

Ælements

Review *A Literary Journal*

No. 2
Winter 2014

3Elements Review

Issue no. 2

Winter 2014

3Elements Literary Review

Born in 2013

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

spring, summer, fall, and winter by 3Elements Review
3330 N. Lake Shore Dr Suite 3H, Chicago, IL, 60657-0078
Phone: 847-920-7320
www.3ElementsReview.com

This issue ©2014 by 3Elements Literary Review

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

TYPESETTING LAYOUT & DESIGN

Marlon Fowler

COVER ART

Collage: Hammock, Helix, (T)ower -Nancy Hathaway

BACK COVER

Hammock, Helix, Cow -Nancy Hathaway



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mikaela Shea

MANAGING EDITOR

C.J. Matthews

EDITOR

Parker Stockman



A Letter from the editor-in-chief

Dear Readers,

Happy New Year! Thank you for taking the time to read our second issue! We truly believe that you are starting the new year out with some great writing.

Please consider submitting writing, art, or photography for issue three! The elements are: **Terminal, 6324, and Bare. Submissions are due March 1st.**

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,
Mikaela Shea
Editor-in-chief

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HELIX

Sally David

Regard the snail: he carries on his back
experience, twisted into the shape
of a jester's cap. With this fat haversack
for all his labor he's advanced one inch
and had he but the wingspeed of a finch,
he thinks, he would possess the vast landscape

and crawl beyond the lonely ocean's reach.
Effortless, large, in my hammock I roll and cower
because my life is too hard, my knack for speech
so grand, my needs, my abilities superior
to his. Yet it took me thirty years
to finish this.

FAVORITE GAME

Mariko Tsukamoto



THE SHORTEST DISTANCE

Rosemary Starace

A straight line drawn upon a plane
that is curled around a cylinder, especially
a right circular cylinder, as with a screw,
and similarly an ivy (*Hedera helix*),
or a type of mollusk, and the curved rim of your ear.

If we don't cower, we can wend
our way toward common ancestors crouched in glades,
first humans—yes, ourselves—
but further to the snail and its spirally shell
that figures here,

and travel with the vine up a skinny tree
ablaze with insects and avian friends returned from the sky
where we too once lived,
suspended in a hammock in a mock
cocoon; we were curled
by a net that would not stay flat.
I was gazing at the stars

tonight, my thoughts invasive
as *Celastrus orbiculatus*—
I am bittersweet about those days,
remembering how it was when
I was caught and you
would whisper to my ear. I can't help
but wonder how you've fared.

WATCHING AND WAITING

Ben Tanzer

"I'M going out to see if I can help," he said.

"Fine," you said.

What else was there to say? Please don't go out in this weather? Don't leave me alone, while I sit here cowering in the dark, too scared to move or even breathe?

You weren't raised like that, but he wouldn't have listened anyway. He never did, which at first had been part of the attraction. You could have him, but you couldn't push him to do anything he didn't want to do.

"I want you to put some bushes out in front of the house," you said.

You had hired him to do some landscaping.

“Why?” he asked.

“I want to block the windows,” you said, “I want more privacy.”

“You don’t know what you want,” he said, “and I won’t do that for you. You need to see the world, not hide from it. That’s how things work, or should anyway.”

You don’t know if he was right, but he didn’t plant the bushes regardless. He also never left, and you loved that, the idea that someone can come into your life when you are past thinking it is even a possibility.

Here you are now though, sitting by the window, day after day, like some sea captain’s wife, healing, looking, and waiting for something to happen.

It is after the flood and the world didn’t end as predicted. It may not have even been the storm of the century. Still, damage was done. There is always damage.

Downed power lines, uprooted trees, homes and businesses underwater, the memories built there floating in the half light, ghostly, and beckoning.

The workmen are out there now, picking up branches, running them through the wood chipper, the endless grind and whir echoing throughout the neighborhood and

bouncing off of the surrounding mountains, only to nestle uneasily in your brain.

The men are indistinguishable for the most part, hard hats and tight jeans, flannel shirts, and safety vests. They are unshaven and cliché in the way small towns always are.

Things may be destroyed, the past drowned and forgotten, and time may fitfully march on as it always does, but nothing ever really quite changes. Thirsty’s still serves beer, the Susquehanna River still flows, and you are here by the window, watching, waiting, wondering how you got here at all.

Not leaving home, you get that, you never liked to leave home, but to be alone again, and unable to bear the isolation, that’s different, new. Before you had a taste of companionship you didn’t even know you wanted it, but now that it’s gone, you need more of it to make this feeling stop.

It would help if one of the workmen would come to your door again. Though not just any of the workmen, because they’re not all indistinguishable, are they? No, there is one that’s distinct. There is the crooked nose, and the hair on his knuckles, thick and alive. You saw it the one time he came to the door and asked to use the phone.

He was so polite, quick, didn't linger, but you wouldn't have minded if he had. Just as you wouldn't have minded him holding you, and asking how you were doing, commenting on how it must be hard to be alone.

"What's your story?" he might have said.

"Nothing," you would have said, "nothing interesting. I hurt my back during the flood. I was trying to barricade the doors and windows, and it was too much, too much lifting, too much stress, I ended up falling on the floor, I rode it out, and now I've barely moved since."

You might wonder if you've said too much, sharing more information than he could handle, or care about it, but you've been alone, there's no one to check on you, and no buffer, plus he seems so kind.

"You had no one to help you," he might have said, looking concerned, confused too, but definitely concerned.

"No," you would have replied, "my husband went out to help down at the river when the rain started, and then he never came back."

"I'm sorry for your loss," he would have said.

"Thank you," you would have answered, not telling him that it's not that your husband died, he just didn't come back.

How you know he left and didn't just get swept away by the flood, you can't say for sure, you just know. But you wouldn't have said any of that anyway, and he wouldn't have held you regardless, as much you would have wanted that. Instead, he would have just left, unsure how to continue, still polite, but gone, back to his crew, and away from your neediness and desperation.

He probably doesn't even know what loneliness looks like. How the days start to pile up on one another, weighing you down, becoming oppressive and unwieldy.

He has his work crew, who you imagine he drinks with after work, and plays softball with once a week. They never win, but no one cares, it's another excuse to ignore the bills and spouses.

At home he has family, or he did, he's divorced, and you can see it all so clearly. Because he now legally has to spend time with his kids, he does so more than he ever did before. It's only two nights a week and every other weekend, but when they're together, they're really together for the first time, working on homework, going bowling at Laurel Bowl, attending little league games, and running out for Speidies at Lupos.

There are even family dinners every so often, something

they barely did at the end, but he and his ex are fine, and so much better than they ever were as an actual couple.

Then there's his girlfriend, younger, but not much, never married, no interest in kids, always preferred working for her father at his law firm, drinking, and adventure, white water rafting, and hunting. Their weekends are full of fucking, at least when the kids aren't there, and the only breaks they take are for water and watching episodes of *Breaking Bad*.

He has a whole life, and that's important to recognize, because if he's never alone, and if he's never really been alone, he can't know what it's like to feel like you do, and if anything, what you have might seem like a relief to him from the outside, a break from family, work, expectations, and responsibilities.

You never wanted those things, but things are different now, and how can you share any of this with a stranger? You can't, you won't, so you sit here, day after day, watching the men clear the trees, and knowing they'll be done soon.

After that you don't know what you'll do, but you're not planning that far ahead.

You think about him, your husband, taking this moment

to make a clean break and start anew, somewhere far away from here. He has a new life, and maybe even a new identity. He can be anything and anyone he wants to be, and you wonder what he says about himself, that his wife is dead, that he lost his job, or that he's always wandered, but now wants to put down some roots?

You don't really know, but that's because you don't know much about his secret life, the parts he kept from you, the parts we all keep from one another in relationships, the dreams, and the hopes. But he's acting on them now, he must be, he better be.

What about you though, what do you want, and why are you still here, when what once seemed fine, doable, all seems so empty now?

There is your back, but that will pass, and the workman's knuckles, though your feelings about that will pass too. This is your home, and that means something in a world so potentially fraught with imminent disaster and pain. Stability is good, safe, and to be anchored is to know your place in the world. There is value in that.

Not that there was value in that for your husband, not after the flood came. Though maybe there never was, because maybe it's not true that you didn't know about

his secret life and dreams, maybe you just chose to ignore them?

You think back to the night the two of you were lying out back in the hammock behind the house, and staring at the helix of stars that seemingly went on forever.

“If you could live anywhere in the world,” he said, “where would that be?”

“Is this real?” you asked.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“Like, do I really plan to live there,” you said, “that’s what I mean, because if it’s real, than nowhere, this is home.”

“You can’t even pretend can you?” he asked.

“No, that’s never worked for me. My parents always said there was no use wanting what you can’t have,” you said, running your hands along his thigh.

“Why can’t you have it?” he asked. “Aren’t you only limited by your imagination?”

You knew you couldn’t answer that, because you couldn’t imagine anything else for yourself. You wished he just understood that, or that you could say that to him, but how do you say that and not sound impossibly lacking? You can’t. So you didn’t.

“What about you?” you asked, moving the focus off of

yourself. “Where you could you picture living?”

You want him to say nowhere. That he prefers to be anywhere you are.

“Everywhere,” he said dreamily, “I want to live everywhere.”

You looked at him and he was staring off into the stars, already lost to you. You kissed him hard on the mouth, the neck, his stomach, each kiss an effort to make him forget every place in his head that could possibly take him away from you.

You realize now that he tried to be something for you that he could not be. And maybe he tried really hard to do so, and maybe he did not, but you decide to believe it was real anyway. That there had been feelings, and desire, and when it became all too oppressive and limiting, he had to go, because what other choice did he have?

You don’t recognize how lost you are in your thought until the moment the air explodes through your window, the piercing screech, the black mass of noise and flutter, engulfing you, and speeding around the front room, sowing chaos with every passing moment.

You bring your hands up to your head, you cover your eyes, and you scream as you tumble from your chair and

fall onto the floor, the jarring pain in your back mashing into the fear of the unknown now crashing into your brain.

It grows quiet just as suddenly as it grew fierce, the chaos becomes calm, and you look up from your place on the floor, carefully trying to assess what has entered your home and head, and whether whatever it is is even real.

As you look up, you see it, a raven sitting on the bookshelf, its breathing hard, and staring at you with its piercing, black eyes.

Your mother always told you that ravens are visitors from the other side, and that they come when you need a reminder that those you lost are watching over you and that things will be okay.

Your mother never left the house though.

You start to cry, first quietly, then more excessively, hugging yourself as you lose your breath, the pain in your back hugging you back, and refusing to let go.

The tears quickly turn into laughs, somewhat crazy, but hearty and full as well, and as you try to collect yourself, you look up again and he is standing there, the man with the knuckles.

“Are you okay?” he asks.

