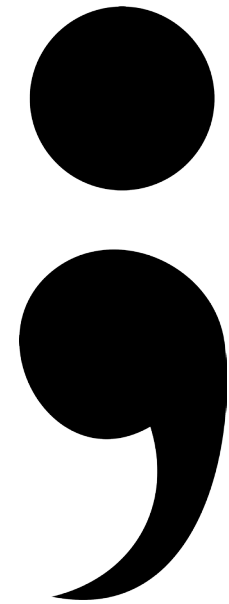


semicolon
literary
journal



ISSUE TWO
SUMMER 2019



SEMICOLON LITERARY JOURNAL

SUMMER 2019

SEMICOLON explores the facets and intricacies of mental health/illnesses through the various ways it manifests in our lives. We aim to showcase fiction, nonfiction, and poetry by established and emerging writers. It is our hope that our journal becomes a safe place for those who struggle and overcome.

SEMICOLON publishes two issues per year. Submission guidelines, information, and past issues can be accessed at semicolonlit.org.

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CONTENT WARNING

This issue contains imagery and descriptions of self-harm, suicidal thoughts, and violence.

We believe that honesty is important in creative work, and we are honored to provide a space for so many talented writers to do so. However, please prioritize your own mental well-being while reading this issue.

SEMICOLON LITERARY JOURNAL

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After the Shouting

ANDREW HACHEY

poetry

I came to the schoolyard and began
to label every flying thing I found.
Red wing. Sparrow.

From under your nest
I pulled the fallen shell
out from a blackthorn

my fist held tight, knot of root.
Lifted my hand that became
a bloody Saint Sebastian,

arrow-pierced, cupping the cracked thing.
Two empty sockets. Gapping beak.
Five red tributaries turned

to a river at my wrist.
Mother Bird, how go the wars?
Can I offer the rest

of my body?
To find the probability
of this trajectory.

ANDREW HACHEY

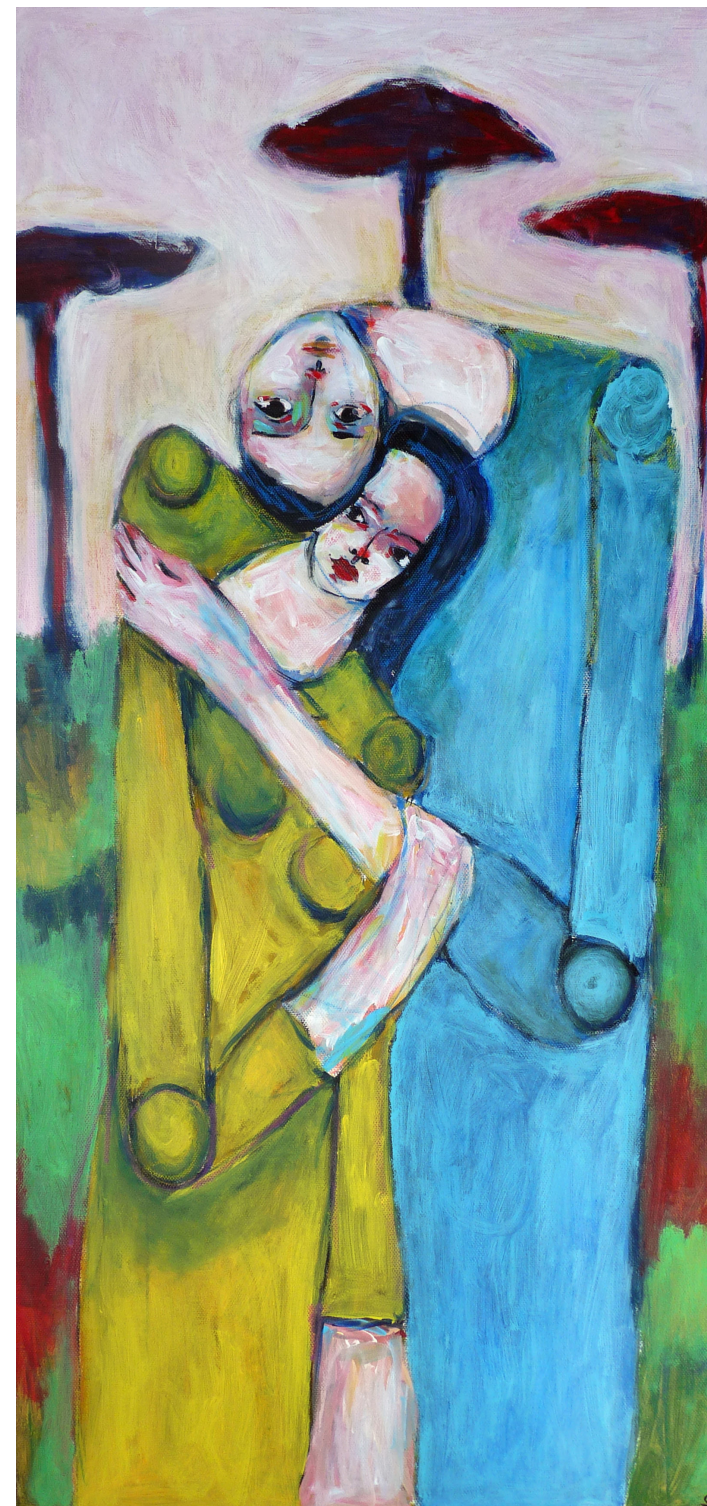
Use centrifugal force
to combat unknowing.
Mother Bird, were we wailing

