

MARSH HAWK REVIEW FALL 2018

Edited by Eileen R. Tabios

CONTENTS

Mark Young

The Trafficante *ficzione*—Part One

Les magasins sont vides

to conceptualize time

Irene Willis

The Secret at the Back of the Cupboard

Peter Vanderberg

Holy Hour: Sext

Lynne Thompson

As Moon

First Person

Susan Terris

Alice, Always Alice

Bad Seedling, 1929

Ghost Note

Eileen R. Tabios

Witnessed in the Convex Mirror: Rape Wardrobe

Witnessed in the Convex Mirror: Aborted Daguerreotype

John Simonds

Water Bearers

Mara Adamitz Scrupe

we too beneath the trees/ after Corot in love

Barry Schwabsky

An Inclusive Disjunction

Wretches of the Earth

Something to Forget Me By

Susan M. Schultz

Three from “I want to write an honest sentence”

Janice Lobo Sapigao

Bed bug bites

Second Generation

E. San Juan, Jr.

ANG PASAHERONG SALAMANDER

Randy Prunty
Shut your hands

Barbara Jane Reyes
Love Poem Written in the Golden State

Paul Pines
FISH MAGIC
[I who have spoken the world]
Entrance to the Underworld

Naomi Buck Palagi
River
reflex angle

Gwynn O’Gara
SUMMER SUNG

David O’Connell
What Are You Doing With Your Life?

Geoffrey O’Brien
Clown Hour
Horacio Salgan

Rich Murphy
Word and Deed

Michelle Murphy
Turn
Relativity Once Removed
Tale

Daniel Morris
The Ballad of Mr. Traveling Newspaper

Sandy McIntosh
Meeting Proust’s Granddaughter at Canio’s, Sag Harbor

Tricia McCallum
Face Value
Out There

Agnes Marton
School Holiday
Cuba Libre

Mary Mackey
When Jaguars Licked Salt From My Hands
Army Ants
The Burning World

Hank Lazer
N33P8

Amy Grace Lam
From “AMERICA: another name for opportunity”: \$\$
From “AMERICA: another name for opportunity”: \$\$\$

Basil King
 A balance that is of itself a tapestry

Burt Kimmelman
 Film Noir

Sherry Kearns
 What Paul Said
 The Solitary Elms

George Kalamaras
 The Battles of the Twelve Animals

Jacqueline Jules
 Two Goldfish

Paul Ilichko
 Long Distance Lullaby

Michael Hardin
 Babel

Grace Grafton
 After hearing that a man opened fire on a crowd

Anne Gorrick
 [Athena]: Dew Gathering
 [Ares]: as though a sudden wind had gutted the stars
 [Apollo]: the carer of herds and flocks / A wreath

Kirk Glaser
 Inheritance of Fire

Robert Gibb
 ON THE ROAD

Danny Gallardo
 BUY-BUST

Thomas Fink
 OFFICIAL BIO

Thomas Fink and Maya D. Mason
 ALMOST MAGNIFICENT

Carol Dorf
 The UFO

Shira Dentz
 Sing to me, sing to me too
 Are you up for being the comma tonight

Aileen I. Cassinotto
 A Day at the Museum with a Poet
 The Cabinet of the World and the Journeys of Women

Tom Beckett
 The true fiction

Ryan Bayless
 And

Ivy Alvarez

Nagkatagisan ang tarehong talim

Nahuhulog ang katawan

Nakasandal sa pader

MARK YOUNG

The Trafficante *ficzione* — Part One

Joe Trafficante, the youngest son of a Mafia Don, so fell in love with Cuba when he accompanied his father on a pre-Second World War trip to investigate the potential of Havana as a possible base for future Family operations that he renounced his heritage & became a sea-turtle fisherman.

It was a quiet but satisfying life. He married, had children. He sold the meat from his catch in the local marketplace, held on to the turtle shell until he had enough carapaces to take to Havana to trade with the international brokers for what he considered not luxuries but necessities to improve the quality of his family's life — cloth better than was woven locally, metal cooking & eating utensils, ropes & fishing nets & harpoons. His family accompanied him occasionally, &, in one of those bitter ironies of life, his youngest son, attracted to the glamour of the faux gaslit gambling parlours that were beginning to proliferate, decided to remain behind & become a croupier. The father, remembering his own past, gave no external show of disappointment.

His fishing trips became longer. He went out further, leaving behind the other boats from his village, though they were with him on the day he saw the giant of all sea turtles, & they were close enough to see him throw a net over it & then try to tire it by forcing it to drag the boat. It was a standard practice with two variations of the same ending, a return some hours later with turtle & with net, or without both.

This time, however, the ending was different. Trafficante did not return, & the local fable that grew about the giant turtle that drew him to his death achieved a measure of concealed fame when it was later heard by a visiting *Yanqui* writer who used its core as the basis for a story, with the slow-paced turtle replaced by a fast fish.

Les magasins sont vides

If you want to feel good
but you're feeling bad,
salvation will automatically
convert any pre-school
playground into a rastered
image of either rolling
open grasslands or a forest
with lots of trees. The
associated housing features
full insulation, & the showing
is done through lenses shaped
from a tinted plastic sheet. It
mightn't offer a complete
answer, but it still goes
a long way towards getting
things started. Usually ships
the next business day. Sorry,
this product is not available.

to conceptualize time

Forgotten artifacts made from the finest quality silicon carbide stones are being cooked or warmed inside the rice cooker. The extracts are more than lucid, since the phase portrait indicates they've bounded solutions. Everything fuses. Or, maybe, it's just that everyone lined up for a turn at

the switch merges into the one person. Them. & me. Themey, you might say. The things we say to ourselves! My doctor addresses herself to the best yoga positions to aid fertility. Escape peaks are small. I miss being touched.

IRENE WILLIS

The Secret at the Back of the Cupboard

New York City, 1939

*The thing you are most afraid to write,
write that.*

—Nayyirah Waheed

Why wouldn't it be better to hide
inside my mother's secret?

Why wouldn't it be better to stay with her
in the box at the back of the cupboard

with the matzoh and the kosher salt,
away from the cleaning woman's

and the janitor's scorn?

Why wouldn't it be better not to see that
look on their faces and the turning away?

I read once of a Christmas tree hung
with images of dead Jews

in a German living-room.

In those days we were hiding from
Vannie, our German housekeeper

in New York.

Later we hid from my mother's
Irish second husband.

Don't tell anyone, my mother said
of the secret place she led me to.

Don't ever tell, she said, breaking
a piece of matzoh and dipping it

into her saccharin-laced coffee.

As she sipped and stirred, I listened.
Eight years old, nine, thirteen

and later still.

I can tell what you are, said the woman
I beat out of a parking space

in a crowded suburban lot
just by looking at you.

I was so afraid, so sure I knew what she meant
that I didn't have the guts to ask.

I should have said, *What? What am I?*
to hear her say whatever, but I couldn't.

Better to stay in the box in the cupboard
with my mother's secret.

And now her ashes, heavier than I knew,
with their bits of bone, in a box

at the back of my closet.

PETER VANDERBERG

Holy Hour: Sext

Beloved, I lose my way long before mid-day.

Parables fall like stones on a dry riverbed. My youngest son wants everything. I answer, *No, be quiet. Leave me alone.* He responds, *I love you.*

I want a new commandment, clear instruction (try *love one another*). Something more complex perhaps? Try parable. *There once was a man who had two sons. The youngest took his inheritance & left home...*

If I say *O, Lord* & pray while watching the maple's subtle gestures, sun-shade patterns, birds mating, wasp at the sap, is this your answer? Is every sound & seen thing your response? When I pray, is it you praying?

*If today you hear my voice...*but this voice, Lord, is it my own, in the desert, or yours, calling from mirage?

LYNNE THOMPSON

As Moon

recalling Stevie Wonder

As Mississippi is to disaster
or nature is to umbrella
As *yes* to a secret river
the moon of women is to fishermen
As humility is to slander and
as shadow is to performance
your hands to a single night
are as the poor are to love, Lord

Or, there could be equally mystifying
combinations: disaster vs. slander,
fishermen in shadow and the secret
river performing. But always,
always, there is a moon of women and
the poor being love, and just as rich.

First Person

A sentence begins with *he* and before
it ends: hyacinth and seashore

where time is a rubber band
and up is always upended.

Sentence wants—eventually—
to Paragraph,
to run wild
with Johnnie Walker Red,

to go for the prison-break.

Not once does sentence say *love*
or concede to fixed seasons:

no fire
or baby bird,
neither famine
nor the happy ending.

Just Sentence. Erect. On both of her legs.

SUSAN TERRIS

from FAMILIAR TENSE. . .

ALICE, ALWAYS ALICE

The long hair, the headband and the grinning cat.

A knight, like Quixote, who keeps sliding off
his horse. Still, she is obsessed with the real

sense that everything she attempts will fail.

All those index cards and notes, and she's
again Alice throwing the deck in the air,

declaring they're a useless pack of nothing.

And yet, in the shadows of the house,
in her room, in her head, she considers

possibilities. *All risk holds the possibility for failure.*

How long is forever? she asks. Rabbit checks
his watch. *Sometimes, he promises, just one second.*

BAD SEEDLING, 1929

Smocked dress, one scraggly braid but hair escaping
everywhere--dark hair, untamed Medusa-hair.

Her fingers, clenched behind her back, hold something
stolen or forbidden. Near her on the old enamel stove,

a tin tea kettle. Watch her. Carefully watch that horizon
line of her mouth. One eye is obscured by wild locks,

but the other gives a skank-eye, an eat-shit-and-die look.

