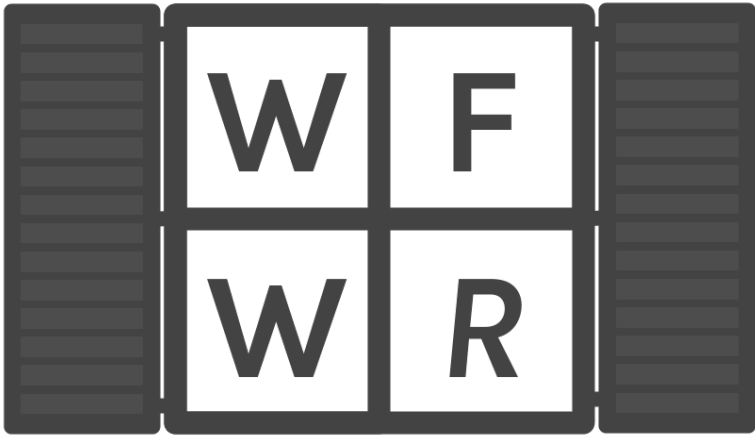


Windows Facing Windows Review.



an open journal of poetry

ISSUE 1
NOVEMBER 2020



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wired

MP Armstrong

downtown, chestnuts crack
under my feet, a thousand
little ribcages. ice breaks
and leaves crumble, death-
dyed chips of paint strewn
across the sidewalk. i lived
here, at the intersection of
winter and fall. i lived here,
the corner of beauty and
brutality, dodging the
ghosts until i nearly became
one of them, caught up in
the music of their own crackle—
grounded electricity holding
them to the telephone wires.
downtown glows with it;
it sweeps in waves over the
vegan restaurant, the repaved
road, the quiet insistence that
things are getting better and
perhaps you should be here
to see it. you could live here,
too, be a pulse with everyone
listening, and a marionette
with wires that lead to the
rainbow-vein hands of
your mother, kneading a
lump of dough, and the
ghosts of all your former
neighbors and cashiers.
you could live here,
sparks flying off your
fingertips right into the
sputtering symphony of
somewhere i thought
that i already shed.

**AS LONG AS I GOT YOU BY MY SIDE I'M NOT
AFRAID OF ANY AMOEBA BECAUSE THE POWER
OF LOVE IS TOTALLY STRONGER THAN THAT
ISH**

Shawn Berman

early in the morning

before i'm even out of bed

mom calls to tell me

about a recent post that she saw on facebook

that there's a new and terrifying amoeba floating around

that can supposedly turn your brain into complete and utter mush within
days of coming into contact with it.

and i know i should be afraid

or weary or scared or whatever

but

the thought of being able

to ladle my cerebrum juices

into a giant bowl of ramen

topped off with some steaming hot scallions

and copious amounts of mushrooms

gives me butterflies like no other,

the kinda butterflies i get when you

send me unprovoked flirty mid-morning texts like

adam sandler probably should've won an oscar for his performance in
grown ups 2

or

the spicy potato soft taco is infinitely better than the crunchwrap supreme
but people are too afraid to admit it because they don't wanna deal with the
blowback from crazy taco bell fanboys since groupthink blinds people from
forming their own opinions

which leads them to believing

that it's totally acceptable to facetime someone outta the blue

like they're some deranged lunatic

who has no social boundaries

or regard

for you having to pause your current netflix binge sesh of *the office*.

this is why

in my unbiased opinion

we should probably

skip second base altogether

and a make joint animal crossing island

or like get married

at city hall

so we can spend the rest of our lives watching cute kitten videos on tik tok

while sipping on some of the best double ipas brooklyn has to offer.

idk

i'm just spit-balling here

but it

sounds pretty perfect to me,

i think!

My Mother Was a Valkyrie

James Butler-Gruett

My mother sang at the airport.

Or: we left her at her gate
and in kindergarten I didn't
know planes or boarding passes.

On the phone she fed me
details I would like.

I have a sword, for one role.

The tenor calls me Xena!

I pictured her swashbuckling,
doing lip trills on the tarmac,
ducking around the men
with serious orange glowsticks.

