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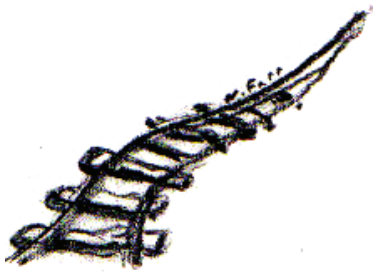

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terminus seeks to publish the most thought-provoking, socially and culturally aware writing available. While we aim to push the boundaries of general aesthetics and standards, we also want to publish writing that is accessible to a wide audience. We seek to live up to the highest standards in publishing, always growing and reaching new levels of understanding and awareness both within our immediate community and within the greater communities of our country and world. ***terminus*** accepts unsolicited submissions year-round, but keep in mind that most of our content is solicited. We encourage simultaneous submissions, so long as we are notified. Address all correspondence to: ***terminusmagazine@gmail.com***.

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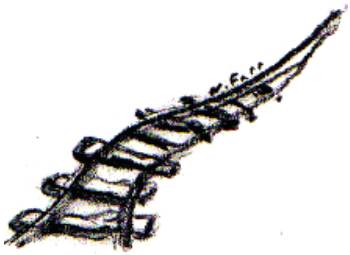

The *terminus* logo was designed by Natalie Farr

Front & Back Covers, inside cover, and insert
by Bo Bartlett

Front Cover: *Hollowman, Oil on Panel, 30x30, 2007.*
Inside Cover: *Open Gate, Oil on Linen, 48x66, 2011.*
Back Cover: *Galilee, Oil on Linen, 88x120, 2014.*

We recommend you check out more of Bo Bartlett's work online at www.bobartlett.com

and there's more from Beverly Key at www.beverlykey.com

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Featuring
Poetry@TECH's 2015-16 Visiting Poets

Art

Poetry

NonFiction

Fiction

Georgia Tech's School of Literature, Media, and Communication presents

Georgia Tech | Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts

poetry @ Tech

Thomas Lux, the Margaret T. and Henry C. Bourne Jr. chair in poetry, introduces

the fourteenth annual bourne poetry reading featuring

October 1, 2015
location
Kress Auditorium 7:30 p.m.

Ellen Bass

William Corbett

an evening of poetry featuring

October 22, 2015
location
Kress Auditorium 7:30 p.m.

Linda Gregerson

Christopher Howell

McEver Chair in Poetry

Travis Wayne Denton
Travis Wayne Denton is the Associate Director of Poetry@Tech, as well as editor of the literary arts publication, *Terminus Magazine*. His poems have appeared in numerous magazines and journals. His second collection of poems *When Pianos Fall from the Sky* was published by Marick Press.

2015-16 McEver Visiting Chairs in Community Outreach

Katie Chaple

Theresa Davis

adam stephens night out for poetry featuring

November 19, 2015
location
Kress Auditorium 7:30 p.m.

Brigitte Byrd

Bruce Beasley

Andrea Cohen

poetry@tech and ivan allen college of liberal arts present the 2016 international poetry event featuring

February 25, 2016
location
Kress Auditorium 7:30 p.m.

Andrew Motion

Niillas Holmberg

mcever poetry reading featuring

April 7, 2016
location
Kress Auditorium 7:30 p.m.

Marc Bamuthi Joseph

Marc Bamuthi Joseph's performance is funded, in part, by a grant from South Arts in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Georgia Council for the Arts.

SOUTH ARTS

Bruce McEver

The Kress Auditorium Parking:
Plenty of free parking available just in front of the building's entrance or through the gate, which is straight ahead as you turn off 10th Street.

For more directions & parking info visit:
www.ipst.gatech.edu/amp/

For more information about Free Poetry Workshops in the community, go to
www.poetry.gatech.edu/poetry_class.html

THE KRESS AUDITORIUM
Renewable Bioproducts Institute at Georgia Tech
500 Tenth Street, NW
Atlanta, GA 30332

All events are free and open to the public.
No tickets or reservations are required.
A book sale and signing to follow all readings.

Previous readings by:
Kim Addonizio, David Baker, Coleman Barks, Mikaki Black, Robert Bly, Roger Bonair-Agard, Richard Blanco, Laure-Anne Bosselaar, David Bottoms, Joel Brouwer, Jericho Brown, Kurt Brown, Elena Karina Byrne, Pearl Cleage, Lucille Clifton, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Billy Collins, Cynthia Cruz, Chad Davidson, Theresa Davis, Kwame Dawes, Chard deNiord, Carl Dennis, Michael Dickman, Stuart Dischell, Stephen Dobyns, Rita Dove, Denise Duhamel, Stephen Dunn, Cornelius Eady, Robert Fanning, Rupert Fike, Chris Forhan, Greg Fraser, Allen Friman, Ross Gay, Regie Gibson, Doreen Gildroy, Albert Goldbarth, Jon Goode, Kathleen Ann Goonan, Beth Gylys, Mark Halliday, Barbara Hamby, Kodac Harmon, Brooks Haxton, Terrance Hayes, M. Ayodele Heath, Edward Hirsch, Tony Hoagland, Bob Holman, Andrew Hudgins, Robert Perry Ivey, Major Jackson, Richard Jackson, Naomi Jaffa, Mark Jarman, Kate Johnson, Van Jordan, Allison Joseph, Ilya Kaminsky, Mary Karr, David Kirby, Steve Kowit, Gerry Lafemina, Kurtis Lamkin, Martin Lammon, Dorianne Laux, Esther Lee, M. L. Liebler, Thomas Lux, Alessandra Lynch, Anne Marie Macari, Nguyen Phan Que Mai, Taylor Mali, Klaus Martens, Marty McConnell, Jeffrey McDaniel, Bruce McEver, Sandra Meek, Campbell McGrath, Heather McHugh, Seth Michelson, Joseph Millar, Opal Moore, Eric Nelson, Marilyn Nelson, Naomi Shihab Nye, Dean Parker, Ed Pavlic, Kevin Pilkington, Khadija Queen, Chelsea Rathburn, Patrick Rosal, Michael Ryan, Jon Sands, Tim Seibles, Vijay Seshadri, Megan Sexton, Alan Shapiro, Vivek Sharma, Patricia Smith, Ron Smith, A. E. Stallings, David St. John, John Stone, Sharan Strange, Natasha Trethewey, Quincy Troupe, Ellen Bryant Voigt, Alisa Michael Weaver, Charles Harper Webb, Bruce Weigl, Marjory Wentworth, C. K. Williams, Ralph Tresvia Wilson, David Wojahn, Oupsee Yo, Dean Young, Kevin Young, Adam Zagajewski

Ansel Elkins

First Person Shooter

I didn't have a name until today.
Quiet as a black coat in a closet.
In the mirror was a ghost
Named Nobody—
I was leashed to him and him to me.
The world flamed fire-engine red. Sirens
Rang inside my head. I was a boy of gunfire and
Rage. Like the Hulk I could not contain
This blaze I was becoming.
The terror being born, it transformed me.
        Yet still I ticked away.
A boy alone so long at sea
Unseen
I became a hurricane.
The little leaves blown down the street, chased by invisible wind.
The suburbs. The silent living
Room, the enormous black TV.
Yet between us there was always a bridge
Where I waited for you.
                I waited for a long time
Across the wide divide.
You never called my name or touched my face,
You who were strangers only moments ago
Now reach to me, in a final word, No.

Ansel Elkins's debut collection of poetry, *Blue Yodel*, was selected by Carl Phillips as the winner of the 2014 Yale Series of Younger Poets competition. Her poems have appeared in *AGNI, The Believer, Best New Poets 2011, Ecotone, Guernica, Gulf Coast, the North American Review, the Southern Review,* and others. She is a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, a North Carolina Arts Council Fellowship, an American Antiquarian Society Fellowship, and the "Discovery"/*Boston Review* Poetry Prize.

Denver Butson

portrait

a man and a woman
who have never had a poem
written about them

are having a poem written about them

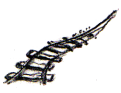
they have passed the poet's studio for years
and even though the sign says *walk-ins welcome*
they made an appointment
and here they are
sitting for their poem

the woman has brought her purse
and some pictures of herself as a baby
and of herself and her husband
when they were much younger

but the poet is more interested
in the mirror she pulls out
to check her lipstick

and he asks to see it
and looks into it
wondering where all the faces
she has had over the years
have gone

the man is sitting stiffly
in what is supposed to be a comfortable chair



he doesn't like this sort of thing

the woman asked him to shave this morning
and to wear a tie
even though he doesn't like to shave
and only seems to wear ties to funerals
and only then if he didn't really know the deceased

the poet says *you can take off the tie if you want*
and the man does
gripping it in his fist
and twisting it briefly into a noose
his head lolling over to the side
and his tongue rolling out comically

or perhaps not so comically the poet thinks
when he notices that the man's eyes have drifted off
perhaps to someone he once knew
who died this way

and then as the poet is fussing with his pencils
he hears the man and the woman
who have never had a poem written about them
whispering to each other
and then beginning to laugh
only at first the poet thinks that they are crying
and he looks up and waits until he is sure
and then says *what's so funny?*

and the woman says
we just imagined our relatives
seeing your poem when it is finished
and saying 'what gives you the right
to have a poem written about you?'
and 'who do you think you are
anyway?'

and the man and the woman
who have never had a poem written about them
begin laughing again
only this time the poet is almost certain
that their laughter is drifting
into weeping

he refrains from asking *what's so sad?*
and simply looks up at them
and waits until
they look back at him

and then he starts writing
about the man and the woman
who have never had a poem
written about them

until now.

I don't remember much about Heraklion

I don't remember much about Heraklion. but I do remember the rain. and how she went for a run in the rain. while I stayed back in our room and read. and then because she was gone so long. and because I had finished my book. I stepped out into the rain to find a bookstore that might have a book or two in English. I don't remember much about Heraklion. but I do remember the hammers hammering the roofs and shutters for summer. and how they finally fell silent after so much rain. and how it felt more like winter than spring. when I walked through the narrow streets. I don't remember much about Heraklion. but I do remember the rain. and how hard it fell. when I was in the bookstore. with its one spinning kiosk of books in English. and the toothless old bookseller smoking with his foot up on the window sill. and watching the rain. and how I found a book I had not yet read. Kazantzakis as I remember. translated into English. I don't remember much about Heraklion. except that I went back to our room expecting to find her there. fresh from her run. perhaps coming out of the shower with our one towel. either tied up in her hair or wrapped around her tan body still wet from her shower. and how she wasn't there yet when I came in. and our room was cold and I was worried. because neither of us knew Heraklion. and the rain was so heavy now there seemed to be nothing else but rain and the sound

of rain. I don't remember much except that I sat on the window sill and tried to read. but instead just looked out. up and then down our alleyway. for her to come running. in the rain. but she didn't for awhile. and I don't remember much about Heraklion except that I told myself that she often got distracted on these runs. and ended up far away from where she wanted to be. and came back with bread perhaps. or a story of school boys whistling at her as she ran. and I don't remember much about Heraklion. but I do remember that when she finally came in. it was almost dark. and I was almost out of my head with worry. but she was smiling. and she told me about a place where we could have crepes and goulash for dinner. and I don't remember much about Heraklion. except that she still had rain on her eyelashes. and I don't remember much about Heraklion except that rain. and how I did not know that years from then. long after we would have fallen out of what must have been love. she would go out like that. and never come back. meeting her murderer in some rice paddies far from here. and far from Heraklion. and I don't remember much about Heraklion but that I didn't know this then. that I couldn't have possibly known this then. as I kissed the Heraklion rain off her eyelashes. the Heraklion rain off her cheeks. I don't remember much about Heraklion. but I do remember that I did not know what would happen would one day. that I did not know that she would lie broken and alone for days. with nobody to kiss the rain off her eyelashes. and off her cheeks. and nobody else to be able to remember that room and those alleys. and not much else about Heraklion except us there briefly then and that rain.

every evening about this time

every evening about this time
a man and a woman
who are not bank robbers
sit at their dining table
and imagine together
that they are bank robbers

they discuss which banks
they would rob
if they robbed banks

how they would distract
the guards
what they would say to the tellers

every evening about this time

they watch scenes from movies
about bank robberies
and discuss what went wrong
in the ones that went wrong
what could have gone wrong
in the ones that went right

they talk about how they would
have done things differently
if they were bank robbers

every evening about this time

sometimes the man gets up
and demonstrates how he would
unwrap the gun from the flower box
as fast as or faster than Al Pacino
unwrapped it in *Dog Day Afternoon*

and the woman laughs
and shows how she would chew her gum
the way she would tie her hair up
in her scarf
so she wouldn't be recognized
after the robbery

every evening about this time

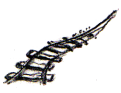
and then the man and woman
who are not bank robbers
discuss the relative merits
of putting the bags of money
in the backseat versus the trunk
and wonder how heavy those bags
will be

you might have to carry them
the woman says

but my hernia
the man groans

and they discuss who would drive
and which direction
and where they would abandon
the Impala for a newer car
and switch plates if necessary

then every evening about this time
the man and woman who are not bank robbers



are quiet for a few moments
the man finishes what's left in his glass
and the woman pours herself a little more

and then they both get up at the same time
as if choreographed
like the good bank robbers they would be
if they were bank robbers

and the man says
well, I'm going to bed

and then the woman
joins him saying his exact words
at the same time

I have to work early tomorrow

and the man goes off to bed
hoping he dreams
of the perfect getaway
in the perfect getaway car

and the woman stays up
for a little longer
wondering which picture of her
they'll use
for the WANTED posters.

Denver Butson is the author of four books of poetry, most recently *the sum of uncountable things* (Deadly Chaps Press, 2015). His poems have appeared in dozens of literary journals including *The Yale Review, Ontario Review, Caliban,* and *Field*, as well as anthologies and journals edited by Billy Collins, Garrison Keillor, and Agha Shahid Ali), and in collaboration with visual and performing artists and musicians. His recent book *launch/exhibition* featured his work in collaboration/interaction/conversation with 13 visual artists, several other poets/fiction writers, and musicians.

Andrea Cohen

Anyone into Anything

after James Richardson

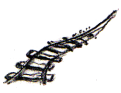
In Ovid, desire can change
anyone into anything. Last

I looked, we weren't
in Ovid, and the problem

was too much desire.
You're still the thick-

headed jug of beauty.
I'm the dustbowl a few

orioles flirt their wings
in, preening, then fly off.



Q & A

We like symmetry
in faces, a kind of echo-
location that says two
halves—miraculous!—have found
each other. I found the car
after a long time searching
the parking lot. I couldn't find
the me who'd parked it.
I gave you something
broken so you wouldn't
worry about it breaking.
We get an extra hour
of light and it feels
like the extra shoe
the one-legged man gets.
What do we do
with our hands?
Not being in love
is a lot like soccer—lots
of stumbling and head-butting.
I like the idea of the Q&A,
which suggests a balance
sheet of call and response,
but too often the questions
are just lonely people
standing at the microphone
saying, I'm lonely, and the wise
woman at the lectern nodding.

Exploratory

I know so little about you.
Do you keep llamas or migratory

birds against their will? How
little a person knows about

herself: I'm just learning, for
instance, how I'd ambush

starlings to impress you.
I'd press their wings inside

dictionaries or the DMS. Do you
have that manual beside your bed

of nails? I do, or did, until I met
the me your strangeness invents.

No entry describes obsessions
with creatures that come and go

seasonally, at nightfall, by instinct, by
virtue of wings, which, btw, are things

I don't have, or didn't until just now,
when I needed them to adjust the sun

above your timeshare/infrastructure. I
don't even know if this is the week you're

inside your body. I need more data:
do you respond to too much light

by fighting or flighting? What have
you learned from those birds you

do or don't tend? Enough
to fend this wrong night off?

Andrea Cohen's poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Poetry*, *The Threepenny Review*, and elsewhere. Her books include *Furs Not Mine,* just out from Four Way Books, *Kentucky Derby, Long Division*, and *The Cartographer's Vacation.* She directs the Blacksmith House Poetry Series in Cambridge, MA and the Writers House at Merrimack College.

Chard deNiord

First Lines

"But come, so well refreshed, now let us play…"
—John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book IX, line 1027

The sweat I leach that dries to salt.

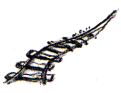
The grief I feel for the wolf I left.

The drug of lips I take each night.

The smell she left inside the perch.

The nerve that crosses thought with flirt.

The leaves that turn to gowns on Earth.



The River Merchant's Mistress, a Letter

Please return to her, my love, in the mercy of desire,
no matter where she waits in Cho Fu Sa.
Find a way to get there as fire
and cloud together in a body
that no longer yearns for me,
but burns the garment you've worn
all winter and smells like the bitter
you drank without her.

Chard deNiord is the Vermont Poet Laureate and author of five books of poetry, most recently *Interstate* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), *The Double Truth* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011) and *Night Mowing* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005). His book of essays and interviews with seven senior American poets (Galway Kinnell, Ruth Stone, Lucille Clifton, Donald Hall, Robert Bly, Jack Gilbert, and Maxine Kumin) titled *Sad Friends, Drowned Lovers, Stapled Songs*, was published by Marick Press in 2011. He is a Professor of English and Creative Writing at Providence College and lives in Putney, Vermont.

Michael Parker

Widow's Walk

The babysitter had never seen an attic or a basement, since she had lived all her seventeen years in a trailer so close to the Sound that even houses were built up off the ground. One afternoon she put the baby to bed in her crib on the old sun porch, pulling all the blinds and curtains to fool day into night. She waited for the child to fall asleep while sitting just outside the nursery on a long wooden bench running down a corridor almost as wide as the trailer where she lived with her mother and two younger brothers.

"When the house was built in the 1840's they kept the hallways wide to allow a good breeze between the front porch and back," the baby's father had told her on the first day of the job. He took her through each room and talked of things like crown molding and wainscoting and he called their walk through the house a tour, which reminded her of when she was still in school and they climbed in buses and followed their teacher through the loud rooms of the Dr. Pepper bottling plant. The father called the bench a pew and said it had come out of the Episcopal church downtown, which her mother had pointed out to her one day, claiming all the people who worshipped there were stuck-up drunks. The babysitter wondered why anyone would put a church pew in a hallway. It was hard and it hurt her back but she sat there every day during nap-time, listening for the baby (who was not really a baby anymore; she was almost three, but the babysitter had answered an ad for a babysitter and so the baby in her mind was a baby) to stop chastising her stuffed snake.

[...] as soon as they were gone she would take the child into the kitchen and pull things out of the drawers and say to the child, "What is this?" "Spoon," the child would say and the babysitter would say, "Damn right, it's just a spoon."

She stared at the carpet, which the mother had once referred to as a "runner." It seemed to the babysitter that this couple had their own words for everything and that it did not change what the things were, so as soon as they were gone she would take the child into the kitchen and pull things out of the drawers and say to the child, "What is this?" "Spoon," the child would say and the babysitter would say, "Damn right, it's just a spoon."

Finally the babysitter heard the light ragged sleep-breath of the baby. The babysitter knew that the child's breathing would always sound alarmingly syncopated because she had had a baby herself, though the baby was taken away from her, a fact that the couple with the huge hallways could never know. Breath rose and it fell; it stopped and started no matter how much you want for it to be even and regular. Nevertheless, the babysitter wanted it for the baby and she wanted it for herself.

Behind the door at the end of the hallway rose the attic stairs. On warm days not yet hot enough for air-conditioning, the door was open to allow a fan to cool the upstairs of the house. On those days she was told to leave the windows in the sun porch open just a few inches so the fan would draw the breeze, but the fluttering curtains terrified the child and she stood up in her crib crying about ghosts and so the babysitter closed the windows and the child soaked the sheets of the crib with sweat and woke cross and the babysitter said to her, "Well, which is it? You have to choose. Either you see ghosts or you burn up."

[...] she had had a baby herself, though the baby was taken away from her, a fact that the couple with the huge hallways could never know.

Today the windows were open. There was a breeze. The babysitter had never actually seen the fan, but it sounded monstrous and disturbing, like the loathsome snarling that filtered most days through the woods surrounding the trailer. Chainsaws, backhoes, neighbor boys riding ATVs through the cabbage fields. Even so far from town, machines drowned out the birdsong, the rustle of wind through pine needle that the babysitter remembered hearing when she played in the dirt yard when she was not much older than the sleeping baby.

Today the fan was off and the door was shut. The child was asleep and would be for an hour at least. The babysitter pushed open the door into a heat that she understood well from living in a treeless field through

summers when there was no money to run window units. The sloped roof had nails sticking out of its boards. Pink thick blankets of insulation stretched into corners so faraway dim she wasn't sure the attic had an end. The floor was strewn with suitcases, as if the father, home from a trip, had tossed the bags from the top of the stairs. The babysitter had never owned or even seen inside a suitcase because she had never been on a real trip. Once a boyfriend was taking her to Kings Dominion, but her extra clothes and makeup and toothbrush were stuffed in a plastic sack, and before they even crossed the Virginia line her boyfriend got pulled over for speeding and it turned out his license had been suspended. She had to call her mother to come pick her up from the magistrate's office, but her mother's boyfriend Raymond showed up instead and on the endless ride home he called her boyfriend names and told her how worthless she was.

The babysitter opened a red vinyl suitcase and studied the zippered pouches, the compartments for shoes. She stepped over the suitcases, drawn to the light that spilled in from the double doors. Outside was a tiny balcony. The couple probably had a name for this, too, but it had wooden bars and it was a balcony to her. Through the towering steeples of town she saw the drawbridge over the intracoastal waterway, raised to let a yacht pass. She was higher than she'd ever been, higher than the pines, a part of the sky, so high she could not be brought down to testify against Raymond and what he did to her, too high to hear her mother claim Raymond was a sweet man who'd had a hard upbringing, how can you say those things about him? Far below she saw her car parked in front of this huge house. Her red Mustang. Ten years old and the back quarter panel was painted with primer and three of the hubcaps were missing but it was the only thing in the world that was hers alone. The sight of it did not make her proud as it once had, but suddenly terrified that it was all she'd

It took a few seconds for the fan to come to life but when it did it was so loud she knew she would not hear the baby should the baby wake and cry out. She knew she should go down, but she wanted the doom she'd felt to be blown right through her by the breeze [...]

ever own, that everything after would have to be shared with the same sort of men her mother brought home then three weeks or three months later threw out. The babysitter went inside and turned on the fan. It was burning up inside the attic. It took a few seconds for the fan to come to life but when it did it was so loud she knew she would not hear the baby should the baby wake and cry out. She knew she should go down, but she wanted the doom she'd felt to be blown right through her by the breeze sucked from the sky by the fan. "At least I won't ever have so many things I have to make up names for them," the babysitter said into the wind, and the fan chopped her words up so that they resembled sleepbreath and sent them down to the baby, who woke to see, through the bars of her crib, the billowing skirts of the woman whose house this once was, come again to swish along the corridor in search of the husband who had never returned from the sea.

Michael Parker is the author of six novels, including *Hello Down There, Towns Without Rivers, Virginia Lovers, If You Want Me To Stay, The Watery Part of the World, All I Have In This World*—and two collections of stories, *The Geographical Cure* and *Don't Make Me Stop Now*. His short fiction and nonfiction have appeared in various journals including *Five Points, the Georgia Review, The Southwest Review, Epoch, the Washington Post, the New York Times Magazine, Oxford American, Shenandoah, The Black Warrior Review, Trail Runner, Runner's World* and *Men's Journal*. He has received fellowships in fiction from the North Carolina Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as the Hobson Award for Arts and Letters, and the North Carolina Award for Literature. His work has been anthologized in the Pushcart, New Stories from the South and O. Henry Prize Stories anthologies. A graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill and the University of Virginia, he is the Vacc Distinguished Professor in the MFA Writing Program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and since 2009 has been on the faculty of the Warren Wilson Program for Writers. He lives in Greensboro, North Carolina and Austin, Texas.

Andrew Motion

The Discoveries of Geography

If only the stories were not so tempting—
but from day one I started to embroider,
and in no time was suggesting a country
far to the North
where fish are as large as dragons,
and even minor administrators
eat off gold plates,
and sleep on gold beds.

This is why I have packed in my birch canoe
a robe
made of the feathers
of more than 100 different species of bird.

So that when I have finally crossed the Ocean
I will have a ceremonial costume
rich enough
to impress in my encounter with the Great Khan.

*

We have an excellent long boat with outriggers
and therefore travel dozens of miles in a day.

Furthermore, and speaking as a navigator,
I can predict every fickleness of weather
and also the change in direction of currents,
sometimes dipping my elbow into the water
and sometimes my scrotum
to feel the slightest change in temperature.

These are the reasons
I shall be considered a saviour by my people
and die in peace.

In my own mind I am a simple man
who threw his spear at the stars
and landed there himself.

*

I now have in my possession
a map:
two handfuls of mud
scraped from the bank of our sacred river,
flattened into a tablet,
baked,
then pierced with the blunt point of my compass
while I spun the other sharper leg
to produce the edge of the world as I knew it,

and beyond
the salt sea on which I am now perfectly at home.

In this way I look down at myself.

I think: I am here.

*

Astonishing, how many horizons are open to me:

at one time mountainous heaps of smashed slate,

at others a vast delta of green and crimson light.

And every day a different shore-line ripples past
bearing its cargo of white sand and dark palms.

Very beguiling they appear, but all encumbered.
All spoiled by the tantrums of their local gods.

Out here there are storms too,
but in the religion I have now devised for myself,
I am convinced
the shaping hands have pulled away from us at last,
so the Earth hangs with no support at the centre of—
what?
That is the question I have in mind to answer.

*

You might suppose better charts would help me,
but despite their much greater accuracy

in terms of coastlines and interiors,

and the intricate detail
guaranteed by developments in printing,

not to mention the understanding of perspective,

empires still lie about their extent and stability.

These are the simple deceptions.

More difficult,
as I continue north to my final encounter,
and wave-crests flicking my face grow colder
and daylight a more persistently dull dove-grey,
is how to manage my desire to live in the present
for all eternity,
as though I had never left my home.

*

It transpires the last part of my journey
requires me to abandon everything I once knew,
even the gorgeous costume
made of the feathers of more than 100 different species of bird.

No matter, though.
It is delicious among the constellations,
as the planets begin to display their gas-clouds
and the beautiful nebulae their first attempts at stars,

When I look over my shoulder
to see my own blue eye staring back at me,
I realize before I disappear
I still accept what it means to be lost.

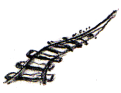
Swim

We quarrelled over something
I don't remember
and while you slept
I tried to make good
by mending a broken pipe
under the bathroom sink.