CLIMBER

B. Yvette Yun

I long to hold your hand again
to feel the grooves between each finger
and graze the tiny hairs along
your arm. (You said it felt like love,
remember? You must remember it.)

I proceed around the crown of your shoulder,
the corner – the stem of your thin vine
like a helix across my back, around
my waist. (I said it felt like love,
remember? You must remember it.)

I reach your neck, the bend.
If caressed just right, not too hard,
it made you cower – more with delight
than fear. (You said it felt like love,
remember? You must remember it.)

A tickle, a touch, a tug – you said
they felt like love. I rested my head

in the sturdy hammock of your shoulder
and said I felt it too. I remember.
And I long for you to hold me again.

HELIXER: SURF

Alan Whiteside



I NEED TO STOP READING ROMANCE NOVELS

Elizabeth Czapski

I see you
standing on the corner of Broadway and N. Sheridan,
and I wonder if you've ever loved someone so much that
you could spend hours just
listening to their breathing,
alone,
together,
in the dark?

I see you
putting your phone in your pocket,
and I think that I could cower in
the crook of your elbow
like a hammock
the next time the monsters chase me,
and I'd be safe,
safe,
safe.

I see you
running a hand through your mussed brown hair,
and I imagine that I can taste your
innermost dreams, your
wildest desires, and the
double-helix bricks that
contain
them.

I want to know you on a
cellular level;
I want to smash your walls and
live among the ruins;
but the light changes, you
cross the street, and the
moment stretches,
snaps,
dissolves.

CHICAGO FREEZE

James LaMear

CHICAGO is a different city in the winter, dark and depressing. The smooth, relaxed liveliness of summer gives way to cracked lips, biting cold, and jealous winds. Death. Most nine-to-fivers forget what the sun feels like, heading to work before it rises and leaving after it has set. The day-to-day without much light grinds the spirit down. I'm stepping out the door this morning and, though bundled up, immediately feel naked, paralyzed. I am unable to move, to flee, or to do anything that would stop the wind from biting into my flesh. So it sinks its icy teeth into my thighs, my neck, and my ankles. It is hateful, spiteful. There is no privacy between this Chicago gale and me. I can only subject myself to her torture. Trudging along, leaning into

the wind, she claws at my eyes. When they tear up, she assaults the tears themselves, thieving away the heat, angry and without remorse. Every step hurts, putting my legs into contact with steely cold fabric. No longer insulating, it is now twisted into torture against the skin.

The wind, caressing like a lover in the Chicago summertime, is now ferocious. She's furious that I dare to hold on to the warmth of summer during the depths of winter; furious that I profane the season of destruction and death by bearing my little torch of creation and life and heat out into her midst. My lemonade and hammock are inconceivable now, as I huddle on the edge of utter destruction. The cold, alive as it raked across my body, carries an unspoken will in the ice and wind:

Eat the cold.

Drown in it.

The wind tries to rip away my scarf, digging its claws into my coat.

What is warmth, this passing curiosity with which the frail, bald animals have such a love affair? Their delicate little double helix puts such stock in heat, without accepting its impermanence, its inevitable death.

I grab the scarf to secure it inside my heavy coat. The act

exposes my chest to the icicle grasp of the wind, even as I recoil away from it into the depths of my coat, trying to work the zipper with numbed fingers.

They carry their little torches of flame inside their frail and withering bodies. They cower in the cold, pitting themselves against the raging will that freezes the universe. Bow your life into the frozen lake, and surrender your heat to my unending cold.

Forgotten are my sandals and swimming shorts. Wading into the lake now is unthinkable. I shove my hands deeper into my coat pockets, flexing my fingers to keep the warm blood moving. All I long for is to get away from the cold, yet I know I can only endure it.

Endure? Bald ape! Arrogant and insignificant! You are a misplaced comma, a stuttering pause in the tomes of ice. You who try to warm yourself in the light of your little sun. But I make the stars themselves burn cold after eons of fire and heat. You will fall to the ice.

I eye the ice over which I trudge, careful not to slip or fall. Any mistake could end very poorly. Almost to the train now, I walk up the steps to the L platform and bare myself even more to the gusts of freezing wind. As the train pulls up, I heave a sigh of relief. Piling into the train, I escape the

grasp of winter, of darkness and death. As the doors close and the train begins to move, I relax. But the wind howls outside, a terrible sound threatening ruin to us little beings inside.

I will have you, now or later. In the end you will all succumb. You will freeze.

UNTITLED

Havvah Holl

While the asteroids chattered overhead
I cowered in the hammock
You were there too
Cradled in my fist
Both of us crushed
By the idea of the sky falling
Unblinking
We watch the helix of our universe
Unspool

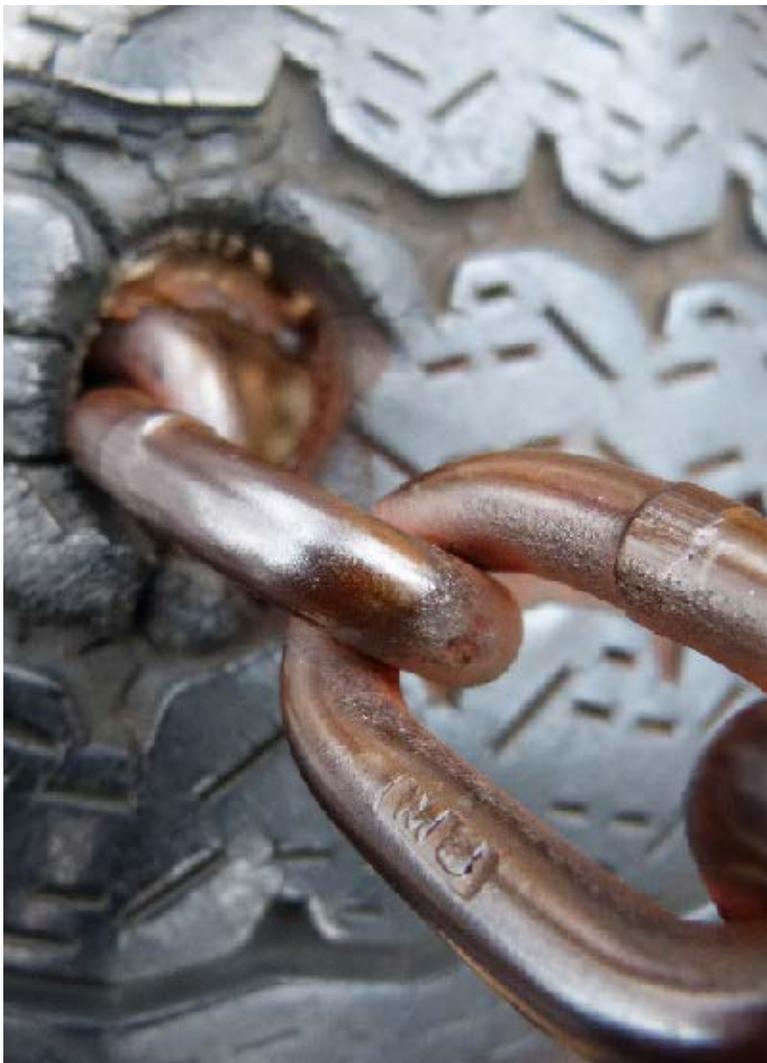
UNTITLED II

Havvah Holl

Wring out your hammocks
And climb underneath the rhetoric
Hang it here
Here, where we all cower and hang out
Disgusted, disenchanting, and disinterested
The fabric of our language twists and rips
Shame and shutdown and true and try
Languageless
The very helix of the letters splits open
Like a silent 'h'
They just hold the place on the page

UNTITLED

Laura Johnson



LA LLORONA OUTSIDE OF APARTMENT 96

Damien Cowger

The hushed gossip in the complex proved true. She stood there, behind my car, her gown sodden from the knees down. Searching the parking lot with damp eyes and arachnid fingers, she didn't know I was there. I peeked through dusty blinds, sometimes looking over my shoulder to make sure that my wife still dreamed of the spiders that cower deep in her brain, and the things they snare in elegant webs.

She told me that she'd been caught one night, snared from above and lifted in a dizzying helix to a place greyer than anything I could imagine. When she woke, I had been there, holding her, squeezing to calm. She'd said she was glad I was there, but even in the dark there was no mistaking antipathy. La Llorona didn't care that I watched her. She searched only for the biggest piece of her heart. When she sobbed, it came from the diaphragm and her knees shook droplets of silty water to the asphalt as though her entire body wept.

When I was young, Mother swayed softly in her hammock and forbade playing on the riverbank after sundown, threatening that a woman would claim me, take me away from her to fill a grey void. When she wasn't looking, I went looking in the shallow waters of the Colorado searching for the child, the woman, the someone. I'd hide in the brush and pretend that La Llorona was looking for me. I turned back to the bed, caught in a web of shadow, and considered all that I'd found and all that had found me.

PITCH SPACE

Chloe Clark

You made me a constant angle,
a helix in human shape,
always keeping my form away from you
and when I spent those years

sewing my name into the seams
of others' clothing and my hands
learned how to make patterns
even in my dreams

someone told me once that I moved
my body in my sleep, my feet trying
to pli  and pirouette in place, my fingers
deftly picking and unpicking
each stitch

You tried to teach me all those meanings
behind words, umbel was a flower and
umbra was a shadow and what then was
umbrella, and when you wrapped
around me I thought you'd protect me from
rain but I got lost

once on a side street in a city in my dreams
and every corner led to another graveyard,
another house preparing to be abandoned,
and when I called out your name moths flew
out of my mouth in floods

I woke up cowering, curled, in a ball
in the middle of my bed and found
I could not remember how to stand
on tiptoe in my sleep anymore

CRUMBS

Susan Tepper

SHE lit the stove even though it heated up the entire house.

July is a bad month, he told her, for baking. You're frying the whole damn place for a batch of cookies. You can buy cookies at the supermarket.

This is special, she said. These are for my mom. They're my double-helix cookies. My mom's favorite.

He seemed to cower when she mentioned her mom, and she noticed this and felt badly. Don't worry, she told him, everyone dies of something, at some time.

He nodded but his spirit seemed subdued. I'm going

outside, he told her. At least I can sort of breathe out there.

Her mom couldn't breathe without the portable oxygen tank. It saddened her to see her beautiful mom stooped so young by this iron thing keeping her going.

She made the cookies carefully. Her mom loved coconut and she dusted some into the mixture.

When he came back in the house, she gave him three on a plate.

Later, as she stood at the sink looking out the screen, she saw him in the rusted hammock. One arm flung back over his head. A squirrel, that he'd made into sort of a pet, hung around, waiting for crumbs to fall.

