To Draw' books sold by the number in high street art shops. Remembering this advice, he took a pencil from the workbench and scored his head with one vertical line down the centre and another horizontal one across the eyes, or at least where they had, at one time, been, holding it steady and with care, in case he forgot the correct proportions of a correct Face when it came to reassembly. Otherwise people would *really* laugh in his disproportionate Face, or think him unduly quizzical, even curious; it could be the difference between laughter and none, just teathy grins; between a noose for the neck or a string for the ankles; between life and this life; between gifted future and no present.

At this stage, air floated between the seconds, he was having quite a bit of fun, regardless of that armchair feeling of fraudulence running from his spine. He stood up and straightened the column, walked the two steps available inside the shed, and performed a little pirouette at each end for the benefit of his faceless audience, the occasion being the closest he had come to perfection, he thought.

He stood on it awhile and enjoyed, for there are few faceless men in this century.

Eventually, he resumed his task. He felt his way back to the bench and leant the front portion of his Head toward it feigning to look, while his eyes, which *could* actually see, eyed him with uncertain ridicule, just as his brain realised, being as it was that it could not be removed, he should have brought with him a mirror for inspection. Now the pencil marks were most likely an inconvenience.

The features were laid out, all piled up on top of one another, astounded by possibility. His fingertips jabbed and shuffled them around, lifting each one to feel for its purpose, and its place. This, all without the aid of a simple reflection, proved unsuccessful: an eye went on where it shouldn't be, the chin; then the nose on his cheek with the two eyebrows below (not thick enough to convincingly moustache); the last eye going

slap on his forehead (he hadn't thought it through, getting in more of a fluster as his troubles cranked up); but the ears, which he had a certain instinct for, were only slightly high of the mark, going deep into his hair by the temples, poking out like an overgrown farm on a hill.

He looked at himself, somehow.

"Pretty pretty," said his mouth, laid on the bench.

His divorced eyes narrowed. Squeezing the lips, he picked up the pinky flab and positioned it a little crooked on an area usually reserved for noses, before slapping himself on the chops.

Awake. Delighted.

Next he was on his way back up the garden along the sane paving, knocking his shoes on the patio then his knuckles on the conservatory glass.

Inside the glass was a room: He tilted his head upward, aiming the lower portion of his skull forward, for a peak in with the eye of his chin. His wife was laid there looking up at the top sheet, formed of black-sky ice, winking left to right to readjust the visual of a mouthless blacksuit white-shirted man who, on his button-holed belly, observed blankly the ongoing charade, his hands and legs spread across the glass roof like a spider pariah.

"I'm done." The shed-dweller's mouth went, bones knuckling glass with anticipatory relish.

"You're done? Let me have a look at you." The wife.

Her face jiggled like a ratty vintage centrefold when she leaned over the sofa and looked into him; he was rattling, vibrating, with necklace-straining eagerness, the prospect of validation becoming too much for him.

It was over quickly.

Soon but later, he was going back down the garden path with her "No" in his hair-invaded ears, his locomotive mind running out of steam, but legs still functional.

Brain also still functional,  
he went back to work.

He discarded the ear, the one which rang of rejection, tossed it flippantly into the bin,

then readjusted the remaining one down, sideburn territory, and forward, borderline cheek. He slid his remaining features into a straight line that ran along the horizontal pencil mark. From left to right: ear, eye, mouth, nose, eye, eyebrow, eyebrow. He danced a pirouette and curtsied to the blind roaring crowd.

He tried again.

His wife looked tired of the game.

Her “No, sir” was voiceless this time. It was only a shake of the head and a return to staring at the mouthless, now earless, blacksuited, whiteshirted man, with a mounting intangible fear in her expression that she couldn’t help but portray.

This time, back in the wooden box, he savaged it all. Holding the bin up he smeared his face downward into it. (Yes, there was a moment when all of the bits, at split second intervals, had formed all of the so-far conceived faces of this world, before collecting into a laughable concentrate centred on his chin). The now useless, now unwanted, suddenly unsavoury bits slid off and bounced about, salty flesh against metal waste, as angrily exposit as his featureless face would allow, the bin left soppy with tears in its caboose.

His Mouth: “murmur”

His Ears: silent.

His Nose: (dripping)

His Eyes: (nothing)

He pulled out the mouth and tried to hold its lips tight, though the mumbling kept on repeating. He dropped it back in where it slapped the nose and bounced off the bed of eyebrows and poked the eye where it stuck in, upright.

Standing on his feet like the mouth he had plunged in his disowned eye, he launched the little container out the door and onto the rectangle black-green (read: Garden).

Slouched, slunched, shoulders contacting the knees, head conversing with the toes. Silence.

OUTSIDE: NORMAL.

OUTSIDE: THE BLACKSUIT WHITESHIRT PICKED THE FEATURES FROM THE

BIN AND REPLACED THEM WITH HIS OWN.

OUTSIDE: a man had been re-made.

Inside, a man stayed where he was, looking like a portrait of a woolly angel (read: Derelict).

The crowd that had been roaring, had been applauding, had been supportive of his clean faced venture, were standing this time not in ovation, but what his brain now thought was embarrassed escape.