When I hit my head on the rim
I decided to hell with it
I'll spend the afternoon
taking a swim
instead.

And why not
prove myself
capable after all
by ploughing across the harbour
and back?

Given that meant a mile
and all manner of shipping
including a liner
recently in from Barcelona
I had to strip off and go
before I finished the question.



Breast-stroke
crawl
breast-stroke
then for a while
floating
getting my breath back
until the liner
set sail for Barcelona again
which kept me treading water
as long as the beast
swung from the dockside
out
surprisingly quick and yet
slow
sloshing an oily ripple
over my head as a joke
before
looming above me
capped with faces shouting
Look out!
or
Look!

I was still treading water
treading
water but thinking
it will be time soon
to kick myself forward again
what with the liner
sliding away from me now
juggling the world in its wake
this way and that then
shouldering off
through the harbour mouth.

Achille Lauro
that was the name I saw.
Achille Lauro.
Wasn't it
captured by hijackers once
didn't they
shoot what was his name
Klinghoffer
then tip him overboard
out of his wheelchair?

I could return to that I would
later return to that but now
I was half-way across only
half-way across the harbour
legs suddenly stringy
breath
short
and still still a good way
from starting the journey back.

What had I ever been thinking?
What had I
not been thinking?

You I thought
you will never need know
not if you
never wake up.

It could be still
an afternoon like the others

the lazy others we spend
here on the island
in Caprichosa in Cala Rata.

I might really
I might not remember
how the enormous water
opened beneath me

how
a liner
had easily slipped straight over
and through

how I swam onwards a little
rested
then swam onwards again
until it was all
behind me
all the silvery harbour
catching the light of late afternoon
and I was back here in our bedroom again
still lying beside you.

Andrew Motion was UK Poet Laureate from 1999-2009. He was born in London and in 2015 was appointed a Homewood Professor in the Arts at Johns Hopkins University. He is the co-founder and co-Director of The Poetry Archive (poetryarchive.org.uk), and the recipient of several prizes for his work, including most recently the Ted Hughes Award. He was knighted for his services to poetry in 2009. His most recent collection of poems is *Peace Talks* (2015).

Ellen Bass

Apology

I'm sorry I didn't buy my father the cashmere sweater with suede trim the summer
I went to Europe. And I'm sorry I didn't stay longer with my mother after he died.

Why was I in such a hurry to get back to my husband who I only fought with anyway?
I'm sorry I kissed his best friend and came home smelling of woodsmoke and sweat.

I'm sorry for the polar bears. And the whales. I once sailed so close I could hear
their breath, see the white scars etched into their flukes. I know I've hurt you.

I read about a man who owns every clock in the opening sequence of *Back to the Future*.
And a man who collects dipsticks from old cars.

I know you think I'm like them and you are one of my assemblages.
I know you think I have secret motives sewn like pearls into the hem of my coat.

You wake every morning surprised to feel your blood still making its rounds.
But I could die before you. You might be standing in your muddy yard

after a spring rain when your cell rings and someone you don't love
half as much as me tells you I'm gone. Oh my operas! My matinees!

But isn't this what some souls slit their exquisite wrists for?
A thousand torch songs crying out, an exaltation of larks.

Death is poorly camouflaged this morning. Ants are floating
in the broth of sugar and Borax I mix for them. Browning trumpets

hang on the Datura outside my window, the scent of sweetness tinged with rot.
Or maybe you just don't love me enough. I've always been baffled by refusal.

Incurably canine, I pant for the leash to be lifted from the hook. I'm sorry
I ate corned beef on rye at the 2nd Avenue Deli—the cows crammed in factory feedlots.

And when I open the door for Elijah, I don't really want a stranger to enter.
I'm sorry I let the zuccinis grow too big. I'm sorry I planted zuccinis altogether.

Forgive me, the sun will burn out.
I can't hear your heart beating in the silence between us.

Lyme Disease and Moonlight

I want to include both Lyme disease and moonlight in my poems.
—Tony Hoagland

Well, okay then. My daughter is ill again. Not again, really. Continuously.
From that tick whose fault it isn't, nor is it the fault of the deer or mouse.

Though only the deranged think about fault this way.
Spirochetes are being themselves, the way a conquering lion kills

the cubs so he can drive his own DNA into the next litter.
These helically-coiled cells just want to wave their flagella

and screw their way through your blood. Or anything's blood.
And here is a moon. Though tonight it's an invisible moon,

the youngest possible crescent. You can see it only during the day and only
with a solar eclipse and only if you're at Arctic latitudes—

the Faroe Islands, the Svalbard archipelago. If it would help,
of course that's where I'd go. And take her with me.

The way I carried her down the road that rainy Thanksgiving
when she was a baby and my husband was pulling the turkey out of the
oven and—

what happened that moonless night? How was it different
from the other nights when I felt if I had to breathe in one more molecule

of air that man breathed out, I would die. I was barefoot
and when I reached the end of the road, instead of knocking on my
neighbor's door,

I went home. But there are some collisions I've avoided in this life.
Even if I can't take credit. Once I stood on a wide open path in a forest

while my friend took my picture—or was about to take my picture—
when suddenly she rushed at me, knocked me over. The earth shuddered

as a redwood tree hit the ground precisely where I'd been posing.
Some things words aren't good for. Action is better. A woman was hiking
with her dogs.

The dogs got lost and were gone four days. She called their names all
through the canyon. Finally she lit a fire and fried up lots of bacon.

Smell is the last sense to disappear when you're dying. I'm trying
to accept the world as it is. You can have this

or you can have nothing: a spoonful of moonlight swallowed
by the vastness, clever spirochete stealing into cells, and then

there is my daughter in a ponytail and oversize raincoat,
breathing, fast-walking to a bus stop a thousand miles away.

Ellen Bass's poetry includes *Like a Beggar* (Copper Canyon Press, 2014), *The Human Line* (Copper Canyon Press, 2007), and *Mules of Love* (BOA, 2002). She co-edited (with Florence Howe) the groundbreaking *No More Masks! An Anthology of Poems by Women* (Doubleday, 1973). Her non-fiction books include *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (HarperCollins, 1988, 2008) and *Free Your Mind: The Book for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth* (HarperCollins, 1996). Her work has frequently been published in *The New Yorker* and *The American Poetry Review,* as well as in many other journals. Among her awards are a Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Fellowship from the California Arts Council, two Pushcart Prizes, and many more. She lives in Santa Cruz, CA and teaches in the MFA writing program at Pacific University. www.ellenbass.com

Paul White

The Exam

I drew and identified
sub-cellular structures
for the histology section
of my biology final.
But I was running out of time—
there were whole empty
pages left undone.
I couldn't stop the music
running through my head.
I may have even tapped
whole sections of side two
from the album "2112"
with my colored pencils.

I had been studying so hard,
memorizing lyrics
and mimicking guitar licks,
clouds were talking to me.
They knocked me over
as they raced across the sky.
Then the sun was like a golden
cymbal vibrating throughout
everything. So I did it!
A flush broke across my face.
I wrote the words out
across the rest of the exam.
I said I was St. Paul
and my life changed forever.

My notebook has ceased to function.

I'm using it like a coaster
for a very large glass of beer.
A glass of beer for the gods
you could say. It is so large
I cannot lift it except with
two hands. I need to use a straw
like a kid with a milkshake
at the ice cream parlor after
church. He is wearing a suit.

The pages of this notebook
used to fly by with calculations
of the stars, boiled down to
a small geography of words.
Now they yellow and brittle
waiting for my brain to wiggle
it's leaves in the slightest breeze.

I am like a carburetor
on the dining room table.
I can't even drive to the grocery
for a TV dinner with cranberry
lava to thicken my arteries.
My notebook is waiting for me
to happen. My life has stopped.
I need to get out of my car now
and look for a word in the ditch.
It is night. Stars itch in my brain.

My Father Tells a Story on His 91st Birthday

After the war my father rode a train
from San Francisco to New York City
to be discharged from the Navy.
They gave him a piece of paper
and three hundred dollars.
They said goodbye and that was it.
So he took a bus to Albany,
then a late train to Niagara Falls.
He said there was nowhere
along the way to call home
and no one expected him.
At nine in the morning he rang
the doorbell at his parents' house.
I never knew the truth about Dad,
but he caught a sob in his throat
when he said the word "Rang."
When my father tells a story
chaos comes close to the surface.
A little bit of hell comes home.
He rides a train unable to sleep
as a whistle gets thin on the plain.
Soon he will stretch out his finger.

After the Hospital

Sunday mornings, when dawn
broke down the doors with yawning,
I stood at my mom's hip singing hymns.
Then Dad and I joined the Deerhurst
Presbyterian bowling team. We rolled
our balls down the alleys religiously.
My parents joined a bridge club
with the minister and his wife.
She suffered from depression
and had red curly hair.
When they played on a card table
in our living room, Reverend Crawford
would pull me aside between hands
and ask me how I was doing.
I never knew what to say.
I couldn't report on school or work,
my dreams for the future were dead.
"Psychotherapy twice a week," I'd say.
Then he'd grip me by the shoulder
and look me in the eye a moment.
He wasn't magic, just a kind man.
What were my parents supposed to do
after I said I was St. Paul?
They joined a church.

Paul White works as a Registered Nurse in Buffalo, New York, where he takes care of critically ill children. He began writing over thirty years ago, as part of a survival strategy, after being diagnosed a paranoid schizophrenic at age seventeen. In 2011 a chapbook of his poems entitled, *The Difficult Gift*, was published by Jeanne Duval Editions. He was also a winner of The New York State Poetry Unites Contest. His winning essay and a short film about him is posted at the website Poets.org. His work has been published in *The Chattahoochee Review*, *The Cortland Review* and *The Buffalo News*.

Katharine Coles

excerpted from Reckless

Adventuring: Four Romances, Three Visits, and a Self Divided

To speak is also to be.
—Isabelle Allende

Walter Link is absolutely a man!
This is a passing reference in the diary of Miriam Magdalen Wollaeger, in fall of 1923 a sixteen-year-old freshman at the University of Wisconsin. She'd met the man in question that night at the Lutheran church supper. She liked the phrase, its two terms made inseparable—liked it enough to repeat it in a letter to her mother later, during February of 1924, when she was suspended between two different men.


Miriam, 1923

About Tom, also that fall, she wrote, *There is someone who feels like I do, to whom I can tell my strange ideas and have them appreciated.* And, *He wants to read my poems.* In spring of '24, about Al: *He has a dandy blue canoe, with all the equipment one could think of, including cooking utensils.* Not to mention *a little flivver*, small like her, and dashing; blue to match his canoe and, Al told her, her eyes. He taught her to drive it, usually much too fast.

Sensibility. Gear. Manhood. Reading, decades later, I see the girl who will become my grandmother looking for a combustion engine and a full tank, for someone to pick her up and move her, for transport.

Walter, six years older, I see less clearly. After the church supper, he lingered on Barnard Hall's front porch until it was time for her to sign in. Already careful of her, he watched the clock. The next day, he took her on a date he could afford, a walk in the snow.

Frugality. Discipline. Family virtues, I've been led to believe, qualities that would make him a successful explorer and lead her to think she should love him, even as they kept her from doing so. The linear head of a scientist; the lean physique of a cross-country runner. Tall and serious, even brooding, he had the long nose that came through my mother to me and impossibly big feet that would cause him torments on journeys seeking oil in the tropics. If Miriam by virtue of sex and class could flit from English to music to French to zoology, Walter focused, determined to thrive. *I think he is very sensitive, and considers himself inferior in some ways—dear little (?) dumbbell!* Miriam's family could afford to view education as class ornament, but, like me, Walter's father earned his meager living, until he lost the power of speech and could no longer deliver his sermons, from the word.

Among his children: an attorney, a botanist. Karl Paul, chemist and inventor of Warfarin, twice won the Lasker Prize and was rumored to have been short-listed for the Nobel. Margie and Helene, amateur horticulturalists, had orchids named for them; Ruth was a milliner. Two petroleum geologists. Ten children survived. Like most of them, like me, Walter became an atheist—hard-headed, willing to rely on himself in everything but love. He was, I think looking back, as American as oil, absolutely of his time.

Seventy years later, I find among her papers a poem pencilled in a bluebook, returned ungraded because she was supposed to turn in an essay.

Then Al began to woo her, and, though Walter promised to take her canoeing (*I hope he does!*) as soon as the lake ice melted, he had no boat to match that canoe, much less a bright blue Ford, a fast piece of sky on wheels.

~

And Miriam: what was she? Seventy years later, I find among her papers a poem pencilled in a bluebook, returned ungraded because she was supposed to turn in an essay. So I troubled my college French professor by handing in translations of Baudelaire rather than grammar exercises. I imagine her lying on her dorm-room bed, wondering what it would be like to bushwhack through jungles and gaze from mountaintops over wild landscapes.

To plough the foaming waters of the boundless Spanish main,
To plunge amid the swelter of a pelting tropic rain,
To wade thigh-deep against the racing waters of a stream—
All these would be fulfillment of my highest, golden dream.

It's formally predictable, but not bad, I think, for sixteen. Embodying desire, she spins through a Wisconsin blizzard on lamplight and white sheets, piloting her adventure. I follow her onto the water, our keel slicing the waves, moving us forward:

To hear the billows swishing as they're riven by the bow,
With their crests like smoke a-flying, lighting dark green depths below,
To feel the rush and smother of a million airy bubbles—

Here, at the end of the second stanza, comes the moment when the poem moves from its sustained provisional infinitive—*to plow, to plunge, to feel*—and into the present, where the journey becomes embodied, or so I expect, in her—

O, the dash and vigorous joy of life make a fellow lose his troubles!

Did this line trouble her as it does me? Sixteen-year-old Miriam, pining for adventure, enters her dream—in a boy's skin. She had to take some trouble to accomplish her split, shifting from *me* in the last line of the opening stanza to the third-person *fellow* in the last line of the second. Did it occur to her that this shift disturbs both the poem's rhythm and its logic? Did she even consider "the dash and vigorous joy of life make me lose my troubles"? Or even "make a girl lose" hers? If she were my student, I would

tell her, look there, into the poem's flaw, for its key. If she were myself, oh, I could have taken her in hand.

Asail on that bed, plowing through the night, she can't hear me. *What more could any man desire?* Her spirit calls, but she can't follow. In the final stanza, when her speaker separates from that *fellow* and they go their separate ways, she has to stay home.

A square of window, whited out. *I want to break away as did 'Desmond,' dress as a man and fight my way*. Movies and novels and her own poem notwithstanding, her will was weaker than her desire. She wouldn't step into those britches she'd stitched from words and go. I have always thought of her life as romantic and, yes, adventurous. Now, I watch her begin it daunted, already divided from herself. She imagined herself in motion, imagined the vast unknown, imagined herself male. "Adventuring." What she couldn't imagine: herself.

Miriam on Sunday Morning with her violin

Absolutely a man. An American of his time. She couldn't become him.

Instead, with her mother's help, she would marry him.

~

But why could she not become him? Her daughter, my mother, answered like so: cowardice, laziness, weakness of will, just to start. As my grandmother lay on her deathbed, tethered to machines, Joan muttered she didn't, she should have.

I'd been listening to something like this all my life, and even in the hospital and on the airplane home, when I most wanted to remember my grandmother with love, I couldn't argue. I'd witnessed Miriam's cruelties,

rage, self-justification. She knew just how to cut my mother off at the knees. For so long, my mother had wanted one thing: that Miriam see the damage she'd inflicted and simply be sorry, because Joan needed her to. She would place her daughter ahead of herself, would love Joan enough to see her and be forgiven. Would this have been enough? Joan believed so.

Even Miriam's accomplishments represented her failure to live up to her gifts. She spoke fluent German, French, Dutch, Spanish, and Malay as well as English; she was a student of violin and voice whose music teacher urged her to drop everything but her *fiddle*; she was a championship swimmer, diver, horseback rider, polo player; at barely twenty she received a degree in geology from the University of Wisconsin; she had the largest working vocabulary of anyone my mother, who earned PhDs in geology and psychology, has ever known; she traveled around the world twice before the advent of passenger flight; she lived in Colombia, Java, Sumatra, Costa Rica, and Cuba. All wasted, according to my mother, her travels made not on her own sweaty nickel but on that of her husband, my grandfather, whom she turned to her own use then betrayed.

By twenty-two, Miriam had traveled halfway around the world. There are worse reasons to marry. In her place, her time, could I have been braver, the person my mother wanted?

Here we are, then, my mother and I, strapped into the airplane's narrow seats, shoulders brushing. We rise through the clouds of a Texas winter. Below us, my grandmother lies in a hospital bed, unmooring herself. My grandfather has been dead for more than a decade. Behind my eyes: Miriam touching the hem of my wedding dress, its lace hand-pearled for her own marriage sixty-two years earlier; Miriam in her filthy Sarasota kitchen, still missing Havana, making me paella from the contents of a box, three cans, and Florida tap water; Miriam at eighty-five, setting down her beer and tilting her head to pour a raw oyster into her red-lipsticked mouth; wheeling her old Pontiac into the supermarket parking lot, tires screeching. At the hospital, her arms were black with bruises, her eyes lightened to the color of clouds. Her hand in mine—trying not to grip too hard, I felt her letting go.

I feel her. I love my grandmother, though she harmed my mother, who I also love. I admire and envy the romance of Miriam's life, all the things she told me that she never told my mother. I even admire her driving, her heavy foot, her refusal to give it up. And in this I, too, betray Joan, no slouch behind the wheel herself, who worked to be another kind of mother, though she carried within her Miriam's thwarted drive toward adventure, her passed-down rage, even more ambition. She made her own way in a world still deeply unfriendly to women. She loved her children and resented being a mother.

By twenty-two, Miriam had traveled halfway around the world. There are worse reasons to marry. In her place, her time, could I have been braver, the person my mother wanted? Still, as I hold my mother's hand on the airplane and weep, I can't deny it: Miriam should have done everything differently. Wherever she lived, she left her children with servants to play bridge, polo, tennis; she went out dancing; she flirted, or more, with aviators and deputy consuls. I am losing my grandmother once. My mother lost her again and again. Oh, my mother remembers, Miriam was glamorous, bolero-jacketed, sequined. Chanel °5 lingered in every room she left.

She should have left her children to become an explorer like Walter, persuading the oil companies (her mother, her husband, herself) that she too could cut her way through the jungle with a machete while her *precious brats* stayed—where?

She should never have had children. She should have stayed married for them. She should never have married. She should have married somebody else.

She should have given more to her children or taken more for herself. She should not have been angry at what she'd given up. She should have given up nothing.

She should have been the exception. She should have done it all and done it alone.

She should have been all my mother wanted, should have been everything she was and more. She should have been something else altogether.

Oh, my mother. I see. I am not these things, either. This, I think as I begin, is what my quest is about. To me, she is not only romance, but history.

~

She wasn't even sufficiently herself. *I don't know what I want or think or feel.*

Miriam's own mother, Mandy Gettelman Wollaeger, daughter of a brewer and married to a furniture business until it failed, was famous in Milwaukee for charm and hospitality, especially toward men, and in her family also for cruelty, which she taught to her daughter in exquisite lessons. Four-foot-ten, dictatorial, willful, she managed her children with deft rigor. With her husband, Louis, she had less success.

Even as a small girl Miriam cooked for her spoiled older brother, Louis Jr., and younger sister, Tony, saw them off to school then delivered breakfast to her mother in bed before hurrying to school herself. Female and thus fatally flawed, she became her mother's petted companion and reviled servant. *My Darling Petty*, Mandy addressed letters all her life, and *Mother's Dearest Blessing. Mommy Darlingest*, Miriam wrote, until she was nearly forty. *Baby*, she called my mother, over Joan's protests, until she died.

Mandy, having watched her dull brother get the college education she longed for, made sure both daughters went to the University of Wisconsin. Miriam was the most talented of her children. *I am merely fulfilling her own dreams*. Still, in 1923 as in the 1890s, there were few clear paths for women seeking any life beyond that of wife and mother. As had Mandy before her and my mother after, Miriam chafed against her restraints but couldn't overturn them or sidestep them. Instead, she created loopholes. To imagine herself in action, Miriam thought herself divided. Through beating men at sports, through conversation, through charm, she became the exception: honorary member of the male sex; object of male desire.

I count Miriam's admirers at school: Edgar, Skeex, Ets, Leo, George, Tom Lake, both Link brothers. *I'm not practical; I'm a dreamer, and lazy in material things*. Only when I suggest Miriam got around does my mother defend her. Things were different then: a whirl was what a girl lived in, being seen too much with one boy was what she had to avoid. *Fellows do make better friends when they <u>are</u> real friends than girls.* Dancing, riding, ice-sailing, fencing—when I reread *Gatsby*, I see Daisy, too, had six or seven dates a day. Not that her results were any better.

In November 1924, Walter took Miriam to watch the northern lights play over Lake Mendota. She saw four movies a week, emotion flickering in the darkness, but nothing could equal the aurora for taking her out of herself. They sang "Stille Nacht," Miriam's mezzo soaring out above Walter's deep bass and over the water. He would not yet have dreamed of trying to kiss her.

Mandy approved. *As you say the German songs are always a font of understanding.* Close calls, heartbreaks. Her trouble: she wanted Miriam to have the fun she'd missed; she wanted her daughter not to capsize. But there was something solid about Walter. Miriam sent Mandy his photograph—*He looks like a very nice fellow*—then took him home for Thanksgiving.

What passed between Walter and Miriam that weekend? Between Walter and Mandy? *I think he is the kind you can respect and admire.* To Walter, the Wollaeger house seemed enormous for five, lavish with privacy. As he walked in the front door, Mandy took his arm—her head barely cleared his elbow—and led him off to her sitting room to apply her wit to him. *The kind of work he does will keep him wholesome and clean inside and out.* He told her everything.

At first sight. She adopted Walter's nickname, Brutus. *Friendships such as his will have a good influence over you.* And she adopted his pet name for Miriam, *his Muckie.* It was Miriam who couldn't decide. In letters, he got only a sentence, a postscript. *He's a dandy kid.* She took up her journal again. *I will be a solitary girl—until someday the man of my dreams wakes me, and then I can do anything. Oh, I will love him (if only I don't make any mistakes first. God please guide me and help me!).*

Now, she is seventeen. Through time, I see myself in her—small, straight-bodied, self absorbed, uncertain, reckless, her head easily turned by novelty, by beautiful clothes, by men. I want her to be wise, at least in time. How not, carrying her inside me as I do? *I'm destined to be forever in doubt as to which man of several I like best. It is a sad weakness.* Over ninety years have passed. *I would not want to have missed it.* She has had some glimmerings, but she is not wise yet, and neither am I.

~

January, 1925: a new diary. *D'you suppose I'm falling in love with Brutus?* There was a line, invisible and moving, she was always about to cross, had just crossed. *I'm <u>wishing so much</u> to know if he loves me or not.* He disliked the slapdash and haphazard, even as it lured him—Miriam, at seventeen often late like my mother, like me running to catch up with herself, strewing ribbons and buttons and torn stockings in her path, tried when he arrived to come down *<u>promptly</u> (notice!) hair up and everything.*

They went to see "North of 36." *Shoot, I hardly remember much of it. His touch thrills me.* After the film, they met his brother Karl Paul at the Chocolate Shoppe. *K.P. and I had a battle of wits. But Brutus squelched him, saying, "She goes*

with the man, not the clothes." Little did he know. She loved play, dance, immanence and its delicate timing. *Absolutely a man.* She didn't stop to wonder who he was.

I'm afraid I love him. The scene begins with the pair not touching. *I wonder if he really loves me?* He steps into her; she backs away, foot mirroring foot, shoulder-to-shoulder, pushed before him as if by a magnet's negative force. *I don't suppose he'd tell me.* Leading, he steps back. *He has no money.* Breast, hip, thigh: he draws her forward, the space between them neither opening nor closing. At last, the distance narrows. He pulls her into his arms and whirls her into the night.

But Brutus would never really learn to dance. *I wanted so to have him kiss me goodnight, but unless I act rather lingering, he seems to lack the courage.* She had to learn to make it look like she was following. *I just wanted to stroke his hair—I'm so glad I did.*

If I could speak to them, what would I say? He didn't say the words, didn't take her into his arms. *I've practically decided I'm not in love.* At "The Thief of Baghdad," Miriam thinks not of Brutus beside her but about a distant land, a man returning to claim his love on a magic carpet. *The old discontent and restlessness and wanderlust stronger than ever.* Brutus had accepted a position exploring for Standard Oil. In the summer, he would go to South America for two years, leaving her behind. She felt distracted, introspective. *If only I had enough character to know what I wanted!*

~

In February, during Brutus's second visit, Mandy and Louis were locked in a dance over money. Louis, who had trouble holding a job after the family furniture company burned, had been borrowing again, not paying back what he owed. Mandy's brothers, who received the bills, were furious. Tension rippled through parlor, dining room, hall. *I'd never marry if I thought there'd be such unpleasantness as there sometimes is at home.*

Not knowing better, used to real hardship, Brutus fitted himself in, working puzzles, praising Muckie's cooking, helping Lou work on the Ford. *He looked so cute in his corduroys and boots, his hands black as pitch.* Such luxuries of solitude. On the Victrola, sitting alone, he listened to Bach and Beethoven, each note a little miracle only money could buy. How could he offer her such a life?

Muckie had never looked so unattainable; he'd never desired her so. But the visit, as Mandy had intended, drew the two closer. When they got back to Madison, the closeness held, just long enough. *I told my beloved that I love him.* In love with the dance. The beginning and the end. For the moment, she was right there, under his hand.

Two weeks earlier, K.P. had *confessed his love*, the second man that day. *If Brutus weren't so much in love*—like her, he was a tease, light and brittle and quick (not all knees, elbows, impossible feet), watching himself woo. His mouth to her ear, the brasses scorching the air—she was his feather, his Ferris wheel gone wrong, his reckless schooner: she felt free, utterly mastered. *If only Brutus isn't hurt and martyrish.* She laid her head back and laughed.

I'm not going to tell Brutus at all. When she put it that way—but what could she do? Only the beginning. *I didn't confess. I don't think I'll go out with K.P. after Saturday.*

Why did he refuse to see?

~

In May, Miriam rode horse drills in the big parade. Brutus didn't like her sitting on a huge, dancing animal, but she would do as she chose. The ground was wet and slick, the horse's hooves slipping. Major was ten times her weight. She was leading, in control, but all Brutus saw was how small she looked, her back straight, thighs straining to grip the horse's body. Danger crackled her muscles: possibility, freedom, the future beating through her veins. Mandy had forbidden her to go out with Brutus more than two nights a week. He was a flicker on the edge of her mind. *I am almost afraid that he is cramping my style.*

What did Miriam long for? Her lover. Her mother. Sometimes she confused them.

