

NOV/DEC
2016



THANK YOU FOR SWALLOWING

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VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 5

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2016



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THANK YOU FOR SWALLOWING is based in Deptford, southeast London, on the same estate where SNIFFIN' GLUE was founded in 1976 by Mark Perry.

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I beg a photo of Hillary Clinton to win the election

A moment after I exposed one of my deepest,
most painful stories for the first time in nearly twenty years,
I saw a photo of the cover of one of Hillary Clinton's books
on my library's website.

With fresh tears still moist on my cheeks
and a tissue clutched in my right hand
I made eye contact with Cover Hillary
and I pleaded with her.

"Please win," I whispered,
my throat raw from the catharsis
of sobbing and retching.
"Please, for the love of god, win."

The alternative, which I can barely acknowledge
actually exists,
is too much for my battered heart to endure
for a moment, let alone four or eight years.

The reality of having to keep my head down and
steer clear of the dark alleys of politics, evade the
close-talking, handsy newstickers, and the
leering State of the Union Address that calls me a whore—

for the safety of my mental and emotional health,
for the preservation of my body and mind,
for my survival—
is unthinkable and unjust.

And yet... it's all I *can* think about.
The necessity of avoiding eye contact with the president
of my own country because his face traps me
alone in a barn twenty years ago with a person I trusted.

Please win, Hillary.
Pull out whatever ammunition you have,
deploy whatever Nasty Woman tactics you've got in your arsenal and
please—*dear god, please*—win.

Slip lock came free

Oh—
it's such a shame—
the Kool-Aid of human emotions
is too much like a daydream.

Under the newsprint
any of us hurt and I'm sorry
good and fine magic
pulled the wing off the living

I want them to know me,
standing by the Coke machine,
an old,
controlled
dance,
a warmth.

Vibes, vibes, vibes, stuffed in pockets,
hours to live, the blood vacillating
in hearsay came into story
over mystic accident.

Curled, the lights
wondered how tonight
might dissolve,
how below, glistening,
wings wanted morning,
a thin membrane inside.

*This is an erasure poem.
Source material: King,
Stephen. Carrie. New York:
Anchor, 2011. 158-165. Print.*

JEANNE OBBARD

Woman's work

In a pantsuit, votive-white,
like an angel in a
Wes Anderson film. Like a
unicorn. Like a spotlight like
a sword. Like a movie screen,
onto which you can project
what you wish, of course. The men
in the room will always think
one thing or another. The women
will shudder or shimmer
in the snow of that suit. At the teflon
of tenacity. At the gold smile. But to read
her right you must recall: in the contest of gods,
blue-bearded Poseidon struck
the mountainside with his trident
and opened a bitter torrent
which no one could drink.
Then Pallas Athena, bright-helmed,
proffered the humble olive tree,
with its coronet of dapper
leaves barely clearing
the burlap wrapper. Yield of a hundred generations'
husbandy; origin of food, light, shelter.
And the people saw which gift
was good, and the city became
her city, and Athens
prospered.

Metis/Athene

Inside
the god
a goddess
Inside
the goddess
a child
Nested like
onionskins
Extracted with
a chisel.

Metis's rooms are
small but space enough
for what she needs:
wool and flax
bronze and a hammer:
the original
homemaker of
revolutions.

What he gets up to out there
she hardly knows,
carried around in his head all day.
Sometimes a wall is a ceiling, sometimes
the bathwater sloshes out, but Metis
is both mutable and persistent.
Thread over thread,
hammer blow upon blow.

When finally
parturition comes it is
the handyman who breaks
them apart from their
long symbiosis.

The child who emerges
without a childhood and consequently
no fossils of each parent to laboriously divide from
the anima – she is self-invented,
whole.

How does she turn back and propitiate the father, womb-less,
and the mother, forever encrypt?

Never apologize
for the migraine your existence
may have caused.
Only go onward – aurelian, martial,
insurrect.

MCKENZIE TOZAN

MY DREAM POST-ELECTION DAY

The pumpkins on our front porch
are visibly more wilted.

One has been clawed open. The top
sits off to the side, guts spilled, as if the lobotomy

were intentional. Trump appears
at my door, says, *Here, go to your front lawn.*

Pick a switch. He plays me

like a violin, but without its sweetness, no resin, no
recognition in those wide, wandering

hands, those fingers that work
but never play the strings.

Next he says, *Here, choose:*

A pick axe.
A grape fruit.
A bow.

This is how I will steal your child.

Months ago, I had a dream that someone led me away
from a mob of figures just before we could be

swallowed down. She made me leave my child, left her
on the ground, and pulled my hand, though too slowly

for me not to see as one of the figures—now hooded—
picked her up and neared their face to hers

as she screamed—(I screamed)—and woke. I didn't know
what it meant, but now, now—I stay up until 3:30AM

to see the results, and those vague, dark hands are there
at my throat throughout the night. Wonder

if they linger around my daughter's bed, gliding
along the crib railing. Wonder if they'll be there

four years from now, if she will
remember them, the way I still do another

man's. The way I still remember the rope, like vine,
embracing bed. My fear eventually moves me

out of my bed, mercifully takes me
into my daughter's room where I can see

that it is empty with no one but her warm body—still sleeping
and blankets. Here, we have converted her bed

to a toddler, and I crawl in. Here, the blankets
are large enough to share, and they are so warm.