Beware of what's cached in her hands but also what's

in her head. Through a glass darkly, she seeks secrets. Do
not trust the hot kettle to stay on the stove. This girl, this

little girl-woman, has ideas. She is, at six, already planning
her escape. And when she breaks out and flees,

we will—each and every one—of us be ass over teakettle.

Burnt, finished.

GHOST NOTE

the one I didn't write odd yet written in my hand
backwards slant disappearing ink or lemon juice

practice run to read it light a match and char unsung
song the missing beat fires you covet silenced by

heartbeat or drum in this eternal rain there is sun
yet no golden pot invisible feet of striders is that

a dog's sharp bark or treefall is a hart leaping over
words and woods ghost sounds love me

then ghost shadows secrets now inversion
always ghost note and at then last one slow dance

EILEEN R. TABIOS

From The Ashbery Riff-Offs

—where each poem begins with 1 or 1-2 lines from “Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror”
by John Ashbery

Witnessed in the Convex Mirror: Rape Wardrobe

*After the art installation, “What Were You Wearing?” at
University of Kansas, Sept. 5-15, 2017*

Or, to quote Imogen in *Cymbeline*, “There cannot be a pinch ... more sharp” than seeing what clothed us as we are seduced or attacked, then raped. A yellow t-shirt, not a gold-colored corset. Baggy denim jeans, not shimmery spandex shorts. A grey exercise bra, not a push-up brassiere with fake leopard print. Not a sequined backless top over sheer lace pants but a black skirt and red sweater borrowed from a roommate for a date—“I was so excited!” she recalled. “I thought he was a nice guy.” Sure, there was “a cute mini-dress ... killer heels, too.” But there also was a tiny pink and white striped dress, not a one-shoulder burgundy velvet shift with a slit up the right thigh. Months later, her well-meaning mother stood in front of her closet to complain about how she never wore dresses anymore. She remembers, “I was six years old.” About the dark green cargo shorts, he recalls as his fingers twitched in the same way it did when he felt himself tearing along with his clothes, “They asked how I could let this happen to me.” *How I could let it...*

From The Ashbery Riff-Offs

*—where each poem begins with 1 or 1-2 lines from “Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror”
by John Ashbery*

Witnessed in the Convex Mirror: Aborted Daguerreotype

Before one's shadow ever grew
out of the field into thoughts of tomorrow,
the seeds for accidents turned over once
then once again, rubbing themselves
against the dirt hardened to frugality with
bestowing their nutrients. Cut to the chase:
you will surprise yourself by coming to
welcome reproductions of profiles. Only
a child should show a face like the open
doorway I presented with my unblinking
eyes. It was unintended—I thought to love
you. But the wind rushed through an alley
we didn't know existed amidst the cornstalks.
Dirt rose to pockmark air and, suddenly, our
views were obstructed. Against grit, I turned
a cheek—that's what you saw: me turning
away, then raising a hand for protection.
You did not know my love was not unrequited
until you departed to reduce, you thought, my
fear. Whose dim daguerreotype planted the seed
that made your heart tighten at the sight of my
vulnerability? But perhaps the cause does not
matter. Cut to the chase: over my face hangs
a permanent veil no wind will ever blow aside.
You did not place it there, but there it is

JOHN SIMONDS

Water Bearers

Our Aquarian sports a hole in his belly
he enjoys showing friends to explain
where the tube connects each day to drain
in fresh fluid to flush out the old,
a clear to yellowish trade from bag to bag
of a peritoneal wash and purge.
It's a mid-life exercise in transparency,
while waiting in line at his own rinse-spin-dry
for his name to advance in Texas' kidney queue.

Self-dialysis as a middle-aged pastime
lacks some of the thrill of wildcat drilling
among the risky coteries of golf-club wives,
pole-dancing twistabouts
and other fracking actions
that push the octane closer
to four-wheeling through the cactus needles
and outracing backyard serpents
to and from the flaming mesquite.

Beers and nightcaps with classmates and workers,
are fun-food groups now off the menu.
Wagon falls are saved for rationed protein
of medium rare, a skilled chef's joys
confined to pots of home stews,
parsnips, garlic, tomato-herb sauces
made with measured precision,
whose margin of error could be sayonara,
as opposed to his other component, aloha.

Walks and naps are keys to his drill.
Diabetes runs in Mama's family.
Quarts of liquid dextrose run through his.
Tubes extend like umbilicus links
to a bedside control-box, a short-wave connection
of sorts channeling past into future.
At home in computers, he knows wires, tubes

and readings better than med-techs at clinics.
He's an I.T. guy who knows this is *it*.

The hole in his left stomach wall
reopens our way to his life, then and now,
as he returns for an island New Year at home,
echoes of late night asthma driving
to ERs with open car windows
doing much of the work of fresh air
needed for breath to his pre-teen lungs.
A Boy's Day blue fish still tangles
in string from below a plumeria branch.

Cartons of the tube-yoked bags—
full paired with empty—ship by truck
to be stored in his Texas home
and more are flown here to Hawai'i,
keeping the flow through year's end,
a holiday toast to the waters of life
and how we cope in our flood zone
of borrowed joy and lurking storms
just above sea level, on the tsunami map.

The back yard is greener than past years
of catch-toss and backboard bouncing,
thanks to underground pipes of sprinkler magic,
but the thirst of our lava soil continues.
Tubes from his insides of 45 years,
fill empty bags daily with siphoned brine,
gifts for the water bearers
of a Valentine's child of the '70s,
to carry to earth in bulging vessels.

We slash and pour
on avocado seedlings
and coconut sprouts,
hoping stems and leaves
will grow to clear the air,
praying Aquarian liquid returns
to recycle his island roots,
and share new life
with son, sun and land.

MARA ADAMITZ SCRUIPE

we too beneath the trees/ after Corot in love

amaranthine stain of lilac blooms

bled & kind brindled

in a raven's dream in a lark's lesson flown

in civilized voice that reason

belies how gorgeous but fraught the underbelly

this upside-down paeon

plum blossom & cherry fruit scattered

in our wildness

we swept away those pink petals

how confusingly baroque

trying to find a chink a hollow a place

lying naked in love

in so much darkness to catch the light/ mind

the lullaby of twilight skies & purplish

we soothed & trembled rocks & shelves

we converged heat-heightened drifting

& at the southern terminus aquamarine fields'
& tallow pitch & coal dust we too read

beneath the trees we two in a queen's
bed head-planks of dragons' beards &
bric-a-brac amassed in reds & yellows/ orange-carved
the mast of our elegant ship/ cantata
 restraint & recitative
 ornament & continuo
 rewards & rocking
 rapture & dissonance

rabbit-fur-laced coyote scat marked that species'

profound defense of forest breach & clear cut
 bisected by our lane
left for us to come upon the morning after

BARRY SCHWABSKY

An Inclusive Disjunction

Eyes decisively screwed into place
yet nostrils breathe denial
next stop: indignant sparrow's bad luck

I still haven't seen you
a bitter tone leaches through the treeline
it holds you up to daylight
under layers of survival gear

we never thought we'd know what we wanted
or start to see with the bright eyes of a cat
we're still trying to pick up your faint signal
by the thin light of a broken star.

Wretches of the Earth

Our angular days are over
no more tormenting me with intervals
inside a poem in the style of
each one you know

you hear the telephone keep ringing
as you ward off its blows
it rains and it rains and it rains
and it rains for a fixed term

of our wretched animal existence
a fold-out atlas
that's seen better days
than I've been feeling for a while

and still recurs in my nightmares
of this dingy coffee bar
where time is a page on a calendar
that no one ever tears off

photography is not to blame
for changing daylight into silver
our angular days are over
and the thirsty pastel nights begin.

Something to Forget Me By

Please silence
your cells phones now.

Darkness undresses
in darkness, in surcease,

prepares nightmares where
most expected. I call you

my twilight idol, my southern
dust. How colors vibrate is their

damn business. Now I ascribe your
face to some clouds

at sunset: one eye open,
the other closed. The one,

glaring, accused but saw
nothing. The other, sealed,

disconsolate, understands
these leftover thoughts:

receptive syrup, a specious eye,
the sea yet another idolatry

and your sighing song rehearsed
for my weary funeral.

SUSAN M. SCHULTZ

I want to write an honest sentence, and then I want to revise it. Not to put it in a vise and clamp it down, but place it in a different light. I saw a sea urchin shell on a rock wall, spines spilling around it. Each a black wand, at one end a white plug that sat in the skeleton's ball and socket. The philosopher saw an octopus dying, her body parts dissolving in sea water. Death is one such revision. So is breath as it runs its tunnel. Describe the feeling in your chest, the brightness in your spine, and I will say it back. "We're all going to die," Marthe said, "and no one will remember us. That's ok." The urchin is a lantern: its top is anus, and its bottom mouth. The entire body might make a compound eye. I see it through a chain link fence, and the mechanical waterfall beyond. A blaze of purple shows in my photograph.

—30 August 2018

I want to write an honest sentence about the photo of an empty chair to the other side of a dark wooden table. The viewer sees a bowl of cereal and a spoon, its handle set to the right of an avocado green bowl, thick white mug of black coffee (half full) between bowl, place mat of mixed colors, and empty chair. Beside the place setting opposite a mussed up cloth napkin. Windows behind the empty chair are blank in early light, a barely visible tree trunk more resembling falling tears than bark. Bryant picked up a thread of Pele's hair from a bed of moss, placed it on his palm beneath his ring. Ring dwarfs hair. One end of the thread is bright silver, the other a tear above a tail of curling black ash. It resembles a tiny hockey stick. His bicycle tires kick up volcanic grit, and the air smells of sulfur. He turned on a video of fissure 20 just as the bed started to shake. Arrived at Volcano golf course when the first explosion happened. His photo comes after the second boom, gray cloud trailing steam. The sky is otherwise blue and clear. Puna's coastal road was closed last night. Lava has reached the sea, sending up clouds of toxic steam. Remember when we walked past the end of Chain of Craters road, molten red flowing into deep blue water, and whales blew columns into air?