Mandy laid her daughter's letter face down on the dropped leaf of her writing desk. She'd expected Miriam to resist, to make of Mandy's obstacle a stronger bond between herself and her lover. *There are a lot of things bothering me*… . What? *Your letters are short and tell me very little of what you are thinking and doing.*

This wasn't exactly right. Miriam had bared her soul to her mother, writing about dates with other boys and fights with Brutus. *I gave in quite*

some again—told him I was sorry I had said some of those things, cause I had been so orful mad,—but truly I had to tell him that 'cause he was dreadfully hurted in his little feelings. Nothing Mandy wanted to hear.

Are you getting tired of the boy? Be careful what and how you say and do things.

What did Miriam long for? Her lover. Her mother. Sometimes she confused them. Every night they didn't see each other, Brutus called to tell her what time to go to bed. *He believes he's been appointed regent in your absence.*

She wanted privacy of mind and to be understood. She wanted Brutus—and freedom. She wronged him, felt wronged. I know exactly how this is, though I came of age in a different time, with different risks. *Perhaps my letters are, as you say, shorter and dumber.* How could she say what she felt or wanted to the tiny woman with the stinging slap? She didn't know herself. She looked at Brutus awash in sweet longing. She never wanted to see him again. *I just asked for a big handsome man with a rich car to take me riding in my cute new clothes, and he would take me places! O, I know it's wicked and ungrateful, but just every so often I long for all those things.* Brutus. Liberty. From experience I know: for either, she would have to give up something she hadn't even tasted.

Mandy was right: something had shifted. Miriam wasn't telling all the truth. *My word, Beloved, you needn't be afraid that I will hurt him.*

Mandy was right: something had shifted. Miriam wasn't telling all the truth. *My word, Beloved, you needn't be afraid that I will hurt him.* She dreamed she could go back, that she and Mandy could be close as lovers again, and she wouldn't have to choose. *Then my Mommy and I will go bummin' together and have a gorgeous time afterwards in a nice little house by the sea.*

But such ideas belonged to childhood, to the journal. On other days, *o Mother, I am not in the least unhappy! I think I am about the happiest person in the world!* One Saturday evening, she and Brutus went down to the Pump House. Alone with him among the hydraulic equipment, the smell of the lake rising from beneath their feet, she felt shy and young and itchy. *My goodness, Brutus was bold.* She wanted to press back. *I guess I haven't been strict enough.* After he took her back to the dorm, she lay awake, flushed and disturbed. *I fear he's getting a bit too passionate and I mustn't let him.* On Sunday, she waited for him

to phone, but he left her to herself. *It'd be just my luck to fall in love with him when I can't have him any more.*

The next day was a Monday, *a perfectly gorgeous night,* one of the evenings they weren't to see each other. When he called, she was already half carried away. She knew her disobedience would please Mandy rather than otherwise. *I simply had to go out for a walk with him, and so we went up on top of the ski-slide. Across the lake there were just one or two lonely lights, while the stars were so big and bright they looked as if they were on fire.*

She was a child. Why should she have seen how ill suited they were?

When I told him he was naughty and asked him if he thought he'd ever get to heaven, he said he was as close as anyone could get right then.

~

Filigree of leaves against bright sky and water. Night air soft and close, fired with starlight. Soft pine duff underfoot; clothes rubbed thin at knees and thighs; draped light as air over shoulders. That June, Brutus came to the Wollaegers' summer house as a member of the family, as far as Mandy was concerned. At Lakeside, Miriam had always been free as her brother to ramble; there she'd developed her love of swimming and diving, canoeing and sailing, of wading along the shore and scrambling up rock faces. She went her own way, in trousers.

Brutus imagined a life that might include both of them, himself and his Muckie, within one frame. If he couldn't lead on the dance floor, he could in the woods. He bounded on his long legs up any hillside, leaned down to offer his hand. Amazingly, she kept up with him, but he was still, by virtue of strength and sex, her master. And she required mastery. Though she loved to win at any sport, she couldn't long tolerate a man she could beat.

Eventually she would chafe under any mastery he took, still resenting him for everything she was better at—dancing, golf, tennis, driving. When she saw that worlds still closed to her were open to him by virtue of sex alone, she would resent that as well. But here in the woods, they could simply admire each other, not seeing how they were doomed.

During the long northern evenings, the family sat on the screened porch and listened to the whine of mosquitoes pressing the mesh. They played cards, or Muckie strummed her uke while everybody sang along. Mandy folded Brutus in so easily he almost felt he belonged.

At summer's end, he would board a boat bound for South America. *My*

spirit of Adventure. He found himself a hundred times a day looking at Muckie, trying to memorize her face or capture a turn of phrase, one of those lines of poetry she was always dropping, an attitude of body. He had bought a used camera with his waiter's wages, and he photographed her plying her paddle in the front of the canoe; lowering herself down a cliff face, rapt in concentration; wading into the lake; diving, laid out over the water. In the mornings, he awakened to the distant sound of her singing as she took an early walk along the shore. He would have recorded that, too, to play back far from home. Like me, he was trying to capture but also to decode. This life had made her, but into what? A longed-for thing, always receding. He didn't understand it but he liked it. He believed he would always feel this way, confused, held in delicious suspense. He would be held.

At last, the days of rest ended. Brutus was leaving for Venezuela; Muckie would head north on a field trip, having decided that she, too, would major in geology. On their last rambles, they talked of living in the wilderness, looking together for oil to light cities, to drive civilization. As he packed his bags, Brutus felt he was leaving behind an idyll he could never enter again.

Mandy too, as she stood on her toes to kiss her little girl goodbye, felt something ending before it had quite begun, while something else gained force and momentum just over the horizon. It was hard to say goodbye to Brutus, but this farewell also sent a tremor of excitement through her. He would go forth in their stead. He would return with spoils, with tales to tell. He had promised to write, and Mandy to reply. She looked forward to it.

Though she knew the cottage would be quiet, Mandy still couldn't prepare herself for the emptiness she felt as the screen door slapped shut. Tony and Lou were both out. Louis knew enough to stay out of her way. As she sat over her unread book on the screened porch, she mulled over her loose-endedness. Like any girl being wooed, she mustn't write Brutus until he had written her, but in the morning, she settled herself outside in the shade and began her letter to his Muckie.

Last night when you left it almost seemed to me as though Brutus wanted to kiss me too—or was I mistaken? I should have been glad to if I had thought he really wanted me to….

Colombian Honeymoon: First Things

The present is the piece of the future we can see.
—Louise Glück

Today at noon the S.S. Metapan of the United Fruit Company embarked from New York. Just after sailing we received several Bon Voyage Telegrams, Flowers from the Davidsons, and a box of candy from Mrs. Wollaeger—our mother.
—Walter's Journal: *Oct 5th 1927, New York*

As the ship pulled away from the dock, Miriam Magdalen Wollaeger Link stood at the rail, cloche pulled down to keep her hair from blowing. She'd cast her lot in with the version of herself ready for change, to become someone else: a *woman geologist*, sailing off the map. Her husband came up behind her, and she leaned against him, feeling, as she shifted her weight, the thread holding her to her old self dissolve while the city blurred on the horizon.

She'd undertaken a series of first events, to leave herself behind again and again. After the ceremony in Mandy's parlor, she stood in her bedroom for *the last time as a virgin* while Mandy straightened the collar of her suit. *Shhh. Let me repair your face.* She stood for photographs on the porch then drove through fading light toward Chicago, leaving the hope chest with its cookbook behind. She was glad Brutus couldn't drive. She'd given herself to a stranger sleeping off bootlegged champagne in the passenger seat, but it was her foot pressing the accelerator.

They'd spent their first night in Chicago. There was blood, yes. Mandy had warned her. As her husband labored over her body, Muckie sensed he was driven by a force beyond her, that erased her. *He's awfully sweet to me in every way he knows how.* It took her husband urgently, and he raced to meet it as if it might pass him by.

It did not take her. *I weeped two nights in La Porte, and I could have a lot more times, but I thought I hadn't better.* During those long prenuptial evenings at the Pump House and Lakeside, when they'd kissed into bruises, she'd felt—what? Desire, maybe, not for that—a mess that made her blush before the chambermaid in the morning. It had been over quickly, and he'd been grateful. But she couldn't wish to repeat it. This is not something I like to imagine marrying into—a disappointment at the heart, one that never goes away—or that I understand, desiring my husband, as I do, even in anger. *I never thought I'd be such a baby.* But she was repaid: the boat's thrumming engines, New York a gleaming inspiration under the fall sun. All through him. *I love him an awful lot, Mommy. He gets my goat quite often, but he doesn't mean to.* His long fingers made a circle around her throat, and she disciplined herself not to twitch. *I expect I'll get over my touchiness. As you say, men are <u>so</u> dumb!*

Hum of nerves. Soon, Brutus would make their pitch to Argie, the grand idea that kept her quiet under his hands. Surely Standard Oil couldn't refuse a trained geologist willing to work for food and a mule. Oh, she was eager. But they had to wait, Brutus said, until Argie saw she wasn't a flighty young newlywed, but a girl of another order, as fit as any boy, braver, anxious to test herself.

To Mandy: *P.S. She still obeys even tho it didn't say so in the book. I guess I must keep her a little longer as there is no chance for complaint.*

Once they reached open seas, where there was no Prohibition, he drew her hand through his arm and led her into the saloon to meet the Argabites. Bottles sparkled above a bar of polished wood. Her first mixed drink: what would it be?

Argie called for champagne. Muckie, new bride, still obedient, held up her glass.

~

A Manhattan, with its brilliant cherry. Her first ocean voyage. In Jamaica, her first tropical landing; a black policeman in his bright uniform. *Yesterday, out of a clear sky, my "husband"(?) said, "Who said you weren't good looking?" I haven't quite recovered from the shock.* Coming: her first view of the Panama Canal; cobbled streets; another continent.

At the Canal Zone, Mrs. Argabrite would embark on a Caribbean cruise, a ladylike adventure, the kind I would never take, nor my mother, nor Mrs. Link, who would continue with the men up the wild Magdalena. The couples

played shuffleboard and walked the deck until cocktails. At six, the steward drew a tub for Muckie—*pretty swell, no?*—and she dressed in satin. After dinner, they danced, Mrs. Argabrite moving her girth with the solid dignity of a redwood, Mrs. Link swinging with delight, Argie leaning into her. *He said I should take Brutus in hand—women had lots more sense, and it was better in every way when the lady takes charge.*

Later, Muckie dealt a game of rummy, a penny a point, which she let Argie win. Her newest dress, a blue-green, glowed phosphorescent in the lantern light. Anyone could see she might do anything. She toyed with Argie's cigarette case, then snapped it open, held a cigarette to her lips for Argie to light while her husband looked on with raised eyebrows.

In his mind, she was gored by boars, devoured by crocodiles, kidnapped by Indians—he and Brutus rode to her rescue. He enjoyed these visions; he enjoyed looking at her small body alight with satin. Reality was something else.

Argie leaned over the flame as she exhaled. What better time to ask? *He said I had enough sense—well, quien sabe?* Maybe he thought she was joking. Maybe her eyes were lit green by her dress. Maybe he really imagined letting her come. *I'm going along on the mule part of the trip, down to the llanos—that will take about a month.* She was a different animal than Mrs. Argabrite. She had the same geology training he did, so she kept saying. Maybe, under an ocean moon, it seemed possible.

But even then, cocooned in smoke and moonlight, he hedged. *Then Brutus will bring me back most of the way.* There were places she would be a burden. *When I leave the party, Brutus and Argie go up and down rivers, hundreds of miles, being poled painfully up, mapping as they go.*

She believed she could do anything. Like Argie, I imagine the pack she couldn't lift, the brush she couldn't hack, the snake she'd be too frightened to behead. Everything would have to be done for her; they would all have to bear her stomach fungus, prickly heat, parasites burrowed head first in her young flesh. In his mind, she was gored by boars, devoured by crocodiles, kidnapped by Indians—he and Brutus rode to her rescue. He enjoyed these visions; he enjoyed looking at her small body alight with satin. Reality was

something else. Reality was where men died. Not, if he could help it, a girl; not on his watch.

~

The change one sees in going from the Canal Zone to Cartagena can't fail to impress anyone, except possibly the native Colombian. The zone has become one of the garden spots of the world, and is something for the United States to be proud of. The road to Cartagena is a filthy mud hole, a brooding place for malarial mosquitoes, and a dump place for garbage and dead animals. The buzzards in the air tell the story.

—Walter's Journal: *October 13th, THE CANAL ZONE*

In Cartagena, she got a taste of what things could be like. *No place to go, no conveniences, no comforts, nothing to do.* Brutus's trunk with his revolver and socks went missing. When she tried to send a telegram during siesta, go to the bank, perform any small task, she found the office closed. *It is always manana or muy trabajoso or no hay—which last means that there aint none of whatever it is that you want.* She didn't know the half: what it was to wait not for what you wanted but for the thing that might keep you alive.

Filth, donkey trains, smells of plant and animal being broken back into the earth. No letters. *I'm beginning to understand how much it means to hear from home down here.* At last, after four days in Cartagena and a train ride to Calamar, forty-five miles in four and a half hours, they boarded the F. Peres Rosa, one of the newly introduced paddle boats, *a prize, though, a real Mississippi River boat. There's a barge on each side, and there's cargo and cattle on them.* Barefoot crew served dinner in the same jackets, *out at the armholes and so dirty they could stand alone,* in which they'd loaded freight and cleaned the latrines.

~

For days I saw a man standing around on the upper deck in a bath robe and pajamas. This man happened to be the captain.

—Walter's journal: *October 22, THE F. PERES ROSA*

Muckie bathed with a sponge and dressed for dinner, and for her the men became charming. *You ought to see our parade to the table every night—I carry the Flit gun 'cause the mosquitoes are bad, specially under the table, and Brutus carries a bottle of Worcestershire—we use that as disinfectant in the sancoche, on the meat, n' ev'rything.* Chicken, rice, soup seasoned by a grimy thumb. *The first night when it came to dulce they wafted a single prune before us. We all stared and then laughed till*

we cried. Even what she might have recognized became unfamiliar. *They have a grande passion for playing a particularly tinny electric player piano, with rolls that have many more holes than they had originally—much of the beauty of such compositions as Collegiate is lost in silence.* The berths were so tiny she and Brutus had to bunk separately, a torment to him and a relief to her. The Company had sent *a straw mat to lay on the canvas, two sheets, a pillow and case, two towels, and a brand new mosquito bar.*

~

Let us follow a piece of material from Baranquilla to Bogota. If the river is low the steamers get lodged on a sand bar and stay there for days or weeks. If there is no sign of let up the freight is dumped. Heavy machinery is lodged in the bed of the Magdalena, gradually being covered with sand and mud.

—Walter's journal. *MAGDALENA RIVER TRANSPORTATION*

Voyage: to see. Brutus still wanted Muckie to see Colombia through his eyes, his opinions. Though I agree with him on almost nothing, I am riveted, as Mandy will be, but she was not. *Colombia is a country rich in material resources of all kinds—Still they are extremely hostile toward the United States, whose capital wants to come in and exploit the country on a fair and square basis.* To him, *exploit* is a technical term, without negative connotation. American company compounds along the river had high fences and guards.

For a few days, Muckie was low in spirits. *Mommie, I don't think I shall have a baby just yet.* Like her, I think, thank goodness. Both men were thinking of their moonlit conversation on the Metapan. Even then Brutus must have known better. Now, they watched the river slip between jungled banks through piles of dumped cargo. Muckie pointed out a line of mountains rising from the mist behind the foothills; Brutus felt the humidity and heat lightening. They were almost there.

After dinner, Argie ruminated his Havana like a pedantic camel. It was time for Brutus to face reality. The filthy boat, the rickety chairs, the squalid lower deck where all but the few first-class passengers hung their hammocks in the open air—even the halting notes of that worn out piano, the one Brutus said *added greatly to the discomfort of the passengers*—all this they could laugh at. But less than a year ago, he and Argie had entered the jungle fit and tough and emerged with infections, malaria, dysentery. They'd escaped smallpox, cholera, yellow fever. *Absolutely no way to get out of here for help.*

Reptiles, wild cats, rivers full of man-eaters and electric eels. Did Brutus remember the gusanos in Argie's arm? The body of the beloved, smooth and clean and white. And her feminine malaise—how would she manage it? If she ended up in a river (a bucking mule, a capsized raft), where caribe swarmed to a drop of blood? Then there were human threats—Indians, labor unrest, attacks.

Fidelity. Priorities. Survival. What changes between two men when a woman walks into the room? Though I've watched it, I can't imagine. They are crossing a river, these two men and that woman, and everything goes to hell: capsize, and the flesh eaters gather. There could be no question whom Brutus would save if he had to choose. And if Argie had to decide between the woman whose right to be rescued was an invisible truth or the man on whom his safety relied?

They are crossing a river, these two men and that woman, and everything goes to hell: capsize, and the flesh eaters gather. There could be no question whom Brutus would save if he had to choose.

The two men sat smoking, looking toward impenetrable darkness, behind which anything might be breathing, any weapon raised. *The river is high and sometimes for 15 and 20 minutes at a time the boat will fight the current without budging an inch.* Brutus bit the end off his cigar.

Mommy, I've got an awfully nice husband—really I have.

How could he not have known it would be this way?

Usually, people figure that when you get married it's all over.

He wanted to live suspended in that bright bubble with Muckie. But no matter how hard the current fought them, they kept moving upriver.

We've been married for six weeks and a day.

What went wrong?

Assume Mandy handed her daughter over, perhaps in the nick of time, a virgin. Brutus made the same claim for himself, and I believe he did spend those early nights alone at camp, listening to violins on his Victrola, touching himself or trying not to once he put out the lamp. If he gave in, it was after he emerged from the floods of the llanos, where he'd seen death in

every face, every fever swamp and swollen river, and strolled into Bogota's pleasure palaces.

Nearly there. Why do I imagine he faltered then? Real scotch. Ice melting on his tongue. *Almost all a poor sucker of a rock hound could want in the line of comfort.* He was alive. At twenty-five, he knew his body better than I in middle age might think possible—what it could lift and climb and clear and sleep through, what parasites it attracted, in what convulsive purges it rid itself of poisons. He knew every thing about it but one.

I will never know what he understood at twenty-five about the world, about endurance, about himself. But I know this: during their wedding trip to La Porte, for the first six weeks Muckie didn't write her mother. She made brief, expensive phone calls, the charges reversed, but wrote not one letter until they boarded ship. *Somehow I couldn't get down to it.* No explanations. *Not that anything was wrong.* And I think whatever Brutus taught himself in Bogota, it should have been more; his focus, when he entered any room with a bed and woman in it, should have been not on release, or on learning one more thing about his own body, but on learning anything at all about a body like hers.

At twenty-five, he knew his body better than I in middle age might think possible—what it could lift and climb and clear and sleep through, what parasites it attracted, in what convulsive purges it rid itself of poisons. He knew every thing about it but one.

He wouldn't have thought that body was like hers.

If I could send my voice into the past, what would I say? Not even, after all, for Muckie—though imagine, if Brutus had once succeeded, her sweet surprise. For himself alone, on this subject he should have been studious, working as hard as he did on surveying, mapmaking, learning to wield his machete like a native and speak a Spanish his peons could understand. *He's most awfully sweet to me in every way he knows how.* If he was going to leave her behind while he went into the bush, he should have left her something to miss, as my husband, when he sends me out, gives me something to return to.

Perhaps this is my question: What makes a man?

He leaves me absolutely cold, physically.

Quien sabe?

The real vision only the men shared, exhilarating and bleak. Only they could enter it.

It's a great life if you don't weaken, Muckie wrote Mandy. *But I won't be weakening.* No hay. Years later: *He leaves me cold. He always has.*

What might she have been capable of? I have no idea. If she had taken the trip, would she have become another woman altogether? Would my mother, would I?

If she held anything against Argabrite, she hid it, even from herself. *Argie keeps reassuring us that we're not going anywhere and when we get there we won't see nothin'.* Enforced inactivity; evenings beginning with cocktails and ending with brandy and bets over whether the captain would be wearing a jacket over his pajamas in the morning. *We got to the next bend—it's just like the rest.* Her honeymoon. *Brutus was just around to ask if I'd told you I smoked a cigarette.*

There had been, when she began her journey, a point. She had been headed into the bush.

But we keep right on traveling to nowhere—that's our story and we stick by it.

~

Certainty, uncertainty. *I got a big kick the first time I saw clouds below us.* The prospect vanishing. Some factions wanted to nationalize oil production. *If they pass a certain bill, it will drive out all the oil companies.* According to Brutus, the Colombians wouldn't have any idea how to manage, even with the refineries and the Andean pipeline, all, he was at pains to point out, built by foreign interests—but now that she wouldn't be riding along, Muckie wouldn't have minded if the expedition fell through. Another five months separation, and what would she do? Go home as a married woman? Stay at the Hotel Europa and look for work? *I've gathered that my spouse doesn't exactly like the idea of keeping me here at, at the very lowest, $125 a month.* He'd brought her all this way. And.

Brutus and Argie were as secretive and absorbed as lovers. While they were out making inquiries, she waited for invitations, for him to come home, for mail. *If you address it to Bogota, it takes at least a week, and almost two.* Occasionally, she went to the office with Brutus and practiced typing letters while he vanished for some mysterious meeting. *He left me to find my way home all alone. My sense of direction never fails me, and it isn't so very far, anyway.*

For what had Muckie's life equipped her? To be a geologist, her husband's partner? *I am going to set out on a job of typing for Argie, and earn me some money.* Typing meant composing the report herself from Argie's notes about oil laws. His name would appear at the top, put there by her fingers pounding the keys, another act of self-erasure.

For what had her life equipped her? *Friday night was the big Armistice Day dance at the Anglo-American club; I had a wild time getting my husband into his boiled shirt.* She danced twenty-one dances straight. *Five were supposed to be with Brutus, but other fellows just took them away.* Not for the first time or the last, he smoked and watched her spin in the arms of others. I watch through his eyes while an Englishman teaches her to tango.

Dinners out, golf with borrowed clubs, horseback riding. She learned to type; she might become a governess. *And Daddy, I'm learning to tell the difference between a Martini, a Manhattan, and one or two other cocktails.*

First uncertainty wore on her, then certainty. *Congress adjourned today.* Brutus still had his job.

The only way down: the wild Magdalena. *Travelling is terrible in that stream.* A week down the river, then she would get on a United Fruit boat in Baranquilla. On the riverboat this time, there would be no cabin for the American Señora; she would sleep on the upper deck in a hammock, effects wrapped in a bundle beside her, her diamond ring pinned inside her brassiere.

Brutus and Argie accompanied her on the train from Bogota to Giradot. At the dock, both kissed her. When Brutus lifted his lips from hers, she could see he'd already left her behind. As the boat drifted out into the stream, the two men stood, not touching but together, and waved. She was rounding the first bend, almost out of view, when they dropped their hands and turned away.

Then she was gone, coursing through a gash in the jungle. From the boat, no letters. I know only what she told me before she died. Rapids pounding against the bottom of the boat.

Then she was gone, coursing through a gash in the jungle. From the boat, no letters. I know only what she told me before she died. Rapids pounding against the bottom of the boat. Rusted arms and cogs of abandoned machinery rippling below the surface, more

perilous than snags. An entire automobile, submerged. The sternwheel turning. Her hammock cradled her above the deck; all night mosquitoes hit a constant note. She woke every morning with new bites despite the swath of mesh. No other Americans on board. One night, she jolted awake to a dark figure looming beside her. She sat up and spoke, and it moved away, silent, its face a shadow. Her hand moved to the strap of her brassiere.

What had once been incomprehensible: Muckie, alone on the Magdalena, moving away at the speed of rushing water. She would remember it all her life, her first solo journey—the kind of travel I most love, though hardly in the same circumstances. It tested her, I think, to her limits. If she had gone out with the men, what then? Would her limits have expanded when she hit them?

And Brutus? *At midnight, I awoke cold.* I like to imagine he yearned for her, but also that he was satisfied. *The stars sparkled, and the waning moon was on the horizon.* She was off his hands for now; there was nothing he could do for her. He was deep in love remembered and desired, still out of reach, but now, at last, a sure thing, the way he wanted it.

~

Last time, floods; this time, the season of thirst and fire. He and Argie settled into their old rhythm of silences and jokes, passing canteen and cigars over the necks of *the girls*, who snorted and lowered their heads. *Dust 2 ft deep covered the trail, and the thermometer registered 120°.*

Where they stopped, people asked for news and gossip, offering directions and supplies in return, but Brutus and Argie were subtle as thieves. What, in that political climate, could they have claimed to be looking for? Cattle, diamonds—anything but oil. *We came here to avoid suspicion.* Women, ruins, trade, emeralds, guns, the hides of snakes. They hid the gear and pretended to be lost. *The canteens are empty.*

Brutus was still counting everything: days, towns, elevations, houses, people, every swallow he took of water—every swallow without it. No rainfall to measure. *The entire country is illuminated by the hundreds of fires all around, burning off the grasses and timbers.* He was writing again to bridge distance, across geography and the time a letter would take to traverse it: his eye to Muckie's, now to mine, the same view for miles. *Some of the savannahs were beautiful and green, for they had been burned over several weeks before, but others had just been swept by fire, and had that hopeless weird aspect.* Stagnant marshes

fringed with green grasses in which birds thrummed and turtles wallowed; crocodiles, otters, the enormous capybara, a bulbous-faced rodent as big as I am. The savannahs, so recently flooded, gone to dust storms. *Here and there small riffled dunes are beginning to form.* The llanos flowing with fire. During the rains, they'd spent every moment on the verge of drowning; now they would be lucky not to die of thirst or flame. *This country is a country of extremes, and it takes hardy men to travel it.* He wanted Muckie to long to be with him, to understand why she was instead tucked up in Mandy's house. He was moving; she was back where she started. *The trails are strewn with the bleached bones of cattle.* The nights swarmed with mosquitoes. *The darned things could bite as well as sing.* He would roll a cigarette at bedtime and use its ember to burn ticks off his body.

Halfway through, the town of Tame, strolling burros and cargo bulls laden with bananas. *At night the lights of the candles shine dully thru open doors onto the cool breeze swept streets.* In one direction, sloping plains. In another, snow-covered mountains. In a third, the silvas, a forest of palms and hardwoods, inhabited by the Tunebas and Sararas.

