



india
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Vol. 3.1
Fall/Winter 2018

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a journal curating literary arts

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in this issue:

- editors' introduction
- 1 Rising – *Laura Rivera Rodriguez*
- 3 Variation on the Paradoxical Vase, Faces Turned Apart – *Vincent Hao*
- 7 forget me not – *xiang*
- 9 Coraje – *Jose J. Prado*
- 18 Keep It Nice – *Salvatore Difalco*
- 21 “NFL’s Head, Neck and Spine Committee’s Concussion Diagnosis
and Management Protocol [Redacted]” – *Lara Dolphin*
- 23 flower boy – *xiang*
- 25 Neither the Game nor the Rules that Guide It – *Nicholas Grider*
- 26 Ghazalode – *Patty Seyburn*
- 27 Hovering – *Kevin Risner*
- 29 As Silk Glides Quivering Through the Wind – *Bill Wolak*
- 31 WHAT TO DO IF – *Rachel Sandle*
- 33 The List of Things I Know How to Cook – *Allegra Armstrong*
- 34 coconut – *Valerie Guardiola*
- 37 Another Anonymous Ecstasy – *Bill Wolak*
- 39 Walking to Manoa Falls – *Jake Sheff*
- 41 Ombre is Trending – *Patty Seyburn*
- 43 30 Seconds – *Alexandra Umlas*
- 45 if there is a river #74 – *Darren C. Demaree*
- 47 nobody here – *xiang*
- 49 Bedside Lore – *Laura Rivera Rodriguez*
- 51 if there is a river #75 – *Darren C. Demaree*
- 52 Cubano Opiates – *Rose Knapp*
- 53 Proposal 6 – *Michael Prihoda*
- 55 first love – *xiang*
- 57 “Kobayashi Maru”-type Situations: ‘Andrea (Un-Dworkin)’
(United States, 1971) – *Clay Thistleton*
- 64 The Anthropocene – *Bill Mohr*
- 65 Pallid Mud – *Heath Brouger*
- contributors

editors' introduction

indicia: in-DISHy-yuh

n. pl. (1) differentiating marks, characters, or signs, or (2) a biannual literary arts magazine — featuring poetry, flash and short prose, and art — that says “out with the old guard, in with the noobs.”

For each issue of *indicia*, we seek poems, art, and short and shorter prose that hunker down at the fringes of the experimental and the accessible, with a special emphasis on developing their own sense of play. What we generally receive fills out the vast spectrum of these qualities, and the ones that make the biggest impression on us as vibrant, necessary, and/or bizarre are presented within these pages.

Our second issue of 2018 arrives as the curtains draw on a strange year, as we wipe slates clean, turn over new leaves, rearrange our projected selves to mold the controlled image the 2019 world will ogle once the curtain rises again. Of course this applies only to us chosen few who subscribe, though astronomically inferior in every way, to the solar calendar, but let's pretend we're all on the same page for once. In which case, these artists have fittingly defined and redefined, professed and expounded upon their notions of identity, by examining its vehicles of desire and rebirth, gravity and interconnection, repurposed trauma and coping, hope and doom, alterations of fashion and linguistic self-effacement. Here's no room for sitting still and tuning out, so ignite your receptors and question who you really are, should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind.

AJ Urquidi & Marcus Clayton, Executive Editors

• i o i o i a
i i i i

Once we realize that what we have to study is not the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act.

— John L. Austin, on performative utterances

Laura Rivera Rodriguez

Rising

Water is a species
of rat. Water
in my body

is erratic
and dumb.
It is an estuary.

Water cannot make
itself ice
without stillness

and it never wants.
How could it be
people allow magic

to be profitable?
In any case,
I am a percentage

of water
and a statistic
of magic.

In any way possible,
I try
to get married.

I want to get
married to water.
I want water

to want me,
but we know
what we have

already stated.
Every breath
a sacrifice.

It's how time
bores its holes
in us.

Vincent Hao

Variation on the Paradoxical Vase, Faces Turned Apart

beware: lucifer is recalibrating.
the gold in your keep

is never gold. your mother
watches you
with those shallow eyes

& the rain mixes her tears

back into shallow bonham
terrace martinis. she stirs

her drink into little
cyclones, florida

hurricanes, the cypher of

subtleties in discolored sand.
her shadow falls

at the apex of the hotel door —
she is the lily white
of the portuguese lamp,

the cold cider
which bubbles unrelentingly

and disrupts this
impassioned silence

which you've built

between gasping,
muddy words.

can you tell? there are spirits
sinking into her skin,
spaces in the wall

where light breaks
through, fettered

& dull. there are surfaces

yet to be shattered.

your whole life
you've been gasping at contours,

but forget the subtle seams
in a wine glass — cusp it

tight, pretend to be whole.
watch for

the reflex which turns
a shadow into a bruise,
the seam of

a jcpenny coat
tearing by the shoulder.

the arm will always be dissolving
from view

& the smile smears against

her lipstick gloss & your pockets
keep filling with answers.

you've been collecting
her wishes

your entire life. find
the space where the rock salt
kisses, brim your ears with towel

and listen:

without you
there are morning larks.

her feet are dancing
on the florida coast

& for a second she is young again.

watch for the yellow
call. lucifer is behind you.
on his blessing

you will never stop staining her
with the touch of your skin.

xiang
forget me
not



Jose J. Prado

Coraje

When I was newly born, right out of the womb, the doctor didn't bother telling my parents whether I was a boy or a girl. The doctor handed me off to a nurse, who quickly wrapped me in a towel and carted me off to another room. I was born a blue-hued baby with a collapsed lung, and helping me breathe was everyone's priority. I wish this — helping me breathe — were still everyone's only concern.