DAISY CHAINS

Anne Lawrence

I never got used to our hammock. I preferred to lie underneath instead, on the cool, green grass by the apple trees
and the chance to pluck at daisies, chaining them into endless, stubborn spirals, stringing them over your brow
and crowning you 'Prince of Summertime.' My thumbnails
grew sticky with thin sap, and the stalks' fine hairs bristled,
like the touch of bare skin just before the goose bumps come,
and I wove the helix into shape. I could smell the sharp
bitter-sweetness of the dying flowers, taste powdered traces
of yellow pollen in my mouth; their last sighs would hang in the air and mingle subtly with the bees' hum.

In midsummer's heat, the garden raged and gloried
with this 'daisy-killer' planted at its core. You
pretended
to cower, called me your 'Titania,' ruling over trees
and flowers, culling them at will; the Faerie Queen
in her bower.
In the shade of the hammock I remember looking
up
to the blue, blue sky, lying back, then closing my
eyes;
and as I disappeared, I dreamt of daisies, all
immortalised.

EQUIVOCAL

C.J. Harrington

A butterfly stuck in your hammock
Wrestling against unnatural threads

You cannot sit, sip morning coffee
With this macabre distraction

A being whose primitive helixes
Spiral children through symbolic cycles

Four definitive phases, unlike the gray
Creeping into beards, under webbed eyes

If you cower from intervention, surely she
Cannot live to propagate eggs under leaves

Scrolling headlines aside, you must clip width
In your possession or crush near-spent form

Even freedom does not guarantee flight
Poised to trim, you absolve her exhaustion

WHIRLIGIG

Rick Rodstrom



NOTHING NEW

John Mannone

After Ecclesiastes 1:9

Tropical hardwood hammocks
—closed canopy forests of Southern Florida—
sift the air, cool it for the understory. A breath
of evergreen permeates the salt pond air
and *Helix auriculata* abound these marshes.

They predator the grass.

What's the difference between this gastropod
and its saltwater cousin, the cone shell?

It too lies in wait. It must. It's encoded
with that propensity—harpooning a barb

tethered to a coil of protein helixing out,
numbing its victim with polypeptide poison.

It is the efficiency of chemistry—DNA—
such minute differences in amino acid sequence:
mollusk to mollusk or cockroach to man.

Are we not all from the sea?

Who cowers in the sand? Who kills
for no reason? There is nothing new
under the sun
or under the sea.

MAP OF LOVERS

Margaret Sullivan

TAKE 1 - Outside, on the hill, it is dark and chilly. He holds her closer to him as they lie together in his portable, red hammock hooked between two small trees that bend with their weight. He kisses the top of her head, affectionate, but unsatisfied. He wants her. He nuzzles his way down to nibble on the cold, pink helix of her ear so that she will look up at him, so he can kiss her hard on the mouth with the want and desire he can't put into words. He wished he'd brought his own blue blanket to cover them, conceal them from the shining stars above so his fingers might traverse the warm map of her white skin. But there is something peaceful and satisfying about lying with her there, her head on his chest breathing her in, fitting around his body. So he

holds her closer to him as they lie, rocking away in the dark of night, loving her in silence.

Take 2 -

Black SUV pulls along the curve of the building, and I know the white cake in the white box has moved, squished frosting stuck to caramel colored cardboard, my name on the cake a covering mush of letters. The sun is still high, but tonight there's a meteor shower and the sky will be lit. I will walk to the slope outside of my building and lie back against the grass and stare at the blues and whites and pinks and blacks and wait and watch. I know Orion's Belt will be visible in a few more months, and I remember that I couldn't ever see it before I moved farther north, back to the flat lands. I remember always missing the stars, missing their lustrous complexity, wondering if any of them were enjoying their last night before dying. I have wondered if I will become a star when I die. Then feet flap bare against concrete and pavement, and I know something is coming. White arms wrap around my body, flung from the driver's seat, into a warm embrace, and lips meet for the first time with meaning and intention, and the stars are the farthest thing from my mind.

Take 3 -

Check out your window. What do you see? Do you see the moon? Do you see how big and bright it is? Do you see how round it is? How white it is? It's white like your skin, big and round like your eyes. I miss your eyes. Your eyes always look beautiful when you wear purple. And the moon is full, full like your lips, and I miss those too. How soft they are. Do you see it? Are you looking at it? I am looking at it, I want you to look at it with me, so we can look at it together, be together on the moon, amongst the stars and know we'll be together on Earth again soon. Look at the moon with me for a little while longer, then go to sleep and dream of me, dream of the day I see you again and finally get to kiss you again. Dream of that day being soon. Very soon. But for now, look.

AND SPELLED BACKWARDS WE ARE REBORN

Chloe Clark

In the strands of us, those double
helix centers, we are all
tightly wound as children's tops
set loose upon the floor

we spin and spin when set
loose and our hands can never
move fast enough to brace our falls

we hide in the backs of closets,
imagining the ghost under the bed,
the one who doesn't wear shoes
but does wear socks,

pink with yellow umbrellas all scattered
across and the ghost knows how to say
our names just right, in a tone
that tickles the core of our spines

and sends shivers up our legs,
close to ecstasy but closer still
to terror, we cower in the farthest
corners of the night

and wait for someone we love
to open the door and hold us
until our hearts beat slow again

slow again like we are sleeping
and the room is warm,
the sun is almost up, and the strands
of us can be counted like
a rosary until we wake

STAR-CROSSED

Gary Glauber

We recline together within the security
of the enveloping mesh in that giant hammock,
smelling sweet remnants of fresh-cut grass,
staring up at the night sky's grandeur,
seeking meaning in that heavenly helix,
those galaxies full of illuminated stars
twinkling elusively, innocently, innocuously,
while distant worlds ignite and explode
years ahead of when we get any visual clue.
Instead, we lead busy ant lives, swarming,
guided only by shared moon signs,
eccentric planetary motions, and more stars
connected into recognizable animals, objects,
generating daily advice that somehow
guides our innate actions and temperaments,
toward what astrologers claim may take place:
invitations, new friends, social situations,
exciting events, unusual occupations.
The emboldened paragraph offers us
the optimistically sensational,
a glimmer of hope, stimulation,
or yet another reason to cower.

HELIXER: COMPOUNDS

Alan Whiteside



AFTER THE WAKE

Lavina Blossom

If she is asleep, she is dreaming and the purple helix is not her DNA spinning in the center of the room. If she is awake, she is hallucinating and the man who seems to be her husband, there in the corner, thin and frail, curled tight, with no body heat to conserve, does not cower away from her. He would never, which suggests that he does not exist, neither he nor the glowing helix. These are the options she accepts. She can still think and so the unseen forces cannot draw her lower, pull the hammock, her sling-shot of a single bed, taut, then fling her through the skylight to dance in air or on the roof of this house that seems so familiar she would swear (if she could speak)

it was theirs once. Which means that she is lost, has lost control. Although-- and she marvels at her lucidity, conjuring such possibilities--this could be simply a vision. And while visions can be difficult to interpret, she will do her best, even while this imposter-husband, synchronous with the pulsing helix, strobes the walls. Yes, he is coaxing her to do, if not the hokey pokey, then the crawl. And, here she goes, with such effort, free of the man who never learned one dance-step himself.

Her legs are strings, or on strings. She (or someone, something) works one, then the other, over the edge. Two legs where once, weren't there more? She isn't sure. She can't quite remember how her body moved before.

THE SETTLEMENT

Ashley Laney

EARLIER today I had been walking down the street with my brother when someone drove by and threw an egg at us. It hit me on my left hip. I was upset by the stupidity of it but more upset because I had nothing clean to put on – our washing machine was broken. I scrubbed the stain with a cold, wet rag as best I could but then I was wet and Mark was coming over to take me to the mall. With my pants still on, I used a blow dryer to dry them off a bit. Now I smelled like scrambled eggs and Baby Soft perfume.

Before I leave, I help Grandma change clothes. Her arms have decided they'd like to stay close to her body this week. She looks like she was halfway to crossing them before

they froze into position. I maneuver her sweater around her sculptured arms, stopping every time she winces. I try to be patient with her but tears fall from her eyes before I'm finished. I wipe them from her face with my fingers and find hard pieces of plastic mixed in with the tears. "More silicon," she says, "it's been coming out of my eyes."

I'm 13. I don't know what to say.

When she poops, I complain about how horrible it smells. Like raw sewage. It smells like a pipe has busted. I'm dramatic, running around gagging. I imagine her in the bathroom crying silicon tears, shitting her guts out from the cancer meds and the rheumatoid arthritis meds and the pain meds.

"Will you do a load of laundry before you go, Smash?" That's her nickname for me. "If it's not too much trouble. I don't think your mother's going to be awake any time soon."

My mom is passed out on the couch. The beer cans in the trash are overflowing, but I refuse to take out the garbage. There are only beer cans, no food, because we don't have anything to eat in the house. My brother must be out with his friends still because he's nowhere to be found. No one cleans around here because my Grandma has

spoiled us all. Only she can't when her arms go rigid and her hands cramp into shadow-puppet contortions.

I have to go through the master bedroom - my room - to get to the bathroom. I plug the tub, turn on the water, dump a generous amount of dish-washing liquid, choose a bundle of clothes from the piles scattered all over the room and dump them in there, too. The past several weeks have been a flurry of shopping sprees. I bought all new clothes for myself because I need them. I made sure my brother got some, too.

I remove my shoes, socks, and pants and step in myself, working the clothes like I'm mashing grapes, only I'm making suds. After a while, I remove the stopper and stomp the clothes again as the water drains. I'm in this crappy-ass trailer in a daydream as the water disappears down the drain in a perfect helix, like a tiny tornado. I dream of being older. Having my shit together. Doing the opposite of everything my mother does. Being like my grandma, but I won't hand out money like she does. Twenty thousand dollars from a lawsuit, wasted.

My grandmother had breast implant surgery when she was younger. Back then they used pure silicon. The implants ruptured years ago, that's why silicon is coming

out of her eyes. I remember one time when I was young we were in a car, parked near a small squat building. My mom had gone in to make sure we were at the right place when my grandmother turned from the front seat and said to me, “There’s going to come a time when I’m not going to be here anymore, Smash.”

“Where are you going, Grandma?”

“I’m going to heaven, Ashley. But I want you to know that I love you and I’ll always love you.”

I started crying. I can still see her short blonde hair styled with hairspray. She smelled like peppermint and Aqua Net and Este Lauder perfume.

At first her attorneys told her she was going to win two million dollars. Eight years later, the lawsuit was still dragging. My mother forced her to settle for two lump sums of ten thousand dollars. Some of it was supposed to pay for her mastectomy. So far, she’s given me three grand. Every time she gives me money, I put some of it in a shoebox that I hide under my bed. There’s about \$1,150 in there now. Really, I’d rather be thinking about clothes, albums, and toys I want to buy, but we’ve been without water and electricity enough times that I’m saving to pay for those essentials instead. My grandma’s money is close

to gone and I know no one is thinking about the months ahead. My mom has no idea how to budget money. I’m learning from her mistakes.