The dark is the embrace of a lost mother. When Trump
comes into the room, the switch shines

like the moon in the dark. It breaks white against
the dresser, teeth and razor blades, and I wait

for the snap, for her to wake. How I would explain,
how I would comfort, I do not know—

snap snap—

I wrap my body around her like a cubicle—
I wrap my heart around her like a drum—

carrying the banner

for Feminists in Resistance, Honduras

well then no choice:
you go forward, with your comrades
at times scarcely able to crawl
you are an ant, clutching between hard jaws
like a huge sail, a leaf twice your size
 or a great yellow petal;
a mother cat, carrying her kittens
one after another from refuge to refuge –
what is there you have not carried
on your back and in your belly
caravel swollen with cargo?
brave little pennants
crow's-nest high and fluttering
before the wind
 like your hair ribbons
when you were ten and running to school
when you were ten and scared to be late
when you were ten and running for joy
with the wind tangled
in your hair ribbons
 now
at times you break into a run, banners held high
and the throats of your comrades singing and shouting
like birds
like thunder
you are thousands and your strength is invincible

Fort Worth

When summer's over I'll salvage every string
of white lights and wind them around your club house.

Rough charm among the trees, they will be the crinoline
you always wanted, a ring around your Adam's apple.

I'll call this my one and only.
I'll call it fortress.

See I'm capable of building codes—look how decent it is now.
Dripping girly drapery, itching to make the most of those lines.

Seem, seamstress. Stress rose riser.
Decline the noun while you can.

Lap up the pearl necklace I was
waiting for, before it becomes a moat.

SHAINDEL BEERS

The Manic Pixie Dream Girl Turns Forty

Today, I used the shampoo that makes me think of you.
When I saw my body in the mirror, I thought, *Isn't this sad?*
and This is probably the best it's going to get. Two weekends ago,
I cried myself sick when you said you didn't know if we'd
see each other again. I watched the leaves fall from the tree
outside my window and thought of what you said about "Letting go."
How the kids today are so good at it. How they are perfect
little Buddhists. Think of all they could teach us. I watched
the leaves that were falling and the ones that were hanging on
despite the 45 mph gusts and knew which ones I wanted to be.

That storm killed a handful of people, left thousands
without power, but those leaves knew what they were doing.
I wanted to tell you how here in the desert the leaves
don't really change color, that the tree outside my window
would make the saddest Canadian flag. That each
of the leaves falling makes me think of the eggs
dying in my ovaries. That when you said one reason
we shouldn't be together is that you want to start a family,
the part of me that hears voices knew you meant,
with someone else. This is the plot of every manic pixie dream girl
love story. The man gets to keep himself safe.
He learns from her. Her tragedy makes him a better man
for the next woman.

I am the most caught and released
of the fishwives. The manic pixie dream girl who won't die.
Who is just recast over and over in a slightly different role.
Each time I give something up. My accent. My dignity.
Ever telling a story about my history. Because I was designed
to be fashioned into whatever you want. I wasn't a chameleon until
some of the colors were beaten off of me.

The place the arch
of my foot fits in the shower when I shave is where my husband
used to lean back and stroke his cock while critiquing my body.
This was the opposite of sorority hazing or trying out for
cheerleading. I was supposed to point out what was wrong with me
while he got hard and told me it wasn't true. This was his way
of making me just a body.

Sometimes when I was just a body
I'd float up out of myself. All the times I said, *No, no,*
and he said, *I'll make it all right. I'll make it all better.*
One time, I thought the sound of my shirt ripping was me
leaving my body under him.

Today, I gave away the curtains
I redecorated with for him six years ago. While he was away
at a conference, I put up a Christmas tree, new drapes.
He was texting someone else, *Good morning, Sunshine,*
and pictures of his penis. Now, a girl in town will make crafts
from that fabric. I guess what I'm saying is this –

that isn't even my first husband. There are a lot of stories,
but they all end the same. Always with someone getting smaller
in a rearview mirror. Always with me wondering why
I can't get it right. When you said, I'm still a stranger,

that you
don't know me, I wanted to tell you all the things I don't know how to.
That I still have an unopened black lace teddy, an entire shipment
of sex toys, that I thought I was buying for us. That I will be the sad
Miss Havisham of 2016, courtesy of Something Sexy Planet.
That I didn't know how to say any of this,

so I wrote you this poem.

Playing Dolls

Imagine a girl who doesn't know she's real. Imagine Ginger the makeup artist painting her face backstage saying,
Doing your makeup is like painting a doll.

Look at these eyebrows, these cheekbones, these lashes.
Imagine, *these* – not *yours*.

Suddenly, the girl is a catalogue, a naming of parts. Maybe she was never a girl to begin with. Imagine *Coppélia*, the fabulous doll, dancing the mazurka. Knee, knee, heel, step,

clap, clap. Knee, knee, heel, step, clap, clap. Imagine being the tin soldier who fires the stage cannon at the Mouse King. The one who stands still and greets children

after matinee performances. Imagine hearing children ask parents if you are real. Imagine not knowing.

Imagine being under the same type of spell as the doll who wants to be real. Imagine a man listing parts the same way – *these tits, this ass, this pussy*. Imagine never belonging

to your own body. Your own body never belonging to you. Imagine you were programmed only to say *yes* when a man pulls the string. Imagine when you say *no*, it's like men can't hear it. Like you

are just a doll who says *yes* and *Momma* and *sleepy*. Like when they lay you down, your eyes close, and you don't remember anything that happens next. Imagine the world that tells you this is your fault.