My parents had wanted my gender to be a surprise — and, hell, did that turn out to be more true than they'd ever anticipated. Once I was breathing, crying, hungry, the doctor told my parents that I was a boy. My name on my birth certificate ended up as Paúl Xavier Espinoza. I was named after my grandfathers — Paúl, my father's father, and Javier, my mother's father, who apparently suggested my middle name be spelt with an X because Americans would have an easier time recognizing it. This is the name I've gone by for the majority of my life. It is an adequate — even lovely — name. But it doesn't suit me any longer. Maybe it will again in the future.

Because the doctor is no longer correct in his assessment of my gender. Maybe he was at some point, but today, I'm not a boy. I wasn't yesterday, or for the past ten years, and likely won't be tomorrow. I'm not a girl either. I don't know what I am. I am in constant flux. I am variable and instability. This is why for a time I went by the name "X." It is the one concrete concept I took away from two years of remedial math.

But that was high school, and high school was four years ago, and now I prefer people call me Pixie, which is what my initials sound like when said phonetically — PXE. I will go by Pixie until I can think up another name I'm comfortable with, and hopefully one that people will take seriously in the workplace. At work, I still go by Paúl.

* * *

I work at a café in a gentrified neighborhood of Santa Ana that used to be broken apartments, a *carnicería*, a *panadería*, *taquerías*, a liquor store, and a bar were my *tíos* would cheat on my *tías*. The liquor store remains, although it's now run by white yuppies who don't bother stocking Mexican candies. Everything else is now luxury lofts, boutiques, teahouses, an art gallery, and a gay nightclub I haunt when I'm feeling either good or bad about myself.

You just know that my workplace is a progressive, inclusive space. It's got that indie aesthetic — exposed brick walls, and all our tables and seating are composed of varnished wood and stainless steel. All our bite-sized and overpriced meals will leave you still-hungry, but at least they are made with locally-sourced products and half of them are vegan. And a space like this wouldn't be complete without a rainbow flag hung proudly by the front door.

Today was the first day of spring. The sky was still, the flowers hungry, the temperature mild — but this was true of almost every day of the year in California. I woke up for work at noon feeling rare, feeling bright, in full color. I trimmed my beard, put on a red shirt I hadn't worn in years, carefully applied my roommate's red nail polish to my fingernails, and then, running late, sloppily put on my drugstore red lipstick. One half of my lip appeared slightly bigger than the other, but at least I didn't get any on my teeth this time. I rarely wore makeup at all — usually it was black, and usually it was just eyeliner. My manager, Monica, had told me she was fine with it, but I knew it made her uncomfortable. On days I wore makeup she'd stick me in the back to do food prep and she'd handle customers herself.

But today she couldn't do that. It was the first day of the new season which meant that she had to take complete inventory of the café, which meant that everyone would be tired by lunchtime and on edge by three. Today was also Tuesday so I expected Delilah with the cardigans, the crow's feet, the Fran Drescher voice, and the "I'm With Her" pin would come in around four to demand her pick-

me-up pre-dinner latte — three parts milk, one part espresso, and a whipped cream topping. Mary usually took care of Delilah’s order, but she was out sick today, so I had to fill in. And of course Delilah applied ample vocal fry to her voice when she instructed me on how to make her simple beverage, and she held an evil eye the entire time I prepared the drink with my pretty-painted hands.

“Latte for Delilah,” I said through bold-hued lips, placing the latte on the counter.

“Thanks,” said Delilah, barely opening her mouth. She immediately opened the lid of the beverage and criticized the amount of whipped cream I put in it. Sometimes it was too much, usually too little. “Also,” she said, whisking the drink with a straw as though searching for something, “shouldn’t you be wearing a hair net for your beard? And isn’t wearing lipstick inappropriate for the workplace?”

“Hell no,” I said. I’d never seen Delilah’s permafrown contort into a sneer. Evidently I was too loud. Even customers sitting at the tables furthest to the back of the room turned in our direction. Monica joined us from the backroom before either Delilah or I could say anything more, and told me to go take my ten-minute break.

* * *

I spent my break in the alley behind the café. I sat on the gravel ground trying to gather myself but my legs wouldn’t sit still. I needed to move around, so I got up and paced the area. Toward the end of the alley in the sunlight I noticed a swarm of dragonflies flying about in a small orbit. I didn’t know that they even gathered like that. I pulled out my phone, searched it up, and learned that it was a rare phenomenon. A feeding frenzy. I thought about dinner too, tried to remember when I last got paid, and if I could afford to eat out today. Before I could take a video of the dragonflies, Monica came looking for me to tell me to please follow her.

She led me to her barely-qualifying office. It could almost accommodate a desk, a computer, two chairs, and two bodies. Usually someone needed to stand. Judging by the smell and size, it had likely been a storage closet or small restroom before being renovated. I wasn't sure if I was smelling the residue of ammonia or of urine.

“Talk to me, Paúl,” said Monica, before I'd even sat down. “What's got you so angry?”

“I'm not angry,” I said.

“You said hell no to a customer.”

“You and me both say much worse back here.”

“Okay, well from what she told me, you got mad at her for pointing out that you needed to be wearing a beard net,” said Monica.

“No, I got mad at her because she very clearly always has a problem with how I look,” I said.

“What do you mean?” she asked. I rolled my eyes in response. She shook her head. “Are you going to tell me?”

“What's the point, Monica?” I asked.

“Paúl. What's been going on with you?”