or laughing? Your friends
descended from their branches.
Marched solemn around our fallen.

Brought clippings of grass,
tulip petals to lay
in the circle. We sat and together

named other birds.
Familiars. Scratched the blue half-shell
like a lamp until birth dust

appeared as a chalk on my fingers.
Agreed we did not ask for this.
Blew away the hollow bones
through falling leaves.



The Couple
SANDRA PARIS

Submerged

CLAIRE LOADER

creative nonfiction

THE BALLS FLOATED SOFTLY, gently, pushing off each other with the soft miasmic rhythms of jellyfish. Hot streams of air from the heater beside the rocking chair kissed their frilly edges, launching them out into space before falling back to hang, like clouds, like brains, like something out of the deep. Three lonely jellyfish, puffing their pastel hues in the corner of the bedroom.

I had bought them on Etsy, my belly nudging the mosaic summer table as I delicately unfolded each gossamer sheet. The tissue pom-poms emerging one by one from the layers in my hand, rustling softly as I gently hung them together in the nursery. I rocked as I watched them float and bob, as minutes took on the shape of hours, and I felt myself slip slowly down into the depths of the Atlantic. My whole being submerged.

For a moment, I wished I really was looking up toward the surface, that all I had to do was close my eyes and release myself to its depths. I wondered there, amid the waves, if it was salt water that choked him until he cried and cried as we rocked on our little island, threatened by the sea.

There had been no talk on Pinterest of the building tide, the sleepless roar that came to engulf me. There had only been greys and yellows, elephants and bunting. Whispers of perfection in untouched rooms, expectation reaching out

from every tailored picture. No hint of the loneliness, the sleepless nights, the dark currents that sought to erode my grip on reality.

Purple, green, grey—we didn't find out the sex. They had been the safe colors. The tissue now laughing at me from my memories, laughing at me from above the rocking chair. The murky waters of a midnight ocean, 4 a.m. and all alone.

HIS FIRST BIRTHDAY. The balloons nodding in the lounge, the smell of a single candle's smoke slowly drifting in the air.

"Hasn't the year flown. I bet you didn't even feel it!"

I looked at the balloons, bobbing on their strings like buoys at the top of the water. The year spent counting hours, tethered by the weight of time.

"Yes, the year simply flew." I smiled, nodding my head absently as I wondered then at the next one. My chest tightening at the thought that I hadn't surfaced at all.



sanctuary
LIZZIE BANKOWSKI

Shifting Gold to Virtue

WILLIAM BORTZ
poetry

see the belly of night
distend after taking in another
body—the immediate response
dipping down to set
shimmering capsules on
shouting tongues
give me permanence and I'll return
it gilded—more tangible
I plant flowers in my garden
and refuse to open my eyes
until they are blooming
I place the petals in my palm
and grind them into the skin
how badly I long to become some-
thing vibrant. to grow into
something that can glow against
the darkness encasing it
I am trying so hard to hold
the stars in my teeth without
crushing them. to not see
every shimmering thing as
gold

Not About A Gun

WILLIAM BORTZ
poetry

in a moment of vulnerability / I bite my cheek and taste metal /
I give my body to the cool breast of night / and what miraculous
things it does to the starlight buried in my dark
the sky weeps while no one watches / morning is painted with
streaks of red stretched lazily toward the edge of the horizon / it is
tired / and like us it has avoided pouring out into some poor soul's
lap / I see this and wonder / who could ever want to pierce me / to
create a hole / a sleeve to put an arm through / and I am reminded
how some have such a vast reservoir of hate / it could contain the
whole unfragmented sky / God—I am exhausted / from reading
memorials / from keeping my head above the surface of some un-
familiar sea of grief / what a strange pain to feel your lungs expand
/ close to bursting / with the air of someone's last breath / if we lit
candles for every person who heard a pop in place of a goodbye /
and tasted gunpowder on their teeth in place of their lover's lips the
sun would blush / oh how red it would become at the sight of how
small it truly is / in light of the light that has been taken / in light
of the light it couldn't lend to replace and fill each darkened space
/ I am moved—profoundly / by how much some people's arms can
hold / by how many crumbling bodies they can keep together at
once / and, as the sky, remain strong / until it is safe to press into
the chest of twilight / and empty themselves

Those Poor Dolls

E.J. SCHWARTZ

creative nonfiction

LAST THURSDAY, I was online looking for vibrators, a longtime suggestion from my college roommates who know I'm career-driven and refuse to date any of the guys at our school, any guys period, really, and I finally relented because I started getting charley horses in my right forearm and aching cramps in my fingers.