They left and left him there. His shorts falling to his ankles.

— *Declan Tan*

## Kittens

I first noticed the wretched little things when paw prints mysteriously appeared on the hood and windshield of my brand new BMW. One of the few drawbacks of living here is the carport parking. Condominiums are a beautiful thing – everything perfectly manicured and controlled. No lawn to mow, no trash cans to take to the curb, no worries... except for the lack of garages. And forget about using a car cover -- the overnight moisture makes removing those things kind of like smearing your paint job with a moist towelette.

The mystery was solved when I returned home from work one day. As I pulled in, a scattering of black furry bodies into the bushes and trees gave evidence that stray kittens had invaded my gated condo complex. To make things worse, a huge metal tray was off in the bushes nearby, bearing a heap of cat food large enough to disturb the Earth's gravitational pull. With a sigh, I heaved the tray and its contents into the dumpster. BANG.

As I walked to my recently-acquired bachelor pad I pondered the situation. Of what use was the condo in the hills, the guarded security gate, the carefully-tended landscaping? All this organization and perfection had been shattered with one stray cat... and the birth of a litter of scavenging vermin, leeching off the prosperity of their human hosts. These creatures have absolutely no business being here, cluttering up the scenery, targeting my car... invading *my* life!

As I faded into sleep that night, my thoughts wandered back to the divorce and the circumstances that landed me here. No emotion, she would complain. What would she prefer – nasty, messy fights every night? Upheavals of emotion, full of tears? Mankind has not evolved for thousands of years only to be weak china cups brimming with sloppy feelings.

The next morning, briefcase in hand, I trekked to the parking lot to discover some housecoat-clothed octogenarian laying out a metal tray of cat food identical to the one I threw away the day before. I noticed the freshly-dented corner of the tray and realized with a surge of distaste that the old bag actually DUG the thing out of the trash, piled another Mount Vesuvius-sized amount of cat food on it, and was tucking it again into the planter next to the carports. Furry eager faces peeked out at us from the trees. And yes, a particularly brave specimen actually **sitting** on the roof of my car! A hateful glance towards this particular feline must have been well-interpreted, as it took off in a flash of black fur and dust. Leaving paw prints all over the damn car. Of course.

I tore off my mirror shades and strode up to the old lady. "There are rules here, lady. What the hell are you doing, feeding all these strays?"

She stood up with a groan and met my hostile gaze with a disarming smile. "But young man, without this food they'll starve. You don't want that, now do you?"

I withheld my answer to what she seemed to think was a rhetorical question. I decided that maybe logic would be a better ploy. "C'mon, lady, if nobody feeds them

they'll go somewhere else. If you keep feeding these things, they'll never leave! They're a total nuisance... their paw prints are all over my car, and... and..." I cut off. She was looking at me pointedly, curiously, as if I were a square egg or a duck-billed platypus or something. This only enraged me more.

She seemed suddenly to come to a decision, and a fresh smile appeared on her withered face. "Well then young man, I guess these kitties are all my pets now. And I'm feeding *my* pets, with *my* cat food."

"Lady, if they were *your* pets they would be inside *your place*, where they belong. Animals do not belong outside, to romp around and create problems for the people that *live* here." With that, I took hold of the tray of food and proceeded to throw it yet again into the trash bin.

"No, please, sir..." I looked back and saw she was actually *crying*. Her old face was glistening with moisture, wrinkles filling like tiny little aqueducts. "These kitties are so beautiful... and I..." She hobbled up, laid a hand on my arm. As I jerked away I was disgusted to see a drip of snot emerging from one of her nostrils. "My husband just passed away, and I just want to have... some company... and, and these little kitties..." I didn't let her finish. A heave, a BANG, an alarm chirp, and I was safely behind polarized glass and on my way to work.

As I commuted, I had an epiphany. Perhaps the right thing to do would be to feed these poor kittens. After all, can't let the pathetic things starve to death, eh? And while I'm at it, maybe slip them a nice little *surprise* in their food. Shouldn't be too difficult, after all... they're hungry strays, and the old bag was giving them cheap dry kibble. Maybe stop off at the market on the way home, and pick up a few tins of Sheba or Fancy Feast some other crap... You know, something they'll just dig right into - never mind the slight unpleasant aftertaste, ha ha! The more I thought about it, the more I realized that I would be doing my neighbors and the public at large a great service. Maybe even get an award from the Homeowner's Association!

I was roused from my reverie by a tap to my window. I jumped in surprise when I saw the old grizzled face of a street person leveling his tired gaze at me through the tint of the safety glass. And of course, here was the ever-extended hand, and don't forget the little sign they all have nowadays. Who the hell put all these people here? Is their sole purpose to harass me? All I want is to get to work, and I'm forced to deal with these nuisances on every street corner!

As the light changed and I sped off, I began for the first time considering Social Work. After all, I'm sure they can *always* use more volunteers at those free meal shelters...