“I don't know. What's been going on with you? You've been cutting my hours, and when you do schedule me it's either very early in the morning or it's close to closing.”

“Yeah, and that's on you,” she said as she typed on her keyboard. She turned the computer monitor in my direction and showed me a spreadsheet and highlighted a number that signified how many times I'd called out sick.

“You've called out five times in the last two months,” she said.

“I need to get the hell out of this room,” I said. My eyes felt hot and wet. My throat had been getting progressively tight, almost painful. “Can't breathe.”

Ten minutes later she came to find me in the alley and handed me a piece of paper. Before I could read it, she told me it was a written warning — my first. She also told me that she was sending me home for the day.

“Why?” I asked.

“You don’t look good,” she said. “Go home. Get better.”

* * *

I needed a ride home. My roommate and I had carpooled, but she wasn’t getting off work for another four hours, so I called my cousin instead. It took him four rings to pick up, and when he did, I could hear spoons hitting ceramic bowls and him chewing with his mouth open.

“Yo,” said Lupe.

“I need a favor, man,” I said. “Stelmaria was supposed to pick me up from work but I got sent home early. She’s still at work and so is Ismael. Can you come get me?”

“I don’t have a car.”

“Your mom does,” I said. There was a silence, and then I heard him say a few words to someone. I could hear them, just barely, their whispers somewhat edged like butter knives.

“Alright. I’ll be there in twenty.”

When he got here, he looked rigid and stone-stoic. He glanced at me for less than a second, and then fidgeted with the radio. I sucked my lips into my mouth as I got into the car. He accelerated before I’d even shut the door.

“The fuck?” I said, pulling the door closed.

“Sorry,” he said. “I’m not used to driving something with four wheels.”

“It’s okay,” I said. “Thanks for coming. I owe you.”

“You don’t.”

“So what’s been going on with you?” I asked while he watched for a chance to merge into traffic.

“Just — you know, same old. School. Papers. You?”

“Well — my boss has been messing with my hours,” I said. “She says she doesn’t want to fire me, but she thinks I’m unreliable. She wants me to get my shit together if I want my hours back.” Lupe said nothing for a while. He was rigid and focused. He gave more attention to driving than anyone else I knew.

“So what are you gonna do?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” I said. “Get my shit together. Or not. I’ll find another job.” I waited for him to respond, but he said nothing. By now, traffic had loosened up.

“It’s happy hour and I’m not happy,” I said. “But I want to be.”

“Alright.”

“Let’s go to that shitty gay bar. You know, the one I told you about that does karaoke every night. We can help each other pick up guys.”

“I’d rather not.”

“Or we could go to a shitty hetero bar,” I said, pulling down the vanity mirror. A couple of slips of paper fell out, as did a pair of sunglasses. I picked them up and put them in the glove compartment. “Or we could just go home,” I said, checking my reflection.

I thought he would have rather gone home than be seen with me the way I currently was — a sweaty, hairy, red, vibrant mess. I wasn’t sure, but I wanted to be. I wanted to challenge his comfort and loyalty to me, his dear cousin.

“Let’s go to your shitty dirty dive dudebar — the one by your house. I’ll buy you a drink.”

“Okay, fine.” he said. “But just one.”

*

*

*

We arrived and it was warm outside his car, warmer than it had felt before I'd gotten into it, but the bar was cool. I caught the scent of Pine-Sol, which reminded me of my parents' house. I wanted to leave, but Lupe wasn't going to want to go anywhere else. He was already at our usual table toward the back of the bar by a dartboard. The bartender eyed me as I walked to meet with my cousin. I waved at her and she said a low "hey."

"Order me a whiskey sour," I said to Lupe, leaving him there to wipe down the table. "I need to take a piss."

The men's room was empty and surprisingly clean, and so after I peed I took a moment to reapply my lipstick and wet and restyle my hair. Just as I finished there was a hard knock at the door. When I opened it, I found that there were two people waiting to use the restroom too — Lupe, and red-faced dude with hair like white frosting. He looked me up and down and scoffed.

"Lemme cut in front of you," said the man to Lupe. "I gotta take a mad piss and this queer's taking ten minutes to do god-knows-what," he said, smiling at my cousin. "Putting on makeup. This isn't a powder room, you know. Use the lady's room next time, faggot. It's always open."

"Man, shut the fuck up," said Lupe, moving past him, knocking shoulders.

"You wanna watch where you're going?" said the man before he moved forward and shoved my cousin. Before Lupe could react, I charged into the man, knocking him on his back. It felt good to do that — until it didn't. He didn't immediately get up. He rolled to his side. His red and yellow eyes were wide and he began making a heaving sound, and then a low, elongated groan.

* * *

I thought to the last time I'd seen my dad. I was nineteen and getting home past my curfew. He was drunk and furious, specifically because I was wearing my dead grandma's earrings. He managed to pluck one out from my earlobe, and when I refused to hand him the other one, he stomped to the front door, tore it open, and demanded I leave his house. But I was in my house too. I wasn't going anywhere. He yanked me by the shirt collar with such mal genio, such coraje. I reached out to my mom standing nearby but she did nothing except scream. I pushed his arm away and he pulled harder until my shirt tore. He snatched my wrist and grabbed my shoulder.

At the door, I pulled myself free and locked my body into the doorframe, arms and legs spread, hands gripping the wood, feet planted down. My father the stout bull charged into me and I fell backward, off the porch, onto the wet grass. I lay on my back unable to breathe. My breath, like my grandma's earring and my dignity, had been stolen away. I writhed on the ground trying to reclaim some of what I'd lost in the last two minutes. By the time I caught my breath again, the front door had been shut and every light in the house had been turned off.