I come out of my reverie and wring the clothes out by hand as best I can. I hang them on the line outside. There’s a mound still where we buried Simon last month. Our cat Snow is sitting on it and I swear to God she’s crying tears, but do cats cry tears? When we got Simon, they said he was a Golden Retriever but Grandma said he might’ve been an Irish Setter.

We’d had him on a runner cable between two trees. The neighbor girl stood just far enough away from him that he couldn’t reach her. He was a jumper. He strangled himself trying to reach her. A week later she knocked at the door and told me that her parents said it was okay that our dog died because that was the way God wanted it to be. I spit in her face and slammed the door.

I look over from hanging a shirt on the line and see her. She’s lying in the hammock next to her trailer. I wish we’d gotten that trailer – I’ve always wanted a hammock. But now I will never knock on the door and ask if I can lie on it. Our eyes meet and I taste bile and feel like puking. I want to hit her but she’s younger than me. I tell myself she’s just

a child and try to calm myself down. I pet Snow and cry a little as I feel the silkiness of her pure white fur. She's 14 and hates other cats but gets attached to dogs. I love her but she hates me. (Later, when I am 19 and she is 20, and Grandma has been gone a year, she will fall asleep on my chest every night and I will finally know her love.)

I put Ambisol in her mouth last week because I saw it on America's Funniest Home Videos. It was hilarious seeing her sling saliva like a crazed fighter bull. She was pissed! I picked her up to tell her I was sorry and she bit me right on the mouth. It's going to scar for sure.

I go back inside and find Grandma has made it to her bed. It's set up in the "dining room," which is open to the living room so that we can all take care of her. I get the footbath ready. She recently had surgery because her toes were turning gangrene. There's a hole in the top of her foot now. I unwrap the bandage, remove the gauze from the hole, and place her feet in the water. The footbath vibrates, stimulating circulation. It's also heated, which she says feels good. I cringe in sympathy. A hole that size doesn't seem possible, not on top of a person's foot.

After 15 minutes, I kneel before her and dry her feet carefully. She waits patiently while I apply the ointment.

Before she was forced to retire, she was a registered nurse. Now I'm her nurse. I pack the wound with fresh gauze and wrap her foot in new bandages. It's taking so long to heal, this hole, but at least it's getting smaller. She thinks she would be healing faster but for all the other medication.

When I've got her settled in bed, I crawl in beside her.

"Are you planning on going back to school?" she asks. I haven't been in weeks because I'm embarrassed about the way we live. As I lie next to her, holding her as gently as I can, trying not to cause her any further pain, I realize I can't quit school. I'd end up just like my mother who, I think, may have just peed on the couch again because I detect a faint smell of urine. I don't know which is worse, the stink of my Grandma's shit or the stench of Mom's urine. The cushions will lie out on the front lawn to dry in the sun but then they'll smell like baked urine. I cower in my grandma's arms and wish I could escape this nightmare that is my life.

"I'll go back Monday," I promise her. It's Wednesday. I have five days to mentally prepare. The kids at school aren't fooled by my new clothes. They know we're poor. For years I've been wearing hand-me-downs from the neighbors behind us, stuff so outdated not even they, at 70, would

wear them anymore. When I wore my new clothes to school so proudly I was mocked. They called my mom a prostitute. She's not. She's only a drunk. It didn't bother me, their insults about her. It bothered me that even with the right clothes I still wasn't going to be accepted. No matter what I did, I wasn't going to be invited to anyone's house after school.

I nuzzle my face against the velvety feel of Grandma's skin. Skin that hasn't been hardened and damaged and leathered by her cocktail of cancer drugs. It always amazes me how soft her skin still is. Buttery. It feels as if my fingers will come away oily after touching it but they don't. It's just ridiculously soft.

"Have you fed Snow?" she asks after a while.

"Yes, and I cleaned her water bowl."

"Did you add ice?"

"That, too." We may not have food but my mom makes sure we have ice for her drinks.

Grandma found Snow when I was seven. She was skinny and filthy with bloody paws. The vet said she was probably eight but thought she came from a good family because she'd been de-clawed. I wondered if Snow misses the life she lost with other owners and how they felt about losing

her, too. Snow hates cars. I know this because we move around a lot and she freaks out whenever we try to put her in a car. Now when we move, I put her in a pillowcase and hold her in my lap. She doesn't love it but it keeps her calm. I just feel claustrophobic.

There's a knock on the door and I know it's Mark, who is taking me to the mall. Mark's dad is Lee, who my mom met who-knows-where. Given the cast of characters she's brought home, Lee is okay, and I like Mark. He's 18 and doesn't mind taking me to the mall. The cash my grandma slips him doesn't hurt. I kiss Grandma and go shopping knowing I won't spend much.

All that's behind me now. My grandma's money has disappeared into the hands of everyone who's ever asked for help; Mark and Lee have disappeared, too. My mom is sober for the first time in weeks. Reality is back. It comes in envelopes red-inked with "Past Due." I see them on the coffee table as I walk past my mom with her head in her hands on the urine-stained couch. She and Grandma are discussing the bills.

It's time. I reach under the bed and pull out my shoebox. Grandma's arms are hidden under the blanket, silky skin on her face and neck wrinkled with time and pain, but her

brown eyes are still sharp and clear. I hand her the wad of cash. "For you," I say, my voice strong, as if this is the easiest thing in the world to do when in fact my heart is splintering into silicon-sized tears, crying for the kid I know I will never be.

HELL, EARLY ONSET

Elizabeth Koch

Hell is knowing
my DNA is a thief
stealing a word at a time
thinning the memory file
of my heavenly life with you

Hell is knowing
frustration is contained
behind your loving eyes
your compassion can't stop
this double helix robbery in progress

Hell is knowing
you try to return the stolen goods
you tell the stories, label the photographs,
remind me that I eat cereal from a bowl
when I've asked for a hammock

Hell is knowing
what hasn't been taken
has been horribly misfiled
you cower when I have to ask
are you my wife, mother, sister, her?

Hell is knowing
I am locked in my house
locked out of my mind
can't get out
no one gets in

Hell is knowing
nothing
silently begging
Final Thief
return what is mine

Heaven
is knowing again
forever

ROCKY BAYOU HYMN

L.E. Goldstein

We used to spindle up in hammocks,
twist ourselves like caterpillars in cocoons,
take turns to flip each other round and round,
two woven girl-child jump ropes, until one day my spine
began to sag to ground, scraped and cracked
against the trees' protruding roots. My older sister teased
I must have been too heavy. I felt the blood that trickled down
my spine was somehow caused by something that I did.
I cowered then, whenever she would want to swing;
I'd say, "Let's fish," "Let's search the sand for buried coins."
I'd want to jump the trampoline because my heaviness
was safer there. Her airy bones would fly so high we'd
both get scared. I'd be the trainer, she the dolphin
through the hoop. Back then we'd watch for Flipper
from the car ride on the bridge, mistook high white caps
for dorsal fins, buoys for pelicans. We hummed along
with Flipper's theme song every Sunday, imitated him
as best we could in swimming pools, our clumsy feet
splashing Mom with chlorine, our grins retriever-like.

At home, we'd pull the cardboard box marked WHALES from closet drawers and line the rusty tea-tinged carpet halls with humpbacks, orcas, an uninvited leopard seal. One Halloween, we costumed as dolphin and beluga, did not appreciate the time it took for Mom to sew the sonar padding in our heads. In summer, we'd pretend we gripped bottom-lit tails while tubing with friends, our hands submerged in rainbow-colored boat-wake helixes. It was here, in the bayou, where I first felt a dolphin school, their long sighs, the squeaks of their rubber backs coruscating silver in remaining light of dusk. I was waist-deep wading, and when I climbed out again, noticed a barnacle had sliced my heel, blood cresting from a wrinkled flap of skin. It was three days later, swollen and purple, when I finally showed Mom. I thought of the hammock, felt the ache in my spine. I didn't know if I did something wrong, but this time, unafraid, didn't want her to take it away.

NAP TIME

Paul Beckman



SHE WISHES FOR A TAIL

C.J. Harrington

Favor from a beach wedding, small conch
has silver lettering she can't read yet, holds
whispers, not roars, to compel close listening.

*A mom, a girl, a low-tide ocean, shell shards
dot hot sand. One unbroken, with helix tip,
channels hushed message asking salvation.*

Pink dress-up tail or blue, double-looped lei as hair
garland. She layers bead strands, adds not-high
heels, gloves. Please can she have some lip-gloss?

*Dreams lead to dolphins, whose minds chime
words, whose fins brace surface swimming to
siren island story of sweet-voiced lost sister.*

Maybe if she stripes her hair pink with markers,
she can grow a real tail, just like the cartoon girl,
insists fairytale trusting four-year-old wisdom.

*Sirens' box holds invisible gift: underwater
breathing, so they can dive deep to deliver
this mystery to missing sister, their mission.*

Ephemeral castles announce her presence, she
calls to secret beings. Dolphin pod responds with
astonishing showoff somersaults for tourist photos.

*Tailless, songless, siren sister cowers in forlorn
cave, until present replenishes her trills, grows
scales on fused legs, gives her up to becoming.*

Hammock rocked sleepy, soothed by the steady
pulse of ocean, sing to me Mommy, she whispers,
about how to turn into a mermaid. I want a tail.

THE GENTLEMAN VAGINA

Ryan W. Bradley

IT'S not so bad dating an actress—even a wannabe. Most of the time. I don't like to complain, and I really don't mind when Andrea wants to do skits in the backyard. As long as I've got a six-pack, I'm good. I just sit in the hammock and watch her do monologues she learns for her acting class. But it gets weird when it follows us into the bedroom. When I fuck, I don't want an improv class for foreplay.

She says she can see herself going “method,” and I've seen enough Letterman interviews to know that means trouble. I wouldn't say I root against her, but I'd be lying if I said I wasn't disappointed when she got her first role.

Her character's name was The Gentleman. Yes, she was playing a man. There couldn't have been a shortage of actors and Andrea is all woman, but she didn't seem to wonder why that was the role they'd given her. She was just excited to do an accent. I guess it could have been worse, but her British accent was going to take a lot of work and I wasn't sure I had it in me to wait it out. Even the dog hated when she worked on voices, cowering in a corner or scratching at the back door.

Nothing could have prepared me for The Gentleman's appearance in the bedroom. I was reading in bed when she came in the room. I didn't notice the pipe at first. Her pants were unzipped and what got my attention was the glimpse of her pink panties. Then the pipe caught my eye. It was one of those Sherlock Holmes deals. She was holding it so the stem was in the fly of her khakis.