Not Dr. Coppélius or Drosselmeyer or Balanchine. You are the one who has starved yourself to the thinness of a slip, never taught yourself to speak using your wooden tongue. You are the one who had to cut

the strings that were visible only to you. Stare down the hammer above your porcelain skull. You know your body is misshapen from following the choreographer's uneven directions. Now, what are you going to do to fix it?

Promotion

I sit with hands wrapped around the steaming mug. My new office is freezing, my desk just below the vents that blow cold air regardless of the outside temperature. I sit and sip hot water – not tea or coffee, just water. Just the mug to warm my hands and the liquid to warm my throat.

Only men have inhabited this space and I knew it would be cold but the requirement of layers and a lined bra seemed a worthy trade-off for authority and power.

I celebrate by ordering business cards with my new title printed on them. Tomorrow I'll wear an unlined bra. I'll let my erect nipples walk into the room before me – guns blazing.

COURTNEY LEBLANC

Alternative Names for Woman

after Danez Smith

79 cents to a dollar
dramatic
bossy
bitch
stepping stone
support position
secretary. no. administrative assistant
old hag
witch
kitchen dweller
dinner maker
baby maker
glass ceiling breaker
Senator, Justice, Secretary of State
President
President
President

A Conversation With Marie Antoinette

I pour wine and kick off my shoes, complaining
about my week –

60 hours in the office and evenings
spent working, my husband and life
neglected.

Marie rolls her eyes, unsympathetic.

She complains

about Louis, about the gossip,

about the backstabbing employees.

I offer her a piece of cake and she stares
dully at me.

Oh... right... and I push the cake away.

I touch her hair, a towering mass

of curls, a tiny ship tucked

into it, the height of fashion

literally perched upon her head.

She bats my hand away, says she needs

to leave. She stands and cradles

her head in her hands, walks proudly

to the door. She pauses and looks at me.

I meant not to do it.

I eat the cake when she's gone.

LANETTE CADLE

How to Lose

Whether graceful or tumbled, we all lose;
it's only a question of what and when. No one
aims to lose, but that is the first stone in the shoe.

She sees a small erosion, heels toughening, a tan
taken too far shows age, corded from personal training,
hair withered from too much lettuce and no dressing,

and then her existence pales, a life washed in rose milk.
A shadowed corner seen through red tissue paper, fractured
glass caught in freeze frame. Photos show the sinews

of her face, a tissue skull, each tooth straining to show
the joy of nights filled with smoke and casual lies.
What can possibly follow perfection at eighteen?

A sudden loss of beauty that begins one cell at a time
from birth until no one sees her ever again, even when
she's in the room. No one hears her, even when

she shouts. Or it's the other way. She holds herself tight—
no time for fa-las and fou-fou, she has work to do, a vision
she must share and she does. *Controlling*, her campaign whispers,

and then, that dying word, *difficult*. As she speaks and paints
a future for all, competence glazes the room, dimming the light
until no one knows what she did wrong, but they are sure

it's something. Steam coats the shower door, an empty place
with fogged echoes. Paintings tapped perpendicular,
precise. The future's coming. It's almost here.

Carry Nation Returns to the Eaton Hotel at Happy Hour

The Carey Grand Hotel is now the Eaton, cornerstone
of a long-hoped for revival in Wichita
and it's happened. Young men, women, dressed alike
in dungarees roam the sidewalks going from bar to bar
a mockery of the freedom I hoped for. Is this
what we worked for, prayed for?
My hatchet marks carefully restored
by the historical society, the smashed mirror replaced,
and I, a ghost of history worth bringing up
between whiskey sours? If I had known
the future would be one where women are free
to be just as enslaved as men, I would have
swung that hatchet harder and aimed differently.

DARYL SZNYTER

Real Power

is being able to block
my dad on facebook
when he posts a picture
of Hillary Clinton's
head photoshopped
onto a porn star's body
not because i don't
admire the curve of
the unnamed breasts
or the defiant smile
on Hillary's face
but because equality
is being able to block
and unblock my dad's
access to me as many
times as i please.

Last Week of Canvassing for 2016

The wind's rage blows literature
into a woman's yard. She opens the door
a crack and motions us inside, whispering
that she's afraid of what her neighbors
will do to her if they find out who
she's voting for. We offer her a discreet
ride to the polls, vowing to protect
her the way our country should have
years ago. The next door we knock on
shelters a lady who didn't even know
she was registered to vote. She doesn't
know anything about politics, has never
voted before, but this election is special.
We walk a straight line down the block,
careful not to leave footprints in the grass.
"Are we even allowed?" they ask. "How long
do we need to be here?" Every woman brave
enough to answer looks down at her clothes,
brushes off invisible dirt. Over and over,
we are told not to judge. I'm cleaning.
I'm cleaning. I'm cleaning, they say.

I Hear the Change in His Voice When He Realizes Who He's Speaking to

Ask yourself this:
What do prisoners do to staunch the flow?

Are they too ashamed to ask for a tampon?
Do they have toilet paper in prison?

Does rape have a name if you're
a criminal? Does a criminal have

a name? Cotton may be paraphernalia
if it is thick enough to make a noose.

Porous enough to burn if one wakes up
somewhere foreign.

Maxi pads are less glamorous
but can suffocate intruders like a pillow.

No panties allowed.
Cotton, they said.

What is a dress to wear
with nowhere to go?

Allow me to unmake you,
they said, traipsing

us around in red-bottomed shoes, only letting
us keep them if we eat the ground.