In one photograph she's Brünnhilde
backstage hefting my sister and me.

Her hair's fake gold on shiny chainmail.

I, five or so, look dazed and cowed, far
from crying *Hojotoho!* myself.

Some things my father knew to hide from her
if he'd fed my sister and me only poptarts for a few days,
if my socks were different colors.

If I had, as I remember, hidden bread crusts in the VCR.

If I had wandered through the house at night, unsleeping
crying out, *Where's mom?*

And today, my first adult Wagner:
one hour of yawn, two hours of brawn,
five hours of awe. String parts needle
and horns burble. Wotan's vampy
vambraces and grizzled eyepatch
shout, *Be like me, keening and severe!*

Somewhere in my first act fog
there's a magic sword and *Wälse*
from a giant's lips. Brünnhilde's onstage
when I'm more attentive, she stomps and crashes,
brandishes a spear. I watch her caught in a ring of fire,
I watch her hold for applause. She coruscates there. No look
of mine can ever glean her moment. Watch
her bow, pluck up a bouquet tossed from the house,
watch her walk backstage to someone unseen.

Our Time Is Over

David Centorbi

You have to understand,
Not everyone wants to meet you.
Not everyone wants to talk to you.
No one wants to care for everyone.
It would be as impossible as turning stones into bread.

I am a pessimist, that is right.
I want to believe in the beauty of a kissed frog,
but not until forever & ever can be synthesized.

So, for now, I know
The whispers from an empty chair
Are the only words
I need to hear.

heat death elegy

Sandhya Ganesan

after Robert Frost's "Fire and Ice"

you wave to the universe and it doesn't notice. it's not your fault.
the universe doesn't understand the thermodynamics of hello.

every action has an equal opposite reaction. somewhere a black hole sighs
for one last glimpse of light. it has never before been the consumed thing.

the universe simply wants a glass of chilled water. it has never told
anybody this. absolute zero: an ice cube left out in the sun to melt.

entropy until equilibrium. stars *hold with those who favor fire* but physics
has never taken into account *desire*. relativity has never considered sleep.

when you look up, you see no light. it's not your fault. light faltered well
before
god lost his game of dice and the universe gave up its pretense of chance.

you wave to the universe. it decides *ice would suffice* and suffuses itself with
it.
no one notices. no one waves back. no one knows how.

MIRROR: REMINDING.

EL Kamaal

One day, I feared death enough
I prayed God to rescind its inevitability;
I feared it enough
I listened to my fears chirping the song
Of the end. They throw me the meanings
Of death as a young rainbow: *different,*
Inimitable. But the definition which
Unplugged my heart out of my chest
Is their sudden silence without warning.
Without reduction in their corporate sound.
And neither their voice slightly heard,
Nor the tenderness of their feathers felt
Ever and ever again.

SLEEPLESS.

EL Kamaal

1

The night is a hypocrite: he deprived me of my right to work it as if nothing owns it more than me. I own the copyright of the darker part of the night to my eyes as much as you all, sleeping on your chest. I pray pharmaceutically just to have a kind of peace I can't live to explain. The kind of peace one experiences through inactivity. I undressed my body into the hand-manufactured air beside everyone's snoring, and it almost cursed the incompetence of every nature of tranquility.

2

I think my stressed body is the rolling stone:
It kept rolling north and west on the atlas
Of my bed. Music is beautiful to pass the night,
But the sleeping well of my neighbors
Depends on the lower the volume of my need to dance.
What is the purpose of the night
If not for something useful like the ephemeral death.

3

I don't mind being knocked out—hours or forever—
By the calm fist of the night.
But I care about getting my consonants right.
I care about singing high when the singer sings of the hill.
I care about silence and the meaningful words
Stretching out of my mouth at the dawn of the day
When the fog breathes the new white
Of another interestingly distressing day.
I care about being given my right by the night.
I care about getting laid by the bringer of the stars
To hours of journeying the plain history, unconscious.
I care about, like almost everyone else,
About recognizing my mother's voice
When the ruggedness of the night lastly fades into memory.