There was actual smoke rising from the bowl. For a moment I thought maybe I'd get lucky and she'd start a fire that would get me out of whatever was about to happen.

“Hello there,” she said.

The accent was truly horrendous, her ‘h’ silent like she was auditioning for a chimney sweep. I did my best not to cringe. I'd started to get an erection when I saw her pants

were unzipped, but The Gentleman killed my buzz.

“You look right tasty, you do.”

She pulled the pipe out of her pants and made an exhaling sound. I watched the helix of smoke rising in the air. It was the best acting she’d ever done. She sidled up to the bed and stuck the pipe in my mouth. She began to massage my crotch. The tobacco was sweet in my lungs.

“Let The Gentleman take care of you.”

I couldn’t take it any longer. I took the pipe out of my mouth. Andrea was unzipping my pants, trying to get things started again and it worked as long as she didn’t talk, but she was devoted to the character.

Telling someone you’re dating an actress is like telling them you’re dating a twenty-one-year-old or a gymnast. They think it’s sexy, but it’s not sexy at all. It’s no wonder so many actors and actresses end up adopting kids.

I thought about my options. How would Andrea feel about sticking exclusively to blow jobs when preparing for a role? Or me holding my hand over her mouth? Of course I could always walk away, but I knew six days out of seven I’d miss her. And I’ve never been much for confrontation.

You know that old saying, if you can’t beat them, join them? I closed my eyes. Remembered rolling my eyes in

high school. I opened my eyes and Andrea had her shirt off, which helped.

“Tell me how much you want me,” she said, her voice somewhere between Michael Caine and Dick Van Dyke in *Mary Poppins*.

I took a deep breath.

“So much,” I said, my voice like Robin Williams doing *Mrs. Doubtfire*. “But for God’s sake, there’s no room for a gentleman in the boudoir.”

Andrea withdrew her hand from my dick.

“Are you making fun of me?”

She was no longer The Gentleman. Even though I knew she was mad, hearing her normal voice got me harder. She slapped me.

“I knew you didn’t take my career seriously.”

I didn’t say no one could take someone seriously when they’re pretending to smoke a pipe with their crotch. I didn’t say a non-paying role in a small theater production doesn’t qualify as a career.

I imagined seeing her one day, years in the future. Barely remembering her name it’d been so long since I’d thought of her. Maybe I would remember her only as the girl who smoked with her vagina, at least that’s how I’d have told it

to friends.

I pictured her giving an acceptance speech at the Oscars, talking about all the people she had to prove wrong over the years and knowing she meant me. Or maybe she would be thanking me for sticking by her through the early days of her career. The camera would turn to me, a single tear rolling down my face, belying the fact that I'd never believed in her.

She stood and went to the bathroom, struggling to pull up her pants as she walked. I stood, knowing I should leave. The script for the play was on the dresser and I flipped through it. I don't know what I was looking for, maybe to see how it all panned out for The Gentleman. I turned page after page. Andrea didn't have a single line. There was just one thing highlighted. It said, "The Gentleman exits stage right."

A LOSS OF EQUILIBRIUM

David Seltzer

She didn't often notice her feet
as they were usually in a white Porsche,
this being California,
and the ground, like her life,
passed precipitously.
At the manicured mall she stopped at a luxe home furnishings
store soon to be
defunct or acquired,
where she bought a hammock,
taking the crisp cornered corrugated box to her manicured new-
lywed home.
She hung the hammock from two trees in the yard
which one day would be manicured.

Her husband had learned as a child to cower behind his bedroom
door,
escaping the swarm of bees in his parents' yells
that covered him still with bites and hives of guilt.
The rainbows of withdrawal he built
decades later echoed empty as hollow mirage,
shimmering a tremolo like the flicker of a dying neon light.

Perhaps she and he were together to be healed, in equipoise,
a double helix
traversing an axis they couldn't acknowledge, much less de-
scribe.

Or maybe they were each other's rocks,
so solid on the surface
so slippery when it rained.
And even on the still summer days, the hammock blew amidst
the lemons and thorns.

Marriage is a road in need of ongoing repair. To understand
premature failure,
look for a substandard foundation. Tacit neglect is neither
a shocking nor a tidy disposal,
but a fine dusty layer of contrivance.

Like a relationship, getting out of a hammock
requires greater skill
than getting in. The motion - momentum's perpetuity -
kept them going, until the day
they sat stiffly in the yard.

Under the arbor, the wind had died.
Unable to see themselves, they had become but background blur,
like an audience when they needed to be the players.

After she left, he re-boxed the hammock.
He tossed it in the attic, where it landed askew
in a plot among the stale graveyard
of broken exercise equipment.

UNTITLED III

Laura Johnson



SECOND LIFE

Helga Kidder

After raising three kids, she takes a brush,
dips it in blood red paint, rushes it over the canvas
from East to West, North to South, steps back.
She splashes drops of water like tears shed
as her children grew into their own selves,
watches the paint fracture and flow away.
She broaches grey and brown for shadows.
But that's the past. She slips a pencil brush in green
and gold, flecks grasses and wheat stands
across a field in Tennessee, heavy for harvest.
Her strong hands work quickly.
She spackles rose and plum, then curves
a blue helix of clouds for heaven,
a few smudges below,
smiles at the canvas that imitates chaos,
she, finally controlling her days,
unable to bleed past edges.
She backs away as colors cower or mesh,
then combs through a vision of children's hair,
dabs strands away with a fist of white cloth.
A rent of burlap in one corner reminds her

of the moments stolen swaying in a hammock,
a pinch of sand, then glitter strewn sparkles
the times she had to coax a smile. She knows
the light of morning slays a long, dark night of waiting.
She trowels white pigment thinned with water,
a streak of lightning, a pool of light
in a backyard lake for luminosity and depth.
A few diffusing brush strokes before the final spray.
Children gone, she finds herself, her life,
a persevering heart.

SQUALOR

Meg Tuite

DUST does not yield to leniency. Its lack of moderation is obstinate, corrupt. Particles howl around lamps, bookcases, plants, clawing at every surface you have Pine-Soled, bleached, scrubbed, beaten with foaming objects until the bastards are denied life. The tiniest corners demand a toothbrush to eke out the subterranean life that pulses beneath these cracks before they set the whole thing in motion again.

You put away all the products after a full afternoon of annihilation, settle back in a chair with a book, and wait.

Don't, you say.

You will not feel it. All that can be done has been done. You are the victor. There is no malignancy here. You will not cower. Stop blathering and read. Your hand reaches under your shirt, regardless, and fingers a pulsating orbit of hypocrites that swarms in a gene pool as pliant as memory.

Dad sent you this book when you were in the hospital the first time. It is a hardcover and is larger than one hand can grasp. You could read for a week without looking up and still not finish it. The first page is blurry. A woman has been killed. No wait, she's lying on the asphalt, collapsed, and no one is coming to help her. The other people in the novel are all concerned with an accident somewhere nearby. She might be alive. There are so many disasters. The world is in a state of siege.

Your mother died lying in a hammock in the backyard with a book in her lap. Dad kissed her goodbye and went to work. He didn't know she was dead until he got home that night. You were outside in your bassinet beside her, he said. You don't remember your mom. You were mesmerized by shedding light on thick patches of silence that sifted around you. So stop with the goddamn tears.

Not halfway down the second page you peek over the words, watch a helix of beasts flutter and gossip and point at you as they dance and roar from the skylight. You're pathetic. You with your puny weaponry? You think you have eradicated the mocking movement of time?

You haven't always been patient. You fell asleep behind the wheel of a car once after working 72 hours. You cleaned through six girls' shifts. Nine floors and no one could tell that you were the only one in the hotel with a cart, knocking on doors, slipping in and out like breathing. Each room was as sterile as the one before it.

You slam your head against the windshield and the city repeats itself in labyrinths of shattered glass. So many people drive like maniacs, weaving themselves into webs of traffic until no one is going anywhere.

You close the book. You already know the lady will die face down on the asphalt and no one will help her. The room is like a snow globe, specks of matter, maybe skin sheathed off of people living hundreds of years ago. Nothing is far enough away that it can't catch you. And

wasting away behind a book has never been the answer.

Everything you need is under the sink. You pull out yellow plastic gloves and fill the basin with scalding water. You always start in the kitchen in the left corner and work slowly across the linoleum, spray and scrub, spray and scrub.

Evolution is mold. Sludge dripping from somewhere, drop by drop.

DOUBLE HELIX

Anne Lawrence

I am the double helix, couched
in the wilderness of time, lost in labyrinthine rust
of long, lonely chains.

The twisted sinews of my arm-struts wrap
themselves in wire-framed figure eights, entangling
limbs, wrestling with complications and
randomized mutations from my bony, jointed
wrists. I finger at change, like dried up, hard-
won scabs, picking them off, storing their crusts
for later, like a beggar starving
at the end of a busy street. If you think

I sometimes bend or cower, it is forced on me by the weight
of centuries' tears, collected like rainfall
in tin buckets or dusty hammocks, suspended over
ungentle years.

Evolution made me what I am.

Uncompromising, I am

nothing less than the silver skyscraper's

jagged tor, spiralling unnoticed
through ethereal air. And mine too
is the speck of grimy dust, blowing
down the railway tracks in subway's gloom,
and resonating still with creation's
first breath.

HELIXIR: MASK

Alan Whiteside



SILENT PRAYER

Brittany Ackerman

Whisper “the sun is everything” with
eyes closed, spreading onto the earth,
she helixes her body into a sand sculpture.
Teaching, lying, she receives manna, gracefully, and
eyes cover behind her hands,
reaching up to the Kotel,
nodding, rocking the Amidah in her hammock lips.

We can only see her moving mouth and
aspire to be as close as Chen is to the ground.
Listening always to how the
Law floods mellifluous.

THE WORLD OUTSIDE YOUR WINDOW

Ronald Stout

I saw a man get cut in half once. Eight years ago; I was nine years old. My family and I were packed into our basement as a tornado tore through our neighborhood. I recall watching through a window that was positioned just at ground level. The man was leaning forward, pumping his legs as hard as he could but getting nowhere thanks to the wind pushing against him. Try as he might, he couldn't make it home.

Before witnessing the man's demise, a peculiar sight caught my eye: there was a gentle twirling of leaves moving in its own little helix, moving in a pattern unobstructed by the surrounding weather. There was a beauty in seeing freedom amongst the maelstrom, innocent to the world.

Then, before the leaves could inspire too spectacular an impression upon my eyes, a stop sign sans post flew through the air and sliced through the man down the middle. A perfect cut. His body split in two and was sucked into the air afterward. It was as though the sign were made for this; from its manufacture to standing guard at an intersection for years, the true purpose of this sign was to take a man's life. The leaves were no longer twirling. It was upon this sight that I came to a revelation: if you let yourself into the world, chaos and fate will find and devour you. This isn't the type of memory that leaves a nine-year-old.