— Luke Salazar

## Spare Change

It wasn't until after his throat had stopped gushing blood, and I looked down and saw the dripping knife in my hand, that I realized what I had done. That was when the panic kicked in. I still wonder what I must have looked like, tucked in that alley behind what used to be a Borders, trying to wrap my overcoat around the throat of the homeless man, hoping to stop the now slow trickle of blood or at least prop his head up enough to convince myself I hadn't just killed a man. The cops say I was in shock when they showed up. That I was sitting on the snow covered cement, knees tucked into my chest, rocking back and forth. I don't remember though. I don't even remember stabbing the first cop in the ankle with the knife still gripped in my hand. They say I was screaming. That's why they were called. A man had been screaming non-stop for 20 minutes. A well-dressed man covered in blood, holding a knife.

I remember my stock broker calling me, telling me I lost everything in the crash just 20 minutes earlier. I vaguely remember his apologies, and the sound of wind rushing through his Bluetooth headset as he flung himself from the rooftop of his building. And I remember the homeless man rummaging through the dumpster in the alley, probably looking for some food. I remember his tattered yellow beanie was slightly skewed revealing his thinning silver hair, his faded olive colored jacket with the tear in the side exposing his dirty white flesh underneath, his filth encrusted jeans, the blackened flesh encasing his frostbitten toes juxtaposed against the crisp white snow. I remember him looking me in the eye and asking for some spare change. All he wanted was some spare change.

— *Brian Verwiel*

## The Life I Had

The Life I had with You was dead but it would not Leave. It sat in a corner Rotting.

It reached a bony Hand toward me, I batted it away.

"Come now," it said, "think of Caterpillars."

I went for a Walk, it followed.

I looked up and You were a Star Shining Thoughtlessly.

I kept my Head down.

The Life I had with You kept pace. It began to beat me. The more I cried, the harder it hit.

"Come now," it said, "think of the Phoenix."

I went for a Drink, it followed.

It got me Drunk, I vomited.

I looked around and you were Everyone.

The Life I had with You carried me Home, it drew a Bath. It grew many Arms, it slashed at my Wrists with Blades. When this didn't work, it began to Choke me. It held my Head underwater.

"Come now," it said, "come now."

I fought for a bit.

The World danced in Waves.

— Omar ZahZah



## THE BUMP

South of Pasadena in the far left lane, just before  
heading up the hill alongside Chavez Ravine, a bump  
lightly jerks the steering column: the driver's side front wheel  
tilts and rocks back down.

It doesn't matter how old  
or ruined a car I'm driving, this is the only moment  
I wouldn't trade: complete foreknowledge would tempt me only if  
it were written in poetry too personal for anyone else to understand,  
of which this could serve as an intimate example.

— *Bill Mohr*

## **twice that many**

squash for dinner, and squash for lunch.  
squash squash squash.  
harbinger of autumn.  
prelude to halloween.  
taste buds awash in their softness, their delicate stringiness.  
gentle fibres caressing tongue and  
insides of cheeks and back of  
soft pink throat. thus sits  
the sexy gentle country boy in  
his seat at the kitchen table  
eating the squash that he  
has prepared for himself  
from his own garden  
out behind the old house  
in which he has sequestered himself  
for the better part of a year.  
dropped out of college.  
dropped out of as much of life as possible.  
lucky to have this house, and this land,  
left to him by loving  
grandmother in  
her will at just about  
the time he made the decision to  
drop out of  
college and drop out of life and, well,  
drop out of just about everything for a while.  
now,  
sitting at his little table all alone  
eating a variety of squash for dinner,  
he  
considers  
decisions he's made,  
decisions he's about to make,  
decisions he'll never make because  
he's just so  
entrenched here,  
all alone,  
as  
he rises from the table,  
the sexy gentle country boy is naked  
as usual,  
he spends as much time as

possible naked,  
he's really quite beautiful,  
tousled blond hair and  
tanned all over  
and lean muscles under tight  
skin  
his big thick dick  
hanging over his nice set of balls.  
he goes to the sink  
and washes the plate and  
the pans he used to prepare  
the squash.  
there is squash  
skin on the countertops,  
squash skin at the edge of the sink.  
the squash skin is knobby and multi-colored.  
he likes the way it  
just lies there  
and  
waits for him to  
do something about it,  
which he most certainly will,  
when the spirit moves him,  
when the time just seems  
right.

— *Carl Miller Daniels*

**“By what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.”**

A solemn verse: what else could be expected from someone whose miracles were classified as destiny by the recipients? How else can you measure a miracle? One day you're crippled and tethered to a post to keep from crawling to the honey-pots when everyone else is gathering the harvest and the next morning nobody recognizes you walking around. They've forgotten all about the miracle since they thought you were faking it from the very start. Didn't your own mother see you getting paid off by the prophet's personal bookkeeper? How else could you afford to buy two tickets out of the provinces, though no one else here wants to sit next to you, even if it's for free.

— *Bill Mohr*

**THE WIND  
AGES ME**

The wind moves  
through the grass.  
The wind ages me.  
The rain drips from  
the house.  
The rain ages me.  
Sleep breathes deeply.  
Sleep ages me.  
A young woman  
on a bicycle  
yells to me,  
“get out of the way  
old man.”  
She laughs and  
waves to me  
as she goes by.  
The moon cannot  
burn a tree down.  
It cannot eat  
a cow or cook  
a shrimp. But  
it ages me.