—20 May 2018

I want to write an honest sentence. I gave each old woman a flower and asked her to describe it without using the words "beautiful" or "gorgeous" or "nice" or "pretty." *It's so pretty*, they said. *So beautiful*. "She won't let us use those words!" There were lavender petals and dots. What color are the dots?

There were long stems. How long? 20 inches, they wrote. Are they all green? Mostly they recognized the flower as described. I asked them to express an emotion by adding to their descriptions, but without using those words. An Englishwoman named Fleur (*how do you know who I am? Because you came to my last workshop*) erupted with the story of her homeless brother and their mother killed by a drunk driver, all having something to do with a yellow chrysanthemum (though she didn't remember which flower she'd started with, it might have been purple) and by that time I had given up getting them to WCW's "The Great Figure" — the poet's insertion of the word "tense" — but I shared it with them. *I feel anxious about my children when I hear a siren*, one woman said. So it's you and not the truck! As I looked at them, they were pulling their flowers and stems closer, holding them to the light.

—21 May 2018

JANICE LOBO SAPIGAO

Bed bug bites

On my back there is a constellation:
Reptilian scales forming my cold-blooded self

Murmuring red; each spot a reminder of how I have not taken care of myself;
each new dot returning me to doctors and ointments

I cannot afford to see. My partner and I threw away our Craigslisted couch,
Our first shared purchase of my adulthood

Tainted by my childhood fear of falling asleep in comfort
With a six-legged smallness climbing up my legs

I'm more convinced that the map on my back
Is a survey of parts of my life hiking for my attention

Sucking the time out of my skin
Putting reminders back on rotation

That I can be part mermaid part piranha
Part tipping scales part shark

Wrapping my jawline around the exact things I ignore
My bite penetrating, teeth meeting teeth

Blood in between
A root stop in my mouth

Second Generation

When you grow up being
Teased for being Filipino.
For eating rice. When you
Bring your food to school.
In your lunch box. And they
Said it smelled. Foreign, they
Forgot to say at the end of
That racist sentence. It
Smelled foreign, they meant.
The drought of Filipino food
In college when you lived in
The dorms. Sandwich this.
French fries that. And then you
Spend six dollars of your meal
Points on a can of Spam because
You missed home that much. For
The internship at the publishing
House. When your vegan boss
Looked at you. Like a dog eating
Mush. For your audacity. To
Bring bones into her home. Onto
Her plate. And now motherfuckers
Wanna take your food. Elevate it,
They say. Charge twenty to forty
Dollars a plate, they say. Say it's
Theirs. Tell you everything about
It. Tell you your culture. Without
History. Without the soul. Your
Food. Without your face.

E. SAN JUAN, JR.

ANG PASAHERONG SALAMANDER

"....don't know what I want, but I know how to get it...."

--SEX PISTOLS

Habang naglalakbay patungong Isla Ambil, karatig ng baybaying Batangas
at Mindoro Oksidental, malapit sa isla Lubang--
(2,000 hektarya, ipinagbibili ngayon sa halagang P839,300.760),
napatakan ng tae ng ibong Adarna sa dalampasigan, nagtanong:

"Nang nagugutom ako,
pinakain mo ba ako? "

"Nang nasa bilanggo,
dinalaw mo ba ako?"

Kipil ang hinagap, naisip ng ipinatapong taga-Samaritan:

"Kapag may karayagan, may kabaligtaran-
lumalaon, bumubuti;
Sumasama kapag dati"—

Samakatwid, kung may utang, mabait;
sa pagsingil, anong galit;
tago muna habang hinahanap,
liko pagsalubong,
ayos, ocho derecho—"

Salamangkero, kailan mo ibaba ang tabing

upang mabunyag ang iyong lihim?

BARBARA JANE REYES

Love Poem Written in the Golden State

1.

Love is having another bad night. What's happened to Love. Love has no defense. Love did not step up.

What the hell is Love thinking. Love misfires. Love's fallen, Love's floored. Love's struggling. Is Love

injured again. Is Love tough enough. Is Love going to get back up. Will Love limp to the sidelines.

Love has no answer for the disappearance of Love. Will Love return. Will Love get back on track. Will

Love ever inspire, will Love ever live up to the hype. Love, rejected again. Love, denied. Love, nice try.

2.

Love was a no show tonight. Love was shut down. Don't give up on Love just yet. Love may bounce back,

but Love looks to be waiting in the corner. You wish Love would remind you of Love's value. Love tries, but

Love's easily beguiled. Once again, Love, left behind. Sometimes Love just needs a good pep talk to get

Love back into the right frame of mind. Try Love again. You ask yourself, must you wait for Love.

You're afraid your faith in Love is in vain. Don't lose sight of Love. Sometimes Love just needs tough Love.

3.

Love had a great night. Love bounced back big time, just look at Love's body language, powering forward.

We thought then that Love would find redemption;
Love didn't. We thought that having Love would make

the difference; it didn't. And then Love took a hard
hit. Love took an elbow to the head. Love crumpled

to the floor. Love became disoriented and had to be
removed. Now, Love's status remains unclear. Love

is day to day. This may be the last we see of Love.
If Love returns, Love's presence may not mean much.

4.

There was a plan for Love, there was a need for Love,
but alas, Love may be more liability than asset. Sadly,

there is no margin of error for Love. When Love must
assert, Love surrenders. Love must be bigger. Love

must make space for Love. Love has so much to prove.
Will Love, should Love be traded for a finer prize.

What's it like, to lose Love again. What's it like
to smother Love, to eat Love alive. What's it like

to take Love down so easy. What's it like to witness
Love curled fetal and beaten. You don't want that Love.

5.

You want the Love that would be MVP. You want
a robust Love, a Love that will fight for Love.

You don't want Love to end like this, an ailing,
unavailable Love, ill-placed. A meek, defeated Love.

A stunted, plummeting Love, unsung. Love's last legs,
buckling. Rumors of Love facing the auction block.

Complaints of Love's diminishing worth. Laments
of Love's uselessness. If asked, perhaps Love will

tell you that Love just needs a little time. Will you wait for Love. You might see what Love can do.

6.

Things don't look good for Love today. Love's absence, a blessing, they say. Send this Love back

to the Wolves, they say, we are paying too much for this Love to let us down. We are much better off

without Love, they say. Let Love fade from memory tonight. Let Love be nowhere to be found. Let Love

crawl under Love's covers, soft and dreaming of all Love could have done different. Let Love

ponder Love's replacement. Let it be as if Love was never here. Let's consider Love again tomorrow.

7.

Love's had a bad week. Love has been unlit and ill-fit, listening to all the loathing you've loaded upon Love:

that Love does not do what Love must do, that you blame Love. But this is not about Love, your dirty

Love, your sad soft Love. You really thought you could buy Love. You blame Love, but mostly, your Love's

become a bystander. Sit your suffering Love back down, or use Love as much as you'd like. See how Love

can't hold on. See how Love will miss again. Even if Love shows up, even if Love really tries. Love, let's see.

Epilogue

*When you need Love, Love may fail to come through.
Has Love been silenced, is Love so quickly overcome,*

why must Love disappear, as Love lately has. When Love is

so guarded, Love cannot break away, when Love's been
worn again and again. When Love cannot give much more
than Love gives. When Love smiles, then we hope for
an improved Love. When Love swears that next time,
Love will be ready. Love will keep trying. Love will push
back when we doubt Love's worth. Love will hold
up Love's head and take Love's shot, when Love does
what Love is supposed to do. But when Love hesitates,
Love misses Love's opportunity, Love throws it away.

Again.

When we see how Love tries, we hope Love will be red hot,
When Love is big, when Love's back in the game.
We will say, Love is not the problem, sometimes Love is low.
When Love does what Love does best, we'll praise Love.
We never ask Love if we are asking Love for too much Love
When Love is not to blame, when Love's in the corner,
when we say that Love could be bartered for something better,
when we say Love was once all that,
when we say Love might be getting old,
and when we blame Love again, see Love as liability,
see how Love struggles, let's sit Love down.
Will Love ever be good again. Must Love always run cold.
Will we ever use Love properly, why demand so much of Love,
who really needs Love this way.
Let tonight's Love be the last we write of this Love.

RANDY PRUNTY

Shut your hands

My pets are looking pale. My mule. The guinea hens. My trout is four years old and likes to bump the ducks' feet. But now lookit. Watching them through the valley's clamp of smoke is what I do instead of other things.

I have some questions to take to the library. Where can the goats rest? Why is the smoke returning and does it signal the end? May I speak to John T? Hurry, because I have no idea what the future might bring and he helped me last time.

Last night I (we?) moved into a gated subdivision of cul-de-sacs called The Plummets.

There's no room for fences except everywhere. I'm in a city full of cats in trees. It's true that trees are made of wood. I think it's probably true I'll hold my hat on the bridge. Why else would my hands be here with me?

I'm relieved to be back with my spilled coffee. Such a bounded error. I'm hearing that things can be fixed. Let them be fixed.

What's been said of theirs is now awkwardly said of ours. Habits of the opposite. Steps to randomness. The story I've been looking for is found in everyone else. Counting heart by heart is exhausting but otherwise I forget.

The cats teach the goats and the goats teach me. I'm learning to tame the smoke. I draw arrows like scaffolds sprouting while bordering. I teach the ducks to fly straight up.