Tres Comas

EL Kamaal

1

I married phonetics in the church of grammar. Calling a wolf a wolf is another way of impressing a language bride, so I respect my second tongue by calling a spade a spade in front of its rake mother. I also adhere to the rules of reading, as fast as the legs of a starved cheetah, escorting its prey into the slaughterhouse of its teeth until the linguistic millipede—head-curved, and lone—came, blocking the smoothness of my flow. I felt a pause in my breath—as short as sleep compared to death.

2

This is what happens when the pause
Lasts long: I can't kill myself holding
My breath, but my breath can exhaust itself
Out of frustration of getting abandoned.

3

But out of the page, a comma is me, halting
At my desk, typesetting reality out of fiction.
It is the tip of my long middle finger, putting
Full stop at the end of every sentence, nullifying
The image of my most beautiful creation.
It is also the cries, and suspense, resting
On the slippery floor of my audience throats.

4

Out of the page, two commas are out there,
In the living room, doing nothing.
Two commas are the beds in the theater
Pleading recuperation for their bodies' heads.
They are you and me, hating our lives
To the blood and bone. They are everything out of normal
Still breathing loud, still breathing clear.

5

The three commas are everyone.
They are the oak trees,
Growing wide in everyone's backyard
With the forming of the day,
With the greying of the noon,
With the snowing cool of the summer,
With the westing of the sun,
With the hoofing spree of every wind
With the headquarters of violence

Until it grows over everyone's roof
At the old age of the starry midnight
When every hand is inside themselves
Cuddling relaxation;

Until the three commas eventually crossed
The street of our breath, giving us hands
To see the beautiful legs of the Lord
In the presence of the flawless of heaven.

Structures & Individuals

Frank Karioris

Here is an example of what structural critique looks like and what it can mean.

I can judge and critique and damn McDonald's and their reach, impact, and power

Without leveling any judgement towards those who work there, eat there, or survivor there.

Critique of the institution does not comment on the community built here.

Such as Cornelius, the elderly man, orders two fish sandwiches and has coffee, eating with his chosen family.

Deanna, the manager in on her day off, walks his coffee to him, I can't remember if he takes Splenda or not she says.

As they're finishing their sandwiches, one of the staff members lovingly takes the pot of coffee and fills everyone's cup.

This is how individuals work within the institution.
This is how we must critique the institution while still being with those in it.

We all need another cup of coffee,
amongst many many other broader things.

In A Dress Walking Alone

Aura Martin

Cento from Always Happy Hour: Stories by Mary Miller

I'm in love with a boy who carves things into his arms with the sharp edges of beer cans. These are the best days, but still I do not write. He sits across from me and I watch him dig around in his box full of small tools. Tomorrow is Saturday and we'll go to the river and drink beer and maybe catch more fish to put in the tank.

I don't feel like going to the river. What good can come of it? His energy makes me nervous and dull, like I have nothing to say that might interest him, like I won't be able to hold his attention for long. You never catch anything anyway.

Skeleton cars and underfed dogs. I hear thunder in the distance. I toss my bottle cap, which I've been clutching so tightly there's a ring in the center of my palm, out the window and take the last beer from the refrigerator.

I watch him the same way he watches me—blankly, without interest. This is not my life. Nothing makes sense.

I get drunk and all I could think to ask is when I would die, if he could tell me when I'd die. He puts his arm around me and holds the camera up and takes picture after picture. I lie back and close my eyes.

Sidestage

A. Martine

Time passes differently here you were envisioning trampolines now you are headed for concrete sit on your hands sit upright and don't get comfortable never comfortable who said a bird in the hand should have gone for a different metaphor the puss moth eats its own skin after it has shed it now that is cashing out and cashing in sit your legs under you sit apart sit so they don't see it when you slouch you've landed in worse places with agony and its also-rans so sit so they can't see your face see it wrinkle wishwashed in fear get yours get yours all the way sit so you still look woman and a threat sit so the whole world knows this here bitch has some power imminent it's a ten of pentacles kind of day call yourself circe making out of pigs men sit like a trick on the sideline clothe yourself in others' shadows you've landed in worse places you've been dragged into the light singled out for your atrocity you said never again now you have to mean it sit by the corner let them take the stage center sit so nimble they mistake you for decor you were headed for concrete now you're back looking skyward they see you they see only washout misfire letdown they list in order skin gender origin they say I don't think so so get your shit together you puss-moth, you sit like you're the last sentence they'd have thought to string together sit like they won't even know won't even know what hit them.