— *Ronald Baatz*

## **Lepon Lepon Lepon...**

*"The cut worm forgives the plow" – William Blake*

The rabbits are marauding again, loose all through the house.

This is not a good idea. They are cursed, or possessed, or ill.

Where they go, they shit. It is best not to look too closely at their leavings.

The pellets might take the shape of hanged men, of gods clothed in flesh

hanging limp and broken from the crossbeams. I do not turn my

head to glance at unusual movement – A rabbit deep in their voodoo chants

will hover feet from the ground, somehow smug, self-satisfied,

its tiny buck teeth glinting like arrowheads. Rabbits engaged in debate turn

nihilistic, Nietzschean. It is easy to walk away, to think you have won the argument

only to find yourself hours later in the tiny Italian restaurant in the village,

glaring disgusted at the teenagers. *Do* feed the rabbit, please, go ahead,

it will not be satisfied.

— *Scott Creley*

## The Fragmentary

I like the fragmentary, the half-done, the unfinished, the abandoned. Not for me the cohesiveness of the completed. I prefer scattered showers to a day of rain, shards to panes, the dalliance to the marriage. I would rather read the hormonal jottings of a fifteen year old girl than, say, the Complete Works of William Shakespeare. Building sites fill me with a special kind of joy. When I see newspaper blowing down a darkened alley, my heart is maddened with the uncomplicated beauty of it all. Then at night when I settle into my half-made bed with its sheets and blankets so expertly unravelled at the edges, I become enraptured with the ensuing collage of dreams and the way I tumble end over end into their exquisite unfinishedness.

— *Glenn W. Cooper*

## THE MYSTERY OF WATERS

The Black River moved east to the Red Sea  
as August crept in on soft hands,  
all before a lost tribe of clowns  
carrying cartoons and sacred images  
high above their heads  
    close to the blue sky  
        close to their desire.

Calliope music beckoned them enter the  
cathedral that nestled under a grand mustard tree,  
as Mary Magdalene flew high above the center ring  
    Saint Agnes recited the seven truths  
        Lucifer blew fire and ice  
ending the world as predicted by Frost.

Alice, their queen, kept watch -  
Alice who knew the secret of grinning cats and wise caterpillars  
smoking dope high above the cathedral on tree limbs,  
purring to perfection in sitting meditation  
    dreaming of dancing mice  
        one minded mischief makers.

I remained silent and floated on to the Dead Sea,  
where blood drops become rose buds in bleeding hearts.  
Watching ash fall from the hand of an avatar  
    snow flakes in August  
        dusting me white as talcum after baptism.

These wandering mysteries.  
    These puzzlements of mind.  
Meditations on the nature of rivers and seas,  
breezes that dapple my mind in sunlight at midnight.

Will you float with me  
On this river of grace?  
Belly button pointing toward heaven,  
umbilical eye staring into the mystery of love.

— Charles P. Ries



## Edgar Allan Nobody

All the poets he admired were  
opium eaters, laudanum users,  
sallow faced scarecrows tainted  
by sickroom visions of soul  
draining women and of death,  
wrote graphic verse in archaic forms,  
language so mannered it was  
a caricature of the lines he read  
aloud dressed as some kind of  
Beau Brummell on-the-way-to-a-funeral,  
sixties stoned retro that went with  
his affected Velvet Underground  
tone, a Lou Reed sound alike with  
the hint of a lisp and vampire lovers  
cold from the grave, thought the tepid  
response his work received meant no  
one got what he had to say rather  
than the obvious, that they did and  
they thought that it sucked; thought  
that chain smoking Gauloises and drinking  
until he puked, on stage and off, marked  
him as the genius he was meant to be instead  
of the drunk he would become.

— Alan Catlin

## Atelophobia\*

Each wavelet is an echo of memory unclasping itself. I never understood loneliness as a child because the moon was always following me. The universe does not have laws, it has habits, and habits can be broken\*. Psychologists suggested that it takes about 28 tries before you can break a habit. I've forgotten how many Pilot ballpoint pens I've stolen. How many sea foam green intimates I've purchased. How many letters to my father I've never sent. My mother promises, on a daily basis, that I'll love her more when she's dead. The world is nothing more than water and want. The people we love become ghosts in the vestibules of our hearts and that's how we keep them alive. The old marquee across from the pale yellow neighborhood church reads: Stupidity should be painful. Drinking too much coffee is the thread of most stupid acts. On nights like this, I'd like to go moonbathing: until the sun begins to rise, until the sea becomes indistinguishable from the sky. Moonbathe until the Aurora Borealis drowns out the eventide. The dreams we are chasing and the reality that's haunting us is always parallel. Even when the moon wanes, it's never changing shape.

\* Atelophobia: Psychological neurosis: the fear of never being good enough, the fear of imperfection.

\* (Telo = End. Atelo = No End. Atelophobia = Fear of No End).

\* "The universe does not have laws, it has habits, and habits can be broken" - from Jitterbug Perfume by Tom Robbins

— *Jacqueline Pham*

## Untitled

I bought plum blossoms  
more for the name  
than for the color.  
I buy lipstick that way, too.  
In other words,  
if it sounds like a poem,  
I'll take it.