PAUL PINES

FISH MAGIC

consciousness
swims
weightless
through the world

the world
through
it

what
will not register
in the balance
against a
feather

conscious
of itself

submerged
in us

(from *FISHING ON THE POLE STAR*)

I who have spoken the world
Find myself with no one
To talk to

I who have loved the particulars
Of various landscapes find myself
At home in no place

History vanishes
All around me children are taught
The dead have nothing to tell them

Even as the dead whisper
Eternal secrets in the nautilus
Of their ears

(from *DIVINE MADNESS*)

Entrance to the Underworld

He discovers halfway up the slope
a cave that opens on a stream
of clear flowing water

where he sits

moist air

quivers like a membrane

skin that extends

the nerves in his own skin

allows him to feel

the world is proximate

unbounded

to eliminate

movement

overcome by a conviction

he can't name

becomes himself

the opening

to the cave

(from *GATHERING SPARKS*)

NAOMI BUCK PALAGI

River

Not everyone in this world smiles false. There are the gods, the tricksters, the unfortunate used car salesmen.

The past three decades have been a challenge, and before that I can't remember.

We should celebrate. Cars have safety bags and little chewing gum.

If the tin man is a metaphor (and why not), who is the axe? Who is the dog? Who is the brick? People ride waves as if there were no mountains, and cheer along the way.

Mean (the trait) and mean (to signify) are related, but mean (in the middle, average) is clearly unique. Thriftiness is a synonym for mean.

I am a synonym for country. Language slows and pulls like a tugboat, and barges do their thing.

Today is another decade, no one knows which I mean.

I miss the radio,
branching through air.

reflex angle

the box in the sill had all they left me, star wars figures and fake gemstone rocks and little hearts.
like high school might have been the mecca, like they liked me. did they? they smiled. remember smart?
remember puttin' it together and workin' it through in calculus and smilin'? remember calculus, and
physics? we hardly handled it, not knowing what was coming.

the best bits keep coming, do they keep coming? the time between falls short some days. the
friends need help and everybody's been dying. whatever is there in the wind, that has such
softness on the skin? ashes and souls and dirt and oil and somewhere in there, fire. air.
somewhere in there love. molecules careening off each other and nuzzling up, energy from
closeness.

feel the wind on your cheek and lift up your palm. for a moment, and the next, it is you.

GWYNN O'GARA

SUMMER SUNG

Grotto with hummingbirds, tea and nutmeg,
nectarines spilling the meaning of life.

Enough! chant orange buckwheat and fuchsia.

Enough! The wedge of trees sways, keening for brothers.

Infinite gardening, dilapidated joy,
making art not war.

Strange folk snag the big world.

Without golf, sex, or big bucks,
how will they lend me an ear?

The soul's midriff plays in the sun.

Her ample shoulders shade me in a spring-rooted lake.

Baseballs rise and set.

The home-run moon fills our bags with popcorn and relief.

Hooray for the fence lizard who evades the crow's beak.

DAVID O'CONNELL

What Are You Doing With Your Life?

I know the name Russ Meyer,
 that he was an American director
of, I believe, B-movie pictures
 featuring—and this is his mark—
 large-breasted women in various states of undress,

but I've never seen one of his movies
 or, as far as I know, his photograph,
and I'm not sure how he died,
 or the dates on his headstone,
 or, to be honest, if he's even dead,

but I know the name, and caught the reference
 and the joke
when Seinfeld, talking in a rerun to Elaine,
 drops it in a wisecrack
 about the waitresses in the coffee shop:

“I haven't seen four women like this together
 outside of a Russ Meyer film,”
which got me thinking,
 is this enough, or what Russ Meyer wanted?
 All that effort

so, after you're dead, it rings a bell,
 your name,
though over time
 as if there's fur—more
 and more—lining the mouth of that bell.

GEOFFREY O'BRIEN

Clown Hour

We did not expect death
during a comedy episode

or what would have been
without the odor of ruin.

When the clown is sent to mock us
we mock him back to make him cry.

A department store dummy
sent on his mission

in off-white face paint,
the smile glued in place,

braided with joke explosives.

He strips us to our bones

while art objects crumple in our hands
like vacated wasp nests.

Nobody knows who sent him
or how to get rid of him

or if the place is already empty
like a dressing room after the show ends,

lighting fixtures switched off
and unplugged wires tangled in coils.

Excited by what frightens them
and frightened by what excites them

the ticket holders advance with a certain urgency
toward the pavilions not yet on fire.

Horacio Salgan

(1916–2016)

to go quick

ever so slowly

to go slow

quickly

to bounce off

what happens

always

in the same place

where quick notes

drip down like slow rain

RICH MURPHY

Word and Deed

In the relay between experience and story
the baton memes for the whole event
even if footnotes abound.

A tale passes off a false memory to feet,
torso, head, a reckless abandonment
exposing races to the error in ways.

The disheveled neurons
and misfiring synapses (not to mention
muscle cramps and pulled ligaments)
confuse all about the storage trunk
that runs on enmity and empathy.
Handcuffed to the chain-letter "I,"
the police cheat slips on a habit
and kneels at an altar: A confessional
provides for an emergency exit.

The pot boiler bores over
with routine logs to put out any fires,
but Prank and Sons practice at tai chi
in DNA, avoiding any headlines.
(And the mental illness
parties on in the host.)
Justice, the airbag, drives
so wee, the passenger, holds on
to the wheel to dare life.

MICHELLE MURPHY

Turn

There's always something to say about the rain, its lack or abundance the way wind wraps around your shoulder blades and flattens your collar against the photo's frame. When light begins to learn consistency, to imagine itself real. There were birthdays in the rain before candles or song or fever before any flood could be detected in negatives before antibiotics or scurvy & rain flew everywhere, inciting gravity to make sense of it, scattering haphazardly renderings of itself, nailing everything without regard for the unloved or the rubber bullets clapping like lightning from sweltering rooftops, without half wild clouds to hide under the sad and lonely stocked their refrigerator with philosophy and liquids.

There's something to say about diction since it always begins in the inflection of fairy tales watering the beanstalks, enunciating the giant. A diction so plain it clings to the roof of our mouths like paste.

& then the lack, you say what you mean to say, still the stories crack then leak out collecting in the crevices where rain can't when you say rain's bound to know for sure that for centuries there was snow this will sound like propaganda and no one will believe we waited for so long parched, belligerent in belief, waiting for the fall.

Turn us to dust. Turn us mute as turnips.

Before word was word, before it was hijacked, before rain fell & made us vertiginous, tipsy in our aloneness, it was business and no one wants to remember the dead profits, the underused flint. Love didn't come easily, there was no marvelous to it, nothing to wet our lips on and we went unnoticed, almost invisible from stairway to staircase.

Rain is sublime he said, recording in first words, stone, ache, withdrawal and she was startled by the wet its liquid form and cupped her hands to surround it.

A camera settled on the land, rained snapshots of us walking or waiting for the light to change, narrating our moves as it rained, covering everything. We emigrated here years ago under the guise of developing a flag to sleep under somewhere safe from comic thirst.

Caskets from underdeveloped climates and roads & disparaging paydays. For example: how we wilted at the gates waiting to gain admission, wanting for rain for some condition that could explain the lack of birds and coming drought we'd learn to become familiar with.

We've traded our knives away for bread we can't slice & this city wind unfastens our hearts, picks at our secrets, blows us away.

(First published in *Verse*/2015 Tomaž Šalamun Prize finalist.)

Relativity Once Removed

Clock him, my father tells my brother. He stands at the corner of parable and history with his cut-and-paste prayer, his lonely hieroglyphs. He carries a backpack filled with letters he'll never finish. When he gets to the ocean, he turns his back on us.

On the strip, gamblers wait for daybreak and over-easy eggs, rib-eyes the size of almanacs. Hunger is mutable even as we try to measure its length, the paydays blown in one full scoop. Days where complex maneuvers fail to recover. Somewhere my brothers swim, synchronized, poised in kinetic variables (that follow the sun).

If it's true that we play dice with the universe, then is God a reckless metaphor, a mathematical equation composed of stars, black holes, peripheral blood flow? Did you clock him, my father asks. My brother's found another way around the equation, a way to climb into distance without actually leaving.

Here is my mother, straddling a line between faith and desertion, abandoning plans even as she unfolds a map. Restraint has failed her and it's a relief. She adapts the story, adjusts the oxygen, watches as my brothers dive into the deep end, their arms held over their heads in makeshift steeples.

Tale

The wolf snaps his jaws, swallows the girl whole — end of story. Fairy tales are revised so that darkness never falls completely so that girls and rage are blunders in eternal dusks unfolding on the edge of the page margins barely visible and ever after everything is eaten and the wine drunk the failure to come up with an escape route is on us. If you let your guard down the fairytale says if you let your hair fall from the tower.

DANIEL MORRIS

The Ballad of Mr. Traveling Newspaper

Traveling Newspaper, once you cheeped TV
out of every sacked
speakeasy on McDougal Street.
Dear Traveling Newspaper, I regret to inform
You may no longer solicit the Bottom Line lobby.
And why shouldn't his beep be beseeched behind the Botanical Garden?
How 'bout micro integrity.
How 'bout anonymity
Of application. O Traveling Newspaper. A weep
Beneath a park pew in South Miami Beach,
Sweeping up the media of baroque folk in solidarity
With Striking Sanitation Workers of Tennessee.
Peeping aluminum can Traveling Newspaper broadcasts
A children's crusade on behalf of 1968.
Part Elvis/Part Che, a ditty jump glaring in gold lame.
I for one am secretly convinced. Mr. TN is prime minister, even if he
Plays to 7 at the Northern Lights Folk Club
In Edmonton, Alberta; edging out the 5 who come out
Of hiding for The Bandanas at Mankato, Minnesota's Bothy Club,
Inter My Crave mini comeback tour.
8 Midwestern States and Northern Canada, January-February, 2008.