Pinhole Image

Michaela Mayer

i hold a grey snapshot, negative space
in the shape of your body: where once
you stood, now a nimbus of silver halide
crystals, an aching void. weeks ago

you told me you needed space
to process intimacy, how it triggers
you—the ache lessened but not
gone, its luminous weight what gives

pause to plaintiveness. still, you are
the shape of absence, a hole in the paper
of our joint lives, curling into yourself.
i grasp to flatten the edges and my fingers

fall through. i think of you holding me,
that day in your bed, your fingers laced
with mine. that image blazed by sun
coming through the little aperture, fixed

on paper forever: our grainy picture
etched in chemicals laced with gelatin,
and how dear you are, my friend,
my friend, my dearest, dazzling friend.

When not paying attention

David McKenzie

I hit my leg on the coffee table and there's a trickle of blood
running down my shin.

This is what happens when I don't pay attention.

Also, you walked out the door the other day and I
haven't seen you since.

You said something as you left. I thought you went to buy
milk or bread. Something like that.

Then I noticed your clothes were missing from the wardrobe.

Are you on a holiday?

When are you returning?

It's very quiet without you. I'm enjoying the silence.

Line-dancing with Heschel

Andrew Miller

Help me, on the dance floor,
not to dismiss, deny,
nor denigrate the every day
happy hour, the cowboy
hats, the boots, the flags,
the bulging mechanical bull.
When you lean towards the DJ,
and the DJ is listing the steps,
half-turn, sailor, sailor,
kick, kick, and hips! Heschel,
help me hold your vision,
we're making holy time.

Get Off My Lawn, Kids

Leah Mueller

Once I
discovered
the truth
about Santa,
my patience
for miracles
began to wane.

I prayed
every night
until I was ten,
but God
also failed
to deliver.

Now, in my
seventh decade,
I have given
up hope
for a Socialist
takeover,

a vegan
renaissance,
a sudden surge
of brotherhood,
or heartfelt
apologies

from ex-friends
who dashed
my love
like eggs
against a wall.

Forget miracles.

We are
all better off
waiting our turn
in the emotional
bread line,

hoping there
will be a few
tiny scraps
left over
when our turn
finally comes.

Double-Entry

Shareen K. Murayama

My mother and I wait for fortune
to fall. Our pockets plump

with college loans. In some cities,
a virgin or child is sacrificed

to quell that with fur on back and ears.
Is it better to feign complicity

or fly faster with less control?
Even water deities can tally lateness.

My mother's sacrifices are tea-stained,
like a leash-tan around my leg

skinning her past from today's last light.
I worry over holes in zero and options.

I forage all trails less egalitarian
than my own body. My mother and I

wait for my college degree
to mean something.

She gardens peppers, tomatoes, paprika:
nightshades that flower at night.

Afterwards, some bodies inflame
against things that harm them:

pain, swelling, loss of function,
like safe passages for boats.

When I Say What, I Really Mean

Shareen K. Murayama

Just tell me; I don't
believe you &
I have no
clue I agreed to
something
Come again?
Fill me in
I know
nothing
you've taken
too much &
I want to
please you &
I'm in denial
Surprised? Ex-
hausted? An emphasis
over something
remarkable: like thin
words. An approxi-
mation: I don't
want you &
there's nothing
between these
cracked
working hands
anticipate
surrender
don't bother me,
really; I'm open
to suggestions—such a
small
unspecified thing

SURGE

Shareen K. Murayama

A **PILL**, like a needle, morphs pained to peaceful.
If it gets too bad, sometime in the night,
 he might—

INJECT a fallen country four or five times
it grows colder than most;
 other animals bear arms
 too far from

CIVILIZATION where most people of color & women
do not negotiate, taking what's already plated

GREAT-FULL—how I start to spell my country's name
but I'm a paradox loyal to the backspace key
so my words uncoil in parks like a lover's

BODY with fists & milk to wash the
EYES of children stewing patiently for
JUSTICE, meaning feedback, to nourish
ANOTHER returning from a

CROSSING to learn if you're like me
or **NOT** because that's all
the **POWER** I have right now.