— *Dorothea Grossman*

**You** tow a conversation out to sea  
lean over the rail and vomit

i push on,  
into the interior  
camouflaged by word-play  
impervious to the storm  
fooled by the same young faces

if I left us up to God; I'd be with someone else  
out of words  
as quick as whiskey

bits of light glow up from a ripple  
worms stretch out for robins in the rain

as I sit  
in a blue penciled dawn  
and grow furious  
the party  
starting up without me

— *Jude Dillon*

## **The Broken**

(by *name withheld* to protect The Broken)

(dedicated to all the men who have not married me)

The Broken  
know who they are.  
They do things differently--  
they manage, they pass, they are even amazing  
in moments.

The moments don't last.  
The Broken are easily overcome  
by their brilliance and yours always looks better  
next to theirs  
because how can you be brilliant alone?

The Broken, as they age,  
lose family members, rarely have plans  
on holidays, make do with the stuffy concerts  
on KCET where others go to their children's, their  
children's children's Christmas programs.  
The Broken sometimes ignore holidays altogether.  
They shop at the 24-hour store on Thanksgiving Night,  
pretending it is the Thursday night previous. They pick  
up some wart remover and toilet paper or a copy of  
DISCOVER—maybe a bar of banana-scented soap from the  
mark-down bin.

The Broken go to therapy, they attend groups, they have  
hobbies, post messages on their favorite fringe website. They  
watch CARNIVAL OF SOULS or MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS repeatedly  
instead of going out to a movie. Some of them draw or play the violin  
or flute. Sometimes they throw ceramic pots. Maybe they used to be good at  
archery, tennis, ice skating, but now, no. Not anymore. There's usually a long list  
of things they want to do but feel they can't.

They work very hard at accepting their lot and after awhile they don't notice they are  
Broken. But they know who their fellows are--those neighborhood singles whose first  
name they know, the ones they wave to when they run into them at Top  
Value or the branch library. These are the same ones who ride  
the bus on holidays, the other ones without family, the ones  
who carry the bus schedules for every route in the city. The Broken are

usually excellent at giving directions to strangers.

Sometimes an unexpected event happens. An Unbroken comes into a Broken's life and invites her to join him. She is suspicious. What does he want? Does he think she's easy? Is he trying to get something? Sometimes the Unbroken is temporarily Broken himself and knows that the True Broken will not judge him, may even help him repair. Even while she is sussing this out, her lifelong desire to join the Unbroken, to be partnered, to be a true familiar in a world of comfortable kitchens, kid homework, dairy field trip cow-milking and movie nights, 'sex on the beach'--and I don't mean the drink--gets the better of her. She dares to believe she has been chosen for herself. Maybe the spell of The Broken has left. She still tries to hide all its earmarks around The Unbroken--those she is aware of anyway, or those she can try to keep under control for short periods (fear of going without food, fear of looking like a dinosaur while chewing, fear of being unaccountably slapped or snapped at for saying something annoying, fear of being kissed without due preparation). She feels she is semi-successful for a time. Things go well. She is invited to The Unbroken's home, she is invited to one of his members-only clubs, then--even as she wonders if The Unbroken girls get this same treatment or do they have a longer period of public events--she is too quickly only seen in private. And now it is only at The Unbroken's convenience--while he is working, in between his appointments, being given a courtesy ride to the bus station. No gifts are exchanged, unless they are from her, of course. No more suggestions of fun things to do are mentioned, no questions about what she might like to do. No more, 'Maybe I could join you sometime,' when she mentions her nature walks, her hobbies, her private showings of rare kinescopes from the Dumont television network, non-existent since 1959. She wonders, do The Unbroken ever bring orchids to other Unbrokens as they seem to in old films? Nothing has been brought to her except peanut sauce for their chicken fried rice, but she appreciated this very much as it did require a special trip to an Asian grocer.

Then the visits become phone calls and they come less often, usually on a Sunday. There is an exchange of news, mostly the Unbroken's difficulties at being temporarily Broken. The Broken listens patiently, thinking, at least it's still a relationship with The Unbroken. It's still something enough to tell her friends, her Broken friends, about.

The friends remain impressed with the overall development and all choose to ignore its diminishing returns.

One day the Unbroken sends a message to The Broken. He is telling about a birthday gift he has received from two young children (the break-up of his family is part of his

temporary broken condition). He describes his consternation at receiving a piece of furniture 'which doesn't go with anything else' in his new bachelor quarters. He is not sure what to do and discusses it with a trusted advisor. The advisor humors him and tells him to put it (in one telling it is a magazine rack, in another a hat rack, but it could be anything--an ottoman, a throw), on the wall and see it as a symbol of his new life. Being a good sport he does that. The Broken thinks to herself that she is like this unfitting appliance. She also doesn't go with anything else in his pad or his life. He is trying to be a good sport and appreciate her anyway, but after awhile, the honorable advice forgotten, her ill-fitting nature cannot be ignored. He puts her aside as he eventually does -- respectable display time over--the piece of furniture.