Simply Pleasure seemed good enough, and it was there that I stumbled upon the synthetic dolls section for men. The advertisements claimed it was a "dreamy 3D face," like you could even call that thing a face, and I sat transfixed by the dolls for hours. You can buy them in all kinds of positions. Sitting, kneeling for prayer, legs in a 180 split. Some run thousands of dollars, which is really unbelievable, but probably worth it to men who won't have to hear women talk or complain, or spend money liquoring them up first. It's an SAT math question: If a man spends seven dollars per drink at a bar, and he buys a girl five drinks per night, how many nights will he have to pay before he hits the flat amount of the synthetic sex toy?

My suitemate, Mandy, says she can't imagine how great sex feels for guys, how they have something so sensitive and then they get to stick it in our slippery warm abysses. She has sex with guys regularly; even when they talk shit about her afterwards and she swears them off, they always come back. I hear two of

them come in at 3 a.m. because my bed is next to Mandy's, just with a thin sheetrock wall between us. I hear them moaning and talking and laughing and talking. Talking way too much for it to really be good sex.

I order two vibrators. A silent one just for the clitoris that looks like a computer mouse and a butterfly thing that works in and out.

On Twitter, there's an article about one of those sex dolls killing a guy in Germany. One of my few male friends, Jack, retweets it, freaking out like he has a doll of his own and is going to spontaneously combust any second. I quote tweet, "You think THAT'S bad. Imagine what REAL men do to women." He blocks me.

Weeks later, I lie in bed with my toys. I like to be alone. The toys do more for me than boys ever have or ever will. I tell this to myself like a mantra. I *train* myself. I will master this art of independence that will not end with me in the bottom of a well or a lake somewhere being reported on channel nine.

But even with the lights off and the vibrator on high, there's something missing. So I wait for Mandy to stumble in, for her bed to creak, for their laughter to start, for my aloneness to extend to those in the next room and those in the next building and those on the next campus, and it finally begins to work.

Cyclical

KARA GOUGHNOUR
poetry

When you let your fears grow old,
your fears will age you.
Hold your pale, cross-fire palms up
and pray to anything that has a backbone—
make it yours, strung through your thick skin
like bedazzled cross-stitch done with fishhook.
Use every piece of that thankful beast,
that Cerberus of wanting. Know yourself
too well to dig a shallow grave.
When the reckoning comes—
it won't matter whose—
you'll check the door three times
and run.



The Dance
SANDRA PARIS

I Think God Is Sitting

MARTINA LITTY

poetry

on my chest. My heart
hurts so badly and not
in the metaphorical way.

My wrists quake
make my hands jitter
and my body is doing

its own thing, shaking
like a thrumming harp wire.

I was afraid in bed and poured
a cloying orange 5-hour Energy
into an empty

mug and read a blue whale wiki
like it was the morning paper.
Did you know their songs

sweep thousands of miles
of sea? Did you know

their hearts are big enough
for a whole human to curl up
inside? Five feet high

and four feet wide.
Did you know they're warm-blooded,
sunlight-warm?

Imagine having that much room for love.
Imagine that much heat.

Blue whales don't sing
from their mouths, don't sing
without a thousand tons

of sea pressing on their backs.
My chest tightens with every
breath.

I want to call my mother.
I want to call my mother.

Enough

KATHRYN M. BARBER

fiction

SIDE A

Clock on the stove turns over to midnight, another day gone, another day he ain't come home, another night I'll wait up, then give up, go up to bed, start the whole thing over again tomorrow—and what do you reckon he does out there? He's in some corner of some bar somewhere, sitting up on a stool, neon lights & bar-back mirrors keeping him company because somehow, somewhere, I stopped being enough, stopped being something he needed. & I bet there's a record filling his ears, some needle scratching some Haggard or Jones or Cash. I bet he's leaned over a glass, kissing them edges like he ain't kissed me in years, licking it off his lips. Bet he likes the way it burns the cracks in the skin in his lips. Bet he likes the way it tastes like something that ain't me.

I know those old demons that come calling on him; know, deep down, if I'm honest, why he drinks way he does, all the things all those years done to him. Thought when he left that job, finally, done for good, it'd get better, be different, but it ain't. It's worse. But still, still I wonder—if I curled up inside that glass, too, would I be the first thing he thought about in the morning? If I curled up beside him on that barstool, would I be the thing he'd wrap his hands around, cling to, pray to? If I was that blue-neon light that flickers outside that bar, would I be what he'd come home to at night? If I's that ice melting in the bottom of that bourbon, could I keep him warm?