Monday

Hold on in my red
blouse black
pant suit
like Hillary
campaigning
stump speaking

Silly ceremony—we stand on
sore feet, sensible
heels a disappointment
my mascara smudges
and now what

Can't fail
so much riding
so much
Do. Not. Fuck. It. Up.
so much riding

LUCY M. LOGSDON

The Good, Good Cripple

The good, good cripple does not slow
the group with her hitched gait.
That drag foot knows its place:
close to the margin marked *accommodation*.
If she insists on trying to hike, swim, or bike,
she must acknowledge the disadvantage
her crippness places on the whole.
Warn the leader ahead of time.
Sometimes, she does, and everyone
smiles their small smile as they wait.
Perfume hides her Poise pad stench.
Expensive, baggy clothes cover her kyphosis.

Fuck the good, good freak.
There's Travel TV, National Geographic,
PBS documentaries. Easier, less pain.
Her struggle to navigate museum steps,
the extra eighteen minutes in bathrooms.
Why not leave The Group?
Strike out on a different path,
like the dirt one right ahead—see
how it forks off the main trail.
She's already wandering onto the tamped
earth where weeds, rough, gnarled,
line her descent. Mushrooms, belladonna,
hemlock thrive. I pick a devil's walking stick;
thorns remind me I'm not numb.
Balance is a fickle bitch—she comes,
then goes. One fox, two does, four hawks,
and one owl ignore my stumbles.
No one calls my name.

Soon return won't work. Bluebells
by the stream, then black, unidentified
snakes: I'm out deep. Wilderness is wilderness.
Beauty and danger. Calculated risk.
Ahead a cliff, the edge shaky, yet riddled
with undergrowth trees. Some roots hang
firmly, others tumble at first touch.
I'll choose wisely: one step down
to brokenness, one step up
for pain, inability, and degeneration.

Recipe for Disaster

First, stop cooking.
Let all the domesticity
of your lovely kitchen wither.
Let mold fill the fridge,
dishes pile in sink.
Let the roaches gather.

The tidying of pillows,
pictures, books, schedules,
and, yes, writing, forgotten.
Weeds blossom. You're a wild
field now; a pasture
gone to seed.

Make a strewing powder:
lavender, peppermint, straw.
Spread on the linoleum. Still,
you can't cover despair's stench:
rotten apples, vodka, burnt
bangs, gas lit cigarettes.

Guzzle your drink. He's not
coming tonight, or tomorrow.
Your poems are rejected.
The promise you arrived with,
a white pillbox hat, matching coat,
falls off. Stop paying your bills.

What's potential, but a chance
to prove loss. Make another.
Kick your sleeping dog awake.
Break a mirror for good luck.
None of the given rules work.
You're broken, a battered cat.

Grad school's tin roof shelter
incinerated your pretty pawed feet.
Once the pet, you've doubled down
to the disaster. Heads shake
when you show up. No one warned
you: talent doesn't do disgrace.

Sleep in wadded piles of unwashed
clothes; grind your teeth at night.
Wisdom molars cut through
bleeding gums. Bare them, then witness:
you are the freak your mother
promised you'd become.

Red Blues

I

My father was not the oldest,
but he was the brightest
boy and so he was sent first

to America. No matter
how far he crawls from Guyana
he will never scrape the wet

earth roads from his feet,
never scrub his pink tongue
of coolie colloquialism.

When I pass down stories
of a back home I have never seen,
my tongue slips quickly

into Caribbean. My father,
terrified of himself, still says
close the lights and tirty

tird. He is a staunch
republican. He once refused to hire
a Trini temp because she had heard

it hiding behind sharp white
enamel, too. How dare she,
he asked my mother.

How dare she?

II

My family came here as
paper sons and through air-
ports requiring cash

in brown paper bags
my mother borrowed to save
a thankless man's brothers.

My mother's hands, a long
fingered daughter of those who fled
burning torches of red

revolution. She did not ask
for much. A loving man. A man
who would give up everything

as her father, and his father before
him, all the way up the chain –
a long line of noble Chinese men.

My mother was born in China-
town. New York City is all
the home she knows. They call

her zuk-sing, empty shell,
Chinese on the outside and
hollow within. She was

gentrified out of Brooklyn last
year – rising rents and Rag
and Bone encroaching, slowly,

slowly, she watches as the stores
filled with pastries and duck
hanging neck-wrung in clouded

windows falls away, replaced
by sleek NYU façades and
rowdy bars. She takes my white

midwestern girlfriend by the hand
and points: Look, there. Do
you see? It's all gone.

III

Here is the beautiful
thing about being a
child bridging worlds

you don't know: the women
are strong in all the same ways,
and yet carry their wrinkles

like maps. Here is where I
fought a brawling student
off with words. He had a cutlass. I

was pregnant, the size
of a planet. I contained the
world and more within me,

and I won. By God, I won.
Here is where I fought a man
who wanted to take from me

what was not his to take. I
was fifteen. Here is the scar
I saw in a young boy's side

left from a knife brawl.
New York was different then.
It wasn't safe for us.

IV

But is it safe for us, now,
I want to ask them.
My mother's missing finger-

tip tells no tales. She is voting
for Hillary. She is sick of white
men ruining everything all

of the time. She wants
a better life for herself.
She does not think of dying brown

children in far-off lands. She is too
fearful for her own son, of his being
shot to care about the abstract.

What do you have against
empathy? a white girl asks
us in an online forum.