The Broken finds her own handmade furnishing (hat stand, throw or lantern) in a thrift store. (Broken's most often shop in the neighborhood thrift store). She takes it home and arranges her own furniture around it. It goes fine with her things. It doesn't seem Broken in her home. She doesn't seem Broken in her home. And she doesn't seem Broken around her friends even though they are still Broken. Maybe she's not Broken anymore.

Maybe helping the Temporary Broken become Unbroken again made her Unbroken. The condition seems only to last as long as she stays away from him. If she tries to extend the friendship with the Unbroken past his 'setting aside' of her, she seems to become Broken again.

If the Broken know anything, they know when their time is up. As the Temporary Unbroken, if she ignores anything she's learned 100 times already (the Broken often have to repeat experiences more than The Unbroken--they are slow to understand or maybe it is just too painful), she will probably become Broken again, possibly too Broken to repair. She'd best stay with The Broken crowd where she can safely wait to meet Another Temporary. It's not impossible for The Broken to find love but The Broken do so live in the past that to love someone in the present must break them of their condition. It is a rare Broken who can sustain the radically uncomfortable process of being made new.

The Broken are The Broken are The Broken or so they think.

— Catherine H.

## Whirlwinder

sheathed in her sunday best  
hair afrill  
humming a tune  
reminiscent of a freight train

she asked him  
what his plans were  
for her  
that afternoon

he put his pen down  
on the nearly complete  
crossword puzzle

right then and there  
Occam decided  
to grow a beard

— *R L Raymond*



## The Edge

You woke up wearing a thin red X for a left eye,  
and didn't care when the sun wore away the permanent marker.

You realized your body was two days older  
than it was two days ago, and so you cried because

tears are fresh and young,  
and they render new stains on the carpet.

You cursed your diva pink bangs for being too yuppie,  
your eyeliner was not heavy enough,

your mascara too neat for grunge. You looked more  
made up for an outing with your Greek sisters

than like you had just made out with your biker boy toy  
in a mud hole right outside his half-sister's trailer.

Your breath was stinking of duck liver mousse,  
some un-American cheese product, and vegetable cracker

(the trans-fat free kind that takes a while to dissolve on your tongue).  
You swore to never love again, but love again you would,

and bruise again you do so easily because  
ripe garden plum looks good on you.

Purple was your mother's color though,  
like the jelly bracelets her anorexic wrists swam in,

when she was naïve and mistook the rain for kisses.  
You look just like her after coming out the shower,

you think like her too and you feel the edge nearing.  
The miles come slowly but they come and go,

and they call to you, and you to them.

— *Samantha Hawkins*

**when i**

was a little kid  
i had  
a red tricycle.  
i could go pretty  
fast on it.  
we lived on the end of  
our block.  
i'd get the bike  
on the sidewalk  
and go as  
fast as i could  
to the other end.  
i wouldn't slow down,  
and every time  
i tried to turn  
the corner  
i'd fall.  
i'd always  
tear my pants or  
scrape an arm  
or something,  
but i always got back on,  
and rode like hell  
back to the house.  
i never did  
make it  
around the corner.  
i didn't have to.  
just getting there  
was enough.

— *John Yamrus*

**“Wilford Brimley’s Moustache”**

Wilford Brimley’s moustache  
Two clumps of cotton glued right under his Santa Claus nose,  
The centerpiece to his Pillsbury face  
It quivers when his Southern drawl weaves words and leaps from his lips  
He informs us of opportunity and syringes and finger pricks  
and all the horrors of  
comas  
lost limbs  
swelling bodies  
and blindness  
are lost on a powdered sugar lip warmer and  
“Diabeetus.”

— *Dylan Gosland*

**Sir Henry Raeburn:** *James Cruikshank*

His fortune was made from sugar,  
And I would imagine  
From the plantation labor of slaves.

I discern no guilt on his visage,  
But his fingers do point down.

The painter achieved  
A royal appointment  
In 1822,  
And died in 1823.

— *Gerald Locklin*

## I Met

rebecca's  
parents  
last tuesday  
night

*so larry  
they began  
what type  
of poetry  
do you write?*

*mostly  
self deprecating  
i said*

*that's  
considered  
poetry  
now a days?  
they asked*

*depends on  
your  
definition of  
poetry  
i answered*

not listening  
they  
ordered  
something  
french &  
said  
*well don't  
give up  
larry, you' ll  
get there  
eventually.*

– Lawrence Gladeview

## WHY I GAVE UP WRITING AND JOINED THE CIRCUS

I left it all; the paper and pens, publishers  
and agents who could not love my inner  
fantasy and joined the circus.

The make-up, big nose and fancy pants  
helped me overcome my feelings of  
obscurity. I created an identity grander  
than my literary art. I now have something  
worth writing about.

I married the fat lady, she gave birth to  
a midget; I learned to swallow swords,  
made friends with a contortionist who  
told me to turn my pens into pretzels,  
and live like a real man.

— *Charles P. Ries*

## Yet Another of My Many Bad Ideas

Disneyland, in line for Pirates,  
my proudly inappropriate sister  
crowds upon the virtues of the Diva Cup –  
an eco-friendly alternative to pads and tampons.  
By the time she's done, I'm convinced,  
almost wishing for a vagina of my own.