Because I don't remember when he stopped calling me sweetheart, when he stopped sitting next to me in that church pew every Sunday morning, when he stopped sliding that gold wedding band on his finger in the mornings. I don't remember when he stopped coming home, when I started sitting down here in the kitchen at night, waiting until the clock rolls over to midnight, climbing those stairs up, up, up, alone.

I don't remember when beer can turned into bourbon glass & when one glass turned into a bottle & when one bottle turned into two. & I don't know why he can't be stronger, why he can't learn to put that bottle down, why he can't be the man I fell in love with thirty-seven years ago. All I know is I'm about tired of watching him drink himself to death, of him not being able to look me in the eyes. Tired of him not understanding ain't a thing in this world he could do to make me not love him anymore, to make me love him any less.

Clock says 12:37, & so I slip my feet back in my slippers, move slow up the stairs, hold my breath, pray that door's gonna open & he's gonna stumble in. Never wanted babies, all I ever wanted was him, just him, from the time I was twenty-two years old until now. All I ever wanted, all I ever wanted was just him. But I can't sleep, all I see when I close my eyes is his face, his face, his face leaned over that glass, over that bar, over everything that ain't me.

So I go back downstairs, stand over top that record player, one he worships, sways beside at night when he comes home, sways & sings into the dawn. & I slide all that vinyl out them cardboard envelopes, one & then another & another, & I smash Willie, smash Waylon, smash Hank, smash every last one until they ain't nothing but pieces staring up at me from the carpet. I open that cabinet above the sink, one where he keeps all them bottles, & I yell & I holler loud as I can—everything I want to say to him, everything I know I never will, & I turn every bottle I can find in this whole damn house over the sink, turn them upside down until every last drop finds its way out every last bottle.

SIDE B

I dunno how the Lord counts who's going to Heaven & who ain't, but if he looks at how many times a man's sat in a barstool to how many times he's sat in a church, I ain't gonna count to figure where I'm going. Woke up this morning in some bed I don't remember getting in, next to some woman I don't remember kissing on, & there was a bottle of bourbon lying in the bed between us, & I turned it up & then I left her there, but I didn't go home, couldn't go home.

She don't deserve who I become, my wife. Deserves better than the likes of me, & maybe once, long time ago, I was better, was closer, anyway, to the man she wanted, the one she needed. But not now. Now, now my breath smells like bourbon & I can feel it coming out of me, out my pores, out my sweat, out everything.

Slept it off in the back of my truck, slept in there all day parked behind the bar till it opened. I shouldn't've left my job, should've waited, maybe, to retire, but it was time, & now all I do with the time I've got is just this. I pour whiskey till I can't think straight, don't wanna think straight, because if I do, all I can think about is every damn thing I done wrong.

I shouldn't've married her, should've set her free a long time ago. I was selfish. Wanted her long as I could keep her, & now, now I can't face her, can't bear to go home & look her in the eyes because the last time I did, I could see it written all over her face. Regret. Disappointment. Shame, maybe. She could've done better, me & her both know that. Part of me wants to just leave her, let her go, let her start over with what time we got left, but what'll I do if I go home one day & those yellow flowers ain't on the table & she ain't made the bed I didn't sleep in & her house shoes ain't by the bed, right where she left them?

Truth is, I don't even want this drink I can't put down, all I wanna do is go home & tell her I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry. But it won't matter because I've gone too far, ain't nothing I could do now, nothing, to fix all the things I broke. She's all I want, all I've wanted since we was twenty-two years old packing up those apartments after senior year, & she's as beautiful now as she

was then. Couldn't tell you what I'm doing here, can't go home, & what am I supposed to say, anyhow? What could I say that makes up for all the things I done?

Some nights, I walk by the house, see if I can see her shadow sitting there in the kitchen, sipping that wine, waiting. I can't face her. Ain't talked to her, looked her in the eyes in almost a week now, & I don't when it got this bad, but feels like all I can do now is hide here, keep drinking this bourbon, keep hoping she'll leave so I don't have to. She deserves better better better better than me. Went home two nights ago, she's upstairs—she's started giving up about midnight now, later than she used to. I could hear her praying, praying the Lord'd make me stronger, better, a bunch of stuff I can't live up to, not anymore.

& when the bartenders calls for the last round, I drag myself up off that stool, listen to the needle slide off the record, & I slide outside, blow cigarette smoke into the cold night, walk home slow as I can. It's almost one, she's gotta have given up by now. I'll sleep on the couch, can't sleep next to her after what I done last night—and it ain't even the first time. Truth is, most nights maybe I'd rather sleep with other women than my wife because they don't look at me like she does. They ain't got those looks written all over they faces, that look worth thirty-seven years of disappointment.