Nothing, I do not say to her.
I have nothing against
your empathy at all.

Patterns

I drew a white dress with short white gloves,
pillbox hat over bouffant hair.
Jackie Bouvier had A-line flair
and I the young urge to copy it.

Pillbox hat over bouffant hair,
setting a tone, upswept a nation;
and I the young urge to copy it
with No. 2 pencil onto lined paper.

Setting a tone, upswept a nation --
youngest president, wife and children.
With No. 2 pencil onto lined paper,
I wrote my dreams and nascent poems...

Youngest president, wife and children
daring our hope for Camelot and justice;
I wrote my dreams and nascent poems...
cut short in Dallas on blood-soaked fabric.

Daring our hope for Camelot and justice
cut short in Dallas on blood-soaked fabric.
Jackie's veil of darkness flaring;
I drew a black dress with short black gloves.

My Mother's Angiogram

I could have told the doctors,
before they decided
to thread themselves through
your veins, what they'd discover.
That loss and regret totters
your knees, leaves thick green
branches vining up to your
pelvis. I imagine they will avert their eyes
to your stepfather's sly secrets—
that most powerful part of you,
left as awkward as your mother's elbows
and as icy as her hands
after your father died.
The death of your father will be found
in your crushed voice, tightening
your lungs so that your breath
seeps out in tiny gasps as if
you are sipping slowly your
own death and when they reach
your heart, the stint will open wide
as the bunny ears atop the 16"
black and white to find you a cross-
legged ninth grader watching Bobby
thank Ethel and Freckles, speak of an end
to division and violence, and building
a country based on compassion. But
maybe, at fourteen, you were most
taken by his sincere smile,
the top teeth, just slightly
edging over the bottom, the way
yours do. You'll wake in the morning
to find that hearts can grow weary
and evil lurks in the hollows of a kitchen
waiting for you to pass.

LAUREN BULLOCK

Vagina Dialogue

While trying to convince my vagina that she is in dire need of a haircut, she reminds me of the last time some man critiqued her curls, the way the razor scathed her face into a landscape of livid hills.

For the most part we two are indifferent roommates, absent when we can be. The first time we really gazed at one another was during a homework assignment for *Vagina Monologues*, me bent in an awkward trance before the compact mirror, she an origami of pink and purple flesh. Just staring.

Now my vagina is trying to go all Betty Friedan, says it's a losing game, my coy batting of the word *children* as I browse photo galleries, pausing on a baby (not mine) with my lover's nose, my eyes, all some creamy brown stirring of us like a coffee bar. She says I'll be sorry when he gets bored. Says she'll dry up, lips tight, or else scream bloody murder from the uterus, she says

anything to prevent the possibility of cold gloom creeping into my bedroom again. It doesn't matter how he still greets her with a kiss despite the coarse, sprawling tangle, all the sweet heat she can consume. How could it when she is so unseeing, small, her only defenses made of soft?

The Curse

i. The waxwings in my painted field guide were an imagined smoothness, buckskin feathers like tiny brushes. See how the red and yellow tips might flit across the sky with a Pollock dash? I kept my mouth an eager splash of names and song. I kept my eyes hungry for a flicker of their sound and prepared for distractions: a blue jay's violent screech, a begging blackbird, a cardinal bleeding through the bush in the backyard.

ii. The waxwings outside my window hushed me with unexpected reverence at their elegance, my face so close I could have peeled the bandit masks from their eyes. My best friend on the phone asked what? what? I did not hear them steal her bit by bit in their beaks, every year a fist-sized fluttering of excuses.

iii. Seven years later, the waxwings dripping themselves across the foggy branches beneath my balcony were a Japanese watercolor of weak tea, the sheet music for silence. By then, the man I did not see coming had happened. When I could look no longer, they melted through the moist cloud like little banshees.

iv. The waxwings ornamenting the morning tree are a witness of frantic squeaks and clicks. I want their magic to be too late; they, who have pecked all my best parts clean. But their chatter remains restless, fevered, their small bellies thrumming with want.

Found Poem for Lost Freedom

men shut their gate
stand at the door
like a sheriff
you must
confine yourself within
modest limits

these clothes are good enough
you will... walk veiled
like a cloistress
attested by the holy close
of lips, abandon'd to sorrow
unthought of, roughly used

become a bond-slave
marry, but have a rough hand
lead the way, force
that on you

courage, hope, teaching
turn brains... intent

O, I have read
all the good gifts of nature
and know it is not heresy
this prerogative of speech
mine own escape

I will show you the heart
of my message, sweet lady

I am resolved on two points
the gift of a grave by this hand
for him that gave me
my veil, my shroud,
threw it o'er my face.
and
I shall keep mine own purse
play my freedom, saucy at my gates
open *my* lips... wide
not denied access to the world
beyond a thousand, thousand
sighs

Source: Twelfth Night by
William Shakespeare

Once

Once I was rain
condensed from water vapour
washing your face, your body
precipitation slippery
wrecking the hair
saturating the illusion of control.

You licked your lips
and tasted me as blood
invisible at dew point.

Unashamed of my wetness
your cumulonimbus heart

I slipped through the
leaky roof
bringing you back to life
cold breath on the face.

When I was rain
a one in ten year event
I stormed and raged

bled into the earth with velocity
pockmarked your skin as I hit
leaving fossilised remnants

these love bites
won't fade in the sun.