Pin Pricked

Anisha Narain

Content warning: suicide.

A knock on my door takes the belt off
my neck tonight. I wasn't expecting a sound

or a reminder of my own breath. I open the door
and start the dishes. Cleaning has a healing

power of its own—I forgot. I forget a lot
when I'm living above the world. Like how warm

the sun pulses, or how well water calms.
I can only tread the memory of everything

you and I have worn around our necks. Hangers,
cords, straps of purses we despised. Never belts.

I watched as you threw yours away,
the only kindness you spared for yourself.

I can only taste my heart beating faster
in my chest, still hammering even though

I don't have to make sure you made it
through the day anymore. I still worry

sometimes. What things are you putting
in your body, what people have you let in

to your yawning heart. Who else have
you left a pin pricked balloon, bursting

open over and over and over again.

I Want You to Do It For Me

Anisha Narain

You asked to walk me home
so I wouldn't sleep on the sidewalk.
I don't know how much or if

 you even love me. I said yes
so I could pretend that you do—
 love me, that is.

I said yes because I only want
your arm to use in the tug of war
against the morning. You have such

 a big heart, I repeat to myself.
You're the one walking me home
 when nobody else would.

You don't come inside because I tell you
not to. If you did, you would've stood awkwardly
beside my bedroom door with a glass of water.

 I'll get my own water,
even when my only thought is how much
 I want you to do it for me.

Drainwater

Noreen Ocampo

My mother's flag swells with
the same colors as my own, but my skin
would burn under the golden sun
from which hers was forged, unaccustomed to
the love of a sky overripe & vermilion.
She dices mangoes in steady palms that held
blood just hours prior, her knife
splitting flesh & fingers pressing a blade
into mine moments later. I slice
fruit clumsily & do not cup the sunlight
messily weeping over my knuckles,
wondering if my mother will fill our
silent chasm, ask if I have reconsidered
learning the family ritual of weaving
breaths back together. Instead,
she is quiet, dicing mangoes in steady palms.
I tell her that if I imagine my blade
as a pen on paper, I slice more smoothly
& she laughs, tells me that I was
always destined for creation rather than
resurrection, muses over what could
have been if I had learned to create life
in our own tongue. Her golden sun
could have been mine, too. But instead,
I am silent, unloved by the sunlight
weeping over my knuckles & into the drain.

In no time

Noreen Ocampo

The streets are aflame with all colors
again, high-rises crumbling as sidewalks
split from the main roads. The
streetlights choke on a
mispronunciation of my name that
I should be used to by now, but it still
irks me endlessly. You know what
to do, buying tickets so we board the
next train. The city's colors combust
outside the window as we soar past,
flames licking the side of the
tracks. I hear them wailing

for me,
my palms prickling as the temperature
of my skin peels a layer from my bones. You
do not touch me,
do not need to. You simply order
a glass of ice water, like you always
do on days like these, voice your awe
at the speeds this train can reach,
& remind me that we will arrive at the
next city, where the unworldly colors
never touch, in no time. & so I hold
the glass in my hands, feel the
heat fade, & believe you.

LIMBO AS A HIKE ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Lucas Peel

at the end of the valley, turn left at the burning bush. continue on through the charred earth or ocean of glass, all needle and 40 oz. listen: it is not the wind, clattering like pill bottles or fistfuls of keys stumbling out the front door for what you remember as the last time. then, heaven parts like a mosaic, the pickled red sun smiles back through the wreckage. then, a way out. so i climb a ladder that is also a railroad and also a beanstalk and the boy who told me of its breath or spot in the imaginary sky. you, the boy. you, scattered ash in the mausoleum of my memory. rumor has it that at the top there is a pyre made entirely of boys. a thousand dead boys, a vast orchard of bloom, dandelions spilling themselves into the selfish breeze, taking flight in the hopes of finding a home in the potted chest of everyone they left behind. rumor has it that the boy is the rumor or the flame or jar of marbles sunk in an empty lake of stars. from up here, i can no longer hear you. or myself. so i turn back, watch the flowery mist billow like a song from the mountaintop. on the way out, i find a seed by the trailhead. i think i will keep it, for now.