I open the door real slow, don't turn on no lights, & I go to the cabinet above the sink, but everything's gone—every bottle, every sip, gone, gone—and then I turn around & I see them all lined up on the countertop. Bottles from the kitchen, bottles from under our bed, bottles I tucked in places I didn't think she'd ever find, but there they are, in a straight line. & at my feet, all my records, smashed up & lying all over, faces of men who're better lovers than me staring up, their words & their notes dead & broken & gone.

In the darkness, I can see something catching the light from the street outside through the window—beside all them bottles on the counter is her wedding ring.

Tesserae

ELLORA SUTTON

poetry

do you remember
a place called ephemera

my veins are so fucking full of it. receipts I keep. choking on all the clinging
on all the inability to let go, and yet I threw away

that strip of photos
where you kissed my cheek

and I washed that cheek
watched the carmine bleed away thought it meant /

my hands are heavy have been so heavy ever since I haven't held
such bones again my palms
reliquaries of ghosts and grief

your knuckles
ripe with bruising
the black notes of the last piano
Mozart kissed
so full of genius

the sounds
holy shit

and those photos
that little strip
I threw them away

and it was like tearing the marble monument of a dictator down like
ripping pages out of history books or burning novels or a drip-feed amnesia
because although I can't remember the shape of your lips I'll forever know
the taste of your lipstick

it rattles my teeth which have never been sharp
but burning things,
like stars blurry-soft and far away

you were the biting
but all that's healed over now,
I'd like to think

when we took those photos they were iconography to be
looked at through tendrils of incense and prayer
inhale (exhale) inhale and

the fog on the glass
ruptured with stories stolen away by the sun by the warmth of God
(who exists between us) (us meaning our bodies) (we create Her)

wiped away
the lingerie of cathedral windows
the beauty is made up of glass and lead and scabs and light
smashed
into millefiori into
forgotten fruit dilating with rot
into meat

the mosaic will never be complete again.



I Have Anxiety But I Am Loveable

ABIGAIL E.P.

The Fish

AMANDA MCLEOD
fiction

IT STARTS AS A BUMP on the inside of your left wrist, surrounded by ripples of skin, like pond water disturbed by a tossed pebble. You scratch at the bump absently, your mind drawn away by the flashing cursor, the piles of reports for work—all distractions. It's not until your brain translates the bump under your probing fingertips into the word *fish* that you truly focus on it.

There it is: veinous blue, flicking an elegant tail back and forth, immersed in your subcutaneous fluids. It stares at you with bulging eyes, mouth gasping for oxygen, a reflection of your own face when all the air is sucked out of a room and you can't breathe. It happens more than you will admit.

As the fish glides along your hand, its fins tickle the tips of each finger, one at a time, and they leave a burning sensation; you rub your fingers with a refresher towelette over and over, but the feeling won't leave.

The fish swims up your arm, leaving a trail of fingernail gouges in its wake as it heads towards your shoulder, then your sternum. As it paddles around your heart, the swish-flutter of the fish's tail sends palpitations through your ventricles. The pressure makes every heartbeat echo under your eardrums; the throb has a deep bass. You retreat to the bathroom.

The fish makes its way down the ladder of your rib cage until it is swimming lazy laps in your gut. The motion sets the waters of your stomach