HILARY VARNER

Mermaid

How do the leaves whir in the breeze and the light?
I wish I could remember their sight and sound
and keep them forever in my heart.

I wish I could keep the leaves themselves
whirring in my heart

because all else is increasing static,
blaring its dominion into the foreground, into me—

the jeweled watches, the plastic bags
of plastic diapers, the caught-on-tape
and its endless defense—

until they become clutching hands of rough grey in my chest,
grabbing each other before hardening into concrete

and scritch-scratch-stacking up so fast their hollow klok
echoes where those leaves should live,

where my panting is
keeping their noise from roaring out my mouth

as I yell silently *What insanity*
you give you to always. As I sigh,
What insanity I give me to always,

and silence, repeating Silence,
finally descends from that watery, chrome head
on my arms around my stretched knees.

Even though I become the worst thing then.
Scales rising, filling in, hardening over

the parts that matter,
the matter that counts,

the 1, 2 legs, the in-between,
all blue-green in 3, 2,--

like the water I am born again in.

I know you and I will never be friends.

I will never have the earth
you call *dirt* inside me,

but I can watch yours sifting
slowly, like passion for living, out of your flesh

while I can dissolve your grey chaos
and re-fuel, clarify,
be a monster but at least be alive

enough to turn off the tap, un-fish,
steel-coat myself to rise
and do it again. Admit it:

My legs walk wrapped in their costume of dryable skin
up your hard streets to pay for things

while your eyes narrow
at their borrowedness.
Admit it: You feel my tail.

LAURA LEHEW

I AM JUST ASKING FOR AN ACCOMMODATION

not to have my readings recorded. About snapping, blogging, posting. Facebooking. Chips, cameras. Devices everywhere. Stop lights and malls. Pockets, purses. Phones. Commonplace drones. A ceaseless signal. Jams my right to privacy. Yes. The struggle—the issue of people hearing me. My ©'d intimate confessional. Downstreamed. Out of context. Free. Instant gratification 24/7. Words stolen. Consider the election. The Alt-right repercussions. Poets rounded up. Censored. Akhmatova, Murugan, Techung. Dead or exiled. Our voices, our ability to speak the truths—to be witness. We will be jailed. Disappeared. I have travelled this country. I have travelled this world. I know what I have witnessed.

WOMEN COLLECTIVELY

I was abused by my father—fists, belts and other tortures
I was raped by my “friend” at my own party in my own house
I was stalked for months on end creepy notes left on my car, even after

I moved 6 times

Words beat me down to a still too fat “0”
thanks to my first husband

I have worked over 30 years in high tech

I have been paid less, passed over for promotions

I have endured jokes, boasts, pictures, the oh-so-many unwanted
sexual advances

his tape—his words alone, words

the way he says them, the way he means them

he says they are just words—

but it's his pacing, his invasion of her space, his towering over her, his words, his hand a lowered
fist, his rising words, his pacing, his empty apology, his hand on the small of her back, his
glowering, his words interrupting, his hand grabbing her elbow shaking her hand, just
pussy

Lucy

Lucy will never know
 hair ties with balls at the end
 smacking the back of her scalp
 as her mother wrestles her hair
 into a ponytail or the burning
 sensation around the edges
 of her hair from a perm
 that she wanted because
 she wanted her hair “straight”.
 Lucy’s hair is bone
 straight like two hours
 in the bathroom after
 a wash and condition,
 flat irons 450 degrees
 straight like time, money
 well spent, two hour
 wait at the salon even with
 an appointment then another
 hour under the dryer
 and another two with
 the professionals straight.
 And Lucy wears it half up
 half down with the ponytail
 in the middle like my sister
 used to in high school
 before her sickness when I
 envied her for going out
 with her friends in her own car
 when she would braid my kinky hair
 and I would cringe at the sound
 of her long fingernails *clink-clacking*
 together like beer bottles when
 you declare cheers.
 Lucy will never know
 hair so thick that rubber
 bands can’t hold never
 know kinky curls without
 a curling wand because
 lucy’s hair is straight
 it’s straight edge straight
 flat line, no pulse straight
 straight.

The Task at Hand

a difference between
the art of seeing
 and serpentine lines.
 consistent line of beauty
 proving serpentine
 in repressing several features.
 many serpentine lines loose, naturally
 nothing more than a varied play of serpents
 twisting in a flame-like manner.

imperfect power is so rooted
 in scarce cunning:
 how our eyes, riveted,
 seldom believe
 at first sight

a downright idiot,
 a foolish or wicked mind.

at any age, betray
 (ever so entirely)
 the hypocrite
 smiling
 and stab his face.

Testament

What will you do without apple-spill,
pink-glazed mornings, the sturdy body
in barren winter, quiescent, assured?

At the height of your agitation, I see
the blossoms, the bright fruit, boughs
tight against your neighbor's fence,
its great trunk extended outward

from the roofline on Windy Hill.

I will mourn with you for the apple tree.
For one hundred years it stood by your house,
the heart of your investment.

I'll stand here, too, in the vacancy
until, from the deeps of sadness, you
can draw another view.

Bones

I have to go back.
I have to keep searching

For something alive
Among the dead.

I am yet undecided
How to arrange

Her bones.
I want to conjure

The dark red throbbing heart.
Regrow her hair and teeth

The way they used to be.
Her legs are in my hands,

Cool to the touch
Like bottled milk.

Better, perhaps, to leave her alone,
Unfeeling and without question.