He wanted to return with spoils. One morning he approached an Indian woman. *She had some kind of long contraption to pin her blanket.* Brutus had no idea how to turn the trinkets he'd brought for trade into the objects he desired. *We had a circus*. Imagine Walter on Main Street back in La Porte, removing the brooch that closed a woman's blouse at the neck. *Finally we took it, and gave her a couple of pins to pin her blanket.* The woman turned them over, opening and closing them, before fastening her blanket with them. He slid a cheap ring onto her finger as if making a vow, took a mother-of-pearl necklace from her neck. *I put a glass necklace on her, and she did smell and was dirty.* From then on, if an Indian had something he wanted, he shoved a few notes or a trinket into her hands and took it. By day's end, he had jewelry,

[...] if an Indian had something he wanted, he shoved a few notes or a trinket into her hands and took it. By day's end, he had jewelry, bows and arrows. Coca leaves to chew; lime to neutralize the acid.

bows and arrows. Coca leaves to chew; lime to neutralize the acid. Chewing passed the time, leaving his mouth dry but also deliciously numb. Flocks of leggy birds rising in pink and white clouds from their banks. A moon gone bloody behind smoke. *The plains are mottled with silver and the night bird's calling. The world has a lonely beauty that sometimes makes a person mad.*

They crossed into Venezuela, coming to the end. The border was only an invisible line in the middle of a river, but on this side, the savannahs, still shimmering under the heat, looked beautiful to him, even yielding the occasional comic relief of a car driving straight at them from Caracas over the roadless plain, emerging like a metallic ghost from the heat and dust and smoke. He admired a people who would drive where they wished. They reminded him of Muckie.

Colombians, Venezuelans—to him, their flaws and virtues lay not in their characters, which were the same—*They are not fit to govern themselves*—but in their stars. *It takes a good dictator to bring prosperity to these Latin and Indian people, because the people can not agree among themselves what is good for them.* Good dictator, bad—all a matter of perspective and our national interest, we are told, even now, as long as we're talking about some other country.

Argabrite is and was the best and squarest man I ever hit and ever hoped to work with. The end of his first long partnership, the beginning of his second. Two weeks in New York with Muckie, one in La Porte, two more in green Wisconsin. Then a promotion, from junior geologist to geologist with an assistant, and two more boats for both of them: the President Pierce from San Francisco to Singapore, first class passage (*He'll have to dress for dinner every night, I guess. Wonder if my collection of dresses will do?*—my question, exactly), then a smaller craft to Batavia, Dutch East Indies. There would be no turning back for Muckie, not this time. She was signing on for the whole three-year pull. A house, two servants. Everything on Standard Oil, even Muckie's travel and living expenses, plus his salary. *Getting paid for seeing the world—that, as the Bozo says, is the <u>way</u> to see it.*

Walter Link: Standard Oil explorer. The charming Mrs. Link: Standard Oil wife.

A Nice Night for Beauty

Muckie came down to the dock to see me off and I stood and watched till she was no longer in sight. I never thought that one person could grow to a man as she has to me, and every time it becomes harder.
—Walter's Journal, *Oct 3rd 1928*
On Board S.S. Van de Wiek enroute to Palembang

His first expedition as lead geologist. His Dutch assistant, Agerbeck, waited on the dock to lead him through Palembang, half of it built on stilts or rafts over the Moesi River, rising and falling with the tide. *Coolies selling things to eat and drink, ringing a little bell*, chiming Chinese, Dutch, Malay—a cloud of tongues I trail him through words on the page to the floating market, a street that flows with water when the river is full and now, left dry, stinks of garbage. Women step gracefully along elevated blocks foundering in the mud, bend over rolls of batik or peer into bamboo cages stuffed with chickens, bead-eyes rolling and throats throbbing with panic. Now, also, Nike knock-offs, plastic Disney figures.

In my sun hat, I turn every head. At last, a woman grabs my arm, says, in perfect American English, "Excuse me. What are you doing here?"

Jet-lagged, disoriented, I begin to answer. "My grandparents," I say.

"*Here*," she says, pointing to the mud beneath our feet. "You will be robbed." I am slow, my head fogged. Exasperated, she points at the bridge. "Get on a bus," she says.

"You will be robbed." I am slow, my head fogged. Exasperated, she points at the bridge. "Get on a bus," she says.

The stench of refuse and raw sewage reaches right to the gates of the Sultan's palace, the call to prayer wafting over all of it. I don't get on a bus. I walk the decayed sidewalks a mile back to my hotel, the Sandjaja, built in

1932, the year of my mother's birth, where my grandfather will stay often and my grandmother will lunch, at least, with a man she loves. Behind me, my grandfather and Agerbeck haggle for goods and men: Chinese pit diggers and surveyors, Sumatran coolies to carry housing, tools, food for a hundred on their backs. They deal with Dutch officials, who provide bodies, many conscripted or working off debts or sentences. My grandfather doesn't ask.

~

In Batavia, Muckie cleaned and painted, sewed batik into curtains, scoured shops on the Pasar Barve for used furniture, swimming through the heat. She rode in bicycle rickshaws painted with wild patterns, a maelstrom of yellows, greens, blues, and reds. Borne before the spinning wheels, she was a figurehead, windblown.

~

Slowly we shall break into the habits of the jungle that will swallow us.

Five days to nurse the boat through low water to their first camp. He left Agerbeck to supervise the building—thatched huts on wood floors for the white geologists, on bare earth for the workers—and chose five coolies to paddle him upriver through the narrow gorges. *The water being so very low, I saw outcrops that perhaps have never been seen by geologists before.* He drew furiously. It was raining in high country. The river would rise all night, covering all he'd seen; by morning, up five feet, it would be lapping at the coolies' beds.

~

The bathhouse was out back, past the kitchen and the servants' quarters—a tank of rain water and a couple of buckets. *Two or three or four baths a day seem to turn the trick.* Just like the natives. The cool water felt delicious. *You can get used to anything.*

She didn't yet know the house was too modest and on the wrong side of the tracks. Decades later, I photograph it from the street. A block west, Menteng, with its embassies and mansions; here, litter in the streets and a sidewalk eroded into gutter.

Another bath, a dose of powder, a white evening gown and Chanel °5. Her first party she wanted to do as it was done in Batavia, down to the whisky and soda splits Marto, her houseboy, passed. Brutus's new friend Mr. Eastman, *a mystery man scouting around for some oil co.*, the politics here no less complicated than in Colombia. Lura Rhoades, *another geological widow*. Everyone older than she. They dined on roast beef, mashed potatoes, creamed asparagus, ice cream—American food accomplished by her Java-

nese cook, Minna. *They never went home until 1:15. The only flaw was that the Boy Friend was absent.*

~

Now they moved overland, mapping by section, coolies clearing trails, the Chinese diggers digging a line of pits through mud and clay. One digger could dig a pit nine meters deep and three wide in under a day, reinforce it, carve into its sides narrow, slick steps Brutus descended, peering at the walls looking for signs of structure, hoping they wouldn't collapse and bury him alive. *He who thinks this work is a Sunday School Picnic can follow me for one day, and then judge.*

Measuring time. He waited for the coolies to open the jungle so he could pass, then for his gear. *I need a stake—it has not been cut yet; then a note book, it is still in the bag. Today they made a fish trap, and instead of cutting trail they were trying to catch fish.* They worked in a different economy. *To threaten a fellow with his job is just like pouring water onto a duck's back.*

I watch him measure his life. Twenty-six, time moving through him. Leeches waited in the trees for any uptick in air temperature to tell them a mammal passed, warm-blooded and mortal, below. He found one on his chest, full of blood, as big around as his finger. Others *in places I blush to mention, and so they were all the more painful.*

~

She still dreamed she might go out with him, to *Bali or Modura or eastern java.* Not Sumatra: she no longer imagined traveling 150 miles on foot, through ticks, thorns, red ants swarming like a lick of fire, cutting her own trail, no more than I do.

Invitations piled up on the hall table—tea, afternoon bridge, luncheon, golf. When she remembered, she missed him, the way she was supposed to, counting imaginary miles.

~

There is a wonderful moon that lights this wild and weird jungle in such a delicate pale light that a man is bound to get homesick, especially when he is in love with his wife. He enumerated animals for her, a form of love. A bobtailed monkey, biggest he'd seen. A white turtle. The neighborhood elephant, *a rogue cast out from the main herd, now wandering around all by himself*, leaving droppings big as tuffets. Under logs he found nests lined with grass and leaves: *wild men, wary as a tiger.*

Hardship and wonder. *It is all a very beautiful life.* Through his words, I plunge. *When one emerges from the jungle cover and into the light, the brightness is blinding.*

~

She was too distracted to pay this kind of attention. Golf at the club with Mr. Eastman. Dancing at the Box or the Des Indes with Jim Farley. *Due to the dearth of girls here, it's really done, and it's all au fait.* Chinese peddlers unrolled fine pongee, silk, shantung heavy as linen onto her dining table for dresses copied from Paris and London, more than one seam blown in the hilarious wee hours. *I went to a cocktail party which started at 11:30 and our part of it never broke up until 3:00, after which we took a drive down to Tandjona Priok and watched the sunset from the yacht club.* A little break after sunset to bathe again and change for evening. *I was brought home at 2:30 A.M. by an Englishman who was firmly convinced that I came from among wild Indians and ought to be wearing chaps and a 6-shooter.*

~

The jungle wore on him. *Every morning I can scrape a nice crust of mould from my hat band. The hob nails rust. My camera shutter won't work.* Monstrous growth. *At night the ground is covered with phosphorescences.* The jungle floor lit up like a starry sky that makes us sigh, Brutus and me.

Any breach to the skin might be fatal, and he, too, was chafed raw, covered with sores. The pencillium mold was being discovered just now, but decades would pass before it would save a life.

The flesh, too, eroded. A coolie came to him with festering boils. *I lanced one and drained it, but the poor devil could stand no more.* He'd never imagined lives in his hands. *They do not come around till things become unbearable.* Any breach to the skin might be fatal, and he, too, was chafed raw, covered with sores. The pencillium mold was being discovered just now, but decades would pass before it would save a life.

At dawn, he heard invisible birds calling, *the mournful cries of the tailless monkeys*. When rain poured through the jungle canopy, each drop sounded hundreds of times as it fell from leaf to leaf, the storm multiplying in the ear. *I want to see the sky, the sun.* The engineers couldn't keep up, *or even begin to do so,* his long legs stepping off days. When it was time to return to camp, he struck out cross-country. *With my compass, I always manage it very nicely.* Even

the surveyor once spent a night alone in the jungle, but never Brutus. *If the man that makes the map loses himself I wonder how I should ever find my way.* Day by day, he was headed home. The earth was taking shape.

At night, he lay awake on his cot, fitting map to land. A subterranean dream.

The coolies are singing some weird sounding song. Now for sleep—I hope it comes soon—Buenos Noches mi Amorcita—if only it were so—

~

Most expats stuck to their own groups, but she wanted to talk to everyone. She studied Dutch, Portuguese, even Malay, practicing on Marto and Minna. *I know almost two hundred words.* From the jumble of her papers—books, diaries, old shopping lists—still flutter sheets of jotted words. With language, she might domesticate this place. *They do things a little differently.* As romantic as that.

~

The rainy season settled in, storms blowing through. *Every night one hears the crashing of huge trees, and it is a most terrifying noise in the stillness.* Branches and tangled roots blocked the trails. When the map finally resolved itself—no oil—the river was up forty feet. It swirled them over through the tops of trees in a tumult of reflected light. *Just before dark millions of huge bats came out of the jungle and covered the sky. Last night was a rather nice night for beauty, but a poor night for sleep.*

Emerging from the jungle, a man felt half wild, estranged—from others, from himself. He fell on his letters: from Muckie, only a few. Now that he could, he must have ice in his water—he must have her. *My mind is feasting on the solid pleasure of my little Muckie, with her sparkling blue eyes and red soft lips that are mine alone.* On the green Java Sea, he could see his way to her. They would sit in their little house, just the two of them. *That is a million times better than having the President of the United States or the King of England around.* So close, he could hardly wait. *I wish the cursed boat could fly—*

~

They went to the mountains for Christmas, Muckie driving the rental car while Brutus took photos out the windows. There were hardly any cars, but the road was full of people, seven hundred per square Java mile. *One sees them trotting with a bamboo rod on their shoulders on which is suspended several baskets or tins etc, a contented lot of coolies.* It couldn't last—fields cultivated the same way for centuries; wooden plows. Everything exerted its force, even their

presence. The Great War was finished, World War II a mirage. *I wonder how long before the country breaks into the turmoil of revolution against the Dutch Rule.* He saw so much that others like him didn't, the whiff of violence wafting even there, where peasants bowed to him, the Toean in his automobile. By the time I arrive, even these mountain roads are choked with cars, buses, and scooters along with bicycle rickshaws and carthorses, their harnesses jingling with bells and silver ornaments. Everyone sees me, my difference marked by pale eyes and strange dress, but nobody bows, and nobody stands aside.

The Hotel Tjisoeroepan overlooked rice paddies in steep terraces reflecting the sky, surrounding Brutus, who for so long had seen nothing blue. A brief interlude to drift and be still. He was getting ready for a car trip to mid Java—almost a pleasure jaunt through lovely country, a little light espionage to keep him busy. He wanted to take Muckie along, but Gallaher said no, or so Brutus said.

~

People left; new people arrived. Billee Gallaher, Walter's new boss, whose family lived in California, next door to Douglas Fairbanks. His wife Ludmilla, *a beautiful Russian girl* who escaped the revolution through Constantinople. Jim, whose wife died of smallpox a few days after they arrived. *He nearly went crazy for about a year.* In January, Muckie saw him every day. The mysterious Ted Eastman: *a peculiar duck—Harvard man, much given to poetry and introspection and analysis of other people, and thinks he's a bit of a lion with the ladies.* Colin McCulloch, a Scot. *He rode bucking broncos in Madison Square Garden.* The Brit, Bill Davis*, star of many polo games and riding contests*, who often lent her a pony. Brutus would not approve, but Brutus was almost never there to know.

~

He finished in the field a few days early but sent no telegram. Tossed on the bed when he arrived were two evening dresses she'd tried and rejected. Made for her, they would have fit me, but where would I wear such fillips? He sat down in the dark to wait.

At three a.m., headlights swept the batik curtains. Tires on gravel, laughter, a man's voice. Humming under her breath, she walked past, heels clicking. He watched her gown slide off her shoulders into a shimmering blue pool around her feet. Another dress he hadn't seen before. In stockings and a froth of lace, she leaned to the mirror. She was unfastening her necklace when she caught sight of his shadow in the glass and began to scream.

I was glad to see him, of course. Tomorrow's bridge, any number of parties, golf, all gone to hell. *I'd told everybody he wasn't coming till next week.*

But he had figured out how to get her attention. The next afternoon, she stepped onto the front porch to see a little roadster pulling up, a half-caste behind the wheel and Brutus in the passenger seat. She didn't even grab her purse. *And o Boy, how she do ramble!* They arrived at Priok in time to watch the sun set over the water.

In the morning, she gave him his first driving lesson. His big feet sat awkwardly on the pedals, and the car lurched when he let out the clutch. He reversed without looking behind and ignored the speedometer, the buffalo on the road, a cyclist. He hunched over the steering wheel, trying to get a feel. By the time they returned he was getting the hang of it, but she was done in. In this as in so many things she cared about, he was more diligent than gifted. *I doubt whether he'll ever be a good driver.*

In stockings and a froth of lace, she leaned to the mirror. She was unfastening her necklace when she caught sight of his shadow in the glass and began to scream.

~

So began the cycle of long separations and reunions. My husband, too, as I begin this book, is traveling as many as 100 days a year, though during the writing, as my own career begins to take off and my travel increases, he will become established and be able to cut back.

Every trip began poorly. Mosquitoes rose from the riverbanks in gauzy curtains, and men came down with malaria. But there were small gifts. A welcoming headman who *trotted out the Gadisses for us. Gadis in Malay is a virgin girl. The village seems to only have about six of them.* Rarely, the village women let him film them. *If one can not get pictures of them the native method of doing things is lost.* And, on the trail in the middle of the jungle, a glint of light: *a 5 dollar gold piece in the form of a pin.* In the mud at his feet, a gift. *Today Muckie and I have been married 18 months. I wonder how she is.*

It has seemed funny with Brutus gone again, but I'm getting used to it once more. The Javanese New Year, all color and motion and stir, the ever-shifting set of expats on Muckie's calendar, most of them men. *They treat me just like a kid sister, even to the teasing.* In the car, his gift, she could go anywhere. *I had*

the flv up to 93 kil. Per on the way! It goes quickly this way, and so I don't get achey about Brutus.

His wife and nobody he knew driving down to Priok in his car, his Victrola on the seat.

Monday afternoon I had a lovely ride. Yesterday I tried to play polo and reached too far for a ball and fell off, disgracefully.

~

Brutus was down with malaria and hookworm. Muckie was raring to go. *He always lets his ailments depress him, and he thinks they're worse than they are. I always think the other way, and they go away quicker.* She'd never seen him in the field, where he could overcome wild animals, disease, natural disaster.

Like my husband, when he was home, he wanted her to stay home with him.

Brutus is one of the best eggs in the world, but he is depressing to live with. He ran his movies over and over, planning sequences, editing in titles. She cajoled him out for golf, but he was still weak from fever, and the ball wouldn't behave. He walked off the course at the tenth hole, threatening to cancel the club membership. *He seems to think you have to scratch and be tight and uncongenial so that when you're 55 or 60 you can do anything you please, on a measly 5000 or so a year, because all the gorgeous high tide of your youth was directed along the ditch of sober plugging.* The fight wasn't over money. It was over how they would live, who would decide—the question, perhaps, at the heart of every marriage.

Is it that we didn't marry the right sort of people? She understood his virtues, could even tolerate them when she was used to them, she told herself, but he kept going away. *I get used to being independent and not subject to anyone, and he comes back. It's subjecting myself to him, just like getting married all over again each time.* New York, her back against the glass and the gun raised. All the rooms and beds since then, a corner of the pillow in her mouth. *It's so hard to overcome my mental and physical rebellion because he leaves me absolutely cold, physically. And I can't let him know.* There it was, *brutal*: her chill at his touch. She turned to him anyway, most of the time. *She still obeys.* How could he not have known?

To her mother in letters, in her journal, a torrent of words. At home, silence. Muckie came back from tennis to find him still sitting over his films, blinds drawn and the lights off. She was light as a feather, young, childless.

She had been invited to play in the Box cabaret show. Rehearsals would put her smooth cheek by any number of jowls. *A couple of duets with ukuleles,*

and a playlet—comic, with songs. Muckie, of course, as ingénue. For Mandy, in the letter's margin, and for me, a line drawing of her dress—*white organdy, long tight bodice, little white buttons, round collar and long, dark blue ribbon.* He imagined himself watching another man croon love songs to his wife. I've got a man crazy for me.

The dark hid his face from her. Impatient, she clattered her racket down on the table, startling him, startling a shadow from a dark corner of the bookshelf—a small bat, fluttered by the noise, hazarding its ribbed wings around her backlit halo of hair. She screamed and slapped at the movement around her head.

Brutus leapt from his chair, grabbed her tennis racket, and beat at the fluttering darkness. When the bat lay on the floor at her feet, he took her into his arms and held her to him, kissing her hair where it was damp at her hairline.

If we could only live together permanently, I could submerge all my interests and abilities and live entirely his way and so I shall sometime. But not yet.

Why not imagine a different fate for them? Why can't I write a love story, two people bound across time and space by words that might be burning, here, on my page, if they hadn't burnt out already? Another granddaughter might have invented this for them, but not I. Submit. Subject. With all my liberties, I can't change their story, like their bodies both mine and not mine; I can only imagine it. I am looking to it to explain I don't even know what. I am still over the ocean, in my lengthening night, heading their way: the man packing for another adventure, full of wild water, snakes, and poison arrows; the girl, left alone with her flirtations and in just as much danger, nearing the brink.

Katharine Coles is a Professor at the University of Utah and the author of five collections of poems. She has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, and the Guggenheim Foundation. Her work has been translated into German and Spanish and is currently being translated into Italian.

David Blair

Boston Night Hospital

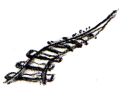
This life is a hospital…
—Baudelaire

Things in general are used and useful,
permanently distressed. The ER doctor
wears red denim pants,
a Mickey Mouse shirt,
scuffed clogs.
She is not playing doctor
at Children's Hospital.
There is a patina of spirit
on the gurneys, empty wheelchairs,
the metals of industrial
health gleaming,
the lid to the tongue depressors,
the silver of the stethoscope.
The mattresses
on the exam rooms
in the ER are permanently
distressed, used, useful.
They dip down
like couches in rec rooms.
The ice gleams on top
of the snow at every corner
where lights change
and no cars or people come.
The linoleum on the edge of the cabinet,
the edge of the sink,
cracked, worn. The waters

of time run over these things
and people and the old bars
around the theaters downtown.
And some things are kept in cases
for emergencies.
On the back of the doctor's neck,
she has a red birthmark
in her brown hair.
Let's face it. I like doctors.
They are a sturdy lot,
eat plenty of beans and rice,
eat plenty of leafy vegetables.
They mix their Omega 3
with their Omega 6 fats
and keep them in the right places.
There is a really husky grey guy
across the hall,
sitting on the edge of the bed
where his tiny daughter sits.
He is gotten up like a NASCAR driver
and like an ancient rap star,
and he is not unflappable
and neither is she. As we checked in,
we passed an old lady bleak
with three kids in pajamas,
and she and the kids
all wore surgical masks.
Why think of neo-lithic sunspots
if you can't even see hands
with latex gloves at midnight?
On the way in and out,
there is a curving drive
of space carved in concrete
out of concrete, a whirlpool basin
attached to the sunken limestone
facades of the twenties,

the earlier dormers, the mansards.
The hospital has accumulated
in the darkness between entrances
the wheelchairs and carts like ice,
more than needed all at once,
padded with what appears
to be in the family of green leather.

David Blair is a poet who lives in Somerville, Massachusetts. He is the author of *Ascension Days* (Del Sol Press, 2007), and two books of poetry set for publication in 2016, *Arsonville* (New Issues Poetry & Prose) and *Friends with Dogs* (Sheep Meadow Press).



Linda Gregerson

Epithalamion

For Susan and George

The beautiful geometry the trees become
each winter here
is beginning to blur at the edges a bit

and the robin we think
must be a little deranged has for the third time
in as many years

returned from wherever she goes for sun and
resumed
her attacks on the window. She's at it every

day, feet first,
as though to scatter an enemy host
or seize

some last essential. And on the theory she's been
deceived
by the visual field, we've tried removing the

blinds, the screen,
and once in desperation taping a page of the New
York Times

to the glass. No luck. She is relentless as
the warming earth.
Sweet lake, abide our lingering here.

The four-
footed creature who year after year leaves
a wreckage

of yolk-smeared shell beneath the weeping
larch where year
after year our robin restores her nest

must come
by night. *Sweet lake*. He too has his work
in the world, or so

I've tried to think. The window refuses to
moralize.
The joy that has been untouched by grief

is precious
and protectionless. The joy we choose
when grief

has had its way with us—*Sweet lake,*
abide—
is rarer still. And shared.

Linda Gregerson is a Renaissance scholar, classically trained actor, and devotee of the sciences. She is the author of six collections of poetry: *Prodigal: New and Selected Poems, 1976 to 2014* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, September 2015); *The Selvage* (2012); *The Woman Who Died in Her Sleep*, a finalist for the Lenore Marshall Prize and The Poets Prize; *Waterborne*, winner of the 2003 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award; and *Magnetic North*, a finalist for a finalist for the 2007 National Book Award. Gregerson's poems have appeared in *The New Yorker, The Atlantic Monthly*, *Poetry*, *Granta*, *The Paris Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Best American Poetry*, and many other journals and anthologies. She is also the author of two volumes of criticism, including *Negative Capability: Contemporary American Poetry.*

Christopher Howell

The Simple Operation

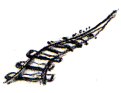
I.

The incision was not precise.
Some of the horses escaped
their riders, paddocks, and barns
in the last blaze
of summer flowers the young
girls had tucked away
like secrets.
It was almost nothing, that condition
and no one but the surgeon knowing it
with his gloved fingertips.
It was almost everything
left when the dreaming turned
as if to question something the King's
fool had whispered, just as the tall
trees whisper, not meaning to.
And when they removed
the rest of him, the sighing
remained, a dark blue
singe
as if shadows of the horses and forgotten friends,
a currency, had come into his lake-like eyes
and outside it was snowing.

II.

The universe opens its enormous mouth
and the world enters, one life at a time.

Yet something endures and we
are its metaphor. Broken, repaired
and filled with love
we rise again. These are our last words
to each other as the gurney disappears
down the hall.



Beyond Theology the Soul

walks out into morning's mists and roses
and huge dreaming sycamores
and slips a robe of leaves over its boney shoulders, as if to trade

some of its solitude for a little warmth, a little bit of the old earth
that has forgotten it.
When a fire truck rushes by on the way to a catastrophe, the soul bows

and enters the useless dance of sympathy, remembering Rome, Chicago,
the great blaze at Herculaneum.
When small birds mistake it for a tree, it makes the exhausted north wind
sound

and takes them in and feeds them those tiny seeds the dry leaves have
hoarded
all winter in their broken skin
as though they were children, their faces peering into the snow from dark
windows

as the moon goes by and the clouds pass like centuries of houses and roads
and great armies whose souls are dented rust
and who, therefore, brim with sorrows and have only themselves to blame.

Crickets and katydids carve in air the soul's unlisted number and the shapes
it might, in a rush of joy, assume,
paying forward what the bent coin of flesh cannot afford to know: we are
the guest

within us, always, that we be not without habitude or solace, that we be not
only what we have done and failed to do.

Elegy for Uncle Glen

I ask the spider
how I might mourn you now
or speak out some blessing
for the old sake of your soul.
How does a spider pray
with all those legs, those eyes
watching? Before I knew you
were dead, I was green with answers
or I was the fog, stalking up hill
from the bay and the docks you worked at
forty years, and had no need
for certitudes—though I supposed I knew
all the keys and windows
and cable cars rattling toward the obvious
truth: work wears us down to shiny
thread that drifts among the benches,
bent struts and saffron, all that might be
left of the days.
If I prayed, what god would believe in you, anyway,
as I did, or as the spider,
climbing an old rose in the trash,
surely must
with so many knees to go down upon
and no soul, old soul, to claim this sorrow
as its own.

Christopher Howell's most recent of his ten full-length collections of poems are *Gaze* (Milkweed Editions, 2012), and *Dreamless and Possible: poems New & Selected* (University of Washington Press, 2010). He has received two National Endowment Fellowships, fellowships from the Oregon Arts Commission and the Washington Artist Trust, and three Pushcart Prizes. In 2006 he was awarded the Stanley W. Lindberg Award for Editorial Excellence in recognition of this long service.