SANDY McINTOSH

Meeting Proust's Granddaughter at Canio's, Sag Harbor

Canio's bookstore, a small curiosity shop of crowded shelves on Main Street in Sag Harbor, attracted young writers. You might find anything there. I was in Canio's one day, when I met Marcel Proust's granddaughter.

I'd been attempting to read C. K. Scott Moncrieff's translation of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, off and on since I was sixteen. Now a senior in college, I thought I'd give it another try. Canio's had several volumes of Proust in different editions, and I was whispering to a friend when we were interrupted by a tall, elderly woman.

"I'm standing right here," she said. "And I can hear every word you're saying. So don't say anything insulting about my grandfather."

"Your grandfather?" I said.

"Yes," she said. "My grandfather, Marcel Proust."

This was a striking admission. I didn't know how to respond.

"You're impressed," she said. "I can tell. But I knew my grandfather during the composition of his entire *oeuvre*."

I was excited and wanted to ask her questions, but didn't know where to begin. She continued. "He even posed me as a model for his heroine in the second volume."

"*From a Budding Grove*," I said.

"That's better translated as *Of Flowers and Virgins*."

"You modeled for a novel?"

She smiled modestly. "I was the virgin."

This is where my memory fades. It wasn't too long, however, before I discovered that Proust, once described as a "confirmed bachelor," had neither children nor grandchildren.

I never encountered Proust's granddaughter again, but I remember our meeting as a lovely, lyrical experience. As I've grown older, I've realized that the world is full of ghosts. I've met some of the most interesting in bookstores such as Canio's.

From *Lesser Lights: More Tales of a Hamptons' Apprenticeship*, Marsh Hawk Press, 2019

TRICIA McCALLUM

Face Value

John Wayne hated horses. Took a truck whenever he could.
Esther Williams hated water.
Couldn't wait to dry off after every shot.
Dr. Seuss was annoyed by children, their unpredictability.
Bet you Bieber hates his own music.
Whatever you think is true about anyone
turn it on its head then flip it again.
You'll be closer.

Next I'll be telling you Marilyn Monroe hated sex.
But I bet you a year of Hollywood's grosses
she did.

It gets worse.
The flawless model: photo shopped.
The philanthropist: cheats on his taxes.
The environmentalist cannot live without A/C.
The priest, I hate to say it,
the priest's no saint either.
And come on, no one throws it back
like the prohibitionist.

Make it easy:
Assume everyone is revealed
only through a prism.
Tease out a viewing angle
with the least distortion.
And even then.

Out There

I just saw a man walking a raccoon on a leash.
I kick a pathway through the foliage to my front door.
So much needs tending.
A flurry of leaves follows me inside,
depositing the season deeply into every corner.
The fall light is so harsh it seems it might lay bare
everything it touches.
And no forgiveness in it.
I smell the winter approaching.
Taste the metallic cold of it in my mouth.
I fear I may have lived my best years.

AGNES MARTON

School Holiday

I'm not allowed to keep dangerous things.
I kill with my ribbon,
my hairpin.

Wish I could climb the fence.

I creep there every day
to peep through.

I call it Overbeyond.

Dragon caves.
I would people them with loud shadows,
then balter.

Rocks
I could crush grasshoppers with.

Viper clouds.
A greedy gorge.
Trees with teeth—

one day I will queen them.

I will strangle the days away,
safe,
a giant.

Cuba Libre

A worn driver for fresh tourists:
I'm Manuel Carleo Salvatore
hawking around in my 55 Buick.

There's a stain on the glove flip.
'Whose blood is it? Fidel's?'
I smile and nod. Beetroot it is, you sloppy grip.

Brumm, brummm, the engine is from Shoreditch:
my uncle's gift. Plus tax, shipping.
Tips pay for my soup, my sausage.

In my zig-zagging nightbland
I pile cardboard boxes on the seats.
Where to go? It's an island.

MARY MACKEY

When Jaguars Licked Salt From My Hands

burning jungles
once spread out beneath me
carpets of flame that moved and twisted
following the silver snake of the river
like an evil prophecy

I remember a hot green day
when jaguars licked salt
from my hands
and the shamans turned my body
into a bag of birds

how they pried open my mouth
and stuffed me with parrots
macaws crested eagles Fire-eyes
Monjitas Tinamous and Cotingas
filled my lungs with feathers
stripped off my skin and replaced it
with a layer of greasy down the color of
rotten mangoes

I remember how my hands became claws
my nails talons
how when I tried to speak
a thousand beaks
came out of my mouth
and my tongue broke off
at the tip

when they were finished
they wrapped me in a blanket of thorns
tied ropes around their ankles
and climbed to the crest
of a great tree

fly they commanded
throwing me naked and nestless
into air so hot and thick I thought at first

I could swim in it

I flew forever before I hit the ground
flew like a hawk looking for prey
like a vulture looking
for death

now back in these lands
where the leaves turn blood red
and pepper fruits fall to the ground
and everything has a golden
diminishment as if light itself
is finally being observed to die
I can still feel those birds
trying to beat themselves
out of my skull

and I almost
take flight again
over that vast jungle
of nightmares and
hallucinations

From *The Jaguars That Prowl Our Dreams: New and Selected Poems 1974 to 2018*

Army Ants

a black river
flowed down our walls
smeared the floor under our cots
ate everything scorpions snakes
mice termites

they would have eaten us too
if we had not fled

later we stumbled on them
sleeping in the jungle
in a great humming ball
their bodies linked into corridors
their dead made into bridges
their pale queen at the center
bloated and quivering

From *The Jaguars That Prowl Our Dreams: New and Selected Poems 1974 to 2018*

The Burning World

on the long road down the hill
the cobblestones tip us like drunken sailors
under a sky smeared with volcanic dust

at the bottom lies a sea
clear and pale as the skin
beneath our arms

in this burning world
where we can never stop to rest
you reach out and brush
the tips of my fingers

our parched skin flakes off
in tiny bits and floats up toward the sun
riding the great cone-shaped thermals
of this slowly turning planet

we are two birds
gliding through an empty sky
lost uncertain
filled with unreasonable joy

From The Jaguars That Prowl Our Dreams: New and Selected Poems 1974 to 2018

HANK LAZER

N33P8



4/1/17

Tuscaloosa

**not the negative
nor the simple positive**

written in darkness

words the light

hospitable to

this adjacency

so that something gets written & the something gets said he said she said

becomes a conversation

“Elements come together and form this body. At the time of appearing, elements appear. At the

& a community

or a communion

time of disappearing, elements disappear. When elements appear, I do not say ‘I’ appear. When

giving thanks which is thinking

elements disappear, I do not say ‘I’ disappear. <380>

so you say

<for Romana Huk>

AMY GRACE LAM

From "AMERICA: another name for opportunity"

\$\$

"Money grows on trees here," I heard everyone say
And when I first arrived, all I saw around me was garbage
Garbage?!

Potholes, broken glass, empty buildings, shoes, clothes
Even the people, just tossed out on the streets
Like they were all used up and had nothing else left to give

But not me
Ever since I got here, I've been working
Working my fingers to the bones

But no matter how hard I work, how hard I try
I'm still stuck, stuck in the same place
With no one giving me a chance

There's only so much a person can do
So much a person can pray for before they just give up
I should have asked to be a dog in this lifetime

Feed me, serve me, pick up my shit
By the way, organic food
Only

\$\$\$

Before I came here, I longed to live in the land of the free
I believed in your justice
And fell in love with your democracy

I memorized the pledge of allegiance
And taught my children that in this country
Their voice matters, every vote counts

So I learned to speak up when I saw injustice
Waited for your democracy to do
The right thing

I kept waiting and waiting
And waiting
But the justice never came

You know where I come from
To get a politician's help
You give them red envelopes full of money and a carton of cigarettes

But here they intoxicate you with stories
About their forefathers, their constitution
That all lives matter

I prefer ugly truths
Over sweet
Lies

BASIL KING

A balance that is of itself a tapestry

El Greco painted Toledo and elongated its sinews. He wanted to know where heaven is and where is hell. El Greco painted Cardinal Fernando Niño de Guevara and by the look on the Cardinal's face he might have known but he would never tell.

Martha and I were on a train
Waiting to leave Toledo
We looked out the window
And I recognized Estéban Vicente
Walking in a landscape of Spanish light
Olives hot peppers collage

People who have been burdened with superstition, the Diaspora and a dictator live with the anguish of the Bull Fight, Flamenco, the foot of a peasant the body of an aristocrat.

Be Rich. Get Rich. Be Rich. Get Rich.

Diego Rivera
Paints a Mexican peasant
Standing next to a white horse
Martín Ramirez draws a white horse
Oh, St. Luke Rivera and Ramirez
Never forgot
Mexico

Pause

MARTÍN RAMIREZ is a sharecropper who wants to own his own land. And to do this he is willing to leave his family and go to America to earn money. In California he works on the railroads, picks fruit. And when he is unable to find work he becomes despondent. He has no one to talk to. So, he talks to himself. This is unacceptable. Talking to ones self frightens people. The police pick Ramirez up and put him into a mental institution. Twice he escapes, and twice he is returned.

There are men who see a woman once and remember her for the rest of their lives. Dante did. Everett Sloan did in *Citizen Kane*. Living in a cloister surrounded by a culture that did not understand him Ramirez became a seasoned survivor. He remembered Mary; mother of Jesus, mystery and darkness, composure and aching, Mary, mother, wife, lover. Ramirez realizes that he has to do something to save himself. He doesn't speak English and his education is limited. Unable to satisfy his urges he is tormented and possibly guilty. Masturbation is unsatisfactory and eventually painful.