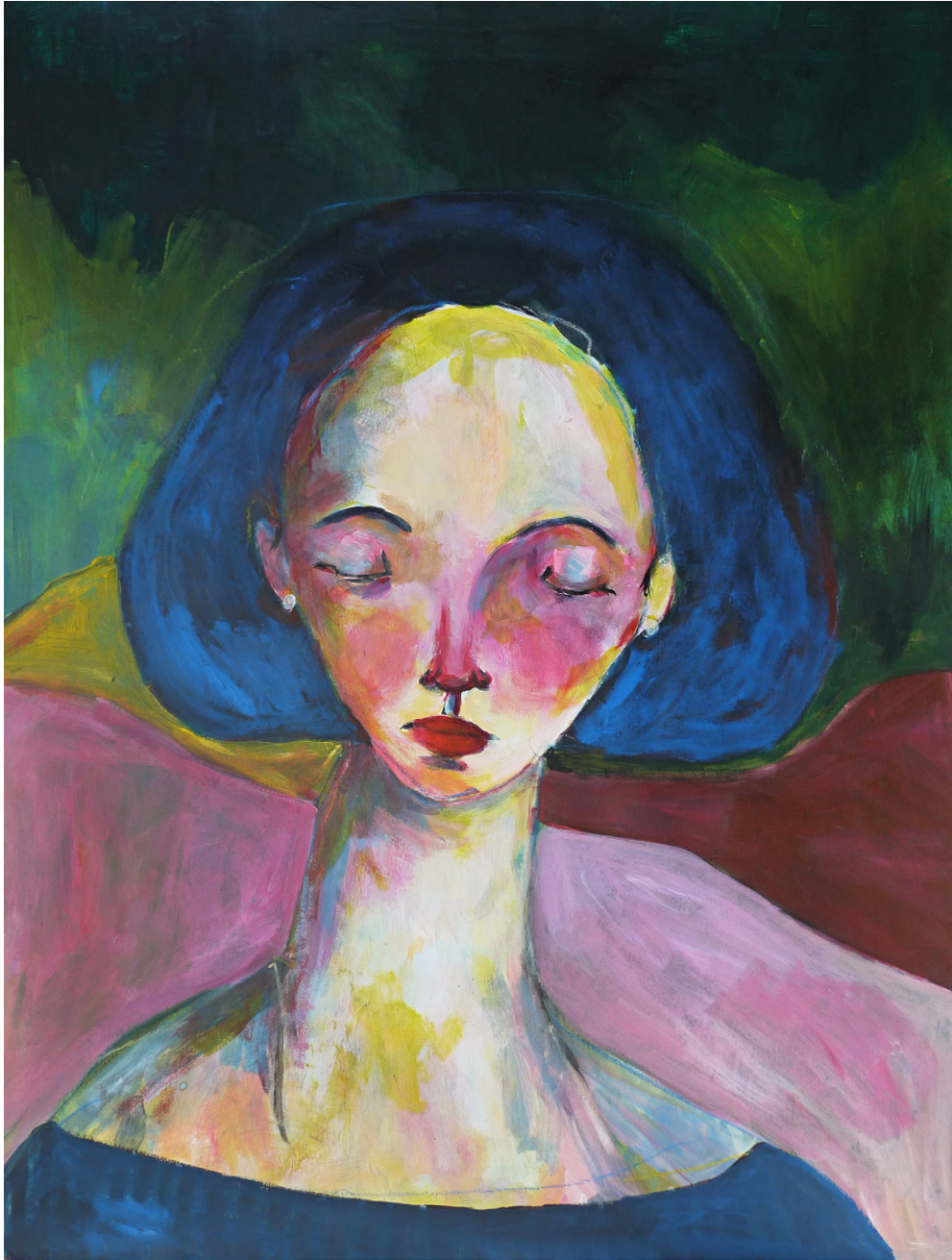
sloshing against the sides; you are seasick. One ferocious dive sends bile rising in your throat, and you stare at your own reflection in the bathroom mirror, taking controlled breaths, trying not to think of flickering blue scales. The effort is futile. You are sick into the toilet. The fish, unperturbed, ascends back to your heart and creates a whirlpool around it.

While you splash water on your face with shaking hands, you envision other places. A lifeless desert. A bleak, snow-capped mountain. A cabin, deep in the forest. Dry, empty places where the fish would never find you.

reverse guide to reintegration

QUINN LUI
poetry

what damns him is not that he does not apologize,
because he does; it's just that he's never meant *sorry*
the way anyone else does in his life; he says it as *hello*,
as *good morning*, as *absolve me*; what damns him
is that he doesn't even say *i'm sorry it happened*,
but *i'm sorry you forgot*, as if you could've set
a time and place for this kind of thing, as if he'd had
a dull-eyed secretary with too-long nails to set up
an appointment with you; what damns you both
is that he is being gentle, or thinks he is, and
in the back of your throat a dead-sick taste manages
to recognize it; it's how bewildered the offering is,
how unused he is to this wounded-animal treatment
he's giving you, as if you're some woodland creature
who darted across the perfectly safe, perfectly legal
trajectory of his life, as if you surprised him somehow
and you're paying out your mouth for your own mistake
and he's only sorry in an abstract way, like he knows
it's what he should be feeling but he feels nothing
at all; what damns you is that even after all this,
you still haven't realized that something's wrong



Untitled
SANDRA PARIS

Until the Glass Breaks

HANNAH MADONNA
creative nonfiction

I'M WATCHING THE WORLD go by, my hands pressed to the glass, my breath fogging it up as I peer out at the rush of life moving by without me. I thought it would be better to be safe, to be shut away in my own bubble, apart from the rest of the world. The colors are muted now, and the voices are soft, and I can't feel anything, not really, not apart from the dull, constant ache that has the same shape as loneliness.

Sometimes numbness is preferable to pain. Sometimes the feeling of dullness, of being tired and limp and boring, is easier to force into your life. Because that's what you have to do, at first. You force it. You ball your feelings tight in your fist and shove them down your throat, to the bare, dark bottom of your belly, where they can't hurt you. Where you can forget they ever existed. I thought that was what I wanted.

But seeing the rest of the world—knowing that there is, in fact, a rest of the world—makes every moment of bland, static numbness fill my lungs like dust. I'm choking on stale air, half-asleep, dying by inches in a little globe tucked away in the corner where no one thinks to check anymore. What would it be like to feel something, I wonder.