E. Kristin Anderson is a poet and author living in Austin, TX. She is the co-editor of *Dear Teen Me*, an anthology based on the website and her next anthology, *Hysteria: Writing the Female Body*, is forthcoming from Sable Books. She is currently curating *Come as You Are*, an anthology of writing on 90s pop culture for ELJ Publications. Kristin is the author of eight chapbooks of poetry, including *A Guide for the Practical Abductee* (Red Bird Chapbooks), *Pray, Pray, Pray: Poems I wrote to Prince in the middle of the night* (Porkbelly Press), *Fire in the Sky* (Grey Book Press), *She Witnesses* (dancing girl press), and *We're Doing Witchcraft* (Hermeneutic Chaos Press). Kristin recently took a position as special projects manager for ELJ and is a poetry editor at *Found Poetry Review*. Find her online at EKristinAnderson.com and on Twitter at [@ek_anderson](https://twitter.com/@ek_anderson).

Magdalena Ball is a novelist, poet, reviewer and interviewer, and is the editor of *Compulsive Reader* (compulsivereader.com). She has been widely published in literary journals, anthologies, and online, and is the author of several published books of poetry and fiction, the latest of which is the novel *Black Cow* (Bewrite Books) and the forthcoming poetry book *Unmaking Atoms* (Ginninderra Press).

Karen Barton is studying History of Art with Creative Writing with the Open University. She is the co-founder of *Matryoshka Poetry*, a site that actively promotes new, and emerging writers. Her work has been published in *I Am Not A Silent Poet*, *The Curly Mind*, *Matryoshka Poetry*, *Quatrain Fish*, and other sites. She has a special interest in concrete and visi-poetry. Find her at: <http://thepapercutpoet.blogspot.co.uk>

JoAnne Bauer, Ph.D., recently published her full-length poetry collection, *Drawn Parallels* (Trafford.com), as well as a chapbook, *Dances with Masks and Mirrors*, for Finishing Line Press. Her poems have won prizes in state contests and been accepted into international, national, and regional publications, including: *Caduceus*; *CT River Review*; *Journey to Crone*; *Poets Against War*; *seed packets*; *Theodate*; YouTube; and *Where Flowers Bloom*. She serves as a contest judge for the National Federation of State Poetry Societies and as an officer on the Boards of Riverwood Poetry Series and the West End Poetry Society, as well as the originator and convener of ekphrastic poetry for the annual National Arts Program in Hartford.

Shandel Beers's poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies. She is currently an instructor of English at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton, Oregon, and serves as poetry editor of *Contrary*. A *Brief History of Time*, her first full-length poetry collection, was released by Salt Publishing in 2009. Her second collection, *The Children's War and Other Poems*, was released in February of 2013.

K. I. Billey's debut poetry collection *Vulgar Mechanics* is a finalist for Fordham Lincoln Center's Poets Out Loud Prize and being rendered into Spanish by poet Soledad Marambio. Originally from rural Alberta, Canada, Billey won *Vallum's* 2015 Poetry Prize and her poems have appeared in *CutBank*, *Denver Quarterly*, *The New Orleans Review*, and *Prelude*. An assistant editor for *Asymptote*, her translations from Spanish and Icelandic have appeared or are forthcoming in the *Harvard Review*, *Circumference*, the Council for European Studies' *CritCom*, and *Palabras Errantes*. See more at ktbilley.com.

Lauren Bullock is a multiracial writer, performer, and community organizer living in the DC metro area. Currently she serves as a staff writer for nerd culture web site *Black Nerd Problems* as well as poetry editor for literary magazine *FreezeRay Poetry*. When not working on poetry-related activities she enjoys fighting crime as a costumed vigilante.

Lanette Cagle teaches rhetoric and creative writing at Missouri State University in Springfield, just down the road from that shrine to pop culture and outlet shopping, Branson. She has previously published poetry in *TAB: The Journal of Poetry and Poetics*, *Yellow Chair Review*, *Rose Red Review*, *Stirring*, and *By&By Poetry*.

Natalie Crick, from Newcastle in the UK, has found delight in writing all of her life and first began writing when she was a very young girl. She graduated from Newcastle University with a degree in English Literature and plans to pursue an MA at Newcastle this year. Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in a range of journals and magazines including *The Lake*, *Ink Sweat and Tears*, *Poetry Pacific*, *Interpreters House* and *Jet Fuel Review*. Her work also features or is forthcoming in a number of anthologies, including *Lehigh Valley Vanguard Collections 13*. This year her poem, 'Sunday School' was nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

Jen Davis is a Northern Kentucky-based freelance writer with poetry published or forthcoming in *Licking River Review*, *Eclectica Magazine*, *Vine Leaves Literary Journal* (including their 2015 "Best of" anthology), and *NEAT Magazine*. As a freelancer she is churning out copy and relocating poorly placed commas, and on the creative side she is actively seeking shelter for her unpublished works while toiling over her first chapbook.

Kim Jacobs-Beck is a student in Miami University's low-residency MFA program. She has a Ph.D. in British Literature, also from Miami, and is Professor of English at the University of Cincinnati Clermont College. She lives in Hamilton, Ohio, with her husband Dan and a too-smart-for-her-own-good cat, Jasmine.

K. A. Jagai was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York and lived there up until it got too gentrified for their family. They now live in southern Vermont with their girlfriend while they are working towards their undergraduate degree in storytelling at Bennington College. They are a qtpoc poet and artist trying to live in an America that doesn't particularly want them here, and

their work revolves around the politics of identity. They will be graduating in December, barring Trumpian disaster.