Be Rich. Get Rich. Be Rich. Get Rich.

Horse and rider

He loves

The movies

Ramirez draws a train to take him home he wants to ride a horse. He wants his wife. He wants paper and pencils. He wants magazines he wants a horse. He enters into a tunnel and when he comes out at the other end he will be home. He will find a way. He will draw his way back to Mexico. Ramirez's drawings are always going home his drawings are poems of longing not of retreat. He channeled his ambitions and became the man he wanted to be. There is no self-pity. He went forward. His eyes retain what the mind is not always willing to accept equilibrium a balance that is of itself a tapestry.

BURT KIMMELMAN

Film Noir

I love old movies, their turmoil in black and white
on a dark evening, a rainy street, a single car
the size of a trolley parked out front of a townhouse —
the only way to know someone is living somewhere.

In that building a guy has murdered a man who was
choking him, who found he was having a drink with his
girlfriend in her apartment, who, panicked, handed him
the scissors she left lying beside her sewing box.

She's beautiful, like in the portrait of her displayed
in a gilt frame, which sits in the window of a store
just across the alley from a swank restaurant where
the guy, that night, dined with some people he knew in town.

Afterward, on the way to his hotel he sees her
there in the painting, but then he hears her ask him if
he likes it, the her in the painting now the woman
waiting in the alley's shadows for him to pass by.

The dead man was never much of a lover, she says,
standing over the corpse, stabbed in the back just because
someone fell hard for a painting, and we know why he
kept her all alone in her art deco apartment.

The guy's a professor at a leafy college north
of the city, a married man who lives with idylls
in quietude — who has suddenly realized he must
fight for his life and get rid of a dead man's body.

He wraps it in her blanket, carries it down her wet
brownstone steps in the opaque rain, stuffs it in his car
and drives off but the cops pull him over since the guy's
forgotten, in his haste, to turn on the car's headlights.

In the heavy rain the one cop asks for his license,
and there's a letter from the Board of Education

in the guy's wallet, which the cop reads, water dripping
from his cap, and tells him "Next time, Prof, turn on those lights!"

The guy's feeling pretty good — but he'll leave tire tracks
and foot prints near some woods where a boy scout trips over
the body the next day, and it turns out the dead man
was a town father, but the killers know his secret.

Unplanned, even perfect, crimes always go wrong because
crimes always do, because people just don't realize they're
living in a wrong world, because they kid themselves, but
I know the facts — and I don't want to see the ending.

Tired anyway, I turn off the movie — but let's
face it, the world's not simply black and white, and I don't
mean to say the world isn't gray, because I know it
is, though it's also as red as blood, as green as her eyes.

Why can't life be like Keats's "Ode to Autumn," no doubt
a poem the professor taught — until his whole world
no longer made sense, a poem about desire,
really — what we're all born into, innocent at first.

Homicide is simple, people simple, poetry
not so simple as it bestows a story we need
in which no one's in trouble, like in a movie when
the world's good and it makes sense, but then it all goes wrong.

SHERRY KEARNS

What Paul Said

about improvisation
being the voice of the gods
come through in jazz, poetry —
all the arts —
is true, true.

What he didn't say
that's true, too,
is the gods are improvised
by our minds...brain's
spontaneous creations...,

that life
is a riff
played on earth
by physics

which is still
making up
space in a void.

The Solitary Elms

As if the soul of
old America—

before its Ozymandian fall

before councilmen gave
greed eminent domain

before poets repeated themselves
on book jackets

like those quick-growth
replacement trees
lining our village streets—

as if that spirit came back
having survived the plagues
that killed the beauties
of our towns and left
on county-road farms
uplifted limbs in skeleton,

as if that soul came back
to inhabit the solitary elms
still alive in remote pastures
or at a city's verge
and their loft and arc

were the poetry
of the Yankee bards
and green growth
the vectors of their words.

GEORGE KALAMARAS

The Battles of the Twelve Animals

1.

Let's say we ate the hound heart after all. That the armadillo in Arkansas is disliked by farmers because cattle and horses may step into their burrows near the surface and injure themselves.

2.

When things go wrong, a good tracking collar will work night after night in the swampy dark, headlamps in the hunters' helmets remaining lit with the luminescence of fossilized bees in the belly blood of a raccoon.

3.

Let's say the many names of sorrow, as if the lightning crack that is our mouth allowed the hummingbird access to the color, *Mu*: Aellen's Roundleaf Bat; Vordermann's Flying Squirrel; Green's Ringtail Possum; Vigagie's Golden-Mole.

4.

Pretend the first toothache you've ever had in your sixty-two years is a message you'd earlier ignored from Vallejo.

5.

It has been written, prior to your birth, that you're going to call your eponymous cup of tea, *Teach Me How Not to Hurt*.

6.

Perhaps the hound ate *you*. Perhaps it paused in Harlan County, Kentucky, and considered Major Silas Harlan, killed by a renegade pocket hanky in the Battle of Blue Licks, August 1782.

7.

Who among us could survive if their pet rat was a Leo?

8.

Repeat, backwards, the ancient names of sorrow: Hoberg's Tapeworm; Sclater's Forest Shrew; Bandy-Legged Babbler Hound, in the parking lot of a Safeway, full-throated in front of an empty can of Campbell's Soup; Bob Kaufman's Jazz Poem, "Battle Report," stuck in the riff of its opening, *One thousand saxophones infiltrate the city*.

9.

“The Battles of the Twelve Animals” is an ancient Japanese tale in which the twelve animals of the zodiac, who guarded Yakushi Nyorai—the Buddha of Healing—had a poetry competition on the theme of the moon.

10.

Who among us could survive the pressure of being a perfected Lightning Bug, born and destined to die in the cruel fires of Sagittarius?

11.

Let’s say the zodiac consisted of prize-winning teas, the three fire signs being: Evening Snow Diamonds; Wisp of the Whisker; and Temptation of the Sable Tassel.

12.

Pretend the heartache is a headache is the pressure of the hound splintering off through your digestive tract.

13.

Every twelfth battle requires the crease of a thirteenth moon. Bitten but not broken.

14.

The fourteen lines of a sonnet are there for a purpose—the way death, like the waning fluid of the moon, falls back through itself.

JACQUELINE JULES

Two Goldfish

She tells me about the room.

High ceilings, spacious, a garden view —
and I walk into the memory
to sit beside my son, not hers.

I didn't bring a dog
to whimper at the foot
of a wheeled bed.

Instead, a plumper pillow,
his Penn State blanket.

She tells me
his chest heaved
with incoherent sounds
as the nurse whispered,
"Not much longer now."

Or is that what I told her?

It's three weeks since the funeral.
We sit in her kitchen, sipping memories,
some spoken, some sighed.

Two goldfish in a glass bowl
shared by mischance.

PAUL ILECHKO

Long Distance Lullaby

There are times
especially at night
when the ruins blaze

in brilliant light
flaring magnesium
into new shapes

there are times
when we sing
across the shrinking

distance of wire
with the plaintive mockery
of telephone passion

there are times
when our messages appear
as a rolling cavalcade

of surges that rise
and topple again
in a liquid torrent

of tropical warmth
mizzled and fogged
as the endless spray

rusts the metal grips
that we cling to
in our desperation.

MICHAEL HARDIN

Babel

My daughter speaks its name,
“sky scraper”: the ice thin contrails
at thirty-six thousand feet.

I take a moment to track her eyes:
not the hospital or convent spire,
the horizon held no other choice.

The week after 9/11, no planes,
no helicopters to the trauma center,
ten months before she was born.

My science teacher in seventh grade
called them “jet streams”:
the Bible, our only reference.

God confounded our tongues
atop a ziggurat, bared our differences
and taught us to misinterpret.

Helmeted, on the back of my bike,
my daughter is secure as we ride
home through the rows of pig corn.

GRACE GRAFTON

After hearing that a man opened fire on a crowd

The candle burns its wick into the holder,
flame eating wax. And snuffs out, taking
light and prayers and the past of itself
with it. Another iteration of begin and end.

What were the prayers and, being immaterial,
do they still meander through the air of the room?
People are dying, alone or as a member of
a crowd, or in a tunnel where they sought escape,

or falling out of the sky as they fly
to kill others. It is a day of demons and
angels, a day of angles and divides,
congruence, separation and the prayers

might be bandages. One day the lying-down
will be our last. And the many days we'll still
wake up, stand and walk, kiss our
loved ones Good Morning? Do some good?
Choose not to shoot another human?