I've fortified myself in my house for the better part of a decade, with occasional trips to my backyard. When this all started, my parents would occasionally try to coax me out of the house with promises of visiting a beach or riding roller coasters. Of course, my natural inclination was to think of all possible downsides. Sharks live in water—what if one would eat me? And roller coasters? Forget about it. Shiny hunks of metal that move thanks to electricity and inertia. And if it were a roller coaster by the sea, chances are good that it would jump the track and land square in the mouth of an awaiting great white. I don't know much

about real life, but I do know that death is random. Why try to expedite it?

Of course, over the years, my parents have never given up on the idea of my leaving. My mother, a marketing director by trade and my homeschool teacher, has spent the past several years keeping up with lessons, hoping to convince me someday to go to college. At the same time, she's spent a good portion of her time chiding my father, who has become sarcastic and bitter when he was once just witty and high-spirited. I guess my experience has changed us all in different ways.

I was using my computer at the desk in my room one morning in August when my mother called me for breakfast. We typically eat breakfast and dinner as a family unless I'm feeling particularly reclusive, in which case I'll usually let them know that beforehand. On those days, it's best that I not be bothered. As I made my way into the kitchen, I recognized the unmistakable smell of bacon and eggs, hot off the griddle. My father, reading news on his phone, had already taken his place at the north side of the table, so I took my place on the south.

"Morning, Charlie," he said, barely glancing up from his phone.

“Morning,” I replied. I can typically tell how conversations are going to go based on his demeanor at the table. On most occasions, he responds with light conversation if things are going well. If he’s in a bad mood, he’ll talk about how whatever recent sporting event was awful. This day was different. It was as though he was just staring through his phone, not actually using it to look up news, but just to hold something so he could hold off on what was in front of him. Before I could ask him what was on his mind, my mother came whistling into the room with our plates, attempting her best Mary Poppins.

“Here comes some food for the men in my life,” she said, placing the plates before my father and me. She had managed the skill of carrying three plates at once, recalling her days working at a diner in her youth. “And one for me,” she said, then took her seat between us. “How are you two this morning?”

My father grunted, his eyes lost in a daydream, staring at the table.

Sensing his mood, she turned to me. “And you? What are your plans today?”

I started cutting my scrambled eggs. “I don’t know,” I said. “I was thinking about reading *The Road*

by Cormac McCarthy. The reviews say it’s pretty good.”

My father grunted again, and had started shaking his leg. It was like he was struggling to contain himself.

“Harold, stop it,” my mother said, slapping his leg. She looked back at me, and with a mouth full of bacon, asked, “What’s that one about?”

“It’s about a father and son who try to survive after the apocalypse.”

“Shit,” said my father, bringing his palm to his forehead.

“Harold!” yelled my mother.

“What?” I asked.

“I’m sorry,” said my father. He lifted his fork to his mouth to eat some eggs, then slammed the fork back down on his plate. “You know what? No, I’m not sorry. I’m doing this now!”

“I don’t think this is the time,” said my mother.

“Bring what up?” I asked.

“How many books have you read this year, Charlie?” he asked.

“I don’t know, 25, 30.”

“Jesus,” he said. “You’re too damn smart to be stuck here!”

I looked at my mother. “Is this about college again?”

I already said I'm not going!"

"Yes, this is about college again," my father answered for my mother. He was standing now, pacing around the table.

"And she and I talked, and we think—"

"Harold, maybe this isn't the best time to bring this up," she said.

He held his hand out to her. "Samantha, dear, I love you and you make the best bacon and eggs, but I swear to God, I'm just pissed off enough to stab someone with a butter knife right now." He nodded his head, then looked at me. "We're giving you two options. You can go to college and live on campus, or you can just get a job out of high school. Either way, this time next year, you're out of the house."

At that point, I'm not sure if my jaw or eyes were wider. I looked at my mother. "Is he serious? You guys are just getting rid of me? Like, evicting me?"

She grabbed my hand, "No, sweetie, think of it more like we're just choosing to let you make it on your own. We're letting you face your fears head on." She grabbed a forkful of eggs. "Also, eviction implies that you're paying rent."

I shook my head. "Can I go wash my dishes?" I had hardly even touched my food.

"Yes," she said. Immediately after the response,

I jumped up, carrying my plate to the kitchen.

My father's voice carried from the next room: "Try not to drown in the sink!"

"Harold!"

I scraped the remains of my food into the trashcan and turned the faucet on high to drown out the sounds of my parents bickering in the next room. I was going to do the dishes long enough so I would still be working on them by the time they left. After a few minutes, something caught my eye out the window above the sink. It was a group of leaves that had fallen from their branch. They were being swept in the wind, dancing in a circle around one another. In my head, I could hear the strings of "Swan Lake" orchestrated over their every movement, followed by a deafening silence as they continued to move faster and faster. They had my utmost attention, drawing me closer and closer until I could—

"Hey!"

I was startled by the sound of an unfamiliar voice. I looked around me. I was in my backyard. *How did I get here?* I asked myself. *I must've walked out.* I found the leaves, lying on the ground. I lifted them as if I were going to question inanimate objects. My hands were shaking

violently. Maybe I was crazy.

“Hey! Come here!” The voice was coming from the yard next to us. We just had new neighbors move in. From where I was standing in the middle of my yard, I could see an arm waving from a hammock tied between two trees. Against my better judgment, I started to walk towards it. As I stepped closer, my heart began to beat faster. It was a girl, about my age, beautiful, and wearing a bikini. My first interaction with someone outside my immediate family in almost a decade, and she was gorgeous. Just my luck.

“What’s your name?” she asked.

“Me?” I pointed to myself.

“No, I was asking the invisible guy to your left.”

I looked next to me before I even comprehended what she said. “Right, there’s nobody there.”

She nodded. “And if there was, he’s invisible.”

My God, I’m an idiot, I thought. “My name’s Charlie. I live here. I haven’t left the house in eight years.”

“Okay.”

“I don’t know why I said that. They’re kicking me out, anyway. You just moved in, didn’t you?”

“It’s okay, Charlie. Yeah, we moved in last week. We’re from Florida originally.”

“What’s in Oklahoma, then?” *I think this is how small talk is supposed to go.*

She shook her head. “Nothing’s here. It’s kind of nice. We had to get away from things.” She looked at me and must have noticed that I was shaking. “You’re a little bit different, aren’t you, Charlie?”

I nodded. “My dad says I’m idiosyncratic.”

“He calls you stupid?”

“No. What?”

“The idiot thing. What was that word you used? Idiosomatic?”

My stupid damn vocabulary. “Idiosyncratic. It means that I have certain quirks that almost nobody else has.”

“Like never leaving the house?”

“Yeah.” Now I was going to try something brave: maybe some of my dad’s wit had been passed down to me. “What about you? Do you have anything? Besides trying to tan while sitting in the shade of two trees?”

I think she smiled, but then again, I could’ve just been having a panic attack. I mean, the kitchen faucet could’ve still been running for all I knew. “It’s not just about the tan, Charlie.” She leaned back. “It’s about feeling weightless and free. You should try it.”

I nodded. “Maybe someday. Baby steps.” I looked back at the house. My hands were calm. I wasn’t used to this. “I have to go back in. I’ll see you later.” I had already turned before she could respond. I found my tape recorder and pressed record. “Don’t bother me tonight. I’ll be in my room.” I laid it on the kitchen table, walked down the hall, and closed my door.

I could hear my parents talking throughout their dinner as I lay on my bed. What their exact conversation was, I didn’t care to know, but I was certain that it involved me. I just read McCarthy and enjoyed myself, relishing in the idea that the author had put to paper my exact thoughts on how the world outside really is. After their dinner, I got the sudden feeling that they didn’t get my recording, as there was a knock at my door.

I looked up from my book. “Who is it?”

“It’s Dad. Can I come in?”

I hesitated, then placed a bookmark. “Yeah.”

He walked in and sat down at my desk. “I want to talk to you about earlier.”

“Dad, you don’t have—”

“I do.” He drew a deep breath. “I think you know how I

feel. I think you should go out and see the world and—”

“I know what you’re trying to—”

He held his hand forward. “Let me get this off my chest.” He cleared his throat. “I know you think about that man a lot. I know that that’s what makes you think that the world is just full of chaos and not much else. And I think about it, too. But you and I have different perspectives on this. When you think about it, you see a person getting killed. Me, I couldn’t even tell you what the guy looked like. My focus that day was keeping you safe. Cowering down there, I had my eyes on you the entire time and the thing that I remember most is watching what happened to you. In the blink of an eye, you weren’t even a kid anymore. You just became this cynical being that only saw the death of things. And it breaks my heart that you’re stuck in here and you only remember death when the world out there has mountains, and beaches, and skyscrapers, and people. My God, the people. For every bad guy, there are thousands of charity workers and people who give their all in service of other people only because it’s what’s right.”

He stood up. “And we all have our fears. You’ve got yours, obviously, but I’ve never told you my biggest fear. For the past seventeen years, I’ve helped raise this beautiful,

charming, intelligent, magnificent boy. And what scares me more than you not seeing the world is the idea that the world will never get to know all the good things you have to give back to it. I can see the things that you have within you. It terrifies me to think that nobody out there will know them, too.”

He walked toward the door while I contemplated his words. He turned the knob and looked back at me. “You’re not a burden to us. You can stay as long as you would like. But, I hope you don’t.” He walked out, closing the door behind him.

I didn’t move for about an hour. I just watched the leaves on a tree outside my window blow in the wind. Then at the end of it all, they just stopped moving. Sometimes, the chaos just ends.

I skipped breakfast the next morning. I didn’t want them to be there when I left. I’d come to realize that this was a decision that I’d have to make on my own. And if I failed, I couldn’t let them see it.

Before I entered the garage, I remembered to pick up the tape recorder from the kitchen, along with some bottles of water, fruit snacks, bananas, and a protein shake. All of

this was packed in my Pokemon backpack (which only added to the style that every teenager stuck as a nine-year-old should have) alongside hardback copies of *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Blood Meridian*, and *Atlas Shrugged*. The inside of my backpack was apparently lost in a time warp.

My parents had three automobiles: my dad’s Ford F-150, my mom’s Toyota Camry, and the family vacation SUV that had actually become just a grocery bag holder, the Jeep Grand Cherokee, which now sat before me, tempting me to drive it. I grabbed the keys from my dad’s workbench and started for the car. *I wonder how this is going to play out?* I thought to myself. *First, I, the untrained driver, will drive through the garage door because I’ll forget to open it, then I’ll spend way too long figuring out how to switch from reverse to drive. Then, once I figure that out, I’ll gain too much confidence and do 80 around a curve and hit a tree. That’s what’ll happen. I’ll hit a fucking tree.* I thought better of the situation and grabbed my mom’s mountain bike from the overhead bike rack instead. I mounted the seat, then hobble-stepped to the switch at the wall. I closed my eyes and pressed the button.