Later, an out-of-the-way corner at Bug's Life  
where thorough shrubs, I spy Muslim teens  
kneeling quietly upon their prayer mats.  
I tell my ex-Muslim friend the next day,  
and ask her why she lost her faith.  
*Too many hypocrisies for women*, she said.

She speaks of burqas and forced marriage,  
and that before they pray, Muslim women  
must wash every part of their body touched  
by any man who is not their husband,  
and menstruation is considered filthy,  
so they can't pray at the mosque that week.

My bad idea, you ask?  
An ad campaign for the Diva Cup.  
A young Muslim woman kneels, praying,  
in a crowded mosque. She slips a wink at the reader.

The caption reads *Diva Cup. Not even Allah will know.*

— Luke Salazar

**For Kathleen**

(22 lines)

Some people would rather you stay with the abusive boyfriend  
who demanded seventy-five hundred dollars  
in return for your life  
who bought you birthday gifts with your money  
because he's a chivalrous motherfucker  
who put a cigarette out on your face  
since the ash tray was full.

God would rather you use your soul  
to carry around demons  
like an old suitcase  
Pastor would rather you batter-ram your emotions  
into a sardine can  
on the tip of a pinhead.

But let me tell you  
— sister —  
who you are is fine with me.  
And let me tell you  
— sister —  
the caged bird doesn't sing.  
You're a peacock, not a parrot  
— sister —  
so let your wings breathe.

— *Natalie Morales*



## CONTRIBUTORS

**Jose Arroyo** is a single father of 3 who repairs and maintains industrial and commercial air conditioners at a steel mill in Rancho Cucamonga for a living.

**Ronald Baatz** and his wife live in New York.

[Tony Barnstone](#)

**Alan Catlin** has published over sixty chapbooks and full length books of prose and poetry. Among his more recent poetry publications are the full length Near Death in the Afternoon on Becker Street from March Street Press and a related chapbook from Sunnyoutside Only the Dead Know Albany.

**Marta Chausée** lives, works and plays in and near her tree house in the secret jewel in the crown of Southern California, the wee college town of Claremont, with her luck dragon, Falcor, by her side and her beloved writer friends and peeps nearby. Her first book, Resort to Murder, will be published in 2012 by Oak Tree Press. Her motto is: Manus manum lavat.

**Glenn Cooper** lives in Tamworth, Australia, and has been publishing in the small press and behind for the last decade. His latest book is His Crucible of Pain: 20 Prose Poems Concerning Rimbaud.

**Scott Creley's** work has been printed in *Sentence*, *Freefall*, and the collection Bear Flag Republic from Alcatraz Press. He is an occasional host of the Valley Poets reading series and a curator of the San Gabriel Valley Literary Festival.

Before he was born, his parents wanted to name him Nestor Daniel Cuesta; however, at the time of his birth, neither parent could remember the desired first name, so they left it at **Daniel Cuesta**. Think of him as an "almost-Nestor Daniel Cuesta," though really he is just dANIEL cUESTA. He likes to do a lot of things like walking, hiking, breathing, thinking, biking, etc. but on occasion, he sits down, cuts paper, pastes, paints, and scrawls down things that resemble something like a picture.

**Carl Miller Daniels** is an OCD agoraphobe who flosses quite regularly.

**Jude Dillon** is a male and a photographer and poet/ writer living in Calgary Alberta. He has a blog of photographs: [www.judedillonphoto.blogspot.com](http://www.judedillonphoto.blogspot.com).

**Ray Foreman** is the editor and publisher of *Clark Street Review* and *Backstreet*, both bi monthlies. He has been writing narrative human condition poetry for the past 30 plus years.

**Wesley Francis** has had poems published in *Dash*, *RipRap*, *Zygote In My Coffee*, and forthcoming in *Pearl*. He currently lives in Los Angeles, and is trying to grow out a nice winter beard.

**Lawrence Gladeview** is a Boulder, Colorado poet and one of two editors for *MediaVirus Magazine*. His debut full-length poetry collection, Just Ignore The Beer Stains, is available now from PigeonBike Press.

**Dylan Gosland** is a 22 year old California twin who just wants to put his writing out into the world. He has been published in *The Left Coast Review* and *Creepy Gnome*, and loves the sound of one hand clapping. He also has a moderate addiction to Nestle Butterfingers.

The late Allen Ginsberg called **Dorothea Grossman's** poetry, "clear, odd, personal, funny or wild-weird, curious and lucid." The award-winning poet lives, works and writes in Los Angeles. She has been a featured poet in the March, 2010 issue of *Poetry Magazine*, and the recipient of that magazine's Wood Prize. Two CDs, "Call & Response" and "Call & Response & Friends," feature her in live performance with improvising trombonist Michael Vlatkovich and other creative improvising musicians.

**Samantha Hawkins** grew up in Jonesboro, GA (but she tells everyone Beverley Hills, CA), and is majoring in Business Computer Systems (though her heart is in English). Her poetry has been published in multiple anthologies and may soon be featured in *Poetry* (if they would only stop rejecting her).