ANNE GORRICK

[Athena]: Dew Gathering

As for the crow that brought her the news, she changed its colour from white to black, and forbade all crows to ever again visit the Acropolis. (p. 97)

At Athens girls went out under the full moon at midsummer to gather dew – the same custom survived in England until last century – for sacred purposes. (p. 100)

The Greek Myths: 1 by
Robert Graves

**She's a day spa on Staten Island
Alexander shoes and diagnostics requisition forms
Bathing suits, big bore kits, borderlands beauty
She's also found in the clinical drawing of elms
There are film festivals in her footwear
The Athena Gun Club
Athena Health patient portal in Belfast, Maine
You could make a career out of her
Let's get all intense about our pre-workout
our pheromones, our odysseys
jezik youtube jungle build
Korean drama lyric liaison
Athena Marie tummy control leggings
medical pants
What's your login on Athenanet?**

Of reason, intelligent activity, arts and literature / heroic endeavor / certainly the most resourceful of the Olympian gods / Dewing 1595, silver Athenian tetradrachm (=4 drachmas), ca. 449 - 420 B.C. / The goddess Athena wears a helmet / Athena's tree was the olive tree and her sacred animal was the owl / wisdom, farming, mathematics / "gray-eyed" or "flashing-eyed" / Out popped Athena, full grown and ready for battle / One of the Lords of Karma serving Earth's evolutions / The pronunciation is never AT-HAY-Nah / Your call and snatch / born, fully grown and armed / pot-making and wool-working / Blazing fast results / explore a wide variety of Smite god guides, builds and general strategy / The Pre-Sequel is Athena

**Oilfields, pool cues, Pallas products, Parthenos
Queen Anne's lace**

**She comes equipped with a roar device
Swimwear in symbol, study abroad, safety device
The goddess of training modules
who also controls the temperature at Tomorrowland
She's the tennis girl in Ugg boots
She can vaporize Poseidon and vineyards
She was all of the following except a water atomizer
Refer to your Athena user manual**

Gearbox Software / Chromium evangelist / You'll notice the minimal controls and decoration / Just found out my kitten, Athena, is actually FIV negative! / Yes I created her, but I'm not playing her. AsIfByMagic. / The goddess Athena belongs most intimately by both name and sphere of influence to Athens / Textured and tumbled for a natural appearance, Athena's five differently sized stones promote a creative installation in a succession of random patterns / According to the Los Angeles International Airport's Twitter feed, a humanoid robot named Athena will take off on a commercial Lufthansa flight / a vision of calm majesty with an investigative mind / The Parthenon, Nashville, Athena is enormous! Nike (in her hand) is 6' tall! / Wisdom Melee, Magical, Guardian Greek. General; Abilities; Stats. Mechanic counters. Item counters. Lane counters; Team fight counters / Athena will consist of a large X-ray

**The goddess of what
lover of
known for
in charge of what
famous for
the resident of
the protector of
on the coast of
worth how much
sometimes called**

The Royal Huisman Athena is among the largest private sailing yachts / Ares voice dripped acid (dropped acid?) / Athena, a humanoid automaton designed at the Max Planck Institute / The Athena is putting on a holiday movie series / Project Athena was supposed to be a new User Experience / After five years in the adult novelty in-home party plan industry as a distributor, she decided to create her own company / Introduced to guns as a competitive sport at an early age / representing natural forces, is an ageless icon / Athena has been busy in the field providing geological and vibracore services to clients / Incredible Miracle Athena is the female professional team

under Incredible Miracle / A refreshing, gently tart, German-style wheat beer
/ An interactive theorem proving environment rolled in one / Mint-Athena is
the first release of mint, based on the platform deployed for the ATHENA
best practice network // From Dirtbag Athena: ATHENA [bursts out of his
skull in full armor]: surprise, fucko. ZEUS: what the hell. ATHENA: i didn't
feel like being born regular so here i am / charismatic, yet problematic

To her neighbors, she was a democracy cause
Her backpages are better than Sparta
Limes skyward to a pacific France
There's an Athena food truck in Seattle
Her fingers
adjust the Athena Grill in Santa Clara
Athena: kush strain
She's Tasha in True Detective 2
Athena puppy cake powers
Athena sometimes wears an Isle of Capri high-neck fauxkini
in the greater New York City area
She's made of phone numbers in Pine Grove
Op smite

[Ares]: as though a sudden wind had gutted the stars

...war by the spread of rumour and the inculcation of jealousy nurses. (p. 73)

The Greek Myths: 1 by Robert Graves

Battlelust and civil order and the new space shuttle / Ares Management LP is close to agreeing on a purchase of Kayne Anderson Capital Advisors / The Amateur Radio Emergency Service® consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment to provide emergency communications / to war, strife, chaos, murder / It's said the sky darkens / Ares features a built-in directshow media / a god of action and determination / fighting on the side of the Trojans / Search for How Old Is God Ares / Look Up Quick Results Now!

Descargar Musica GRATIS
Armor derma plate carrier
aegis belt, amoeba honey badger
baixaki, belt fed upper
Brothers and sisters, what is your defense price?
Ethos quadcopter
firearm freedownload fullversion
The history of investment is injustice
our nextbook review and preamble
Official offspring
in pronunciation and prism

He is not as tanky as the rest of the guardians / and he can't exactly save an ally being chased out of his damage / Personal lockdown lets me shred in lane against The Jungler and come out on top and just destroy as soon as I get the 3 chains on then spray them with the flames of pure death / His damage literally scares any other support away / Even kumba is no match if i buy beads cause i can stick to him like glue / So why is Ares so broken? / His Chains can nuke anyone and don't even get me started on his flames / Seems any idiot will win with this guy / Ares gives them a mini-quest / He wants them to retrieve his shield which he left at a water park in Denver

Equity ranger belt
Roman name
Rocket realm

Bolt catch softonic tactical training
Unlimit your free downloads
I am vista free
wustl, won't connect, watermark
xenoblade
Ares, you are my Zeus dog

Endow a place or an object with a savage, dangerous, or militarized quality /
Ares is Ares and will always be Ares / Your life changes around you and
nothing seems to have stayed the same / Ares and Siris will always be Ares
and Siris / Wins, 0. Kills, 17. Most Kills, 9. Assists, 12. Most Assists, 8. Highest
Score, 1,350. Nodes Captured, 12. Most Nodes Captured, 8. Nodes
Neutralized, 11. / It was nothing concrete. Just images of what I assume to be
part of its geologic history. That's about it! / And the leftovers of Ares'
powers? / The odds are stacked against both of you / Ares is coming? / His
lust for blood can be seen as a chthonic trait usually associated with deities
like the Furies, in fact with most Olympians

Allergy groups, also known as
portal, ethos, ensemble
short myths and shrike
Sourceforge sopwith pup
Ares Travel promo code
swamp cooler
The kissing techniques
in his last known location, latest version

Adapt a famous epic poem that is 15,693 lines into a sixty-six-page page
graphic novel / ARES. WRATH. Gubanov. / He drove his car down a side
street past a pile of discarded vegetable crates and large metal bins
overflowing with garbage / It was as though a sudden wind had gutted the
stars / Some Helots staggered slightly / Freeing the green people of this
world—for Ares is a world of green-skinned humans—has proved a long and
bloody task / Victory has been sweet but tragic / At Ares, we take safety very
seriously / Throughout this series, I have found it difficult not to use the
language of a cosmic hierarchy / He's not in any booster pack / Would like to
send u a warning / Ares, a well known monk, is killing the seasons / Form a
group and pull an entire instance to entrance

[Apollo]: the carer of herds and flocks / A wreath

*...the seven strings of his lute were connected with the
seven vowels of the later Greek alphabet... (p.82)*

The Greek Myths: 1 by Robert Graves

The ideal of the kouros / Music, truth and prophecy, healing, the sun and light, plague, poetry / His shrine was that of the oracle of Delphi, in honor of his having killed the Python / Prophecy, colonization, medicine, archery (but not for war or hunting), poetry, dance, intellectual inquiry and the carer of herds and flocks / A wreath / Apollo did not hesitate to intervene / The Greeks didn't delete Helios completely

**Security creed valves
Aviation and Daphne
ball valves, backflow preventer
Apollo beach homes for sale
certified pre-owned vehicles
dirt bikes
endosurgery, electric embroidery
You'll need a flashlight for this family menu
Apollo gate openers
horticulture
imaging Elmhurst
Walkthrough justice in plus sized jeans**

Wow, Thalia muttered. Apollo is hot / He's the sun god, I said / That's not what I meant / Apollo is the code name for a new cross-operating system / I was dreaming about Apollo / I didn't hear you come in / You left your front door unlocked / Mom and dad are in the living room / Against their wishes I ran in here / The active Yang path / In addition to the epithets Far-shooter, Archer, Delian, Pythian, and Delphian / The CFO as jazz improvisationalist / everybody wants to worship him (back in ancient Greece he was a total rock star) / Favors the peplos, as he is the principal male wearer of this form of dress.

**Kettlebells, men's 3-piece 100% wool suit
LED grow lights, landing sites
Nida and Phaedra Parks divorce
Have your nails done in Silverdale
Outdoor TV enclosure, olive oil, optical systems**

**Crimp tools in private equity
Quiboloy scandal quartet
Relocation services, retail specialists
Theater tours from Oberlin, OH to Princeton, IL
Urgent care, under fire**

With his Montreal restaurant empire in shambles, Giovanni Apollo has decamped for Quebec City / WHEN LIES GO LEFT / Lie #1: I offered fellatio to Apollo / Lie #2: I initiated the texts / Lie #3: I saw Apollo in LA / Lie #4: Everything that comes out of either of Phaedra or Apollo's mouths / Since 1992, Apollo Design Technology, Inc. has been one of the world's leading innovators, manufacturers and distributors of gobos / Apollo is a growing healthcare IT company with a positive, high-energy environment / Apollo is our space themed room

**Apollo Island freeplay
Lego City undercover
thugresident
Shale stock and butterfly valve
The sun is going to jail
Flooring is the hoax-y god of credit
Isolation valve, isometric, isopure
Ispat complex ltd Bangladesh
Is represented by which sacred color?
Apollo is in St. Cloud
the theater of the sun
whirlpool bath instruction
The sun, in trouble
cheating on Phaedra for cinema
Locked up in Kolkata
Smoke detectors, ultrasonic**

Artemis assisted her mother in giving birth to Apollo on the island of Delos / "Dashing Through the Snow," a four-scene comedy, is being staged Fridays through Sundays from Dec. 11 to 20 at the Apollo Civic Theatre / Choreographed, danced and tapered / Apollo molds to any shape your environment calls upon! / The full-grain, Italian Vegetable Tanned Leather used is handmade with care

KIRK GLASER

Inheritance of Fire

A father died,
the house remained,
beneath it currents of a life
ate at foundation,
dry wind carving the bone
canyon, whipping
shed skin, rock
teeth grinding delusion
into hairline cracks
spreading unseen
beneath our feet.