* * *

"Hey, assholes!" I heard someone shout. I turned around. Behind Lupe stood two bar patrons. The bartender was leaning over the counter. It was her voice that had called out. "Get the fuck out or I'm calling the cops!" she said. I stared back at the man on the ground who had sat up by now. Lupe tugged on my shirt.

"Let's fucking go," he said to me as he headed to the exit, not waiting for me to respond. In the car, we kept silent for the ten-minute drive to my place. Once we arrived, he parked on the curb and shut off the engine.

*

*

*

“Thanks,” I said, opening the door.

“What’s the point of all this if it causes you so much grief?” he asked. I stepped out of the car and stood for a moment watching a dragonfly glide across the chipped white picket fence in front of my house, crossing a pair of wasps, flying over my neighbors who were pretending not to watch me.

“Ask the dragonflies,” I said.

“What?”

“Why does any fucking creature look the way it does?” I asked, and then shut the door. I waved to Lupe and turned to leave.

“Yo!” shouted Lupe through the closed window. I turned around and watched the window lower slowly. “You owe me ten bucks for our drinks,” he said.

Salvatore Difulco

Keep It Nice

My parents argued in their bedroom. I had been asleep for hours, but their voices awoke me. I lay there in the dark trying to make out what they were arguing about. My mother did most of the talking, her voice rising and falling with emotion.

My father had been to a poker game that night. I'd gone to bed before he came home. I knew he was playing poker because he always wore his black loafers to poker games. His feet swelled when he sat for too long, so he could easily slip the loafers off when necessary without drawing attention to himself.

My mother's anger would not abate. I could hear my father murmuring apologies. She was having none of it. At one point he raised his voice but after a hissing rebuke quickly lowered it.

The argument ended, or I fell asleep again. In any event I awoke the next morning to chirping birds and the smell of burnt toast.

I dressed, used the washroom, and went downstairs.

My father sat at the kitchen table in an undershirt, his hairy arms and shoulders contrasting with and heightening its whiteness.

My mother stood facing the stove in a pale blue dressing gown, head bowed. I don't know what she was doing.

"*Buon giorno*," I said, taking a seat at the table.

My mother didn't turn around. My father grunted under his breath.

I grabbed a biscotto from a plate in the middle of the table and chewed it.

"You're spilling crumbs everywhere," my father said. "Go grab a plate."

I went to the cupboard for a plate. I could see that my mother was crying. I looked at my father. He sat there with his jaw set, hands flat on the table.

“You want coffee?” I asked.

“Your mother’s getting it for me.”

My mother didn’t move. She brought a Kleenex to her nose.

I grabbed a cup and walked past my mother. The glass coffee pot rested on a back burner. I reached around her and lifted the pot off the burner. I filled the cup and lowered the pot back to the burner. My father drank his coffee black, so I took him the cup and set it in front of him.

“I said your mother’s getting me the coffee,” he said without looking at me.

“It’s right here, Pa. It’s okay.”

He glanced at me and in one motion grabbed the cup and hurled it at the wall. It shattered, splattering coffee everywhere.

I stood there shaking.

My father rose from his chair and lifted his arm to strike me.

That’s when my mother turned around from the stove and stared at my father with what I can only describe as burning blue eyes.

As I braced for the blow, my father’s hand froze in midair.

Shoulders hunched, knees bent as if to leap or sprint across the floor, my enraged mother stared at my father with such intensity he began to shrink.

I took a step back as this unfolded, unsure of what I was witnessing.

My father's hairy shoulders and arms receded inch by inch into the undershirt. His balding head shrunk down to the size of a baseball, then dipped below his neckline. His legs completely disappeared. His clothes and what remained of him crumpled to the floor in a sloppy heap. I thought I could hear him squeaking like a mouse under the clothes, but I wasn't sure. I wasn't sure of anything anymore.

My mother now directed her gaze at me.

I didn't know what to do, whether to bolt or face this head on.

"What do you want for breakfast?" she asked.

I raised my hand to shield my eyes.

"Well?"

"Uh, I'll just grab myself some Cheerios, Ma."

Lara Dolphin

“NFL’s Head, Neck and Spine Committee’s Concussion Diagnosis and Management Protocol [Redacted]”

“Football/supersedes/traumatic brain injury

impairment of neurological function/is/standard

the NFL/is important

Players must/perform

acute head injuries/will be/the responsibility/of/the/player who is clearly unstable

communication/by the/player/shall/not/be/published

The NFL Locker Room Comprehensive Concussion Assessment can/have/limitations/and/is/not/formal neuropsychological/data

a/concussive injury/is/a/distraction/to the/NFL/and/to/the team

It is important to recognize that/concussion/Assessment/is/a/Game

The/players ... such/dummies.”

xiang
flower boy



Nicholas Grider

Neither the Game nor the Rules that Guide It

I was fired because I failed the company drug test — not because I did drugs or even because they gave me a drug test but, they said, because I had failed to take the initiative. Safety first, they said. They'd hoped I'd be a self-starter. When I told them I was confused they got snitty and told me my confusion confirmed their suspicions. Before they had me escorted out and shot in the parking lot for suspicious confusion and for allegedly stealing a secret stapler, they shook their heads and said mistakes happen but obviously you're not a team player, so you're not a right fit for us. The Team Leader then reminded me it very clearly stated in the employee manual that under no circumstances was anyone except the Assistant Vice President (Captain Jimmy) allowed to be confused. That's what school was for, the Team Leader said as he adjusted his clean white hard hat, and this wasn't time to learn, this was the real world. If you ever mix up learning about life and actually living it, the non-helmeted Assistant Team Leader leaned in and continued, it's like breaking the rules of a game you're not even playing. People will start being alive while they're still in school, she explained politely, so they won't end up desperate enough to come operate our loud, dangerous machines. Profits will dip, which means people everywhere will suffer. The Team Leader reminded me the employee manual also contained a chapter summarizing the unfathomable complexity of life. When I asked for forgiveness and promised I could be as desperate as they wanted, they apologized but said they had a zero-tolerance policy regarding second chances. Before I was escorted out, they told me they would pray for me but, though they admired my spunk and my willingness to be desperate, it was too little, too late.