Tim Payne

Coming Upon a Ruined Elevator

Stuck out like a rotten tooth in this junkyard
adjacent to full-throated pastureland,
what calling, what power could have held you
from going up as you were meant to,
lifted by swallows undressing pecan trees
or suspended, god's forgotten yo-yo
spun at lightspeed through the stars?

Something smaller than fate dropped
you here, fuses spilt like dead beetles,
doors smirking in observance
of the rust in all things. I've asked the earth
many times, held a pebble to my ear
and picked out little tunes. All I receive
is a pulse I could believe
isn't mine. It should've been easy
to forget the body, physic-heavy,
a lifetime of bumping into things.

Perhaps time ends and leaves us
to hillsides thronging sound all around.
Or we go on, a continuous moment, our bodies
budding totems, dates and names inscribed
for good measure. Can it ever be more
than this light, light that is, was,
and will forever be movement, obvious
as the great, green world we're both welded to?

The Radium Girls

—Orange, New Jersey, 1917

Going on this way takes a special blindness—
radium tongued from a paintbrush, women
dying to mark time, lends life to the lifeless

hours woven in lines. Every contrivance
built about the same, as per tradition.
Going on this way takes a special blindness.

Glowing in dark, their nails, their teeth, would frighten
out late at night or early in kitchens,
yet every day, in its way, still seemed lifeless.

Even then some girls complained of a lightness,
the great pressure from sounds, and in their ignorance,
had no choice but to die, struck with such blindness.

Those doctors well knew it wasn't a virus,
but kept quiet what should be a given:
mouthing in time will leave one feeling lifeless.

Unless one might sharpen grief to a kindness,
the scores of women wasted, bed-stricken,
going on this way, *this* way, seems a special blindness
to what words can do, or can't, for the lifeless.

To what words can do, or can't, for the lifeless,
I go on with this special brand of blindness

like I'd ever known a woman stricken
with her body, the death of which a kindness

might mollify, but until such time: life, less
and less life, and above all less given
to feed that furnace of a virus

we grope into with our *oh-so-special* blindness.
Call it a poem. Call it ignorance.
Call it some uneven lightness

to do little more than make us less lifeless.
When I think of my mother, I think of a kitchen
and I'm goddamn frightened

by so much of my blindness.

Tim Payne is currently working on his MFA at the University of Alabama. His wife just gave birth to their first child. Sleep is but a memory.

Brigitte Byrd

Escapism

After Leo convinces you to join in the Saturday night fever,
you ignore your antisocial dispositions, venture outside your den,
pluck your clinging recluse tag away,

throw it to the bottom of your vinyl purse (face down),
bury your hostility under a thick layer of rouge velour.
You barhop, the tag shakes, red fades from your lips.

Half-numb dormouse cast amidst a myriad of springy rabbits,
you stick your hand into the purse, dig for milky lipstick, grab the tag instead,
unable to resist its magnetic charm. Adieu music, drinks, and bunnies.

Muffled up in faux fur, you dash through empty steel barstools,
followed by a zoologist zapped out of context like a quote.
Isn't he programmed to handle animals in the wild?

He does not trail you for your fur. His study focuses on contact.
He asks for trouble. You throw all your explosive salts at him.
When he mistakes your repartee for a red fox's yap, you yip

and howl like a frantic coyote, go for his throat, right below the jaw,
behind the ear. It is not pretty: bloodshot eyes, bruises on the nose.
A questionable enquiry concludes with a clear kick in the teeth.

~ ~ ~

When Leo takes you to decadent parties in rumorosa Roma,
you let your peroxided mane down, kick your pumps toward la luna,
roll your hips to the rumbling drums of a raging rhumba,

and shout Il sacerdote spruzza acqua sul bambino!
to mesmerized American tourists in baseball caps and sneakers
anchored by the Trevi fountain like feverish paparazzi

because that's the only Italian sentence you know by heart
besides la signora è bella, which sounds just plain un-original.
With a shuffle of imaginary dark silk skirts, you drive away

through Via di Santa Maria in Via with Leo, or Marcello.
Roma è piena di gatti. Se cominciamo…Vieni qui!
But you're no Sylvia, no Anita Ekberg. Tutti è tanto difficile,

especially since no one understands why you insist
on repeating the priest sprinkles water on the child
while rolling your hips to a rombosità rhumba,

dressed like an American tourist with complete khaki shorts
and newsboy cap in the middle of the Trevi fountain,
channeling la dolce vita because Rome is full of cats.

~ ~ ~

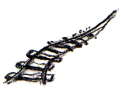
Hungry for adventure, power, and revenge, you want to flee Leo,
like a daring swashbuckler, a bloodthirsty rascal, a wicked rogue of the sea
until you see John at the Fisherman Wharf, or is it in Charleston, in
Nassau?

Outcast like you and down on his luck, his long unkempt locks smell
of sea spray under the ochre turban. You dress like a man in checkered shirt,
yellow calico trousers with bone buttons, buckled leather shoes on your
bare feet.

You tie a linen cravat around your sweaty neck. A bold gesture.
You share secrets with Mary Read and Calico Jack, split aboard a sloop,
turn into the fiercest ruffian, and ravage the sea, no more than a year.

~ ~ ~

Your dolce vita ends aboard a frayed train to the South,
after John crashed your fleeting vessel in the middle of the Mississippi Delta,
and you get caught in a cotton field. This time, you too plead your belly.



The First Step

On Global Wind Day, you open the windows, sit in the house with Tolstoy and Flaubert. The hum of a land mower floats in the background. A fickle breeze tickles the trees, yielding a hint of sweet-smelling magnolia scent on the way. No sheer drapes rippling with the gust. No fluid camera work to evoke a pensive French woman on a yellow chair, toes glued to a napping grey dog's paw pads. You live in America, land of the blinds, where a vicious sun assaults the South pushing people to live in the dark and sing their warbling trill like horned larks in flight.

You read "Ours is not a Christianity of fasting and privations, but of beefsteaks."

You are lost in Russian thoughts when strings of barks drag you out of the steppe into the bedroom where Flaubert stands on the bed to deliver his best depiction of the pointing stance. A young buck rests by the window, worn out after a long chase through the woods (or sparring), swollen eyes, broken antler weeping fluid, botflies looping around the torn velvet, above the pedicle. You want this failed deer to spring back up and flash his white tail at you while swerving around the hedges. Instead, he rises up slowly, staggers away to the road, sore feet tapping against melting asphalt, instinct eclipsed by the radiance of his last day.

French-American poet Brigitte Byrd is the author of three poetry books, most recently *Song of a Living Room* (Ahsahta Press). Her newest poems are featured in *The Laurel Review*, *Sentence*, and *the North American Review*. She is also an editorial reviewer for *Confluence: The Journal of Graduate Liberal Studies*. She teaches Creative Writing at Clayton State University where she is a Professor of English. http://www.brigittebyrd.com

Chad Sweeney

Cause

A windmill is most
when still

because it might
begin at any moment
to turn,

just as I sit
my back to what I love most

so a wind may come over

come over the honeysuckle and wire
to fill this one sentence

with motion,

the deer for weeks
bounding over the highway

until there is no highway.

Poem

Praise be the resounding *maybe*,
its nets turning in milk
misting on the wedding
from an Austrian chandelier.

Praise to the gap
between my teeth
its narrow window
sunflies on the sill,

though your scooter may be stolen
this Friday from church. Though
the election may slide off the end
of the dock, the flood water carry it

who knows where. Praise to colors
the dead wear, or don't wear
on promenade among the soldiers. A diamond
is skipping

across sheets of ice
going on forever toward its asymptotes
your voice
indiscernible in the white pause.

The Triangle

During high school geometry
I practiced holding my breath
one minute, two minutes,

working deeper into will power
until somewhere past three minutes
I passed out and my forehead hit the desk.

I had been staring at a chalk triangle,
rendered white by Mr. Gore,
severely,

like an ultimatum against doubt,
and in the long dark that followed
the triangle burned white

an iridescent frame followed
my eyes,
all the years of my life

even now a scar of light
surrounds your face,
this page,

the rainswept distances over Arles
and if I don't seem to be
listening to you it's probably

the triangle—it's
astonishing and beautiful and means
nothing—

except, perhaps, that accident
is part of the shape of things,
the mother we've been looking for.

Chad Sweeney is the author of five books of poetry and two books of translation, including *White Martini of the Apocalypse* (Marick Press); *Parable of Hide and Seek* (Alice James Books), and *Wolf's Milk: Lost Notebooks of Juan Sweeney* (Forklift Books, bilingual English/Spanish). His poems have appeared widely, including in *Best American Poetry*, *The Pushcart Prize Anthology*, *American Poetry Review*, and *The Writers Almanac*. His translation of the Selected Poems of contemporary Iranian poet H.E. Sayeh appeared in 2011 from White Pine Press, and his translation of Pablo Neruda's final book *The Call to Destroy Nixon* is forthcoming from Marick Press. While working with at-risk youth in San Francisco, he edited the City Lights anthology *Days I Moved Through Ordinary Sounds*. He teaches poetry in the MFA program at California State University San Bernardino where he edits *Ghost Town Literary Journal*.

D.J. Thielke

Ricky Danasi, Then the World

Every night you lie in bed and consider how to save your son from the world. You worry about the normal things, the things every parent worries about: rap lyrics and R-rated movies. Microwaves and lawnmowers. Pesticides. But you can do nothing about these. These leave you feeling hopeless and incapable, studying the granulated ceiling over your bed as though the answer were written there in Braille, if only you could read it.

You've decided what you can do is drive over to Livingston Middle School and seduce that little shit, Ricky Danasi.

You already tried talking to his mother on the phone but that didn't help. She had listened carefully, in a tired silence, and when you were done she had told you to hang on a sec. She had called for Ricky, her voice screeching out the "e" at the end. There was some fumbling, and maybe she put her palm over the receiver but it didn't work and you could hear her screaming at him. Screaming that he embarrassed her, the little shit, and that he might as well drop out now if he's just going to spend his time at school beating up little boys. When she returned to the phone, she told you it wouldn't happen again. You thanked her and hung up. But it had happened again. It had happened again and it had gotten worse. You don't want to call her a second time. You don't know what else to do. You don't think you're morally above an ambiguous kidnapping scenario.

Every night you lie in bed and consider how to save your son from the world. You worry about the normal things, the things every parent worries about: rap lyrics and R-rated movies. Microwaves and lawnmowers. Pesticides. But you can do nothing about these.

First, you'll pick up your son after school and take him home so he won't

have to see anything. You'll tell him you have to run some errands and he won't complain when you plop him in front of the TV. You'll drive back to Livingston, drumming the steering wheel and playing music too loud. You'll pull your harmless, rusty old mini van up next to Ricky and turn on the June Cleaver—Hey, honey, I know your mom, is she working late? Hop in, sweetie!

But you don't expect that will work. Ricky is an eighth grader who should be a ninth grader, who probably started growing chest hair at age nine. He'll probably laugh at you, right then and there, and turn back to the school in an unsupervised slouch.

When your harmless soccer mom act fails, you plan to go vamp. You remember how. You're not that old. You'll flutter your lashes and bite some color into your lips. You'll pull your Ann Taylor blouse lower in the front to display the cleavage no middle schooler can compete with. You'll roll down your window, look at Ricky over the rim of your sunglasses, let your smile spread slow and wet across your teeth. When you offer a ride, you'll let your voice purr. He's probably seen plenty of porn. He'll know what's supposed to come next.

When your harmless soccer mom act fails, you plan to go vamp. You remember how. You're not that old. You'll flutter your lashes and bite some color into your lips. You'll pull your Ann Taylor blouse lower in the front...

He'll saunter around the front of the car, grinning at you through the frosting of splattered bugs on your windshield. He'll heft himself into the passenger side, his flaccid, nearly empty backpack collapsing between his feet. You'll put the car in drive, pretending not to notice his eyes creeping up your arm and latching, like a ringworm, onto your bra strap.

You'll pull away from the brick middle school and turn up the music. You'll drive past the after-school crowd where they sit and wait, draping the benches with elbows and knees, khakis and polo shirts, acne and braces. You'll drive past the soccer field where the prepubescent athletes run in endless, huffing laps. He'll tell a joke and you'll laugh. He'll lean back, maybe prop his hands behind his head, an attempt at adult nonchalance.

The little shit.

This is the face behind your son's nightmares. His hair is cropped too close to his scalp, a scab of almost bald skin behind his ear. He has too much eyebrow and too little chin. His squinty little shit eyes are always crusty and unclean at the corners. There's almost no color in those eyes, the irises as flat and uniformly brown as mud.

You'll drive further up the road. The elementary school will come in sight, squatter than the middle school and made from cream-colored cement. The long black parking lot will stretch out before you. The color will be disappearing in the sunset. Soon the entire surface will be less a solid black and more of an insubstantial black—the black of a void. You'll be carrying Ricky Danasi over open space, space that wants to suck and swallow him through the underbelly of your humming van.

He'll have caught on by then that you're not taking him home, not right away, but he won't say anything. The magnitude of the possibility will hold him in a clenched silence. His thoughts will be as obvious as a cartoon speech bubble floating near his almost bald head—fucking Danny Wilson's mom. The very word—fuck—will quiver down his bones like a sharp note striking a tuning fork. You do not think he's done anything like it yet, though maybe he flatters himself that he has gotten close. You do not worry that he will not want it. In under ten minutes you could make Ricky Danasi king of the locker room. You could cement his popularity as unchallengeable through the entirety of his high school years. Every sniveling prepubescent who just discovered masturbation would look at him with envy. He would forever be the guy who fucked Danny Wilson's mom.

You'll lean back and give a chesty sigh. The engine will tick softly as it cools, the hum of the cicadas reverberating under and around you. You'll turn to face him but immediately have to look away.

You'll be surprised that this thrills you a little. So you won't think about it.

You'll reach the end of the black top and keep going, the van rocking back and forth as it rolls over the unpaved dirt track leading to the field behind the school. To one side, the jungle gym will stand like a leggy insect outlined by the retreating orange and pink. The perimeter of trees will be a

gelatinous barrier of shadow thickening into darker shadow, each leaf fading from green to some color indistinguishable. You'll pull up under an elm. The shadows will splatter across the hood of your van, the windshield, your lap.

You'll turn off the car and let the music die.

Let's sit here for awhile, you'll say.

You'll lean back and give a chesty sigh. The engine will tick softly as it cools, the hum of the cicadas reverberating under and around you. You'll turn to face him but immediately have to look away. His face will be uplifted and pleading, slippery with hope, a pitiable sort of lust. Your gaze will slide right off.

You might feel a little tired. You might think that this is exactly the sort of thing you've done ten thousand times with men no worse than Ricky, just older versions of him. You'll try to remember your middle school boyfriend, but find that he's been reduced to a jean jacket and a gap between his front teeth. You'll try to remember Danny's father, but find that he's been reduced to an emotion, nothing but the surge of anger that still makes your ears ring. You'll try to remember your date last Friday, and the Friday before. You'll string together an eon of Fridays, each face blurring into the next, each kiss identically wet. You'll wonder at the mess of it all. You'll wonder how your life got this far off track.

But you'll remember your light through it all—Danny, your son—your son who you have to save from the world.

Remembering this, you'll say, Do you know my son?

Your son? he'll say. Teenage boys always echo.

You won't nod or repeat yourself. You'll make it more uncomfortable by waiting.

Yeah, I guess, he'll say. And because that isn't unspecific and vague enough, he'll add with a mutter: I mean, maybe. Kind of.

You'll sit and let the cicadas scream.

Danny Wilson, you'll prompt after a moment.

OK, he'll say.

Danny's a sixth grader, you'll say.

Oh, yeah, he'll say.

Are you a bully, Ricky? you'll ask. It'll be best to come out with it like this—blunt, hard-edged, a little bullying yourself. The very truth of the word will land on his face and sting like a smack. He'll be staggering inside his little shit brain.

I don't think so, he'll say eventually.

You don't think so?

I mean. Not really. No.

You'll be ready for this answer but it will disgust you just the same. There is nothing quite as low as hypocrisy, you'll think. At least you know who you are. At least you can call yourself what you are—and you do, sometimes, at night, call yourself those names—failure, bitch, slut. At least you know these things about yourself. There is nothing quite as low as not knowing.

Maybe you'll try to stay calm. Maybe you'll try to stay vampy, and lead him into a promise of protecting your son by falsely promising him something in return. But you don't think you'll be able to do this. The hopelessness against the rest of the world will be too heavy. You will be too angry. You will not be able to stay calm.

Sentences will spurt out of you, and you do not think you'll be able to stop it. What you say will not be particularly meaningful, at least not to Ricky, but the act of gagging it all up will be horrific to witness and hold him entranced.

You'll tell him about holding Danny in your lap when he comes home from school with a bloody nose, pressing a wad of toilet paper into his nostrils as his tearful little snorts press back against your fingertips. About finding the red scrapes down his shins from where Ricky had sent him sprawling on the gravel, pinned him down and spit in his face. How the skin tore off in accordion-crimped shavings under the iodine cotton ball, and though you could bandage his knees, you could not lift the taste of Ricky's spit off your son's tongue. You'll tell him about how Danny had tried to hide the puffy swelling under his eye after you called Ricky's mom. How you caught him standing on a kitchen chair in front of the freezer, icing his cheek with a pack of frozen green beans. How he lied when you asked what happened and said he tripped. How you could not decide which was sadder: that your little boy knew how to ice swelling because of how many times Ricky has given him swollen parts, or that your son no longer trusted you to ice them for him.

You'll tell Ricky that your son's hands shake uncontrollably on the way to school each morning and, when you get there, he begs you to let him wait in the van until the bell rings. You'll tell Ricky that your son won't sleep without double-checking every lock on the house and searching the inside of his closet. That he is scared of hurricanes and fires and earthquakes because these cannot be stopped by locks. That sometimes he still wets the bed.

You'll tell Ricky that you cannot save your son from his pollen allergy or take away his tension headaches. You cannot make him three

inches taller or a better baseball player or more popular. You cannot make his father come back; you cannot, apparently, even find him a decent substitution. And though you have tried, you cannot take away the shyness that makes him such an easy target for bullies.

Bullies like Ricky.

You cannot change these things, you'll say, but you can stop Ricky.

You will stop Ricky, you'll say.

You'll truly believe this, and you'll turn to him to make sure he's hearing you. The animalism bottled in your maternal body, your feminine body, your body separated from him only by the stick shift, will radiate down on him. He will cower closer to the window.

You *will* stop, you'll say again, impressing on him the desperation and rage behind that will.

The animalism bottled in your maternal body, your feminine body, your body separated from him only by the stick shift, will radiate down on him.

Ricky will be close to tears at this point. Not crying, exactly, but looking out his window and trying not to cry. His chest will tense around each breath, the little boy in him wedged against his vocal cords.

You'll remember what his mother had been like on the other side of the phone—her tired voice, her patience worn thin and disintegrating like a used tissue. You'll realize you don't know anything about Ricky's father—if he's there or not, and how cruel either of those situations could be.

You'll suddenly want to embrace him, because Ricky has made saving Danny all the more important. Your son could grow up into a Ricky. Your son could digest the lessons in cruelty he receives and rechannel them when he's Ricky's age, when he has Ricky's height and weight, Ricky's strength and anger.

You'll want to embrace Ricky, this tarot card version of your son, and maybe you will. Maybe the boy smell of him will rise from the crenulations in the passenger's side upholstery. Maybe the boy taste of him will bead on your upper lip. Maybe the boy skin on him, smooth and freckled from wrist to t-shirt sleeve, will rub a nerve in you. Maybe, for a moment, you'll wrap your arms around him. Maybe you'll hold him.

But he is not your son—you'll remember, you'll withdraw. He is not your son, and you have no obligation to save him from the world.

Awhile later, you'll drive Ricky home. He'll get out without saying anything, but get out slowly, deliberately, resentfully. He'll drag his bag and fumble with the car door to prove that he doesn't have to get out, you don't scare him. He'll saunter up to his porch and use his shoulder to ram open the door. He'll disappear without a backward glance.

You'll feel good. You'll go home and kiss Danny on the crown of his head where he sits watching cartoons. Then you'll pull him back from the TV because he's too close to the screen and it could damage his eyes. You'll make his favorite dinner. You'll make his favorite dessert. You'll make him laugh, for the first time in God knows how long.

You'll feel good; you'll feel like a real mother.

It'll only be later, when you're lying in bed, thinking of ways to save your son from the world, that the hopelessness will set in again. You'll realize Ricky Danasi will go to school the next day having spent a little over an hour parked with Danny Wilson's mom. Parked with Danny Wilson's mom—Danny Wilson, the sixth grader, who's scared of the dark and still wets the bed.

D.J. Thielke's stories have appeared or are forthcoming in *Arts&Letters, The Cincinnati Review, Indiana Review, Mid-American Review, Bat City Review*, and *Crazyhorse*, among others. She holds an MFA from Vanderbilt University, and has served as the 2013-2014 James C. McCreight Fiction Fellow at the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing, the inaugural fall 2014 Stone Court Writer-in-Residence, and is currently the 2015-2016 O'Connor Fellow in Fiction at Colgate University.

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Simona Chitescu Weik

The Patron Saint of Wolves, My Countrymen

There was a boy who lived in the apartment downstairs and he was blind. We could hear him counting the steps past our apartment, walking as if he was holding on to invisible ropes. He never fell or missed a step, so precise in his humming and counting. Some people talked about raising money to send him to a specialist, but it was the kind of talk that made them feel in charge of their destiny, though their dwindling rations of sugar and oil said otherwise. When I was in the elevator for those few horrific minutes with the man who promised to do terrible things to me, I heard his humming, and I counted the floors with him, up to seven where the man got off, back down to third, where I burst out of the elevator and yelled, "Dimitri, can I take the stairs with you?" He didn't answer, because according to the neighbors he had been raised by wolves. But I knew better, I knew men raised by wolves were brave men, men who held their coat over you to shield you from the rain, who snuck a warm loaf of bread into your school bag, waving you away saying, "There are more of you than there are of me." People say St. Andrew is the patron saint of wolves because he protected his fellow men from them, but in a library book with a broken spine, I once saw an icon of him with a wolf on his right and one on his left, his hands resting benevolently on their head. I think he knew that wolves were more humane than other species, that they retract their teeth when they corral their young.

Simona Chitescu Weik is a poet, originally from Romania, now living in Atlanta, Georgia, and working towards a PhD in Creative Writing at Georgia State University. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in several print and online publications, including *The Adirondack Review, Smartish Pace,* and *Negative Capabilities: An Anthology of Georgia Poets,* among others.

Clifford Parody

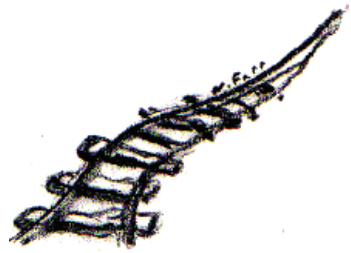
In the end there is nothing.

You leave behind your voice,
echoing through the air conditioner,
your skin cells resting on books
and bookshelves, the tops of photos framed,
on drawings and the drafting table; your skin
on our hands, our tongues, suspended in our lungs,
propelled by footsteps and fan blades.

And then there are the boxes and the bags,
donations and an attic full of "we can't just
throw it out." Bedrooms becoming guest rooms,
with chairs tucked under desks as though never
upturned in the first stage of the "process."

The process. It's all a process:
It's keeping the door shut
but peeking; it's two refrigerators
full of kind words and casseroles;
it's teaching us how to know gravity,
how to remain thirsty while drowning,
how to ignore the sky
when he calls to say we're falling—perspective.

Perspective like that uncle's shattered elbow
mended crooked, prescribed a briefcase full of rocks;
like a piss stain on the carpet of a house without a dog;
like the Blizzard Blue Crayola in the 72 crayon box;
like a syrup flood while sleeping;
like the ants it leaves behind.



Clifford Parody holds an MFA from the University of North Carolina Greensboro and currently lives in Lakeland, Florida, where he writes for the local newspaper, runs a small record label called Swan City Sounds, and hangs out with his wife, daughter and dog. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Forklift, Ohio*, *Outlet Magazine*, *Neon Magazine UK*, *Backlash Journal* and *The Greensboro Review*, where he was awarded the 2015 Amon Liner Poetry Award. He is also the recipient of the 2015 Noel Callow Award from the Academy of American Poets.

Bruce Beasley

Speech for a Speed Date

Do you enjoy the cling of black-
speckle cigarette butt to hot
tallow, spent to spent, as we
might come to be? Do your hobbies include cultivating
what seems to perish then resumes:
two ash-piles' synchronous
quench-and-flamesplurge? You have, I've heard, a light
fear of the dark. Do you sing along in bursts
to outsputterings, like these
burnt-edged questions? Do you listen, like me, unasleep,
to your laptop's love-life, the muted
alarums of urgent messages that come
from other time zones, through your servers,
pseudonymous, autonomic, all night long?

Sanctus

Some weeks I wake up feeling, Lord, like
the bird-dropping spider, camouflaged
as runnels of fresh birdshit on a leaf, spangle-
glisten and black-and-chalk

dimples down the vein. All the birds
think it's their own crap and won't come near.
But butterflies, "wont to settle

on the evacuations," light
right into the smear-white of its web, just
where and as it wants them to be.

I see through You, Lord,
as if You were not there.
I see through *You*, as You must see
me, like shit

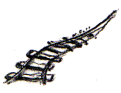
that isn't what it seems.
I'm wont to settle on these evacuations,
to make a praise song of how the light
deceives us,

what shit we find
ourselves
not to be. We sing

Sanctus where we can. Maker
of all things
seen, unseen

visibilium omnium et invisibilium,
let me believe that things aren't like
their semblances.
Order ≠ ordure,

though the bird-dropping spider resembles,
in every way the human eye can evaluate,
both order and ordure from on high.



Credo

That which is indubious
has already been negotiated.
The Period for Comments is now closed.

—I am Party to the Memorandum
of Understanding of All Things, its
codicils and paragraphs of Agreement to Agree,
yet much in it remains to me obscure.

You must first accept the Conditions and the Terms.

—I clicked the little box marked I AGREE,
unable otherwise to get
onto any further screen;
conceding, with many hesitations, to the Conditions;
at odds, though, with the very notion
of prearranged and arbitrary
limitations to the Term.

The term Term *refers, linguistically,*
to any mass of words
considered as the members of an utterance.
See the Glossary that prefaces the Preamble.