I could feel water around my legs. There must’ve been a flood, but I didn’t dare look. Winds pulled at my legs,

pulling me and the two-wheeled frame closer to the outdoors where I could make out the sounds of sirens ringing in the air. I pictured a police cruiser flying through the air, hitting several nuns who just so happened to be nearby helping orphans reach safe destinations. My better judgment told me not to look, but today I wasn't listening to judgment. Slowly, I opened my eyes to see absolutely no inclement weather whatsoever. My legs were dry, which was a good indicator for both weather conditions and bladder control. The only thing that I actually could see was the girl from next door, who was now standing at the end of the driveway. Upon sight of her, I quickly fell off the bike.

She waved to me. "Hi, Charlie."

I waved back while regaining my seating. "Hi..." I realized that I never asked her name, "you."

She cracked a toothy smile. "It's Andrea." She moved her head around, scoping out my bike. "What are you up to?"

Honestly, I wasn't really sure of the answer to that myself. "I think I'm leaving."

She nodded her head. "On a girl's bike?"

I hesitated. "Yeah."

"With a Pokemon backpack?"

"I didn't really think this through."

She giggled. "I don't really know you, Charlie, but this seems out of character for you."

I placed my hand against the wall and leaned, acting as nonchalant as possible. "Maybe I'm full of surprises."

She bit her lip. "Like what?"

Some of the books I had read that assisted in getting me past my fears included an idea that directly conflicted with advice from other books. I was about to take that idea and use it: dive in head first, no looking back. "You want to go with me?"

She furrowed her brow. "Really?"

I swallowed hard. "Yeah."

"Where to?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "I haven't really thought about that. Just, like, somewhere, I guess."

After what seemed like an eternity but was probably only a few seconds, she returned with, "I can't. I'm sorry."

I suddenly felt an ache in my gut that I'd never felt before. "Why not?" I mustered.

"Remember when I said that we moved here to get away from things?" She waited for me to nod my head. "I have a daughter, Charlie. Anna. Her father used to hit me." She hesitated and dragged her foot on the ground.

“Bad things don’t have to be outside to get to you. Sometimes it’s better to try things on your own for a while. Like you’re about to.”

I didn’t know what to say. Sensing my unease, she walked up the driveway slowly, gracefully, kissed my cheek, and began to walk back to her house. Over her shoulder, I could hear her shout, “You have a lot of mistakes to make, Charlie! Enjoy them all!” She walked in her front door, and out of my life.

The feeling in my gut hadn’t subsided. It wasn’t pain, just emptiness. *So this must be heartache*, I thought to myself. *It’s not as bad as I thought it would be*. As soon as the thought crossed my mind, I realized that the ache I was now feeling wasn’t for me. It was a pain for another person. For half of my life, I had only recognized my own hurt. It was time to go.

I looked toward the driveway, then grabbed the tape recorder from my pocket. I pressed record. “Mom, Dad, I love you. I’ve gone to find my place in the world. I’ll call you when I get there.” Before I set the recorder on the hood of the car, another thought crossed my mind. I brought the recorder to my lips. “The sun is shining.”

DROWNING AUGUST 13, 2013

Lynn Houston

The river’s Jersey shore, a carnival of cop cars,
Scuffs my kayak’s hull with its protrusions.
The pink polo-shirted man winces from the height
Of a worn dock, crackles the reddened skin around his eyes.
“Ma’am, you are paddling through our crime scene.”
No question, then, about the fish and fisherwoman scared
By the helix wake of a helicopter as it hovered the steely Delaware.
That night, lightning ends their search
As I cower on rubber from the island’s lowest elevation.
Hands over ears. A tarp and hammock for the living,
Our sleep, the breath and eat and ache of it all,
While the dead refuse rest, rattling the gunwales of stone boats.

FISTULATED COW

Robbi Nester

After a Story on Radiolab

Beneath a shield of hide and flesh
the cow's stomach hangs like a hammock
from the triangular scaffolding of the pelvis.
You've always guessed it was there
that alchemical apparatus
working away in the steamy darkness,
transmuting grass and hay
to silky curds, an ivory flow.
But now, you can see for yourself.
No need to hang back, to cower there
in a corner. Slip on those rubber gloves.
Enter the inner chamber.

We think of the stomach as a sack,
soft and loose as a pocket
in a much-laundered jacket.
It's more like a muscle.
Feel it grab your hand,
sucking the fingers down

into the vortex where intestines,
ribbed as a vacuum cleaner hose,
coil, and the sweet grass
travels the length of each helix,
each pearly arc, like tourists
queued at Disneyland, and the billions
of bugs do their work. And in you as well
the same mysterious everyday magic
you don't like to think about
goes on. But now that she's served
her purpose, we'll put back the plug,
let the cow wade knee-high into a field of
clover,
a body linked to other bodies,
making the most of the world.

LIP' L HELIX

Rick Rodstrom



3Elements Contributors

Brittany Ackerman is a graduate student at Florida Atlantic University studying to receive her MFA in Creative Non-Fiction. “Silent Prayer” is very dear to her, as it is about an Israeli woman who took her under her wing during her short stay in Israel over the summer and their experience together at the Western Wall. The piece is written as an acrostic.

Paul Beckman has been a photographer since he was nine years old. He’s had four solo exhibitions and has taken part in many juried shows. His work is in the permanent collection of both Yale Medical Center and UCONN Medical Center. He is the winner of the Jurors’ Award at the New Britain Museum of American Art. This picture, taken in Havana, is of a grammar school nap time. His work has appeared in national and international magazines, including *The Connecticut Review*, *The New Haven Review*, *Short Story Review*, *Molotov Cocktail*, *Playboy*, *5 Trope*, *Other Voices*, *Pure Slush*, *Word Riot*, *Litro*, *Fiction Warehouse*, *Web Del Sol*, *Jewish Currents*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Opium*, *Clean Sheets*, *Thug Lit*, and *The Boston Literary Magazine*.

Lavina Blossom grew up in rural Michigan and now lives in southern California. She divides her creative hours between poetry and painting (primarily collage and mixed media). She has an MFA in Poetry from the University of California, Irvine, and her poems have appeared in various journals, including *The Paris Review*, *The Literary Review*, and *Kansas Quarterly*, as well as in the online journal *Poemeleon*. Her short story “Blue Dog” appeared in the online journal *Women Writers*. She is an Associate Editor of Poetry for *Inlandia: A Literary Journey*.

Ryan W. Bradley has pumped gas, changed oil, painted houses, swept the floor of a mechanic’s shop, worked on a construction crew in the Arctic Circle, fronted a punk band, and managed an independent children’s bookstore. He now designs book covers. He is the author of four poetry chapbooks, two full-length poetry collections, including *The Waiting Tide* and a collaborative collection with David Tomaloff. He is also the author of a story collection and *Code for Failure*, his debut novel. A novella, *Winterswim* is forthcoming in late 2014. He received his MFA from Pacific University and lives in Oregon with his wife and two sons.

Chloe N. Clark is a current MFA candidate, a supremely gifted baker (in her own words), and a talented historian of stage magic. Her writing has appeared in such places as *Prick of the Spindle*, *Rosebud*, *Utter*, *The Menacing Hedge*, and more. For her delightful puns, reviews of candy, and devotion to Doctor Who, follow her on Twitter @PintsNCupcakes.

Damien Cowger’s work has appeared in various journals including *The Southeast Review* and *The Rumpus*. Winner of the 2012 Science Fiction Poetry Association’s Poetry Contest in the short form category, Cowger lives in Harrisburg, PA and is the managing editor of *New Ohio Review*.

Elizabeth Czapski is a college student who, when not studying, is drinking tea, traveling the world, and collecting antique books.

Contributors [Continued...]

Sally David received her BA from Mount Holyoke College, her Master's from Boston College, and a certificate in Professional and Technical Writing from The University of Massachusetts. She has studied with favorite poets Madeline DeFrees, Mark Doty, David Wojahn, Pattiann Rogers, and Paul Smyth. Sally's poems have appeared in publications that include *The Worcester Review* (MA), *Anthology* (AZ), *Athena* (CA), and *New Voices* (Anthology; Israel); one poem earned an honorable mention from *Writer's Digest* and another an award and praise conferred by Mary Oliver. Ms. David taught for Maimonides School (MA) and for the Johns Hopkins University CTY Program as well as several colleges and the Massachusetts School of Law. Sally currently writes for several websites and is completing a book of poetry. In 2013, some are hoarding food and supplies in anticipation of the "end"; Sally David is publishing her work, hoping to shine one ray of hope on whoever catches the light.

Gary Glauber is a poet, fiction writer, teacher, and music journalist. His works have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net, and one was named "A Notable Online Story" by *storySouth's* Million Writers Award panel. He took part in The Frost Place's conference on teaching poetry, as well as *The Found Poetry Review's* Pulitzer Remix Project. Recent poems are published or forthcoming in *Agave*, *Gravel*, *The Chaffin Journal*, *Extract(s)*, *Bay Laurel*, *Dead Flowers*, *Stone Voices*, *Falling Star*, *Foliage Oak*, *Fjords Review*, *Tendrils Literary Magazine*, *Four and Twenty*, *Kindred*, *The Found Poetry Review*, *Eunoia Review*, *Untitled with Passengers*, *Flutter Poetry Journal*, *Chupa Chabra House*, *Northwind*, *Thirteen Myna Birds*, *The Bicycle Review*, and *Black Cat Lit*.

L.E. Goldstein is from Niceville, Florida. She holds a Master's from the University of Southern Mississippi and an MFA from Boston University. She is currently a PhD student at UT Dallas.

C.J. Harrington lives and writes in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Her writing is published or forthcoming in several journals, including *Gone Lawn*, *Apocrypha and Abstractions*, and *The Voices Project*.

Nancy Hathaway has written books on many topics, including astronomy (*The Friendly Guide to the Universe*), photography (*Native American Portraits*), mythology, astrology, and more. Her shorter pieces have been published in periodicals that range from *Alimentum* and *PaperTape Magazine* to *American Recorder* and *Self*. She lives in New York City, where she teaches creative writing under the auspices of Trinity Church and Poets & Writers. She's been making collages her entire life.

Havvah J. Holl has been writing poetry very quietly for almost fifteen years. She grew up in rural Nebraska, slowly making her way to the Midwest mecca of Chicago, IL. Misusing words fascinates her.

Lynn Marie Houston's academic articles and creative essays have appeared in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *MELUS*, *M/C Journal*, *ArteNews*, *Performing Arts Journal*, *Postmodern Culture*, *Proteus*, *Safundi*, and the collection *Storied Dishes*, among others. Although she did her doctoral work in the Arizona desert, she now resides in her hometown of Newburgh, New York where she's renovating and living in a 1968 Airstream camper. When she isn't teaching English courses at Orange County Community College or tending her honey bees, Lynn also maintains a blog about her outdoor adventures, called The Awkward Angler.