Patty Seyburn

Ghazalode

Serial promotions daze Mark from accounting
Let us now praise Mark from accounting

Whose precise penmanship sashays the margins?
Who prefers Cabernets? Mark from accounting

Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.

Writing on wall, assays Mark from Accounting.

Part hero, part hierophant, ledger decipherer
Am What I Am, conveys Mark from accounting.

The moon waning gibbous, the moon waxing crescent
It's only a phase, portrays Mark from Accounting.

It's true. He's in love with a girl from Fulfillment.
Who sends covert bouquets? Mark from accounting.

Bring him the numbers! Mechanical pencils!
Who despises delays? Mark from accounting.

Patty's enamored with your name's stock phrase
But here there are no clichés, Mark from Accounting.

Kevin Risner

Hovering

when the funicular hung parallel
to Montjuïc some October many years ago
my watch beeped right at four o'clock
it was then hovering there
I knew the funeral service had started

some hymn lifting skyward as I was
about to sink back to earth
with no other human in the car
I was in a Dewar's mini bottle
my single reminiscent toast
just like at breakfast a jolt

swung the car & set me in motion
it was a quick & shuddering shake
& I inched beside the hawks
who always glided & scanned & dove
much more smoothly than I ever did

hovering there
readying to touch the earth
to lay claim of its sustenance

soon there might be a nudge
to send me along
first up
then down
then back up
I leap
onto an Eixample balcony
pedaling the air like a trapeze artist
cozy with the deepest of red wines
a whole bottle
& I am
at the same heights
no longer hovering per se
with the same alertness of
the steady hum of cars
but I hum & swim & glide
in fuzzy thoughts
of eternity
for an eternity



Bill Wolak

As Silk Glides Quivering Through
the Wind

Rachel Sandle

WHAT TO DO IF

you find the perfect pair
of jeans but they don't fit:
squats, lunges, butterfly
your knees. put them
on and climb
 a ladder
 a mountain. put
them on climb into
a bathtub of
 hot water
 a baptism: if
you wash away
your sins they
will fit. climb into
them and
 cuff them
 cut them
 bust the
inseam. regret it.

put them on in
layers: wear
 a belt
 a pair
of tights forget how
it felt that your clothes
did not always fit
like this. put them
on and grow

into them like a tree
bound in wire. like
a plant that cannot be
repotted: must adjust
to its container. put
them on and don't
move

for years then grow
smaller
 until you
can't then split

your spine open and send
a leaf tumbling out like a body
from a closet,
 or a pair
of jeans.

Allegra Armstrong

The List of Things I Know How To Cook

and you want to hang out tonight or tomorrow
I've started to change my mind about
where the fuck 23rd St is,
took a shower at the Y and a bath at home.

I'm tired every night at 10.

Can different people come together for a common purpose?

You lay next to me with your arm around the cat, kiss her over and over and I want you to be warm.

I make lunch for your tomorrow.

What lives in the corners of your heart? I can hold most children with one arm but when they go they go alone.

Valerie Guardiola

coconut

five.

box blonde i feel my grandmother turn, dirt collecting under her nails

i start laughing like the girls in my class, snowflake skin

my voice rots

dirt brown

dead

she was prettier than me i remember that

she was prettier than me i remember telling myself

& i was beautiful once

four.

mother in my classroom doesn't have to worry about her children

& he holds his hands above his head

like falling forward

concrete

maybe if i smiled more

than my skin, less intrusive

flesh deep

eyes down

nails trimmed tight

& he was beautiful then

three.
half bone half berry no sweet
stopped bleeding when she was ten

blood mean human
mean life
mean death

& there's no reason for her to talk to boys
& there's nothing left to say

& she used to know
warm on her fingers

& she was beautiful then

two.
love was easiest to you

white hands low swallow
me low growl

this is the whisper that lasts forever

just love
 love when
 love when we
 tell
 you
 to

& smile more
& your skin, less intrusive

& we was beautiful then

Bill Wolak

Another Anonymous
Ecstasy



Jake Sheff

Walking to Manoa Falls

The family didn't want to fall, but sought
a demonstration; nature's cosplay:
a hibiscus
floating over their meniscus

like the next of kiln. With a *Mahalo!*,
water crashed ahead; the walkers found
asylum
in the eucalyptus carapace and phylum's

past events, but didn't stop. As if Oahu's
roasted highway wasn't ground, they planted
motions
of attention, like the early Nova Scotians

when they stood eternally aloft. "These toys
contaminate our wisdom for the better," green
as halitosis,
rocks agreed with leaves against apotheosis

but resigned. The family declined
decoding days like dice; they left the decade's
geriatric
laughter on parade. They crossed St. Patrick's

Dionysian protocol; evinced a *Clair de lune*
with rational exuberance. The born and braised
cetaceous
will of man — opposed to the cretaceous

arc of Koa trees in spring — was most deliberate
and Sunday green within the little girl. Her
avocation's
sundries at trail's end — an adze for avocadoes

craving awe: her lawless vehemence; a nimbus,
daffy gray, to mince menorah light and grail
finesse
in water's height — control what falls possess.