Janine Lehane is a poet and artist from Hobart, Australia. Her poetry has been published by Telling Our Stories Press, along with her cover art; *The Write Place at the Write Time*; and *Hawaii Pacific Review*; and is soon to appear in an anthology out of The Poetry Society of New Hampshire and as the *Labletter Monthly Note* (February 14, 2017). She also co-edited a volume of selected writings by eminent teacher and community organizer, Suzanne Radley Hiatt.

Courtney LeBlanc loves wine, nail polish, and tattoos. Her chapbook, *All in the Family*, is forthcoming from Bottlecap Press. Her poetry is published or forthcoming in *Connections*, *Welter*, *Plum Biscuit*, *Pudding Magazine*, *The Legendary*, *Germ Magazine*, *District Lines*, *Slab*, *Wicked Banshee*, *The Door is a Jar*, and others. Read her blog at www.wordperv.com, follow her on Twitter [@wordperv](https://twitter.com/@wordperv), or find her on facebook: www.facebook.com/poetry.CourtneyLeBlanc.

Laura LeHew's collections include: *Becoming* (Another New Calligraphy), *Willingly Would I Burn*, (MoonPath Press), *It's Always Night, It Always Rains*, (Winterhawk Press) and *Beauty* (Tiger's Eye Press). In her other life Laura owns a computer forensics and network security consulting company. Laura received her MFA from the California College of Arts. She edits the small press *Uttered Chaos* (utteredchaos.org). Laura knows nothing of gardens or gardening but is well versed in the cultivation of cats. lauralehew.com.

Lucy M. Logsdon's work has appeared in such publications as *Nimrod*, *Literary Orphans*, *Heron Tree*, *Poet Lore*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Iodine*, *Sixfold*, *Seventeen*, *Rose Red Review*, *Conclave*, *Drafthorse*, *Heron Tree*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *Rust & Moth* and *Gingerbread Literary Review*. Recipient of a Macdowell Writers Colony fellowship, she's taught at Columbia University, Univ. of Houston, HCC and various community colleges. She received her MFA from Columbia University (and did much ABD work at Univ. of Houston). Now back in rural America, she raises chickens, ducks and other occasional creatures with her husband, and two rebel step-grrrls. Recently on "break" from academia, she's started an online store, LLCollector.com. She is also tutoring, conducting poetry workshops and explaining to past students what happens when pedagogy runs amok. Find her on Twitter [@logsdon64_lucy](https://twitter.com/@logsdon64_lucy).

Mandy Macdonald is an Australian feminist writer living in Aberdeen. Her poetry has appeared in print and online in the anthologies *Outlook Variable and Extraordinary Forms* (Grey Hen Press), *Poetry Scotland*, *The Fat Damsel*, *The Star's Nest*, *I am not a silent poet*, and elsewhere. She is proud to belong to the honourable company of those the English journalist Oliver Thring has memorably called 'deranged poetesses' (#derangedpoetess). She writes in the strong hope that poetry can change the world, even just a little. The rest of the time, she sings.

Julian Mithra queers desire through performance poems, collage zines, found footage video, and one of a kind art books. Their work has been published or forthcoming in *The Golden Key*, *Pilcrow&Dagger*, *Milvia Street*, and *PoetryFilmKanal*. They have a master's degree in Folklore from UC Berkeley.

sNicholas lives and teaches in the mountains of San Bernardino where she is slowly replacing her children with dogs, kittens, and baked goods. She has a variety of teaching and writing degrees which she uses pay her mortgage and when attempting to impress distant relations. Some of her recent poems can be found at sNicholas.net and she also invites you to join her on the Twitter [@shalisorange](https://twitter.com/@shalisorange).

Jeanne Obbard received her bachelor's degree in feminist and gender studies from Bryn Mawr College, and will always be #WithHer. Her work has previously appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Anderbo*, *Atlanta Review*, *Barrow Street*, *EDGE*, *Philadelphia Stories*, *The Rumpus*, and *Prompted*, an anthology.

Taylor Pitts is a senior at Columbia College Chicago and a Poetry major with a minor as a Teacher Artist and in Black World Studies. Originally from Michigan, she moved to Chicago to start her career as an artist. She was recently published in *The Lab Review* volume 2, issue 2 and the *Columbia Poetry Review*, no 30 due out in Spring 2017. She currently lives on the Southwest side with her cat Amaterasu.

Daryl Szytler received her MFA in poetry from The New School. Previous and forthcoming publications include *Best American Poetry* blog, *Bluestem Magazine*, *Eunoia Review*, *The Fem*, *Freshwater Literary Journal* and others. She currently resides in Dunmore, Pennsylvania.

McKenzie Lynn Tozan lives and writes in South Bend, Indiana, where she begins teaching composition at Indiana University South Bend in the fall. She received her MFA in Poetry from Western Michigan University, where she worked as the layout and design editor at *New Issues Poetry and Prose*. She specializes in poetry, essays and book reviews; and her poems have appeared in *Encore Magazine*, *Sleet Magazine*, *Analecta*, and various online publications. Visit her at www.mckenzielynntozan.com for more info, poetry and stories of her husband, their daughter, and three cats.

Hilary Varner received her MFA in Poetry from Warren Wilson College. Her work has appeared in *The Collagist*, *The Fem*, and *Juked*. She lives in Plainfield, IL. She can be reached at hilaryvarner@gmail.com.