— "Members of an Utterance"? Is that what we are

when we merge with an unenumerated We
to chant, in slightly out-of-synch
and interrupting unison
"By the power of the Holy Spirit was incarnate" or
"And His kingdom shall have no end," or—

Minus grievous errors
or omissions, adjustments
to the Understanding
shall be determined by the following formula,
and only during the next Arbitration:

$$A_i = Max\left[T_{j[i],k[i]} \times 1.06^* \times (1 + Min[g(Y_i),16] \times 0.0025) - S_i, 0\right] \times \frac{a \times TS}{\sum_{i=1}^{N} Max\left[T_{j[i],k[i]} \times 1.06^* \times (1 + Min[g(Y_i),16] \times 0.0025) - S_i, 0\right]}$$

See Appendix A

We accede

that the Maker of all Things
Visible and Invisible

is Itself opaque-
till-shone-through, so
temporarily unbeholdable: yet We
wait in joyful hope. We—
I—believe

in It as one born
blind might in the ice
crystals in a cirrus cloud, or
in the indigo strip of a rainbow
scrimming through a low-hung fog,

his optic nerve firing nothing
down its myelin sheath, like
mist scrimming that rainbow's
fogbow-white and almost-
vanished-already violet slice.

Bruce Beasley is a native of Macon, Georgia, and author of seven collections of poems, including *The Creation* (winner of the Ohio State University Book Award), *Summer Mystagogia* (selected by Charles Wright for the Colorado Prize in Poetry), *Lord Brain* (winner of the University of Georgia Press Contemporary Poetry Award), and most recently *The Corpse Flower: New and Selected Poems* (University of Washington Press, 2007) and *Theophobia* (BOA Editions, 2012). He has won three Pushcart Prizes and his work is included in *The Pushcart Book of Poetry: The Best Poems from the First Thirty Years of the Pushcart Prize*. He has won fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Artist Trust. He is a professor of English at Western Washington University.

Amy Bagwell

the lie and how we told it

the stars, yes.
searing and separate
and enough
until someone
says *constellation*
(to organize in order
to remember) until
someone says *why*
and *Fuck All*
the answer
comes in lines
crossing only one
kind of distance,
pressing flat
against our first
halfminute maybe
those coldfloor hours
from which you
still run. the truth
reads like a tshirt:
you can't look back
until you're past it
and here's the brink—
where we rush
the pictures
into albums
so we can tell
ourselves
what happened.

Amy Bagwell's poems are (or will be) in *Figdust* and the *Dusie Tuesday* poem series and the anthologies *Topograph* and *Boomtown*. She co-directs Wall Poems, a mural project bringing the work of North Carolina writers to exterior walls and public spaces. She lives in Charlotte and teaches at Central Piedmont Community College.

Niillas Holmberg

tree

We started dating in autumn
and even though my dog died
I was in love

three months later
a boy with head lice was born
Rimbaud, un poète maudit
and his haunting example
was to darken himself
in order to see

you clearly couldn't handle the smell of absinthe
and when the shotgun appeared in our bedroom
it was time to put him aside

I changed into an artisan of complacency
all desires I gasped inside
and what I exhaled was pure compassion
I judged attachment on a spring lake's ice

if love were a leaf and not a tree
one could swallow it whole
but instead I told you:
"The leaf of love does not exist"
and, oh, you hate Rimbaud

Old-fashioned

I won't say times change
my poems don't find their way
in thick woods
they stumble on ants' nests
and whole societies
crawl inside their pants

perhaps I'm old-fashioned
like the grey skis of my granddad
surefooted on uphill
and ever green on unbroken snow

old-fashioned
like the boasting old man
who sang about his daughter
oh, she's gorgeous
like a colour tv

Girls

Even the kids come together
curious to see if the rumours are true
do wrinkles really serve as eyelids
on the face of a veteran activist

the Tibetan poet spits on China
he doesn't have a home to dream in

me and Tashi
loitering around
and disregarding
our wrinkly future
we dream of girls

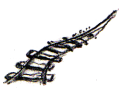
I travel home tomorrow
and will not see him again
when will you see your home, I ask
he winks to me as they walk past

Niillas Holmberg is a writer, musician and actor from Ohcejohka in Saamiland, Finland. He works in three languages: Nortern Saami, Finnish and English. He has published three collections of poetry, which have been translated into seven languages. He's been awarded multiple prizes from around the world for his work.

William Corbett

Green Horse

over Inglewood
Lucas points it out
Advertising a bar
The horse you rode in on
The horse you'd change in mid-air
Horse of a different color
Spring green once seen
In a pair of suede shoes
A horse right here, can do, can do



Scott Fitzgerald's Book

The stars in *Gatsby*
Are silver pepper.
I'm reading the novel again,
Fifth or sixth time,
My first in hardcover,
A jacketless first edition
Found on the shelves
Of this summer house
Age spots the cream pages.
In prep school the eyes
Of Dr. T. J. Eckleberg
We were studying
What makes men tick
If we didn't find the answer
In *Gatsby* our owl eyes
Found it in *Huckleberry Finn*
And answered questions on
The Doctor's eyes, the green light,
Was *Gatsby* great?
Promptly forgetting what
We'd written in our exam books
Like all innocent schoolboys.

William Corbett is a poet, memoirist and art writer who lives in Brooklyn, New York where he directs the small press Pressed Wafer. He has published books on the painters Philip Guston and Albert York, and edited the letters of the poet James Schuyler, *Just the Thing: Selected Letters of James Schuyler*. His most recent books of poetry are *Elegies for Michael Gizzi* (Kat Ran Press) and *The Whalen Poem* (Hanging Loose Press). In the fall, his book on the painter Sharon Horvath, *The Worlds of Sharon Horvath,* will appear from Pressed Wafer and Granary Books will publish his collaboration with the painter Rackstraw Downes, *I Rode with the Cossacks.*

Paige Sullivan

Dismantling the Scaffolding

—after Marie Howe

My car is stuck in the shop, and all this walking leaves blisters
on the soft parts of my arches,

and when I pass the complex just a block from my apartment,
there is pure, simple shock at the construction workers

finally hacking away at all the pipes, poles, and bolts, the scaffolding
that veiled those pricey condos and shop fronts

for so many months—us walking underneath it that first night. And how
not to remember such a detail, like a child's lost tooth,

the sort of thing that marks itself as special in the act of keeping,
the intent to preserve? Where in the country you are now,

I can't say, knowing only where you've been since you left—
Louisiana swamp, Texas cavern, Arizona desert.

The delicate arch of my spine, the view from the summit of each other:
things traded for a manifest destiny of meaning-searching,

what you called running toward, what I saw as running away,
but perhaps semantics matter little

when something is simply finished and dead, when memory
is embellished and colluded, when I celebrate

and mourn you constantly cracking your wrist, regripping your pen.
I'm finally able to see the shops for what they are,

houses of things we don't need: cigars, pedicures, high-end pet food.
Finally able to see my reflection in a front window,

somehow relieved at this picture of myself, my hair blowing
across my face, my backpack snug against me.

Paige Sullivan is currently an MFA candidate in Georgia State University's Creative Writing Program, where she is Poetry Editor of *New South*. Her poetry appears in or is forthcoming from *Mead, Sugared Water,* and *American Literary Review*. Her prose can be found in *Rain Taxi, Bluestem Magazine,* and *Epicure & Culture*.

Andrew Kaufman

Fleeing to Goma, Zaire, 1994

—for Alois

I saw many killed by the liberating army.
Our car got stuck. The axle broke at night.
I saw many killed by fleeing *Interahamwe*.

At roadblocks we paid all our money.
We left the car. We walked when it turned light.
I saw many being shot to death by the army.

We walked through killings from Kigali
to Gisenyi. Those getting killed did not fight.
I saw many murdered by fleeing *Interahamwe*.

Each night we heard screams and woke among bodies.
Some just ordered, *Go!* Some killed on sight.
I saw so many shot by the pursuing army.

My wife and four children were with me.
Old people, children who could not walk, died.
I saw many killed by crazed *Interahamwe*—

they had few guns so they used the machete.
Diarrhea. My oldest son died at my side.
I saw many killed by fleeing *Interahamwe*.
I saw many killed by the liberating army.

Andrew Kaufman's books include the *Cinnamon Bay Sonnets*, winner of the Center for Book Arts chapbook competition and *Earth's Ends*, winner of the Pearl Poetry Award. He has received a National Endowment for the Arts award. He lives in New York City and is currently completing a book of poems concerning the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

Christine Penko

Aubade

Our time together brief
light crowning the horizon
a coupling took place
I could have been more careful

Light crowning the horizon
I already knew our ending
There was no room for you, child
I'd taken that path before

I already knew our ending
I planned it in the half light
tilting through the window
the man I scarcely knew

I planned it in the half light
Easy enough in those days
I should have been more careful
Still, I shook upon the table

I should have been more careful
Still, I shook upon the table

Containment

Here we all sit in our earthly shipping container
filled with everything and one thing—
the one we try to name.
It's so bewildering.
That tree holding its tree-ness
in wide, flat leaves, that tree over there
bearing sharp, piney needles. That dog,
its dog-ness small as a rat,
the other, tall as a small pony.
Even our water comes flowing, frozen, steamed.

Here I sit on a container called Edwardian
modern chair, next to a form known as
dining table, trying to put my finger
on that one thing
while you, my son, sit on a bottom bunk
contained in a place called jail cell,
in a body called male, that one thing
holding us both together for now. And you,
in that part called head, and place called heart,
still free as water rising.

Christine Penko is the author of the 2015 poetry collection *Thunderbirds*—a memoir in poems. Her work has also been published in a variety of journals including *Slant*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Poet Lore* and *Poem* under the name Christine Kravetz. For the past fifteen years, Christine has taught poetry writing in public schools with the non-profit, California Poets in the Schools. Christine holds an MFA from Bennington College Writing Seminars. In a previous lifetime, she was an attorney in Los Angeles specializing in litigation on behalf of the disabled. She lives with her husband and granddaughter in Santa Barbara, California.

James Wyshynski

Exegesis on the Dead Fruit Fly in My Glass of Cabernet

Black dot in a red sea.
I can't spill it out: this was
the bottle's last glass.

Each time I put my finger
in the wine, the way desire
enters the world, the physics liquefy,

and the fly, who should be pinned
against the glass wall and my flesh,
escapes, leaves me looking

at a world that asks in small
but insistent waves:
what to make of this?

Are even fruit flies subject
to l'appel du vide? Silly
image of the fly nosing over

to dive into the other side.
If consciousness begins
in the quiver of subatomic strings,

when does its singing stop?
And: what care weighs this loss
by its stem, much less

than a sparrow or a strand
of hair? At the foot of an oak
I look out on, two robins

flutter their wings, pint-size
dervishes, twirling
in the dry leaves because

it's spring, because they hear
a distant, cellular trilling,
I drain the glass.

Ground Once Common

—Long Sands Beach, York, ME

"Look for smooth ones," she says, and unfolds
an old bed sheet that we anchor at each corner
with heapings of sand. I pry the ones I find,
releasing their stony shadows and balance
the load on my belly before spilling them
onto the sheet. With each trip, we stray
farther from our common ground until
I see her, straightening up at tide's edge,
the cuffs of my old jeans rolled up, her skin
between sneaker and denim the bleached
white of shells. What's left? I bring
the corners of the sheet together and sling
the sack on my back and we head toward the empty
boardwalk, the clack and slide muffled
in a cotton throat I've noosed with my own hands.

James Wyshynski's poems have appeared in in *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *River Styx*, *Interim*, *The Chattahoochee Review*, *Northeast Corridor* and others. He's a former editor of the *Black Warrior Review* and received his MFA from the University of Alabama. He currently is working on his book, *Romancing Akhmatova*, while living in Georgia.

Paul Christiansen

Cucumber

Born at the back of the throat,
cradled by roof, tongue and esophagus,
then a glottal hiccup and syllabic stutter,
a final tonsil shift before bursting out pursed lips.

Such a fantastic scramble of sounds,
bric-a-brac consonants and cooed vowels
wasted on a turgid water tube,
slobbery seed sleeve, cylinder of edible silence.

If history, that complacent seamstress,
had stitched a different definition to it,
we'd say *cucumber* to describe the way gulls
rise and roll atop ocean waves,
to define the purr of a Harley idling
inside a cul-de-sac at three a.m.,
to articulate the sweet musk that escapes
a camping tent unpacked for the first time in years.

We'd *cucumber* stones across serene lakes,
pluck harp strings *cucumberly*,
study Genghis Kahn's campaigns
against the Kingdom of *Cucumber*.

Oh, all *cucumber* might mean
if not for the homely cucumber—
a blimp or a butterfly,
a tiny, pink, prairie-spritzing flower
that blooms like a child's fist
opened by sleep.

In the Pelagic Zone

Jellyfish, translucent mushroom caps
trailing minatory chandelier strings.

They hiccup stroke,
pulse the tide with skin undulating

the porous border between self and sea,
asleep and waking, alive and dead.

What human wouldn't rather be
a non-polyp Cnidarian?

The days ahead of me stacked with decisions
like the stratified layers of a long dried-up sea.

What to do, to want, to fear, to make
of my life, I have no idea.

But the jellyfish know.
Certain in their abyssopelagic meanderings,

the way a parachute fills with air,
they've mastered the art of desire.

Each in Its Own Way

My father is a type of flower that once adorned the coronation alters
of kings, but now
blooms in grocery store corsages purchased for junior proms.

His father was a trade expedition that missed the trailhead and was
forced to scramble
across mountains and marshlands, its cargo rotting en-route.

A coastal power plant, my father's mother spills heat into shallow
waters, luring manatees
off their normal migration routes.

My mother is a metropolis with a confusing trash collection schedule,
streets overrun
with raccoons tearing into swollen garbage bags at dusk.

Her mother was a Salvation Army collection bucket filled with
buttons and bits of foreign
currency.

My maternal grandfather is a kitchen refrigerator covered in expired
dry cleaning
coupons and take-out menus for restaurants no longer in business.

Before she died, my only aunt was a single page torn from a worn road
atlas, its
highways easily mistaken for rivers.

I have four uncles, and each is the hour of overtime a man works to
afford his son a
replica jersey of an NBA player who will be traded a week after
Christmas.

My brother is a pistachio whose sweet flesh is sealed inside a shell that refused
to split
when roasted.

My sister is a forearm tattooed with lyrics to a song the band has since
disowned and
vows never to play again.

My own reflection in the mirror is a stalk of ragweed rooted on a piece of
driftwood, its
limbs withering in the incessant sun, seeds scattering into the desolate
ocean.

Paul Christiansen, aka Doc Suds, was born and raised in Wisconsin, received an MFA from Florida International University and is currently a Fulbright Fellow in Vietnam. His poems have appeared, or are forthcoming, in *Atlanta Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *New Delta Review*, *Paper Darts*, *Zone 3,* and elsewhere.

Stuart Dischell

The Mud of Existence: Walking the Gallo-Roman Wall

I

Dressed but unshaven, like a burglar I slipped through the apartment while my family slept. Stepping out the door in rubber-soled shoes, once again I stole time. The city was dark and my body clock out of whack from jet lag. I could not force sleep. The elevator responded to its summons with an audible shudder. In the courtyard, a faint light appeared behind the blue and yellow curtains of the guardienne's apartment that gave the courtyard a hint of the provinces. I met Mme yesterday and did not want to spend what little good will I might have bought. A diminished version of the concierge, the *guardienne* is rarely a police informer anymore, but even in her current part-time state, I would not want to test the formidable-looking Mme who guarded our *porte*.

It was September, 2001. After the poet's career of adjunct and temporary teaching jobs, I had a real position which periodically gave me semesters off for what the university called "creative activity." I had found us an apartment on the internet which was not commonly done then. It had everything we wanted: two bedrooms, a real kitchen where we could cook for ourselves and the children, and even two bathrooms—a rarity for any city. Its windows overlooked the boulevard Montparnasse. I was suspicious and had feared the apartment was an elaborate scam created from my internet search history. Instead, Francois, the property manager, sent a van to pick us up at DeGaulle and was waiting at the apartment to greet us.

Although Paris has generally been a late rising city, an army of cleaners and collectors in green jump suits works its streets. One man scratched the curb with a long-handled rake, another directed the flow of water in the gutter with a fold of carpet, and yet another cleaned the windows of a bus shelter across the street. Down the Boulevard du Montparnasse all types of trucks delivered a multitude of products from food stuffs to paving stones—all brought in from the countryside.

An English visitor in the late nineteenth century remarked, "All the Paris streets are lit up throughout the night. Early in the morning, before daylight, companies of scavengers collect the city refuse in heaps which, some hours afterwards, are carted away into the neighbouring country to fertilise the soil. During the day other scavengers clear the highways of whatever dust or mud they may have accumulated. Every day in summer water-carts sprinkle the principal thoroughfares. These carts carry behind them an apparatus which flings the water over the whole width of the street… It is prudent, therefore, to keep one's eye on the water-cart, unless a gratuitous shower-bath is absolutely desired."

At seven thirty the streets began to lighten, and then the lamps went off, leaving it suddenly darker for a few seconds. Paris may be called the City of Light, but its streets are not overly lighted. A place where humans have lived for over 10,000 years—the last 2000, or so, recorded in writing—does not need neon to make its case. The expression to be "old as the streets" is the French parallel for being "old as the hills." In one recent count, Paris has nearly 6000 streets, avenues, boulevards, alleys, impasses, passages, plazas, and squares.

I had also come to Paris to live in the past. On this morning I began walking the city with its Roman incarnation in my mind, I did not know that I would walk these walls for the next dozen years [...]

Accounts of Paris by foreigners begin with Caesar's *Gallic War* in which he writes of "Lutetia, a town of the Parisii, sited on the River Seine." His legions expended enormous effort in its capture, but in the end it was the Romans who were transformed. Armies of travelers have been persuaded since then. Their thousands of books occupy more shelf space than works concerning any other place on Earth. There must be a reason for this phenomenon. Much more sensible people than I have been seduced by the city, its architecture, museums, cuisine, and couture. It became evident to me that in this ancient city Parisians practice what Henry James called the "art of living in the present."

But I had also come to Paris to live in the past. On this morning I began walking the city with its Roman incarnation in my mind, I did not know that

I would walk these walls for the next dozen years and how hard it would be to keep my head in history.

Along the boulevard St-Michel, heading to the Ile de la Cite, I got a full-hearted feeling walking upon the layers of inhabitation. Fatigued, I was exhilarated by the thought of unearthing something worthwhile in the modern city, if only the deviation of the line of buildings along a street that marks an earlier path. I looked to my right up the rue Soufflot toward the Pantheon, where the western edge of the Roman forum had stood where I was standing. It went as far back as the rue St-Jacques, the main street of early Paris. A vestige of wall from one of the shops that once lined the western exterior of the forum can be seen where it was excavated by walking down the stairs to the vast underground parking garage across from 61, boulevard St-Michel. Part of it can be seen through the security door.

Wall of a Roman Shop at the Edge of the Forum in the Parking Garage, 61, bld St-Michel

The modern day stores along *'boul Mich* had not yet opened. In Roman Paris the citizens hurried to the forum and adjacent marketplace. There would have been activity around the enormous palace and the nearby residences as well as the very popular thermal baths which still exist in the cellar of the Cluny Museum. The Romans when naked attempted to perpetuate a freedom of speech as if the shedding of clothes created a shedding of social rank, while they soaked in the tepidarium, caldarium, and frigidarium.

Scholars now head toward early classes and folks from the neighborhood toward the Metro or the RER, the regional railroad, to get to work outside the

quarter. On the river bank beyond the Place St-Michel, men on the lower quay stirred and stretched in their sleeping bags. About a dozen of the possibly ten thousand daily *clochards* of Paris, in various states of slumber and wakefulness, most still generating their REMs, kept warm by way of the ducts of the St-Michel station. The borders of each man's area spaced about two feet from his cohort. One man drank red wine deeply from a green bottle he passed to a neighbor propped on one elbow. Unlike London and other capital cities, the homeless and the drifters can sleep undisturbed by the police through the night in non-residential sections of Paris, especially along the river. Some young travelers do this as well. I was looking too long at these fellows. The one drinking from the green bottle said something that sounded like:

"Regards le canard sur le pont."

Or perhaps he said, "connard."

Fair enough.

I remembered my brother once waxing on the charms of the city, saying both comically and ruefully, "In Paris the bums speak better French than I do."

II

Even the village of the Parisii had walls and gates. It was a small boat-shaped island located among smaller islands where the river ran shallow and the current was slow. A highly evolved tribe descended of the Gallic Celts, the Parisii had long abandoned nomadic ways and fortified this strategic encampment with mud huts, wooden stockades, and a watchtower. They forged iron weapons in accord with their martial skills and overmatched the Copper Age people in the vicinity, dispatching the former residents, later called Iberians, to the southwest of Europe.

I remembered my brother once waxing on the charms of the city, saying both comically and ruefully, "In Paris the bums speak better French than I do."

The Parisii transformed this location on the river into the crossroads of their territory slightly larger than today's Department of the Seine. To the south bank (Left Bank), they attached a bridge made of logs in order to tend the fields they cultivated on the arable

slope of the low mountain near the river. A second bridge may have connected to the large marsh on the north (Right Bank) where they hunted, fished, and took aquatic birds. These bridges were a prime place for crossing the river, and the Parisii exacted a toll from the other tribes of Gaul who traded along the north/south route. They also may have ferried livestock and goods.

By 53 BC, when Julius Caesar's legions encountered this stronghold between the banks of reeds and marshland, the Parisii had established not only their village but a distinct craft tradition. They worked bronze and precious metals into their swords and minted gold coins. The men wore baggy britches made of hides and sported dyed fabrics and fancied checkered cloaks. Women wore a long tunic under a shorter tunic. They liked to eat food strongly flavored with resin, mint, pepper, and honey. With the guidance of the Druids, their priestly class, they deified natural elements, the moon, the sun, the stars and worshiped wood and water nymphs. Riparian people, they were fine traders who had found a good location for commerce through Gaul and out to the sea. Several thousand may have lived on the island itself and possibly as many as thirty thousand inhabited the greater environs of hills and marsh and forest. Recent archaeological discoveries in nearby Nanterre suggest a larger than previously thought Parisii presence on Mont Valerien and its environs. Recent theories suggest the oppidium, the gathering place, of the Parisii was on these heights rather than upon the Ile de la Cite where scant evidence other than Caesar's account has been found.

Lutetia, however lovely to say, would be short-lived in the history of the city. By the third century it was referred to as Lutetia Parisiorum and later Paris after the Parisii themselves.

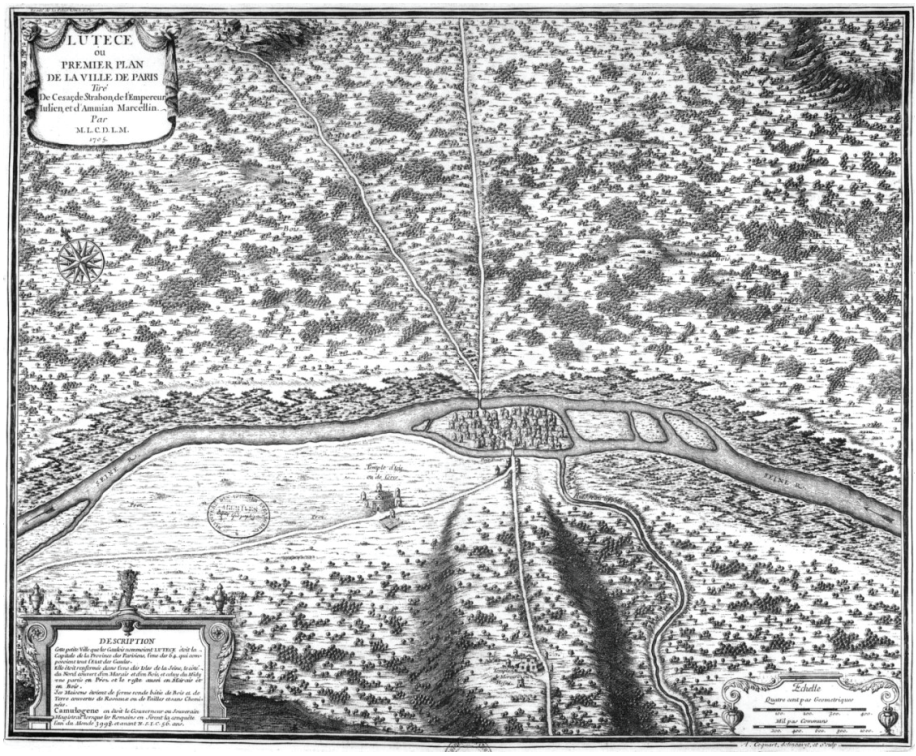
Other speculations conflict on the origins of the name the Romans would document as Lutetia, a possible derivation of what the pre-Celtic inhabitants may have called this swampy region, and what the Parisii adapted. Other possibilities suggest Caesar's general, Labienus, named it Locotecia or Lucotetia which can be translated as Marsh-Town or even more literally Mud-Town. Maybe it was called the place of the marsh people. Nevertheless, the Roman custom in Gaul was to leave alone or

slightly Latinize the place names. Lutetia, however lovely to say, would be short-lived in the history of the city. By the third century it was referred to as Lutetia Parisiorum and later Paris after the Parisii themselves.

Initially, the Romans tried to exploit divisions among the factions of traders, Druid priests, and the various Celtic tribes within Gaul. Caesar called for a convening at which his plans were enumerated and a political solution was sought. Unimpressed by their debased role in the new scheme of things, the once competing Gauls banded together under Vercingetorix. The Romans laid siege from the south bank and the Parisii retreated to their island where Comongulous, an elderly and crafty military leader, held out in large part due to the skill of his Parisii at fighting and maneuvering in the marshland. Lankier than the Romans, they needed room to swing their swords, which they reputedly did to great effect.

Labienus, a gifted tactician who had Caesar's favor, changed strategy in mid campaign, withdrew upriver, built a temporary bridge out of fifty commandeered boats, and crossed the Seine possibly at Melun. He then sent other troops down river on the fleet itself. Learning of the Romans' approach, the Parisii abandoned their island and burned their houses, ramparts, and bridges and fought unsuccessfully near perhaps Grenelle or Auteuil. The survivors joined the other Gauls for battle against the legions. Labienus outsmarted them into thinking he had divided his army and the Gauls broke their own forces, which together had been so powerful. In a battle near the village of Alesia, they were overwhelmed and Paris fell under the protectorate of Rome.