Patty Seyburn

Ombre is Trending

Fabric that moves from one color to another
gradually, dip-dyed,
has taken the fashion world
by storm. All weekend, it was supposed to rain and
hard, foreign to these
parts. The sky tented vague gray.
The volunteer park ranger advised/demanded
my brother and I
stay off the trails — no rescue-
services could reach us. We nodded, proceeded.
As it turns out, verbs have five
properties: person, number, tense,
voice, mood. Complex and vital as we thought,
so much so nouns wish to become
them or their foot-soldiers, the present participle
used in the present progressive tense, which keeps things
not whole but moving.
My brother and I moved along.
I bought an ombre sweater on sale at Nordstrom Rack.
It had a journey:
purchased from the retail store,

found wanting, returned, retagged, reshelved, dizzied on
a clearance rounder,

jostled, flattened on torsos,

stretched overhead, scrutinized in three-way mirrors
and finally shipped out

to the last-chance corral where

it called out to me. Indigo making its way
gradually, to

pale gray, a staggered hem. The sky

was like that. It is flattering. I like how it
starts out one way and

becomes another, wearing dusk.

Alexandra Umlas

30 Seconds

The baby won't stop crying. Elise is in front of the oven, praying the buzz of the oven fan will make the baby sleep. He is hard to hold horizontally, like a baby, so she's placed him over her shoulder and is doing squats that make her knees twinge. He is wearing a cotton onesie, and she remembers her ex-husband's exasperation with putting their own kid in one 15 years ago, the way the snaps on the bottom would never line up. Two hours ago she had watched her sister shimmy the onesie carefully down the baby's body. Jill was still the same person her husband had married, had lost the baby weight, and was good at making plans for "date-nights." She had turned on the TV for Elise and kissed him, leaving small puckers of red on his forehead.

The baby's face is flushing purple, and for a moment he feels like an eggplant in her arm. Her palms are uncooperative, and she smears the moisture from them onto the baby. She is glad to be wearing a gray sweat suit, but wishes the cotton wasn't so thick, and suddenly feels like an elephant in her sister's delicate home. She doesn't remember her own baby crying so much or being so purple. The wall clock's hands seem suspended between the seconds as they click along, and she imagines her nephew's little heart makes a similar small ticking sound in his chest. Oprah has just come on and is sitting in the center of the TV in a yellow blouse. It looks like a drape of delicious butter as it sweeps down her chest.

"Today, we are going to learn how to change your life in 30 seconds," she tells her audience. *I'm going to lose it in about 30 seconds*, thinks Elise. The show is in HD, and she can see the soft waffle weave of the yellow blouse's fabric. Her sister had left the house in a shirt that had a crisscross of material in the front that tied, so that it could be opened like a birthday present. Elise didn't own any shirts like that. She thought that maybe she should get one.

Oprah's voice is smooth against the baby's ragged cries; her nude lipstick is shiny and promising. Elise wants to change her life in 30 seconds, so she carries the sticky baby into his room and sets him in his crib. She feels like she is folding in at the edges. *I just need something*, she thinks, walking into the kitchen. Under the kitchen sink is pine-scented soap and a bottle of Canadian spiced whiskey. Thank god the top has a small white line around it, so she knows it is open. She pours an inch or two up the side of her glass, downing it. It leaves a pleasant heat in her throat, and her cheeks flush a bit as the alcohol sweeps into her bloodstream. She puts the bottle back, rinses the glass with water, and wills herself into the baby's room, scooping him up by the armpits to try the kitchen fan one more time. This time, she holds the baby horizontally. Oprah is back on the TV, but Elise can't quite hear what she is saying. She is watching the drape of the yellow shirt and feeling her sports bra stick to her, while a trickle of sweat makes its way down her side from where the baby's head pushes into her armpit. She is leaning forward when she feels the baby slip. Over the kitchen fan, over the applause of Oprah's audience, she hears the slap of warm baby on cold kitchen tile. Her breath is stuck in her throat as she picks the baby up, runs to the couch, sits on its velvet, turns the baby over and over. She looks and looks. She is still looking when Oprah's voice comes back through the television. Elise runs her fingers through his hair until he falls asleep. Her sister finally walks through the door and says dinner was delicious.

“Did the baby cry?” she asks.

“Only when you left. Only for 30 seconds,” says Elise.

Darren C. Demaree

if there is a river #74

if mercy is an ending mercy is an ending is an ending an ending ending



xiang

nobody here

Laura Rivera Rodriguez

Bedside Lore

Make me a believer, to turn
and turn again to the same place

this gift that harms. I made
or make perfection with a stroke

stroked this template alive,
I mean this temple.

An hour or so and it breathes.
When I leave, it hides conically.

I am emotive, I am emotive,
everything I look at is a name

I can call my lover, who is perfect.
In less than a week, in less than

a second I am gullible and he
is objective, turns my heart

into an organ, places fingers
inside of me. These memories

are petals peeling from the weak
bough. This shade is hunger.

As a child didn't he feel
sorry for shadows? We are safe

only inside. I mean lonely.
We make each other.

Hear my neighbor retches,
imagine that he is perfect

in some fragment of a window,
all these trees in heat.