When A Friend Tells Me I Am A Trope

Gaia Rajan

I want to be undeniable,
so I snap mint bubblegum,

send my address to strangers,
Tweet. I turn sixteen browsing *TVTropes*

and I christen myself Manic Pixie
Dream Girl, spray my hair 48-hour blue, pound

my desire into a vinyl. I'll be a hollow
thrift-store dress, just pretty enough. I'll name myself

new. I'll be your perfect. I'll apologize.
I buy a wardrobe and talk to three boys

and then I realize I want
to be undeniable. Imagine a bird turns

into a mouth. Imagine the mouth widens
into wound. I will never be

a patient body, or an empty attic. Some days
I am afraid of myself. It's been a long time

since I wanted to die, since I chiseled my body
to someone else's desire. Since I could be that girl,

the girl who sets the world on fire,
burning herself to the ground.

The Wolf Gives Red a Rose

Gaia Rajan

and lightning escapes her jawless throat,
the town quiet as a hand clapped over a mouth—

and he knows she will end him. He is lucky:
best dog in the pack. The others look to him for permission

to bark. In her cottage, Red's grandmother lights a candle
on the photos, sharpens her teeth, pulls up her quilt.

Let's start over. There is a girl always told *stay*
safe, who shrouded a cloak over her skin soft

and lethal. And a wolf who tore smiles in throats,
picked brambles from the roses. Sure, he's lucky,

you can have him clean, a legend, the kind of man
no one suspects. She forgets about her grandmother.

They buy rings, stare into each other's eyes.
He brushes her hair back, the ring grazing her cheek;

in July, she knows he'll backhand her with it. She
has forgotten she can leave. Considers everything:

silence, drowning, burial. Every possible story—
girl dies to a howl. Girl stares into the open glow

of her phone until it becomes the moon. Girl turns herself
blue and unlikely in someone's mouth, girl takes back

the rose, girl is running, girl
is running, girl is running.

Call Me Peter

L Scully

You spend summers cutting your pants into shorts and leaving messages to Peter Pan. Braiding grass and collecting acorns and rocks that look like dinosaur eggs all for Peter Pan. Whisper into the trees with your little girl voice begging for Peter to reveal himself. Everyone thinks you're cute for having a crush on Peter Pan but you dress up like him for four Halloweens not even in a row and the truth is you want to be a lost boy, too.

What Do You Talk About, After All These Years?

Claire Taylor

At sixteen:

our hands did most of the talking

—a chorus of want

Do you like me?

Could you love me?

Am I fat?

Yes. Yes. Who cares?

your fingers replied

In our twenties:

we needed to talk

scream

late into the night;

let me make one more point

as the sun comes up

Just forget it

I said, but I meant

I will never forget this

See how I still bring it up sometimes

at the end of a long day when

I don't care for the tone of your voice

I told you so

In our thirties:

we tell the same old stories, laugh anew

sit on the couch and recount

the cute thing the three year old did only an hour ago

What's for dinner?

Should we have another baby?

Did you remember to pick up toothpaste?

We stand silent

as you roll the tube and squeeze out

the last few drops

Does this look okay? I ask
but what I mean is

are you still the boy
who once pressed me up against
the wall of a stranger's bathroom?
am I still the girl
who could only fall asleep to
the sound of your heartbeat?

It looks good,
you reply

Sam Peabody

Jerica Taylor

His name rings out, over the idling of the car,
a flute in a symphony of sky above me.
Someone's mundane business conducted in song,
and I don't have to do anything but listen.

Have you ever called out
with the confidence of a tiny brown bird
wearing yellow jewels like buttercups?
Have you ever been held by the trees?