The Parisii created the first gates of Paris by constructing pier-like bridges, fixed points of entry across the water—a better plan than drifting over in shallow boats. When the Romans replaced these narrow wooden spans with stone structures that permitted heavy military traffic, including elephants, they furthered both the physical edifice and figurative construct of a *porte*. These gates, consciously built for military and civilian purposes, were part of the order of a society as well as a convenience—the grand design of Roman culture and bureaucracy with its self-conscious sense of itself. Great urban planners, they widened and improved footpaths into roads, notably the *cardo* that bisected the city south to north and still functions under the names of the rues St-Jacques and St-Martin and crosses the island over subsequent versions of the initial two bridges. Pont Notre Dame, the present bridge from the island to the Right Bank, led to the dry



edge of the marsh, then the road went north through the valley between Montmartre and the heights of Belleville, ultimately turning towards Flanders. The bridge was fortified to control access to the island, a strategy that later evolved into the Medieval construction of the fortress of the Chatelet.

Largely ignoring the marshy north bank, the Romans preferred life on the slope of Mons Locotetius (Mt. Ste-Genevieve) on the south bank where they built a forum, an arena, an amphitheater, thermal baths, barracks, and private residences. Their engineers and laborers constructed an aqueduct from the distant village of Arceuil, a feat that would not be repeated until some fifteen hundred years later when Marie de Medici ordered the irrigation of the gardens of the Luxembourg Palace. Sensibly, her engineers built it along the ruins of the Roman structure, and subsequent water projects have also taken this trajectory. The Romans planted grain fields and vineyards and erected palaces whose surrounding districts would eventually become the first suburbs or faubourgs of Paris. The island itself would continue to function in a manner similar to that employed by the Parisii: a fortified place of retreat in bad times.

With nearly all of the cities in the empire designed in a similar grid, Roman citizens felt familiar wherever they traveled. But Lutetia presented logistical problems. The advantages of its location from a military and commercial standpoint were counterbalanced by the difficulties in building upon an area that was composed of island and river and marshes and mountains. Although they built a *cardo*, the principal north/south highway, they did not construct a proper *decumanus,* a principal east/west road.

Residents of Lutetia would have lived from above the flood plain on the slopes of the Left Bank—still some of the most desirable real estate in Paris. They would have shopped at the forum where I earlier paused near today's rue Soufflot between the rue St-Jacques and the boulevard St-Michel, down the way from the Pantheon. They would have bathed at the eastern baths where the Abbots of Cluny later constructed their cloister. They would have attended the theater not far from where the Odeon is hosting its new season and would have been otherwise entertained at the arena at the southeastern edge of town. Almost nothing is left to be seen of this Lutetia—a few foundations on display in the crypt beneath the Parvis of Notre Dame, some walls and stones of the thermal baths and fragments of the sculpture of the Nautae in the basement of the Hotel Cluny, parts of the reconstructed areneas once hidden in the cliff above rue Monge, a paving stone or two used in the wall of a garden, several pillars from the temple on Montmartre now in the Church of St-Pierre, and random objects found during periodic renovations of the city. The history of Paris is the history of uncovering new ruins. More lie beneath the city waiting to be found in the next Metro project or underground garage—but as often said in defense of the next urban project, "Paris is not a museum." Consequently, it has not always protected the walls and other antiquities that have been uncovered.

The Romans mostly used la Cite for religious and administrative edifices, a pattern mimicked in our own time by the Palais du Justice and the Police Prefecture and St-Chapelle and Notre Dame. Most activities took place, however, on the south bank in what has come to be called the Latin Quarter, the appellation suggestive either of the Roman inhabitation or the language spoken by the scholars who resided there during the Middle Ages. Lutetia, a city of twenty thousand residents, prospered during these years, and by the end of the third century, when the raids of the tribesman from the east had come, the Gallo-Romans built a wall. In the museum below the Parvis

of Notre Dame are its visible remnants, all the more amazing for having survived so long after being hastily constructed as the citizens abandoned their properties on the south bank at the approach of the barbarians from the east. The stones were taken from residences on the island itself and from the dwellings near the Left Bank and were formed into a defensive wall. Some still bear inscriptions indicative of the original structures. The larger stones may have been rolled down from the forum or the amphitheater, surely a Technicolor vision: the frenzied citizens gathering up what goods they could carry, destroying everything they left behind, retreating behind these walls raised without mortar some twenty-five feet high. Unknown to them, they and their successive generations would chiefly reside behind these walls for nearly half a millennium.

Discovery of Gallo Roman Wall, Quai des Fleurs, 1897

From an architectural standpoint not much occurred in the next hundreds of years in the life of Paris, at least anything that remains. The centuries of invasions first from the east and later from the north kept most civic activities behind the walls of la Cite, as the island was then coming to be known, and also the walls of the fortified abbeys of Saint Marcel, Saint Bernard, and Saint Germain-des-Pres. Unlike the raids that would come later, the early attacks were not meant to destroy the cities of Gaul but rather to gain entrance to them where the always-hungry wanderers might share in the wealth. The Danes and Hungarians, however, looted and pillaged, and stole anything of value. Rather than delighting in the construction of royal and civil edifices, the aesthetic of the barbarian lies in the destruction of what others have so

painstakingly built. To the nomadic psyche, the city is an affront, interference, a treasure trove. They did not destroy Paris, though they looted its edges and worried its abbeys and checked its growth. Ultimately, peace would be made with the Franks and Clovis, a reformed Barbarian, would rebuild the city.

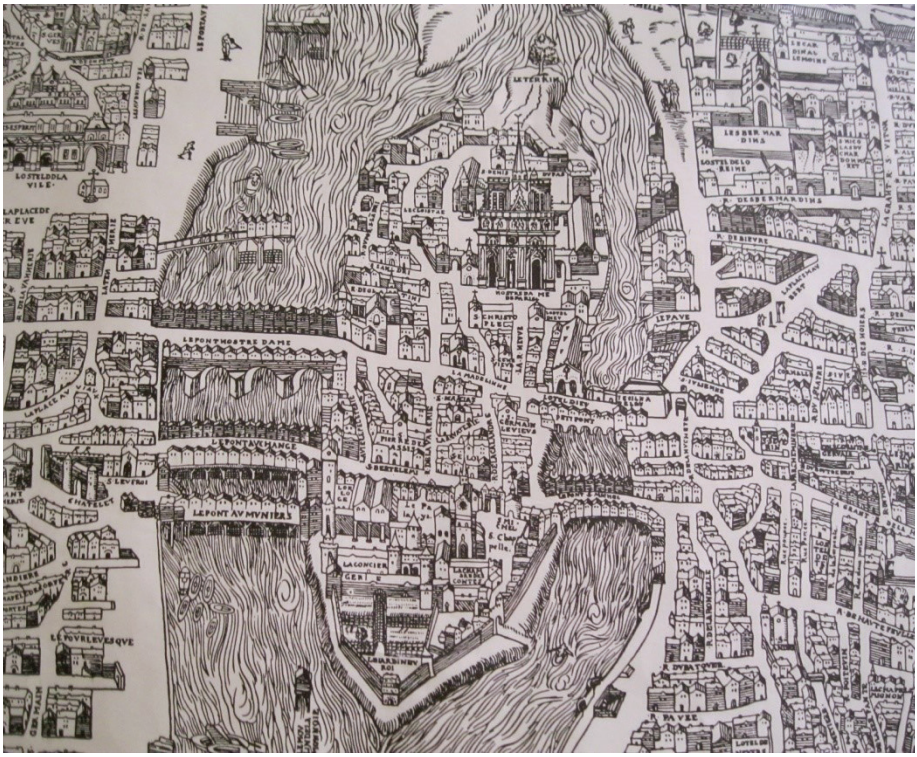
Roman paving stone in a garden just off the rue St-Jacques

It is a matter of debate how much of the island the Gallo-Roman Wall enclosed. Most of its ruins of the wall have been found east of where boulevard du Palais now divides it. The most extensive vestiges have been found below the parvis of Notre Dame where ruins of the wall and the walls of Roman dwellings were uncovered during the extensive archaeological work that took place at the end of the nineteenth century and also in the 1970s during excavations for the underground parking garage. Workers found a section of an altar to Esus, the Druid God of battle, embedded in the Gallo-Roman Wall. Owing to the years of buildings being built upon the foundations of previous buildings, the Ile de la Cite is over twenty feet higher than it was in the Gallo-Roman era. Below these layers lies the urban mud of existence from which the great city has evolved.

Until the nineteenth century, the island was the most densely populated residential district in Europe. Eighteen churches and a synagogue clustered in these numerous alleys where the city spawned. Thanks to the obsessive quality of the great documentary photographer Charles Marville it is possible with a little imagination to wander down rue St-Christophe, rue Trois Canettes, rue de Marmousets, and the other lanes now disappeared. Marville, one of the first generation of photographers, in his role as official photograph of the City of Paris, not only documents an urban landscape

soon to change with radical redevelopment but brings to his pictures an attention to detail and light that gives the work an emotional quality.

The reconstructions and demolitions overseen by Baron Georges Eugene Haussmann, Prefect of the Seine, under Napoleon III, forced



25,000 residents from the Cite, transforming it into the living museum of the church and state it remains today. Despite the temptation to view la Cite in its half-timbered glory, the state of the island and the city surrounding it had become deplorable. Not much had changed in the design of Paris in the three-hundred years since the medieval walls were razed. In his tract of 1749, *The Embellishments of Paris*, Voltaire wrote, "The narrow and infested streets must be widened, hidden monuments must be revealed." It was more necessary to demolish than to build. Enlightenment ideals set forth the concept that a city should be a healthful environment with open spaces contained inside it, that there should be a sewer system, readily available fresh water, and statues to instruct the people.

Probably a few hundred people now reside on the Ile de Cite. Many apartments are short-term rentals for tourists. Souvenir shops, cafés, and restaurants abound. Only one small convenience store serves the neighborhood, but no grocery, laundry, or bakery. The open sewers that Haussmann experienced on his childhood walks from his neighborhood of the Madeleine to his lycée in the Latin Quarter made a smell in his nostrils that left him only when his plans later cleared nearly a hundred alleyways and lanes that to his mind had come to infect the little island.

Still, Gallo-Roman resourcefulness must have made Paris an agreeable place to reside in the years before the barbarian invasions. Isolated, it was one of the last cities of the empire to fall. One must have Lutetia in the mind to see it as Emperor Julian once did: a provincial city of vineyards and fields, its buildings of locally quarried white stone.

Charles Marville: Ile de la Cite before the Haussmann Projects

III

Whenever I cross one of the thirty-seven bridges of Paris, I get some kind of idiotic grin of joy on my face. One was plastered there as I strolled over the Pont St-Michel with the sun beginning to rise from what could have been the keep of the Castle at Vincennes a few miles to the east. A light wind was blowing off the water. Once upon the island, I walked a block east along the Quai de la Marche Neuf towards the Petit Pont. The Seine is narrow here, and the bridge at about 200 feet wide did not take long to cross, even

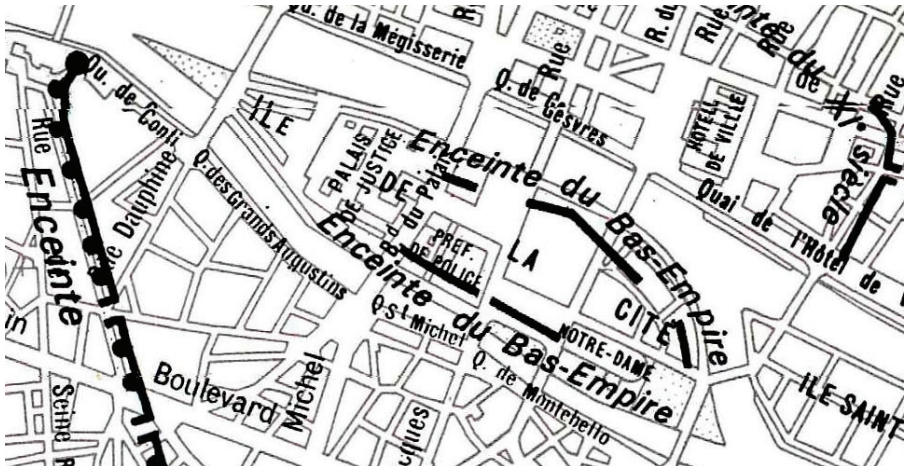
though I paused to look over my shoulder at the buildings back along the quai. Until the early nineteenth century, there would have been houses and shops along both sides of the Pont St-Michel as was the case with most bridges, and I would not have been able to look out over the water. I also might have been trampled by the dense human and animal traffic. A popular place to cross, this is the fourth bridge constructed at this site, the first built in 1378 and the present one constructed in 1857.

At this hour the Pont St-Michel was empty except for a few cars and bikes. I could see the towers of Notre Dame. The Gallo-Roman Wall would have run towards the southern side of the buildings along the northern block of the Quai du Marche Neuf, now the Prefecture de Police where many *flics* were entering their vehicles. The French National Police that guards Paris and a few neighboring towns in the Ile de France is distinct from the gendarmerie who are comprised of the military and said by some to be more friendly. The police of Paris create a strong presence of order, and it is common to see busloads of them waiting near tourist areas. They also have a huge undercover contingent. In almost any crowd, a plain clothes officer likely drifts among the people. On several occasions I have seen police appear to seize a suspect soon after a cry of alarm was issued. On this morning, a uniformed officer was climbing onto his motorbike at the curbside. I looked at him and he greeted me. A man in middle age, I posed no visible threat to public order.

Ahead was the rue de la Cite, the name of this stretch of the old Roman road from the south to the north—called the rue St-Jacques before it crosses the Petit Pont, the site of a Roman and possibly even a Parisii bridge. The Petit Pont, with its western facing view of the triple arches of the Pont St-Michel, offers lovers backdrops for kisses, and in subsequent years I would also have my fortunate occasions. Through the Middle Ages, the bridge was guarded by the Petit Chatelet, a fortress, which stood until the eighteenth century with its "wall so thick they can manage a cart upon it," and "beautiful gardens above these walls," observed the Flemish scribe Guillebert de Mets in the early fifteenth century.

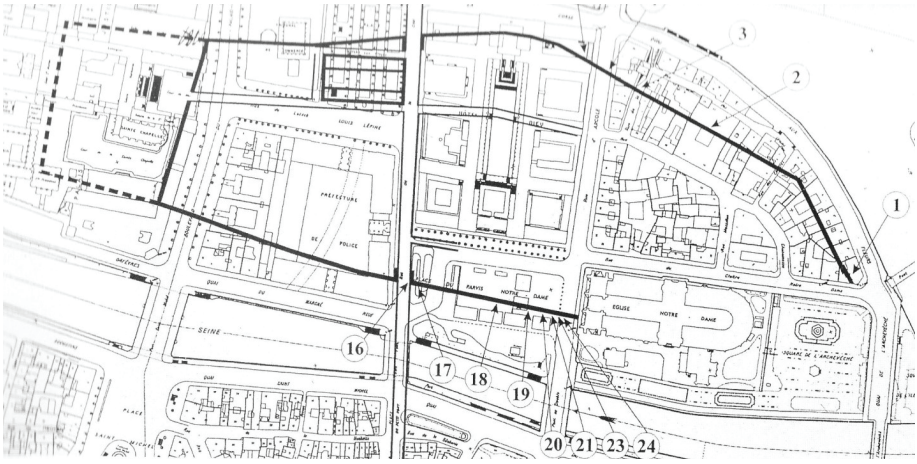
I was already at the parvis, the open area in front of Notre Dame Cathedral, at exactly eight o'clock in the morning, when the bells rang the hour, and then began their fierce extravagant notes.

The proper entrance to a cathedral is always on the right-hand side. In this case the right door pretty much follows the path of the wall as it does



along the aisle down the southern transept. Inside, I followed a small group of local worshipers to the east end of the transept where the service for the parish was taking place. Notre Dame, one of the most famous landmarks in the world, is still a working neighborhood church. A young priest intoned in French and three older priests stood with him. Behind them the sun filtered through the stained glass windows. Henry Adams described this process, called fenestration, as one of the greatest challenges met by the builders of the Gothic style. By the era of Notre Dame's consecration, the glass fabricators had perfected a technique with a quality that would never be achieved by later craftsmen who produced a cheaper, inferior product. In combination with the glass, the vaulted ceilings lift the spirits and lighten the burden of the stone. I felt it in the architecture of my spine.

The people of Paris have worshiped deities at the eastern end of this island for over two thousand years or eighty generations, if you consider the cycle of a generation at twenty-five years. The Druids, who knew the value of spiritual real estate, set a temple here, a column of which was found in 1710. Sacrifices occurred there, perhaps on an altar to Esus, a war god. Later, the Romans erected their temple to Jupiter and the Christians consecrated two churches, the fourth century Eglise de St-Etienne and the sixth century original Basilica of Notre Dame. In 1163 Pope Alexander III laid the first stone of this new cathedral that took almost the next two centuries to complete. Its builders were architects, alchemists, artisans, and laborers. Fulcanelli—possibly a nom de plume for André Breton—asserts in *Mysteries of the Cathedrals* that Mary to whom the cathedral is dedicated is a stand-in



Map of Roman-Gallo Wall made by Paris Commission in 1898

for Isis—the spirit of the mother goddess. The masons who built Notre Dame had, in essence, told the story of the pagan past within the Christian myth—as they had built their churches above the Druid and Roman temples.

My mind drifted to the rose window so bright that the flames of the lighted candles appeared hardly visible upon the altar. When the service concluded, my hand got shaken by the people around me, and I followed the worshipers out of the chapel into the transept where the first tourists of the morning were praying and cracking early gum and speaking in a crush of the world's tongues.

In the prayers I had heard the sinewy Latin intonations within the French. The current of the words pulled me down the river to its source. Outside, coins of sunlight caught in pockets on the windblown water cheered me to the very strands of my DNA. I had not yet learned of the Latin Mass on Sunday mornings I would later attend. I sat for a moment on a bench in the shadows of Notre Dame's towers. The parvis, the plaza outside the cathedral's front doors, is the locus of history and time. Literally as well as figuratively, distance in Paris and, by extension, all of France, is measured from this spot. In many respects it is also the point from which all French history gets measured as well, going back those eighty generations.

Named for the miracle and mystery plays performed outside the cathedral, the word *parvis* derives from *paravisus* which itself derives from *paradises*—as all things should. The parvis of Notre Dame is forty times larger than when the cathedral was constructed and six times larger than Haussmann found it. If it were any smaller, the traveler of

today would be crushed by the volume and rush of tourists exiting buses from all over Europe. In the Parisian custom of noting what has been covered, the city has marked out in the brickwork where the medieval streets had run in a more disorganized fashion than the Roman grid.

To step out of the formerly densely populated maze into the parvis, the medieval citizen would have been forced to look up at the towers of the cathedral at an awe-inspiring angle that would strain the neck as he blinked at the towers in the light. A little known fact: like many medieval churches Notre Dame was originally painted in blues and reds and yellows inside and out: a candy box in which the statuary, like the windows, would have been all the more illustrative.

For centuries all forms of entertainment from religious plays to animal acts took place in the parvis like the Disney version of the *Hunchback of Notre Dame* my children were fond of watching. It was the entertainment locus of the city. Here also Gargantua urinated on the residents from the heights of the towers, perhaps leaving a trace these centuries later. If, when walking past the entry to the tower, the line is not long, it is worth climbing the stairs to see the city from its center and peer down like a gargoyle.

I walked back then along the right side of the cathedral, past the children's play area. Before the Cathedral was built, the area to the east of The Square Jean XXIII was home to the early medieval Jews of Paris, and at least one synagogue was consecrated here. I approached the Pont de l'Archeveché, the Arch-Bishop's bridge. I shuddered to think that the Paris Morgue used to be at the southeast end of the island where according to my Baedeker of 1891, "the bodies of unknown persons who have perished in the river or otherwise are exposed to view. They are placed on marble slabs, kept cool by a constant flow of water, and are exhibited in the clothes in which they were found. The process of refrigeration to which the bodies are exposed makes it possible to keep them here, if necessary, for three months. The bodies brought here number about 800 annually, one-seventh being those of women. The painful scene attracts many spectators, chiefly of the lower orders." Unidentified cadavers were not uncommon.
Robert Browning wrote of his visit:

"Each on his copper couch, they lay / Fronting me, waiting to be owned."

At the very eastern tip of the island, the Monument to the Martyrs of the Deportation was completed in 1962 and dedicated to the 200,000 French

citizens, over a third of them Jewish, murdered in the concentration camps. The modernist architect Georges-Henri Pingusson created a somber and eerie memorial, using narrow stairwells and confined vaults as a means to express the oppressiveness of the conditions. Light filters in the vault from 200,000 crystals. Quotations from poets and writers Robert Desnos, Paul Éluard, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Louis Aragon were inscribed on the walls. The main rectangular sculpture with fifteen triangles was constructed with ashes and earth taken from the fifteen principal death camps—a place of honor that commemorates how dishonorably people treat each other. It was a jolt to walk back into the bright sunlight where the river itself is remarkable from this low perspective. Here, the island, "the cradle of France," is at the same height it was in Roman Paris. You can almost touch the Seine.

Roman Stairway under Parvis of Notre Dame

Back at street level, I leaned against a low wall at the foot of the bridge, where years later, after my separation and divorce, I would kiss, for hours, in the rain, an artist from Finland with gold eyes and a last name impossible to say. On this day, I leaned against it with my foot and tied my shoelace. I then drifted around to the Quai aux Fleurs, then took a left down the stairs that led to the narrow rue de Chantres. Around the corner on rue Chanoinesse in a house formerly situated at number 10, Canon Fulbert hired Peter Abelard to tutor his niece Heloise. Like many famous professors, Abelard slept with his most talented student. Not only

did he have his tenure broken, Peter was castrated for his turpitude. Later, in a less well-known story, Abelard's friends meted out the same punishment to Fulbert. The house, dating from the eleventh century, was torn down in 1849. It had been conveniently attached to Fulbert's by a walkway.

I cut to the right down the narrower rue d'Ursins exploring this little cluster of streets where most of the residences and shops and the last half-timbered houses of the Ile de la Cite remain. Before Napoleon constructed the Quai aux Fleurs, the Seine edged up to the buildings on the rue des Ursins, where the Parisii docked their boats, and later St-Landry, the first port of Paris, established.

Just beyond where the rue des Ursins meets the rue de la Colombe, a marble plaque indicates the path of the Roman wall, the change in cobblestones suggestive of its presence. I noticed the back entry of a tabac and walked inside its walls for a coffee. Most people access it from the heavily trafficked rue d'Arcole on the other side of the building. The Tambour had a clientele of locals and travelers at the comptoir. Entering from the rue de la Colombe, as I had, the café did not give the sense that this establishment is located in one of the most densely traveled tourist areas in the world. Most of its customers were deeply concerned about the lottery tickets they purchased. Others were awaiting the first races broadcast on the television and deciding on their wagers.

Outline trace of Roman Wall on the Cobblestones in the rue Colombe

With my first delicious bitter swallows of coffee, I celebrated another return to Paris. The other customers at the comptoir smoked and read the sports and racing papers. One man dipped the tip of a croissant into his coffee and another opened a cone of sugar and let the paper drop

to the floor, an act duplicated in many cafés where people stood at the comptoir. Parisians littered their streets as well as their cafés. This did not appear as huge a problem as it might be, a credit to those hundreds of men in green jumpsuits who busily brought the city to order each morning. The man wiping glasses behind the bar had the nasty cough, *le mal de gorge*, I heard for weeks in its various strains. He coughed into his hands then went about his tasks. Hand-washing is not a big issue in Paris, and it is common for bartenders to scoop up a couple of your ice cubes with their bare hands or kitchen workers to sample from your plate while assembling your food.

A disheveled fellow standing near me was drinking a glass of red wine at the comptoir though it was barely nine a.m. He was not alone in his habits. Another reason to love Paris. His pink skin showed through his whiskers. The men working the bar asked him how his verses were going.

"Bien, merci, tres bien."

That's good. They liked him. Characters enliven their days.

He grinned and bobbed his head. He paid for his drink with money he took from a leather change pouch. The barmen and those standing close by including me watched him count his coins one by one, wondering if he would make it. He did and we let out our breath. He bobbed his head and lit his pipe and departed the Tambour with a jerky gait like a stringed puppet operated by a child.

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Seeing a bottle of Calvados on the shelf behind the bar, I requested the barman pour me a glass. Okay, it was not even nine a.m. yet, but it was Paris, and I was celebrating my return. I told him and his colleague that I was poet too, and we all three laughed. He asked me if I had any money and we laughed again. The calva burned my throat, and I could taste the apples in the brandy.

A man and a woman came in together and stood at the cigarette counter. Dressed nearly identically in some kind of beige wash and wear garb, they each bought two packs of the same brand and walked down the comptoir where he ordered two cafés crème in what sounded like a cross between French and Italian.

They leaned on the bar at the same angle. They lit their own cigarettes.

Two Japanese women came in and negotiated the purchase of stamps. A Nigerian man with scars on his face requested directions regarding an address he had written on his map. He did not look happy when he was told he had found the rue de la Colombe, the street of the dove, not rue de Vieux Colombier, the street of the old dovecote—about a mile away on the Left Bank.

Then a French woman strolled in with confidence, and the first barman folded his arms across his apron and pushed out his chest. The other took to polishing a platter, but I could see that he was watching her at an angle in the mirror. She was in her thirties or forties all in black with jet black hair. Her lips had a purplish color to them as if she daubed them in Rhone wine. Her skin was pale as a junkie's. She could have taken a spot near where the Italian couple was standing, but she walked beyond them and took her place on the other side of me. The barman was stern but polite. I think he knew her.

She ordered and went into the bathroom. The barman poured her a Grand Marnier, her breakfast juice no doubt. She came out of the lavatory and nearly hip-checked me when she returned to her place at the bar. She had put on perfume.

She ordered and went into the bathroom. The barman poured her a Grand Marnier, her breakfast juice no doubt. She came out of the lavatory and nearly hip-checked me when she returned to her place at the bar. She had put on perfume. She smiled and said, "a santé" to me, and I raised what was left of my drink. I touched glasses with her and she looked me straight in the eyes, which is the French custom. When she tilted her head back I could see she had no back teeth.

She shook a cigarette out of her pack. The barman was hovering. Three workmen came in and ordered demis of beer. I took matches off the bar and lit her cigarette. I heard myself ordering another Calvados. We were having a lovely party, but I had to go.

I left the Tambour by way of the rue d'Arcole and jay-walked across it at my first opportunity, trying to follow the trajectory of the wall as it would have crossed the street. It is impossible to follow its literal path any further.

Whatever remaining vestiges are hidden beneath the hospital complex of the Hotel Dieu constructed above it, so I walked to the Quai de la Corse and west along the Seine. Barges went past, each hauling its cargo. Men on the decks of the boats stood beside piles of stone and bagged cement. Until the eighteenth century, nearly all grain, wood, coal, and wine arrived by water.