Darren C. Demaree

if there is a river #75

i want to eat the fish only and elaborate the bones of the fish and try to pierce my own skin with those bones i want to collect those bones when they fail to reach my muscle i want that collection to mean something more than it should

Rose Knapp

Cubano Opiates

Strings of violet lights hang ——

Dancing Cross Cigar

Necklaced chiseled fauxfur ——

Michael Prihoda

Proposal 6

bend former
thoughts

toward other
lives.

a mug cupped
to ear

sounds of
an Atlantic

muffled
by sawdust.

a taxonomic
defense

for haha,
the openness

in being
mortified

& feeling
alright

with the treatment
of animals.

you act in service
of a Byzantine panoply,

a simulacra
of gods.

(“they say there’s one hundred in one ...
lord knows how many in
the other ...”)

our creations
tail us

through
dimensions,

invite worry, sorrow,
a singular cork

in bottles
untrapped by messages,

floating, briefly,
near the front porch.

dereliction hiding
rusted cutlery

& an insufficiency
of bandages

xiang
first love



Clay Thistleton

“Kobayashi Maru”-type Situations: ‘Andrea (Un-Dworkin)’
(United States, 1971)

“An ongoing and systematic breeding experiment must be considered one of the central purposes of UFO abductions.”

— Budd Hopkins

(i)

... 178 ...

A. Un-Dworkin
had never been

[multiple choice - a) (an existential state)
 - b) touched
 - c) hypnotically regressed
 - d) to Zeta Reticuli

she was - - - floated - - -

out of her bed
across a field
(not Tatooine then)
& into a waiting UFO
(ditto re. “Millennium Falcon”)

where ,,,
as she sat paralysed
upon a table

... J. Alfred Prufrock ...

... J. Allen Hynek ...

a small grey
being pressed
a long need
up in
her nostril

Le
to,

Jared

(ii)

... 180 ...

Budd ,,,

I got

PREGNANT

but it hadn't anything to do

with
- the nose thing
- a boy

I didn't even know

much
about
sex

I was

thirteen

only

I only ...

... look ...

this

thing

was in

my bedroom

& I

was having
sex

with it

it was real

funny

looking

it didn't have any

hair

& it had

real

funny

eyes

& I couldn't move

I just felt something
in me

something
sharp

& then my vagina felt
like it was on
fire

like my stomach was going to
explode

& I felt like
I was
flooded

& in the morning
my underpants
were all wet
& the bed was all wet
& I felt all burning

(iii)

... 180 ...

after a while
my stomach

started to grow
my mother

&

(took me

to) the gynaecologist
& I was

pregnant

my father
was

furious

&

asked

**who did it
to me**

& I said

a man
with

funny

eyes

& a

real

head

big

...

& you know, Budd
the gynaecologist
said

I was still

a virgin

I still had my

hymen

(*w*)

... 179 ...

is
a “small slender
pretty
young” woman

... rhetorical ... (?) ...

obviou sly
suffe ring

- a

from cute
anxiety

- *de la langue masculine*

... resist
Althusserian
interpellation ...

... resist
“Kobayashi Maru”-type situations ...

(Source: Budd Hopkins. [1987]. *Intruders: The Incredible Visitations at Copley Woods*. New York: Ballantine Books.)

Bill Mohr

The Anthropocene

The easy metaphor's
a locust swarm. Serotonin
cinema with wide-screen
seating. The sound-track
is the only nominee
for end of the millennium
trophies. The silence, man,
the entire terrestrial
syncopation spewing
an eardrum aching silence,
like an old war movie,
the final submarine
of a vanquished fleet,
with all engines off,
as depth charges
descend to percolate,
and the audience
irritated at how it holds
its breath for the enemy.

Heath Brougher

Pallid Mud

Proven raven
alack
inside
your body

harvest to reap
 the dull embers
and day
sticks of the cornfield
drifted sifted
 through fingers

November-ish October
footsteps through
rain spilt
onto dirt
the mud overwhelms
the sky at a cinerous constant
is All.

the creation of mud
is allowed
but nothing
else.

anything formal and clean
falls away
just like the leaves.

contributors

Allegra Armstrong is a Philadelphia-based preschool teacher and cyclist. Her work has appeared in *The Same*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *Underground Pool*, *Steel Toe Review*, and *Cleaver*. She reads original poetry aloud at armstrongallegra.bandcamp.com

Heath Brougher is the co-poetry editor for *Into the Void*, winner of the 2017 and 2018 Saboteur Award for Best Magazine. He is a multiple Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee and his work has been translated into 11 other languages. He has published three chapbooks as well as the full-length collections *About Consciousness* (Alien Buddha Press, 2017), *To Burn in Torturous Algorithms* (Weasel Press, 2018), and *The Ethnosphere's Duality* (Cyberwit.Net). He has three full-length collections forthcoming in 2019 and his work has appeared in over 500 different literary journals in 25 countries in both print and online.

Darren C. Demaree is the author of nine poetry collections, most recently *Bombing the Thinker*, which was published by Backlash Press. He is the recipient of a 2018 Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award, the Louise Bogan Award from Trio House Press, and the Nancy Dew Taylor Award from Emrys Journal. He is the Managing Editor of the Best of the Net Anthology and Ovenbird Poetry. He is currently living in Columbus, Ohio, with his wife and children.

Salvatore Difalco is the author of two story collections, *Black Rabbit* (Anvil) and *The Mountie at Niagara Falls* (Anvil). He lives in Toronto, Canada.

Lara Dolphin is a chocolate addict, slacktivist, and determined dreamer. As a recovering attorney, novice nurse, and full-time mother of four, she divides her time between looking for lost Legos and breaking up pool-noodle-related combat.