I strip down and step into a room full of steam, ready to wash away all the dust, the water hitting the shower tiles in a soft, gushing patter. The water is hot. It's so hot it burns me, and after a minute or two of standing there, I start to notice. *I feel, I feel, I feel*, I scream in my head, my lip between my teeth, crouching down low as I let the water pour down my bare back. All the dust built up sloughs off me, and my pale skin turns red like the shell of a lobster, and I stay there under the water until I cannot stand it a second longer, until I am bare and new and raw.

What a strange, horrible relief it is to feel again.

Now I can feel everything. I'm not protected anymore, and eventually I have to go out into the world I've spent so long watching. Something churns in my belly, and a roiling acidic wave creeps up my throat, climbing with tiny, grasping claws. Nausea sits like a boulder inside me.

I feel *everything*.

Every noise scrapes against me, and my ears ring as I hear a hundred little things all at once. I wince and try to ignore it. The world is too bright now, the film over my eyes gone, every color bright and garish and burning.

I had been so hungry for connection I had missed the world and all the people in it. But now there are people everywhere and without the woolly barriers around me I'm an untethered string, buffeted by their movement and their breath and their noise.

Everyone has a field that surrounds them, an energy. Some people thrive on it, feeding off other people's energies, mixing with them, talking, collaborating, just *existing* around the mass of warm bodies in a thrilling, electric symbiosis. Some people—overwhelmed with the shock and buzz of humanity—run into that energy and lose a huge, vital bit of their own. I run into that energy, a

cloud with sharp edges, and I start to bleed. I am bare and new and raw, and I am in pain, I am split open, I am walking through air made of sharp, jagged glass, and every moment I am aware is another tiny slice through me. I feel foolish to have left the soft parts of me so exposed.

But this is better, isn't it? Better than the nothing before?

I sink down onto the ground, small and scared and ready to grab all my feelings and force them back down again. But then. Someone comes up to me and I feel sick and elated. "Are you all right?" they ask, and I look behind me, see the bloody footprints trailing after me. I wait for a comment, an admonishment, but it never comes. They can't see the tiny cuts all over me at all. *Oh, I'm fine*, I lie. *I'm okay*.

They believe me.

I'm waiting for them to go, waiting to be alone, waiting to crawl through the broken-glass world back to my safe, solitary bubble. But a hand touches my shoulder. I recoil, but the hand is attached to a soft, easy smile. "Need help getting up?"

I let them pull me to my feet. Our hands are clasped and it's hot and awful and so much skin—but that heat seeps over me, spreads through me and covers me like armor. I look at the hand in mine and at the person, the friend, beside me. There's another little slice but this time I ignore it. I take a step, and feel the sharp edges recede until there is just a scuff, a rasp, a jagged brush against me but the skin doesn't break.

The hand lets go and I breathe. The new, shiny skin starts to scab over.



the world's most profound artist

LIZZIE BANKOWSKI

Wheatfield with Crows

MARIE OSTENDORF-LECLAIR

poetry

Vincent Van Gogh

stand inside gold and let it melt
the wingtips of crows off my
palms, hold the wheat steady,
a night sky of cumulus
and black wings shade my
eyes my vision my hallucination
lights dance in my eyesight, far off
and I'm dizzy effervescent

look at her beak opening wide
to swallow me whole
to ease out
of this breathing, bulky thing
into the sky, weightlessness
wonder, ponder, fragility

I wish the birds were swallows
I'd like to fit into
a dozen colorful mouths
inside a golden wheatfield
a holy night sky
find mercy in void

CONTRIBUTORS

LIZZIE BANKOWSKI is a documentary filmmaker, nonfiction writer, and environmental advocate. Born and raised on the waterways of Virginia Beach, Virginia, she has cultivated a deep appreciation, respect, and love for Planet Earth. Lizzie uses documentary filmmaking to foster positive environmental and social change. Her prose has appeared in *Runestone Literary Journal*, *Atlantis: A Creative Magazine*, *Mangrove Literary Journal*, and *semicolon literary journal*. Her films have played at Wilmington Female Filmmakers Collective ChickFlicks Festival, Visions Film Festival and Conference, Gold Reel Student Film Festival, and Cucalorus Festival. Lizzie is currently directing and editing a documentary short about local seafood and the future of watermen in Virginia Beach.

KATHRYN M. BARBER is the Associate Editor of *Ecotone* magazine at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, where she also teaches English and creative writing. A preacher's daughter raised in the mountains of Tennessee, her stories often revolve around religion, country music, and the South. She holds an MFA in fiction from UNCW and an MA in English from Mississippi State University. Her words can be found or are forthcoming in *The Pinch Journal*, *Steel Toe Review*, *Helen*, and elsewhere.