How many times
you said, *I wish*
I could pile all his things
in the field and burn them.

Was it premonition to turn
what remained to fuel,
a swailing line to halt
a darker inheritance—
the need to be
burned clean to the bone?

The only answer after
winds blew coals red to black,
rains washed cinder to earth—
to inherit is to enter
the cracks in the bone,
take the splintering wind
in the teeth, wear the dead
skin clinging to gold.

ROBERT GIBB

ON THE ROAD

1. *Woolly Bear*

Headlong, interim, bristly,
His wide russet stripe abutted with black,

He's halfway across the asphalt,
Dissatisfied with the mulch of leaves

Through which he's inched his way.
Ahead of him lies the veil he'll rend

In order to enter the light, but first
He'll have to attach himself

To something earthly, fissuring
Within a chrysalis of matted thatch.

Out of the basic enzymes
Bundled inside that sack—

Or so the old Platonists thought—
He'll molt into the ideal self

He's been seeking all along, having died
Into himself that one last time.

2. *White-Tail Elegy*

Death in the open is unnatural,
The biologist Lewis Thomas wrote.

So what would be the status of that deer
Halfway under the guardrail?

I could see the stiff shins jutting
From the wireworks of the weeds,

But as I got closer—wondering
About hunters and traffic,

The carcass as the body's double
And dead weight—her hooves

Began churning in a midair gallop,
The reflex for flight still there.

Not wanting to trespass further,
I hurried on, but not until passing

The rubble of that gutted house
Did I remember that *carcass* also means

The basic ruined structure of a thing,
Remember how for Thomas

Death goes to ground or vanishes
In thin air, up thousands of feet

Where life leaves off like a tree line,
Its laddering of nucleic strands

Part of the dance of matter
He describes in *The Lives of a Cell*.

DANNY GALLARDO

BUY-BUST

Encircle

Whole area

During the buy-bust

Beleaguer

The target

Using full force

Anytime

Will happen

The bloody blunder

THOMAS FINK

OFFICIAL BIO

Visible ballad

fawning on
divisible

consciousness.

Prophylactic curriculum

to mask

undesirable

mansions,
wrinkles

that would
detonate.

Fronting perishable
frontrunner, hedgerow

handshakes seared with trademark,
egregious.

Fluffy rainstorm

in window slice.
Rearward

glaze

secreting

obloquy

remover.

THOMAS FINK and MAYA D. MASON

ALMOST MAGNIFICENT

I didn't know that you didn't know.
We each brought our own dinner,
and I did the cooking.
But she'd kept every cookbook.

Almost magnificent red clam sauce.
And this I think an improvement.
Sumptuous but indigestible.

The hours of indigestion gluttony
invited. A big fat
ice cream ring.
My first furniture casualty.

Her son very often forgets to give me arms.

He would not mind selling his
paintings, but would not permit them
to be exhibited. The price is a bit
more than I care to be paying.

The family kept congratulating
themselves; they may have
achieved a telephone. And leave me
with nothing but my own unstimulating company.

CAROL DORF

The UFO

It understood nobody
outside a narrow fast orbit.

Happy, very happy, it turned
to remind her.

A good story carries twenty dollars
in its pocket for the mugger.

Out the window three bare
buildings, monumental.

SHIRA DENTZ

Sing to me, sing to me too

Snow-packs on trees,
white mums everywhere

refusal blends in circles
her silence, sky.

Sing to me, sing to me too.

A bird flying in circles

silence flying a flock
open put of bird's not.
I could attack it
won't crack of not.
I with the silence
a nut to climb of not.
Her silence draws silence
a bird's refusal blends.
Goodbye tell my mother silence a cat
a snow mountain a not them down
branches.

Birds draw silence from before.

Padding like a bird's
beak raptors me too.

I will a hill no frills mother silence.

My sky. Her life.
I frill the silence,
guilt my sky chalky
as if it won't crack
open still no.

I try all through
I will a hill a hill a hill no frills mother.

The no response.
Sing in her silence from before.

First published in *New Orleans Review* and appears in *the sun a blazing zero* (forthcoming,
Lavender Ink/Diálogos)

are you up for being the comma tonight

chocolate wrapper flies like an insect
the fans' wind commas

////////////////////

we add or explain
commas tonight and evermore. kiss kiss
below the tunnel a grave hits. no, no,
chock-full
nevermore
reverse swan dive

////////////////////

a lip is a comma but we want
THE comma — to add—are you ready
to be the divider within this group, a divider
that establishes groups. a comma is like a welcome
mat that always stays outside of what it welcomes
others into. we hurry past the comma.

////////////////////

are commas blades on a fan, causing objects
placed on other objects to seesaw,
skip, from one position to another?
if you were the comma tonight,
you'd be glamorous, I think.
a mink stole, fashionably
turned. it's all in the arc, you see.

First published in *Faultline*.

AILEEN I. CASSINETTO

A Day at the Museum with a Poet

—for Eileen Tabios

All days should be like this:
blissful, unhurried and art-filled.

With two women and “The Beach at Trouville” — here’s
a world hemmed in by parasols and flounces, grains of
sand and shell on its surface. Was that uncertainty in the
summer of 1870?

Or impermanence, and the world abstracted and
manifold in Braque’s sea and sky and in both sailboats in
the spring of 1909. Such cubic oddities in the “Little
Harbor in Normandy,”

and in “The Scallop Shell” — Picasso’s 1912 oval still-life
embodying a tabletop (or flat canvas?) where pipe,
seashells, and the world coming apart came together,
blazoning, “our future is in the air.”

“Sunflowers.” Skyward and yellow. Faithful and yellow.
Dear heart. Vincent, Vincent! Were all your days like
this? Blissful, unhurried, joy-filled?

The Cabinet of the World and the Journeys of Women

Caroline of Ansbach's cabinet of curiosities is probably

the most famous in the world—

it held a 'unicorn horn' (*naturalia*),

bezoar stones (*mirabilia*),

an ivory box of gold dust (*artificialia*),

a gallery of portraits (*artefacta*),

and all the books ever written (*scientifica*).

But how do you catalog

ideas such as inoculation?

or "miniature shoes belonging to lost
children"? Or newer installations such as

a dress of sorrows,

or the journeys of women

journaled,

or mapped on cloth.

Surely, these must be classified

apart from items wrested

from nature or wrought by man;

surely, it warrants its own class—

one that speaks of grit and

mother wit. Like the secret

name of woman—*triumpha*,

which means undaunted, forever stronghearted.

TOM BECKETT

The true fiction

I am
Is a robot.

I've begun
To wobble.
I've begun
To realize
 My vacancy.
I mean *agency*.

*

The true fiction
I am
Is an incompletely
Conjugated robot.

 It's decided
Not to entirely cohere,
Decided to
 Be *between*
Thing and person.

*

The robot
I am's
A broken verb.

*

The true fiction
I am's

Fake news,

Metaphysics,
A vocabulary problem.

The true fiction
I am's

An unacceptable constraint.

*

The True Fiction
Robot I am
Is alive
In this sentence
Looking at you.

*

Dear Robot Self,

~~Can you~~
~~Hear~~ Do you
Know your
Own voice?

Talking to
One's self is
Exactly like talking
To a robot.

Love, Tom

*

The presentation
Of my true fiction

Robot self
In everyday life

Is what
I'm all about.

*

Every frame
Of experience

Is itself
Framed and

That frame
Framed also

By some
Fucking robot

I have
Become.

*

RYAN BAYLESS

And

A long, white line marks the very edge of
Going nowhere he walks alone to
Nothing more than breathing out, in
Forming a country unto himself by
What becomes of dreaming when
Remembering that she slept quietly beside
The mountain bringing sheets of rain over
A field flaming in the sun and
Another mile to go, he thinks, before
The bright air fills with stars.

IVY ALVAREZ

Nagkatagisan ang tarehong talim

I buy a bag of rank and the smell is assaultive. The difficulty is in swallowing. The difficulty is the following: the difficulty is my hunger. My reduction. It's not my fault if the sun rises in the rubbish and sets in the trash. Let's not make a hash of this. You pick through mine, consume what I refuse, refuse to acknowledge. I eat the parasites, and decay. I feed my stomach fat with bloat and rot and with what is hard to say and what is not, and the smell is not for faint heart, and I could defeat Mother Death if I had to win today. I buy my bag of the life-death situation and I draw my knife across the day, and chew.

Filipino idiom meaning matched in strength (literally, became as hard as the blade)

Nahuhulog ang katawan

brain cave stalactites dagger from the sides
to puncture loaf lobes so vulnerable
no lesions yet mother carries a knife
surface jagged in this pinkest of flesh
a drop in status chickens all around her
once her hands shake her cup
the sky bewilders personal blades
she wakes bruised from the ground
tea rippling to her mouth

Filipino idiom meaning becoming weak (literally, body is falling)

Nakasandal sa pader

In the middle of our youngest selves, we learn, don't stand out, don't be strange, they track your range of movement, you lick your hand, then jump, and in jumping at the highest stretch, you slap the mark, they measure, you drop and do ten push-ups, muscles straining, try to evade the hands that try to make you cry through exposure, revelation, you pull up the bar to your chin and the man is yelling, and everyone knows you're on your own out there, measured by a future that will not know how much you can do, the strength of your arms, the power in your legs, all they want's in your hand, your coins, your notes, your checks, your balances.

Filipino idiom meaning person with good financial support (literally, leaning on the wall)