Not much is shipped out anymore, but Paris remains profoundly a river city, and, if you stand on the banks or on one those thirty-seven spans that cross the Seine for any length of time, you will soon observe the boats that still work its waters and unload cargo along both banks. In 1323 Jean de Jandon, a visiting clergyman, wrote in his letters, "the sufficient breadth of its bed, the moderate speed of its flow, not impetuous but tranquil, furnish in abundance the riches from all parts of the world necessary for men's needs. The Seine furnishes in great number the wines of Greece, Grenache, LaRochelle, Gascony, and Burgundy, it brings in quantity wheat, rye, peas, beans, hay, oats, salt, charcoal and wood."

The Seine and its important tributaries the Marne and Oise have made Paris a center of commerce since the days when the Parisii called the river Sequan after the river goddess Sequana. The city's symbol is a ship, and the Seine is still a kind of main street. Booksellers still line its left and right banks, but long gone are the bathers, laundresses, wood vendors, and water sellers.

The various walls, bridges, and other structures along the river created dangerous currents that could dash unwary navigators. The Seine periodically floods, most recently in 1910, but rarely as it did in 1176, overwhelming the two bridges to la Cite, or in the summer of 1427, destroying all the goods in cellar storerooms and drowning horses tethered in their stables. It is most narrow and deep between the south side of the island and the Left Bank where the currents have always been most treacherous.

Between the island and the Right Bank, the hydraulic pump, La Samaritaine, was for centuries a fixture of Paris. A major source for the Louvre and the fountains of the Right Bank, it pulled from the center of the river where the water flowed with greatest purity. For a long time Paris made travelers sick. The bacterial mix gave people gastric distress similar to Montezuma's revenge, and the "Paris stomach" was a famous malady. Despite municipal ordinances, most of the drinking water came from the river, and many unscrupulous or ignorant sellers skimmed it from easily accessible fetid surface areas like the arm of the river that runs between la Cite and

the Left Bank. Good water was scarce and expensive. Today's bottled water industry may in part derive from an hereditary distrust of the public tap.

The depredation of the Seine did not stop people from fishing in the river or washing in its waters. During warm weather, two Chinese bathing pavilions were set up. The Russian writer Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin paid "twenty four sous, and bathed with cold water in a splendid little cabinet." Pipes conveyed water from the river to each cabinet. "People can also learn to swim here for thirty sous a lesson."

The traveler who sees the city as the dichotomy of Left and Right Banks is flummoxed by the Cite. People think they are on one side or the other when they are in fact in the middle of the river. Before crossing to the Right Bank at the carrefour of rue de la Cite and du Quai de Corse, I paused near a back entrance to the hospital, the site of the Roman prefect's quarters where Saint Denis, the Patron Saint of France, may have been incarcerated after having been arrested near the rye fields on the Left Bank where he proselytized. According to legend, here on the corner the chapel St-Denis-de-Chartre, established in Merovinginian times, kept in its crypt—the original axe wielded at his execution.

I crossed the rue de la Cite. To my left, the flower market stalls began to open. I soon came to one of my favorite sights in Paris: the clock of the Horloge, whose old face dates nearly 700 years (1334). Time remained an inexact thing until the nineteenth century, with each French city setting its own hours somewhat relative to others. I checked my watch against it as does almost everyone else who passes the clock. Some people glance at their cell phones.

The Pont au Change that connects the island to the Right Bank was named for the goldsmiths and money changers that worked upon it. It was near the site of the pier-like bridge the Parisii built across the Seine later burned by the Romans. Like many of the bridges of Paris, it was rebuilt several times, and in the Middle Ages remained an important river crossing guarded on the Right Bank by the Chatelet, the most heavily fortified gate of the city. This current stone Pont au Change was built in 1860 by Haussmann to line up with the Pont St-Michel a few blocks across the island.

Although some vestiges of the Gallo-Roman wall have been found near the rue de la Palais, it is difficult to know how far west the wall may have extended. The ingrown structures that form the Palais de Justice, Conciergerie, and Ste-Chapelle have existed in one form or another since it

was the Roman governor's palace. A fortified place, it has been in continuous use for over two thousand years. The Kings of France lived here since Clovis took over the residence of the former Roman governors. Etienne Marcel's uprising in 1358 altered this tradition when the young Charles V, who later built his own walls around Paris, got spattered with the blood of his advisors when palace security was breached. Since then the royalty chose other quarters, chiefly the Louvre, Vincennes, and eventually Versailles, preferring to govern less proximately to their subjects. The boundaries of the Gallo-Roman Wall might be in doubt, but the borders of the island are not.

I gingerly crossed the Place du Pont feeling vulnerable to the morning traffic and went down the stairs near the spot where Jacques de Molay, the leader of the Knights Templar, was burned to death for trumped-up crimes [...]

I kept along the river then wandered through the Place Dauphine, André Breton's "unmistakably female genitalia of Paris," at this hour sleepy, silent, verdant, and triangular. One of the least expensive hotels in Paris still operates here. I had seen its interior after having walked a friend back one night in the 1980s. The management in those days kept your key at the desk. In the room the bulb was harsh, the carpet like a muddy palette, the wallpaper elephant gray. It was apparent she slept in her sleeping bag on top of the covers. She wanted me to stay, but I was otherwise involved. This morning walking by the hotel, for more than historical reasons I wish I had.

Near the Pont Neuf, the oldest remaining bridge of Paris, the stones below my feet were numbered for removal and replacement like encoded pieces of Gargantua's jigsaw puzzle. Nine spans attach the Cite; ten if you count the Pont St-Louis. Pont Neuf crosses the river at its widest place, some 350 yards from bank to bank. I gingerly crossed the Place du Pont feeling vulnerable to the morning traffic and went down the stairs near the spot where Jacques de Molay, the leader of the Knights Templar, was burned to death for trumped-up crimes of sacrilege and sodomy. This would have been to the west of the Roman Wall.

This point of the island, the prow, comprised two small islands later filled-in. I walked down more stairs to where several river boats had been moored. The effects of the coffee and the edge the Calvados had given me wore off, and I had not yet found my city legs. No one appeared on the boats, no one around so early in the day. Once among the most dangerous cities of the world, Paris can still be an excellent place to get your pocket picked, your apartment broken into, or for you to become taken in by countless scams. Lately there have been armed robberies of banks and museums, but crimes involving weapons are seldom directed at individuals. A person may be more likely to be blown up in some incident of terrorism than shot in a car-jacking or purse snatching. You may be pestered and even hectored, but you must be very unlucky to be physically assaulted in contemporary Paris. This is not to say that residents or travelers let down their guard. Like all big cities, Paris punishes weakness, but I have never felt truly afraid on the streets as I have on occasions in American cities. In Paris, it was a lot easier to get your throat cut a hundred years ago than it is today.

I stood awhile under the old willow tree near the prow of the island. I ventured toward the tip of land where the stonework gradually angles to the water, and I felt glad it was not a sheer drop so I could stand fearlessly at this point, the Pont des Arts beyond my reach. In the Middle Ages, chains were stretched across the river at night to halt boat traffic and close the port when the *portes* of the city shut tight. The Tricolor dangled from the mast of a boat.

Below the bridge on the south side of the island, it smelled of pigeons. More numbered stones of the Pont Neuf renovation were stored behind a locked wire fence. Seagulls flapped along the bank and a pair of ducks floated by. In the evening there might be fishermen. If you could ignore for a moment the sound of traffic amplified on the water, the honking horns, the exhaust from the buses and focused on the water, you might delude yourself into imagining the Parisii paddling about in their shallow wooden boats. I walked up the stone stairway. Across the river, the men on the bank were now stirring and stretching in their sleeping bags. The *flics* are fairly tolerant of them. Some are latter day hippies and some are nasty drunks and some perform on the streets and some are deranged.

I returned to the Marche aux Fleurs and bought a selection of autumnal blossoms that were expertly arranged into a bouquet and artfully wrapped in flowered paper as if the humble blooms were worth a fortune. With

the flowers upside down in my hand to let the water go to their heads, I strolled back towards the western end of the island and crossed the Pont Neuf, and walked up the rue Dauphine, once the widest street in Paris, to the rue de l'Ancienne Comedie, a few footsteps outside what would have been the Buci Gate of the medieval wall, where I stopped at Eric Kayser and bought a baguette of their solid bread, a pair of chaussans des pommes, and a quetsche tart, a seasonal treat made from Alsatian plums.

The girl at the counter said, "*questsche*," as I thought I had pronounced it.

I said "*quetsche*" to her again.

She said it once more and smiled a little. I think she was messing with me.

That afternoon, I was drinking coffee in la Reine Blanche, the White Queen, a large café, way on the other side of Paris in the 20th Arrondissement with my friend Jeffrey Greene when the terrorists struck New York and Washington. He had driven me around the Peripherique and the boulevards des Marechaux in the northern half of the city from Porte de Auteuil to the Porte de Bagnolet, so I could look at what the gates of the last fortifications of Paris had become. The people at the bar of La Reine Blanche were watching the television, an unusual occurrence in a café except during soccer championships or the Tour de France. My friend and I turned to watch too.

The streets were tense and crowded, busloads of police were assembling at major intersections. There was expectancy in the air, a quickness of fear, as in a time of mobilization or the approach of the barbarians.

I asked the fellow next to me, a large man in a checked shirt and black suspenders, what happened? He had rosacea on his cheeks and a great walrus moustache foamy with beer.

"Le Terror."

I thought he said, "le terroir," the countryside the French are always doting on.

Jeff somehow knew right away that Bin Laden did it.

We got his car where we parked it by the run-down Place de la Reunion and drove back to the Left Bank in the afternoon rush hour. Through the windshield, I felt cold and bleached. I had spent that morning in Ar-

chaeological Museum under the Parvis of Notre Dame. Selfishly, I did not want to leave Roman Paris for the uncertain present. The streets were tense and crowded, busloads of police were assembling at major intersections. There was expectancy in the air, a quickness of fear, as in a time of mobilization or the approach of the barbarians. Back at the apartment, the children were in their room coloring with crayons in books of Asterix and Obelesk, the Gallic comic heroes. The apartment had no internet connection and we could not understand the rapid talk on the tv. The only British station I could tune on my radio was a soccer channel that kept repeating the news we knew. My wife and I talked for hours. Should we go back home now? We decided we would stay in Paris. We would tell the children to keep their voices low. The terrorists sure scared us.

Stuart Dischell is the author of *Good Hope Road*, a National Poetry Series Selection, (Viking, 1993), *Evenings & Avenues* (Penguin, 1996), *Dig Safe* (Penguin, 2003), and *Backwards Days* (Penguin, 2007) and the chapbooks *Animate Earth* (Jeanne Duval Editions,1988) and *Touch Monkey* (Forklift, 2012). Dischell's poems have been published in *The Atlantic, Agni, The New Republic, Slate, Kenyon Review,* and anthologies including *Essential Poems, Hammer and Blaze, Pushcart Prize*, and *Garrison Keillor's Good Poems*. He has given readings from his work at hundreds of venues, including The Library of Congress, the Los Angeles Times Book Festival, The Chateau Marmont, the American Library of Paris, and the American University of Paris. A recipient of awards from the NEA, the North Carolina Arts Council, and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, he is a the Class of 1952 Distinguished Professor in the MFA Program in Creative Writing at the University of North Carolina Greensboro.

Ashley Warner

New Girl Guide

Though we're in the business of men, money, and more
of both, still, we make them scrub underneath their fingernails,

wipe the lint from the folds in the lamp shades, beat the dust
from these velvet curtains. You might let them tie you up,

wrists, waist, all of you. Let them call you nigger,
when they're on top. So long as they come with a gift.

A giraffe drawing on cardboard, a quart of Clorox,
never anything that can die

on its own. Me, I got a jar of shark teeth. One so big,
if I held it to your face, you wouldn't have eyes.

I got lace curtains, cards with women in hoop skirts,
soap in the shape of clams. For my vanity,

a gold-flaked basin and a white wicker stool, strong as an ox.
Hear me, girl? I'm as loud as the Fourth of July. I'm a glass top

factory with many doors. I got eyes, wide as headboards; stones
so big they could close your throat. I'm the pearl onions in the soup,

the light-lined stage with new paint, the cloud-kin cigarette skin.
I'm the mirror. I'm the man. I'm the morning with a straight

razor, if you get too close to me.

Clean

My parents are in another city
and I am a woman tonight.
Andrelle Kelly told me to take
down my plaits and pinch my
cheeks red and to make sure
that I am clean. Clean yourself
until it hurts, she said. I squat
in the tub like some wild thing
starting a fire, let the hot rush
of water press into me, make right
anything that is wrong or uninterested.
I filed my nails into squares the night
before, use them to scrape the dirt
behind my ear, where the skin is thin
as a single sheet of wet paper. Blood
comes. And I am quiet. Quiet as a lake.

Ashley Warner is earning her MA of English and Creative Writing at the University of West Georgia. She has received scholarships to attend the New York State Summer Writers' Institute and the Sewanee Writers' Conference.

Jeremiah Driver

Under the Carpet

Mom's mom and dad lived down a dirt road where hoot owls
fucked chickens—a world removed—where everything was old.
Their house was covered with cedar, milled from old railroad ties,

someone'd given my grandfather, posts that looked like amputated limbs
(half-buried) strung with barbed wire where hickory nuts dropped
into horse weeds that stretched into the rock-chipped earth

near the lean-to-barn with a tin roof that was calicoed with paint
and rust, peering down on pastures where cars half hid in burdock.
I rolled with my cousins on hills, through creeks, and between

the hooves of horses—in the shadows of men that scared me/who feared
for me. My grandmother's green station wagon drove to town for groceries
and car parts. Grandfather paid for taekwondo classes so we, his young

grandsons, might be spared the confusion of hands and feet: the memory
of his nine-year-old body beaten by a crowd, a frenzy wetting his mouth
and tempering his face. Required patience, learned. Each of the eight boys

found alone. One, near-gnawed, had him pinned,
knuckles peppering his face until the guy's pinky caught the inside corner
of my grandfather's mouth. *When you're under it like that, you do whatever you can.*

His chewing led to swinging, to an end-bent mind, his arms
swinging still. I want to believe he learned, perhaps years
later, how it all stains.

Kneeling, Uncle Chet asked me to kick him.
What'd ya learn in taekwondo? Can you get me in the head?
He swept me as quickly as I kicked. The crown of my head popped

whatever it was that was under the carpet. Instead of crying
I was quickened (there in the soft, green shag) with clarity—
simply a boy knocked down

and a man on his knees playing a boyhood game that he learned
with boxing gloves bought by his father who taught
his sons how to make peace in gravel.

a portrait for dad

the pointillism of our world is dirty yellow
    between the trunks of trees
there are purple freckles
        wrecks of youth

the ones you knew
    i see

the mushrooms we picked
            and put
in a brown grocery bag

    our black footprints teach
how violence rolls
        into sister's eye

the hand divides
            we are so different—what is this
telling for you

    even in the woods i guessed
at what you couldn't say
        the red airplane

has not yet
            crashed but cannot fly—stuck
 there in the sky

the bricks we build with
    are so small
        and so easily moved
                §
The gray sky is forgiveness
            i
choke (sometimes) on the sky.

Jeremiah Driver has an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College. He has taught writing to high school students at Sarah Lawrence's Writing Workshop, the Baccalaureate School for Global Education in Queens, and in the Yonkers' public school district. He is currently a construction worker in New York City and his work has appeared in *Piecrust, Catch and Release,* the online supplement to *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art*, and *Prairie Gold: Anthology of the American Heartland*.

Jamison Crabtree

Mistranslation

i feel asleep. in fall, the leaves feel off their
branches: the bicycle of seasonings rides past.

it's hard to stay in a bad mode with all
this misty weather—everything mysteries,

it's gorgefull! we're due some droplets on these
blades of grass. take this good rest b/c, as you

oh-know: fair heart never won fair lady
& all's fear in love & war. let us start

or beg, in a new place with a new man.
please, please. give me more of the different-same.

my twenty-six letters of love. exo
ex. i am tree & branch & board & house.

i am arrow & error. i hope you
can stand under me, despite this clumsy mouth.

Speak to the Villagers

you rarely hear your own voice & when you do,
your thoughts aren't your own. strangers

repeat themselves; out of words, they nod,
punctuate the silence ... ...!

but what do you have to say that's so important
anyway? you call your mother but don't tell her

about your lovers, feelings, failures b/c
she has her own to hide. our dramatic routines.

have you noticed your own dull loop yet?
you take the bus to work. it takes you home.

weather changes. the same faces appear
on different bodies. close to the familiar. the villagers

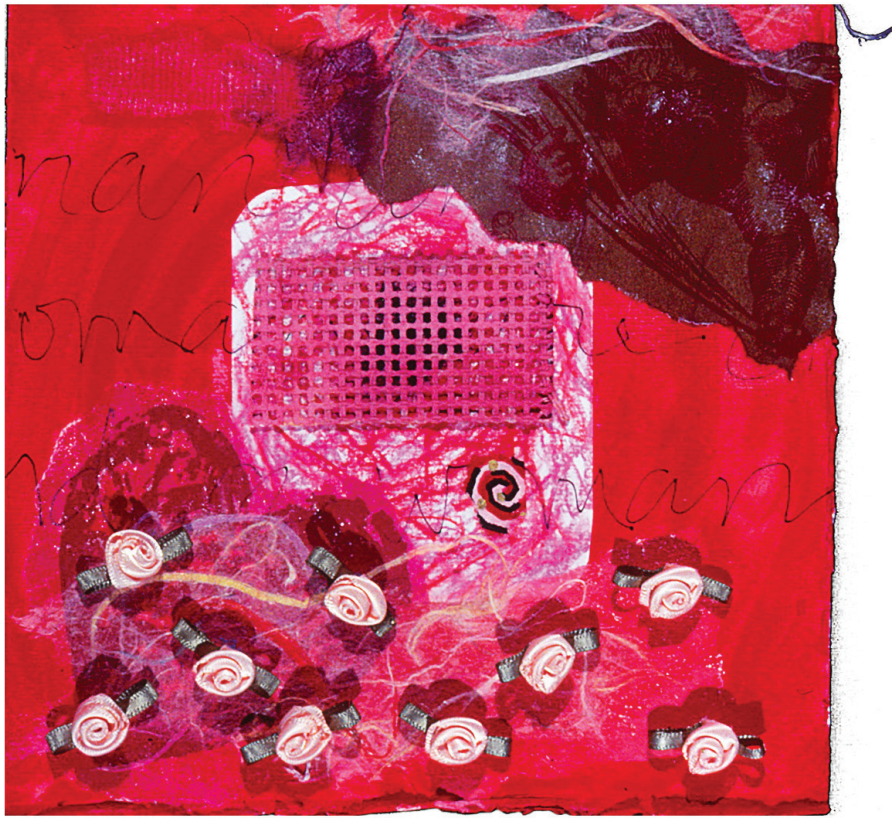
repeat what they hear & you talk to them, repeating
the same dialogue with each new person you meet.

Jamison Crabtree is a Black Mountain Institute PhD fellow at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. His first book, *rel[am]ent*, was awarded the Word Works' Washington prize and was published in 2015.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird #1, Beverly Key.

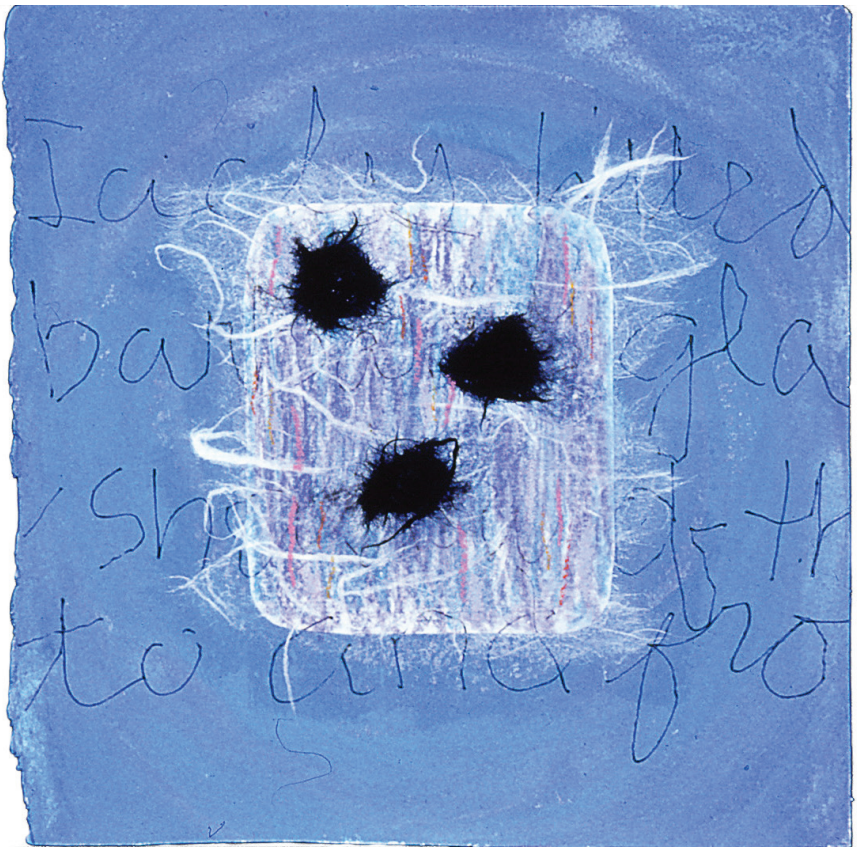
Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird #2, Beverly Key.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird #3, Beverly Key.



Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird #4, Beverly Key.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird #5, Beverly Key.



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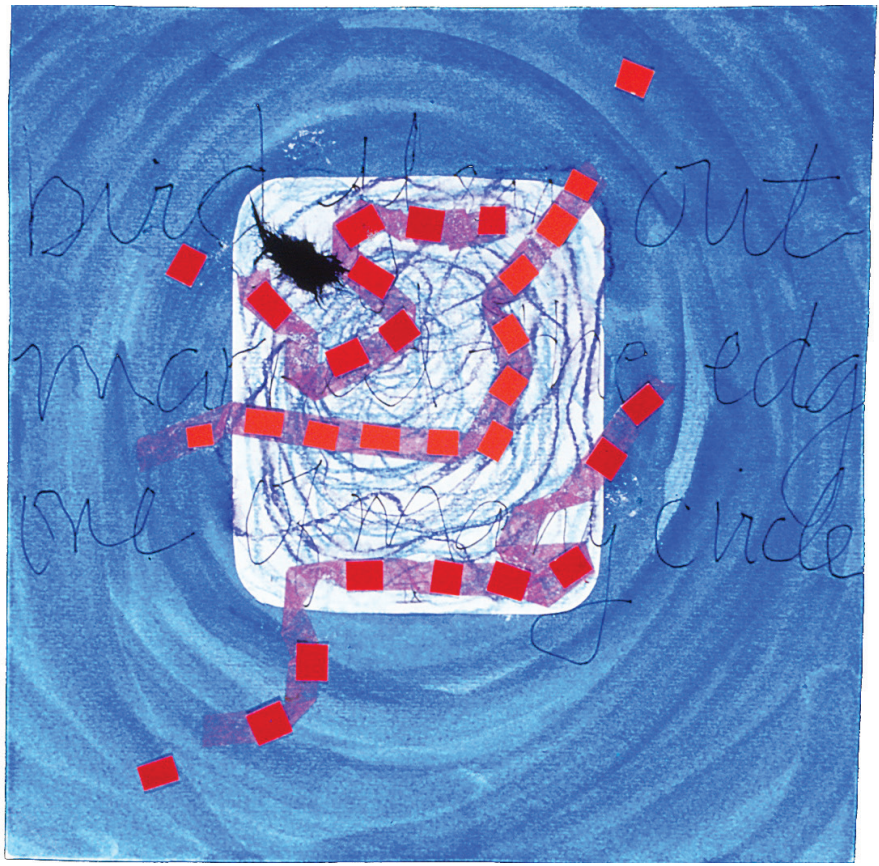
Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird #7, Beverly Key.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird #8, Beverly Key.

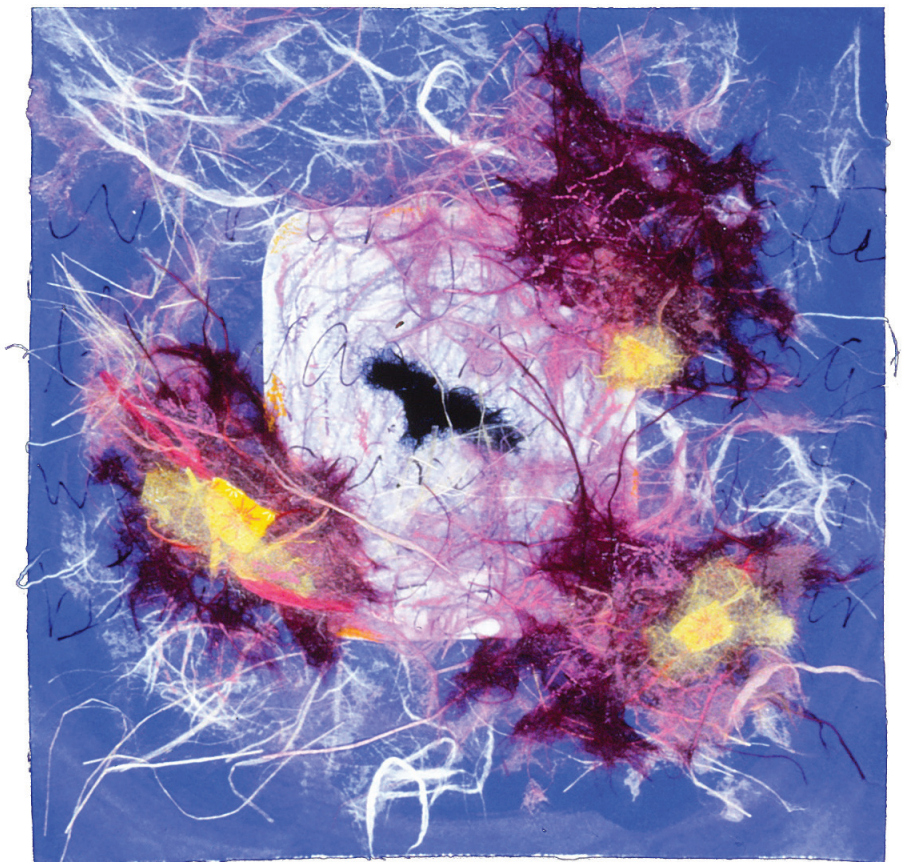


Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird #9, Beverly Key.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird #10, Beverly Key.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird #11, Beverly Key.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird #12, Beverly Key.



Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird #13, Beverly Key.