WILLIAM BORTZ is a husband, editor, and poet who lives in Des Moines, Iowa. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Empty Mirror*, *8 Poems*, *Folded Word*, *honey & lime lit*, *Oxidant | Engine*, *Okay Donkey*, *Unvael Journal*, *The Shore*, and the *Lyrical Iowa* anthology.

Follow **ABIGAIL E.P.** on Instagram @abigailervin.

KARA GOUGHNOUR is a queer writer and documentarian living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She received her bachelor's in creative and professional writing from the University of Pittsburgh. She is the recipient of the 2018 Gerald Stern Poetry Award and has work published or forthcoming in *Third Point Press*, *The Southampton Review*, and over twenty others. Follow her on Twitter @kara_goughnour or read her collected and exclusive works at karagoughnour.com.

ANDREW HACHEY is a poet and performer originally from Toronto. His work has appeared in *Quiet Lunch*, *Occulum*, *Memoir Mixtapes*, *Atlantis: A Creative Magazine*; is forthcoming in *Fjords Review*; and has been a finalist for both the NCSU and *Split Lip Magazine* poetry competitions. He is a founding member of the international performance collective, 404 Strand, and a graduate of The National Theatre School of Canada in Montreal. He is an MFA candidate at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, where he lives with his son, Abbott. Find him on twitter @InvisibleAtom.

MARTINA LITTY is an undergraduate student studying creative writing at University of North Carolina Wilmington. Her poems have appeared in *Poets Reading the News*, *High Shelf Press*, and *Witness: Appalachia to Hatteras*, the Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poets and Student Poets series. She was the founding editor-in-chief of *Torch Literary Arts Magazine*, which won first place with special merit with American Scholastic Press Association for its inaugural edition. Litty enjoys writing, volunteer work, toasted PB&J sandwiches, (re) watching the movie *D.E.B.S.* (2004), and sleeping. She's currently trying therapy. She thinks it's going okay.

CLAIRE LOADER was born in New Zealand and spent several years in China before moving to County Galway, Ireland. A photographer and writer, she was a recent winner in the Women Speak writing competition and blogs at www.allthefallingstones.com. Her work has appeared in various publications, including *Crannóg*, *Dodging the Rain*, *The Bangor Literary Journal* and *Crossways*.

QUINN LUI is a Chinese-Canadian student who is easily bribed by soup dumplings or pictures of bees. Their work has appeared in *Occulum*, *Synaesthesia Magazine*, *Half Mystic*, and elsewhere, and they are the author of the micro-chapbook teething season for new skin (*L'Éphémère Review*, 2018). You can find them @flowercryptid on Tumblr, Twitter, and Instagram, or wherever the moon is brightest.

HANNAH MADONNA spends her days working as a reference librarian and spends as much of her free time writing as possible. She talks about anxiety, her cats, and her forthcoming work @hannahwritegood.

AMANDA MCLEOD is an Australian author and artist. You can read her work in *The Cabinet Of Heed*, *Rhythm & Bones Literary Magazine*, *Twist In Time Literary Magazine*, and elsewhere. She's always looking for less noise and tweets about creativity @AmandaMWrites.

MARIE OSTENDORF-LECLAIR is a nonbinary poet who focuses on nostalgia and trauma in themes and forms. She is a former Design Editor of Franklin College's campus literary journal, *Apogee*, as well as being published in the journal the past four issues. She has work forthcoming in *honey & lime lit's* second issue. Twitter handle is @goghtothegrave. Pronouns are she/they.

SANDRA PARIS is a French painter born in 1977 who lives and works near Paris. A self-taught artist, she became a graphic designer in a publishing house, but soon decided to go back to painting concurrently with her job. In 2007 she launched a blog to show her work, and she's now working in a store while hoping to earn a living from her painting someday. She has exhibited in France, Italy, the US, and Colombia. Paris's work has appeared in *honey & lime lit*, *Like A Girl*, *Average Art Magazine*, *Wotisart Magazine*, *Juste Milieu Lit Review*, *Selah Magazine*, *A5 Zine*, and others. Her universe is full of female characters with long necks, colorful landscapes, and still lifes. Her influences include Modigli-

ani, German expressionists, and Fauvism. In 2015, she decided to experiment in collages and mixed media: personal or magazine photos layered totally or partially with paint.

E.J. SCHWARTZ is a writer from Scotch Plains, New Jersey. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Essay Magazine*, *RiverCraft*, and *Necessary Fiction*. You can find her on twitter @byEJSchwartz.

ELLORA SUTTON, 22, is a museum gift shop worker in Hampshire, United Kingdom. Her work has been published or is forthcoming by *The Cardiff Review*, *Blue Marble Review*, *Eye Flash Poetry Journal*, *The Hellebore*, *Constellate Literary Journal*, *Lemon Star Mag*, and others. She was commended in the 2018 Winchester Poetry Prize.