In this moment, I am loved the way
the white-throated sparrow is loved; for existing.
For its song, no matter how many times it needs to sing
the same notes over and over. I am heard.

the doctor's call

James Thurgood

*What would you be found doing when Death overtakes you?
—Epictetus*

it comes at school: the doctor's call
(tests ran the gamut, cholesterol to cancer)

by luck, I'm reading Epictetus—
panic ebbs to stoic acceptance

then a taste in the air
a sweetness I must have known was there

(can I do what I want my last few weeks
or am I insured only in harness—
strangely, that chance too
I can live with)

my grade 10s pass notes, gossip
glance—if they ask why I'm happy
I'll say *I just found out*
I'm going to die

if not too embarrassed, I'll add
maybe here and now—so good a place
so good a day

in the waiting room
an old student ponders, then:
Mr T.? and tells me I made a prayer
in front of two hundred people
—I was nervous but I did it—

I had practiced on stage
and seen all the people—
they say to picture it—picture yourself
doing everything right—
forget what you could do wrong
and imagine you do it all perfect

then the examining room—
you must be feeling better the doctor frowns:
you're smiling

In the morning

Jessica Spruill Waggoner

we spill into the yard, wild,
split up, search for whatever
we'd waited all night to get back to—
into the creek to wake salamanders,
the field to examine spittlebug suds
clinging to dewy hay stalks,
behind the shed to watch scratch
at chicken wire six ring-necked pheasants.

Inside, our mother demands
the dryer bring itself back to life,
balances basket on hip,
sighs when it refuses, trudges
up the green steps from the basement,
through the kitchen, the porch,
to the yard. She hangs
bedsheets from a rope
suspended between trees, pins
dresses in three sizes
handed down sister
to sister to sister,
smooths my father's motor
oil- and paint-stained jeans, fusses
over spots irremovable.

Cool white sunlight sifts through leaves
and I have my first experience of *deja vu*:

How many times by then had I dreamt
she rose into a blinding beam of light,
angel at each elbow, eyes
up, not so much as a glance back
at me, racing across wet grass
to drag her back down?

My mother, a kite caught briefly
in branches, soars skyward,
gone. She probably dreams
of this sort of escape.
Knuckles raw, bleached and broken;
belly now soft, thrice stretched, once
stitched; shoulders stooped before thirty—
who wouldn't wish her daughter
could dream her away?

From this moment, I resent god
and angels, those thieves.

At the edge of the woods is a hollow
tree, its door dark and deep, we regale
each other with its folklore:
a mouth to the underworld; anyone
who steps inside falls
forever, never to be seen
again. We are possessed
of many fears. Alone
in unspeakable nightmares.

When I slip into that dream again,
I do not try to catch my mother
and keep her. I braid lassos of grass,
pray to follow unseen,
for if I cannot
make her stay,
I won't.

About the Contributors

MP ARMSTRONG (they/them) is queer, nonbinary, disabled, and young. They like bubble tea. They play the ukulele, though not well. They miss walking across their college campus with their friends but they are enjoying the increase in physical letters that they receive in the mail. Their debut chapbook, *who lives like this for such a cheap price?*, is forthcoming from Flower Press. Find them online at <https://mpawrites.wixsite.com/website> and on social media @mpawrites.

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JAMES BUTLER-GRUETT (he/him) loves to write poetry, fiction, and book reviews. He frequently makes ground turkey and broccoli and has kissed the Blarney Stone. He has never had a dog, but he once had a guinea pig named Dog. Given the average male life expectancy in the U.S., he will probably die sometime in 2070. Find him on Twitter @etinarcadia3go.

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AURA MARTIN (she/her) is a writer from Missouri. She is the author of the chapbook "Those Embroidered Suns" (Lazy Adventurer Publishing) and the micro-chapbook "Thumbprint Lizards" (Maverick Duck Press). In Aura's free time, she likes to run and take road trips. Find her on Twitter @instamartin17.

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LUCAS PEEL (he/him) spends his time telling everyone who will listen about his ongoing battle with lactose intolerance. He was born in the year of the banana and likes thinking about the sounds dinosaurs make. He is currently floating somewhere in the Pacific.

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