**Catherine H.** is a gratefully healing "Broken" who holds an MA and MFA in Fiction and is the author of a children's series set in WWII. She is currently on page 603 of her novel about a 'vintage' television personality. In her spare time she recreates the ghost dance of her animal totems.

[Gerald Locklin](#)

**Michaelsun Knapp** is a 22 year old, Native American, college graduate. He's been published online in *In Somnis Veritas* as well as in print in *Creepy Gnome*.

**Agnes Marton** is a Hungarian-born poet, editor, linguist, and translator. She regularly works together with visual artists, takes part in exhibitions and art projects in Europe, in the USA and in New Zealand. She performs in 5 countries. Her book is Sculpture/ poésie with Mani Bour.

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**Natalie Morales** is a senior English major at UCLA. Her poetry has been published in Mt. San Antonio College's *MoSAIC*, Cornell University's *Rainy Day Literary Magazine*, and *Conceit Magazine's Amulet* literary journal.

**Jacqueline Pham** is a first year student in the MFA Creative Writing program at California State University, Long Beach. She holds two Bachelor of Arts degrees from CSULB, one in Literature and one in Creative Writing with a minor in Psychology. Her poems have been published in *RipRap*, *The Mas Tequila Review*, *Subliminal Interiors*, *Bank Heavy Press*, *The Legendary*, and *The Anthology of International Youth Poetry*.

**R L Raymond** is a storyteller. He runs all aspect of *PigeonBike* -- an online and print journal, as well as a small poetry press. He keeps it simple and honest. His publications include - *Existere*, *Carousel*, *Epic Rites*, *Blazevox*, *Not One of Us*, etc. His first collection, *Sonofabitch Poems* is out and available.

**Kevin Ridgeway** is a writer from Southern California, where he lives in a shady bungalow with his girlfriend and their one-eyed cat. Recent and forthcoming work has appeared in *Underground Voices*, *Quantum Poetry Magazine*, *Red Fez*, *Clockwise Cat*, *Haggard & Halloo*, *The Legendary* and *Hobo Camp Review*.

**Charles P. Ries** lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His narrative poems, short stories, interviews, and poetry reviews have appeared in over two hundred print and electronic publications. He will have a new book of poetry published in 2011: *Girl Friend & Other Mysteries of Love* that will be published by Alternating Current Press. His work is archived at Marquette University's Raynor Library in the Charles P. Ries Collection (<http://www.marquette.edu/library/archives/Mss/CPR/CPR-main.shtml>).

**Natalie Robles** is a very sweet 9 year old terrier mix with green eyes. She is safe around cats, but keep away from the elderly and children. Do not rush Natalie or make loud clicking noises. Natalie does the artwork for <http://www.knoxenstein.com/>, which is a complicated mish mash of paw prints.

**Daniel Romo's** poetry can be found or is forthcoming in *Gargoyle*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *MiPOesias*, *Scythe*, *Connotation Press*, and elsewhere. His first book of poetry, *Romancing Gravity*, is forthcoming from Pecan Grove Press. More of his writing can be found at [danielromo.wordpress.com](http://danielromo.wordpress.com).

**Luke Salazar** has an MFA in creative writing from California State University, Long Beach. His work has been published in *Pearl*, *Chiron Review*, *The Ledge*, *Re)verb*, *Spot Lit Magazine*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Beggars and Cheeseburgers*, and *Vulcan*. His poem "Black Friday" won the 2009 Working People's Poetry Contest in *Blue Collar Review*.

**Charlotte San Juan** is a student from West Covina, California who started writing stories and poems as soon as her little fingers knew how. She attended Mt. San Antonio College, where her writing was recognized in the *Left Coast Review*. Her poetry will also be featured in a British online magazine called *The Beatnik*. Apart from writing, she enjoys the company of cats, liquor, and silly men.

**Declan Tan** works as a freelance journalist in Nuremberg, Germany where he also teaches English as a foreign language. He has published some prose and poetry here and there. He is originally from London, England.

**Thomas R Thomas** for his day job does software QA. He volunteers at Tebot Bach in Huntington Beach. His verse has been published in Don't Blame the Ugly Mug: 10 Years of 2 Idiots Peddling Poetry and *Creepy Gnome*.

**Michael Torres** was born and raised in Pomona, Ca. He was exposed to poetry at an early age, learning the works of William Shakespeare, Langston Hughes and Emily Dickinson to name a few. He has been published in *Beatlick News*, *The Chiron Review*, *Left Coast Review*, and *Solo Press*. His first chapbook of poetry, The Beautiful Distraction, was published by Finishing Line Press. Michael is currently in school pursuing a degree in creative writing.

Raised by a gaggle of bears in the heart of Orange County, **Brian Verwiel** witnessed his first mauling at the age of 4. Since then, his severely underdeveloped mind has often times taken him to the very depths of humanity. He finds joy in the places others would only find fear and horror.

Since 1970, **John Yamrus** has been a fixture on the poetry scene. He's published 18 volumes of poetry, two novels and has had more than 1,300 poems published in print magazines around the world. His latest book, CAN'T STOP NOW!, is on amazon.

**Omar ZahZah's** work has been featured in such publications as *The Chiron Review*, *RipRap*, and *Narrative Magazine*. He lives in Long Beach, California.