Nicholas Grider is the author of the story collection *Misadventure* and his work has recently appeared in *Electric Lit*, *Midnight Breakfast*, and *XRAY* (sometimes as Simon Henry Stein). He lives in the Midwest, where he works part-time as an engraver/orchestration assistant, and can be found at @ngrdr and @not_poem

Valerie Guardiola is a poet, artist, organizer, and storyteller. Her poetry and essays have been published in *Pif Magazine*, *Soul Anatomy*, *Red Cedar Review*, and *The Voices Project*, among many others. She is a co-founder of the Emerging Artists Alliance of Monterey, and sits on the Osio Theater Board of Directors. Valerie is a lifelong daughter of the West Coast and lives in California, where she enjoys drinking overly-priced coffee, and writing ... always writing.

Vincent Hao is an aspiring writer who attends Stanford University. He enjoys reading poetry and writes in his spare time. His work has been published in *Anomaly*, *Albatross*, *Adroit*, *Soundings East*, *Blood Orange*, and *River Styx*.

Rose Knapp is a poet, producer, and multimedia artist. She has publications in *Lotus-Eater*, *Bombay Gin*, *BlazeVOX*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Gargoyle*, and others. She has a chapbook with Hesterglock Press and a collection forthcoming with Dostoyevsky Wannabe. She lives in Los Angeles. Her work can be found at roseknapp.net

Bill Mohr is a professor in the Department of English at California State University, Long Beach. *Holdouts: The Los Angeles Poetry Renaissance 1948–1992* was published by the University of Iowa Press in 2011. What Books in Los Angeles recently published a bilingual volume of his poems, *The Headwaters of Nirvana / Los Manantiales del Nirvana*. He blogs at billmohrpoet.com; his website is koankinship.com

Jose J. Prado is a second-year MFA candidate in fiction at California State University, Long Beach. His work centers issues and celebrations of love, friendship, sexuality, and gender, and has appeared in *RipRap* and *Nerve Cowboy*.

Michael Prihoda lives in central Indiana. He is the editor of *After the Pause*, an experimental literary magazine and small press. His work has received nominations for the Pushcart Prize and the Best of the Net Anthology and he is the author of eight poetry collections, most recently *Years Without Room* (Weasel Press, 2018).

Monica Quintero, a.k.a. **xiang**, is a Mexican visual arts and photography student with passion for portraits and photoperiodism. Monica started taking photos as a kid with an amateur film Crayola camera and hasn't stopped since then, making colorful or monochromatic portraits that focus only on one person at a time, as well as improvising using any objects in the vicinity. You can find more work on Instagram @xi_a_ng

Kevin A. Risner has two poetry collections available: *My Ear is a Sieve* (Bottlecap Press, 2017) and *Lucid* (The Poetry Annals, 2018). His work can be found online in multiple locations including *Rise Up Review*, *Rising Phoenix Review*, *Noble/Gas Quarterly*, *Ghost City Review*, *The Wire's Dream*, and others. He has another poem forthcoming in *8 Poems Journal* in January. Kevin is a writing instructor and ESL Coordinator at the Cleveland Institute of Art.

Laura Rivera Rodriguez is a poet from Puerto Rico based in Oakland, California. She holds an MA in Creative Writing from UC Davis and teaches at community college.

Rachel Sandle (she/her) is a poet and visual artist whose writing has appeared in *Bad Pony Magazine*, *Occulum Journal*, *Red Queen Literary Magazine*, and *Prairie Margins Magazine*. She holds a BFA in Visual Art and BA in Linguistics from the University of Kansas. She currently lives in Lawrence, Kansas.

Patty Seyburn is a professor at California State University, Long Beach. Her previous books are *Perfecta* (What Books Press, 2014), *Hilarity* (New Issues Press, 2009), *Mechanical Cluster* (Ohio State University Press, 2002), and *Diasporadic* (Helicon Nine Editions, 1998). Her newest collection, *Threshold Delivery*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. She prefers chowder to bisque and likes the word "marl."

Jake Sheff is a major and pediatrician in the US Air Force, married with a daughter. Poems of Jake's are in or forthcoming from *Radius*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *The Cossack Review*, and elsewhere. He won 1st place in the 2017 SFPA speculative poetry contest. Two of his poems have been nominated for the 2018 Best of the Net Anthology, and one for a 2019 Pushcart Prize. His chapbook is *Looting Versailles* (Alabaster Leaves Publishing).

Clay Thistleton has taught creative writing and literary studies in universities, community colleges, and not-for-profit organisations for almost two decades. He is the author of *Noisesome Ghosts* (Blart Books, in press): a collection of found poetry that investigates the phenomenon of ghosts and poltergeists that have the ability to speak or write. His current project, *Never Mind the Saucers*, examines documented instances of alien-human sexual contact. Along with his son Dylan, Clay lives in New South Wales, Australia, with a fluctuating number of feral cats.

Alexandra Umlas is a recent graduate of the CSU Long Beach MFA Poetry program. She is the 2018 1st place winner of the Poetry Super Highway Poetry Contest. You can find her work in *Rattle*, *Foothill Journal*, and *catheXis northwest press*, among others, or at www.alexumlas.com

Bill Wolak has just published his fifteenth book of poetry, entitled *The Nakedness Defense*, with Ekstasis Editions. His collages have appeared recently in Naked in New Hope 2017, the 2017 Seattle Erotic Art Festival, Poetic Illusion, The Riverside Gallery in Hackensack, NJ, the 2018 Dirty Show in Detroit, and the 2018 Rochester Erotic Arts Festival.