Contributors [Continued...]

Laura Story Johnson was born and raised in Iowa and has lived in New York City, bush Alaska, Mongolia, Boston, Austria, Chicago, and west of the Zambezi River in Zambia. Her photography has most recently appeared in *Off the Coast*. Learn more about her at: www.laurastoryjohnson.com.

Helga Kidder lives in the Tennessee hills. She was awarded an MFA from Vermont College, is co-founder of the Chattanooga Writers Guild, and leads their poetry group. Her poetry has been published in *The Louisville Review*, *The Southern Indiana Review*, *Comstock Review*, *Quiddity*, and many others. Her chapbook, *Wild Plums*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2012. Her full collection, *Luckier than the Stars*, was published by Blue Light Press in 2013.

Elizabeth Koch has been in love with writing since her early teens, but her publications only go as far as her blog that she fills with little pieces of her days as a wife, mother, and special education English teacher. When she's not busy with those things, she finds time to write. Recently, this has been in her minivan while waiting to pick up her kids from school. An Iowa farm girl at heart, she currently lives in the Kansas City, Missouri area. "Hell, Early-Onset" was written for her mother-in-law Ann and in memory of her father-in-law Frank.

James LaMear lives in the Bucktown neighborhood of Chicago with his lovely soprano-wife Kathryn and their seventy-pound bull terrier Basil (part slug, part alligator, and all teddy bear). James enjoys good food, good drink, good conversation, and anything that inspires his imagination. In addition to short stories and poetry, James has two novels in the works. You can visit his website at: <http://VerseProse.com>.

Ashley Laney lives in south Florida. Unfortunately, her abode is a prison. She loves animals, particularly horses, peacocks, and reptiles. In her free time she enjoys listening to music -- anything but country and lots of Radiohead. Her story is autobiographical but not necessarily chronologically accurate. Also, she is a Libra.

Anne Lawrence is a graduate of English literature and modern languages from the north of England. She writes whenever she gets the chance, between various part-time jobs and a full-time family life. Her work has been published in several online magazines and in *Orbis*, a quarterly British literary journal. She loves the sea and hopes to move back to the coast one day.

John C. Mannone, nominated three times for a Pushcart, has work in *Raven Chronicles*, *The Baltimore Review*, *Bethany House*, *Synaesthesia*, *Prime Mincer*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Linden Avenue Literary Journal*, *Ayris*, *Prairie Wolf Press Review*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Pedestal*, *Rose Red Review*, *Rose & Thorn*, *Glass*, and others. He's the poetry editor for *Silver Blade Magazine* and *Abyss & Apex*, a professor of physics in Tennessee, and an NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador. Visit The Art of Poetry at: <http://jcmannone.wordpress.com>.

Robbi Nester is the author of a chapbook, *Balance* (White Violet, 2012) and two collections of poetry pending publication within the next couple of years. She has published individual poems, essays, and reviews in many journals and anthologies and is an executive editor of the journal *Slippage* and a reviewer for *New York Quarterly Journal of Books*. She is also editing a forthcoming anthology of poems and artwork inspired by NPR and PBS stories and shows to be titled, *The Liberal Media Made Me Do It!*

Contributors [Continued...]

Rick Rodstrom was born and raised in New York City and currently resides in Los Angeles. He's had gallery shows in Manhattan, Queens, New Jersey, and Los Angeles. His writing and art can be found at: rodstrom-nopo.com.

David Seltzer inherited penchants for worrying, grandiose visions, and unrealistic expectations. His guilty pleasures include White Castle hamburgers and marzipan. He identifies with Rip Van Winkle and burrowing animals. He regularly attempts to become less externally-referenced.

Rosemary Starace is a writer and visual artist living in the Berkshire region of western Massachusetts. Her work in both genres can be seen at her website: www.rosemarystarace.com.

Ronald Stout is a 2009 graduate of the creative writing program at Eastern Michigan University. He now lives and works in Columbus, OH, and spends his free time reading and writing.

Maggie Sullivan is an Ohio native who moved to the exotic bowels of Hong Kong at the age of ten. She is currently a Nonfiction MFA candidate at Columbia College Chicago where she also works as a first-year writing instructor and a graduate writing consultant. She was also an assistant editor for *South Loop Review* and currently reads for *Hotel Amerika*.

Ben Tanzer is the author of the books *My Father's House*, *You Can Make Him Like You*, *Orphans*, and the forthcoming *Lost in Space*, among others. He also oversees day to day operations of *This Zine Will Change Your Life*, directs Publicity and Content Strategy for *Curbside Splendor*, and can be found online at *This Blog Will Change Your Life*.

Susan Tepper is the author of four published books of fiction and a chapbook of poetry. Her current title, *The Merrill Diaries* (Pure Slush Books, July 2013) is a novel in stories spanning one decade that begins in 1976 and takes the reader on a wild ride over two continents. Tepper has received nine Pushcart nominations and shares a Pulitzer Prize nomination with Gary Percesepe for their epistolary novel *What May Have Been*. Discover more at: www.susantepper.com.

Mariko Tsukamoto is a Melbourne-based illustrator seeking to develop a career path in children's publishing. She is inspired by the child that lives in all of us and aims to create child-friendly illustrations that tell stories and are arty at the same time. She likes drawing children and animals.

Meg Tuite is the author of *Domestic Apparition* (2011, San Francisco Bay Press), *Bound By Blue* (2013, Sententia Books) and her chapbooks, *Disparate Pathos* (2012, Monkey Puzzle Press), *Reverberations* (2012, Deadly Chaps Press), and *Her Skin is a Costume* (2013, Red Bird Chaps). Her writing has appeared in numerous journals including *Prick of the Spindle*, *Epiphany*, *JMWW*, *Monkeybicycle*, and *Boston Literary Magazine*. She has been nominated several times for the Pushcart Prize. She is the fiction editor of *The Santa Fe Literary Review* and *Connotation Press*. Her blog can be found at: <http://megtuite.wordpress.com>.

Contributors [Continued...]

J. Alan Whiteside is drawn to the interplay of content and design elements such as color, line, shape, and texture. He often focuses on details and abstractions that present themselves within what could be called “ordinary” subjects. “Treasures of visual engagement” not often noticed by the casual observer are what he seeks to bring to the notice of viewers. Alan most recently won the grand prize in the State Historical Society of North Dakota 2012 Photo Contest. One of his photos is the cover art for a recently published book of short stories, *Shadows of Men* (Queen’s Ferry Press), and another image was selected for the juried exhibition, *Windows and Mirrors*, at PhotoPlace Gallery in Middlebury, Vermont. In addition, his images have been published in *Forces Literary Journal*, *Frisco Style Magazine*, and the online journal, *Floorboard Review*. Five of Alan’s photos of Fair Park in Dallas were purchased by the Dallas Omni Convention Center Hotel for conference rooms, and several other Dallas-related photos are on permanent display in the Dallas mayor’s office.

B. Yvette Yun hails from Honolulu. She’s been in love many times, but so far no man is as satisfying as surfing and traveling. She is completing her first novel in the final year of a PhD in Creative Writing at Bath Spa University in the UK.

Acknowledgements

We would like to take the time to thank **YOU**, our readers. Without you, none of this would be possible for 3Elements Literary Review.

NEXT UP

Issue No. 3
SPRING 2014

3Elements:
Terminal
6324
Bare

Due March 1, 2014

Submission Guidelines

Submission due dates are [December 1](#), [March 1](#), [June 1](#), and [September 1](#) for issues forthcoming January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1, respectively, unless otherwise noted on our website. [Minimum word count is 500 words for fiction, maximum is 3,500. Poems must be under two typed pages.](#)

We will only accept blind submissions sent to us through Submittable. It is equally important that all three elements given for the specific submission period be included within your story or poem. Artists and photographers are only required to represent one out of the three elements.

For multiple submissions, fiction is capped at no more than three stories per submission period. Poems are limited to five per submission period. In the event your material is accepted elsewhere, we request that you withdraw your submission from 3Elements Review.

Visit www.3ElementsReview.com for more info.

Staff - 3Elements Review

Mikaela Shea is in her thesis hours of her MFA in Fiction at Columbia College Chicago. She has published stories in *Midwestern Gothic*, *Foliate Oak*, *Hypertext Magazine*, *Columbia College's Annual Story Week Reader*, and a children's book, *Ib's Ice Age Adventure*, for the State Historical Society of Iowa. Mikaela is currently writing a novel, editor-in-chief of *3Elements Review*, assistant editor at *Flyleaf Journal*, and a contributing writer for *Gapers Block Book Club* and *Chicago Literati*. She loves her family, puppies, Paris, creepy things, running, coffee, cooking, and whiskey. www.MikaelaShea.com

C.J. Matthews, a writing teacher by day and writing group facilitator by night, earned her B.A. at Cornell College and her Master's at the University of Iowa. She adores reading, writing, traveling, elegant food, bold red wine, and her two little dogs, Hercules and Hucklebee. C.J.'s most recent work can be read in *Spoilage Magazine*, *Cahoodaloodaling*, and *the In Gilded Frame Anthology* from Kind of a Hurricane Press.

Parker Stockman is a writer, college writing instructor, and storyteller. He tells personal narratives with 2nd Story in Chicago, a monthly live literature event, and is featured on their website. Currently finishing his thesis for his MFA in Creative Writing-Fiction at Columbia College Chicago, he is at work on a novel. He writes a blog for his school's program and works as a writing tutor. Parker plays rugby with and is the Vice President of Recruiting for the Chicago Dragons Rugby Football Club. He is excited to be part of the 3Elements family and hopes you enjoy the journal as much as he enjoys working on it.

Marlon Fowler is a Chicago-based web developer and designer for *3Elements Review*. He received his bachelor's degree in Journalism with a major in Advertising from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. Marlon enjoys all things technology, making websites "do things," running, reading nonfiction, sports, movies, video games, and Chicago food. He would really like to learn PHP and get back to Paris. You can check out Marlon's portfolio at www.marlonfowler.com.

Carol Roh Spaulding is co-author, with Kay Fenton Smith, of *Zakery's Bridge: Children's Journeys From Around the World to Iowa* (2011). A Professor of English at Drake University, Spaulding teaches courses in writing and American literature. She is the author of several award-winning short stories, including a Pushcart Prize, best story of the year in *Ploughshares*, the Glimmer Train Fiction Open, and the Katherine Anne Porter Prize for Fiction. Her new novel, *Helen Button*, tells the story of avant-garde writer Gertrude Stein and her life in Central France during World War II. Spaulding is also director of the newly-established Drake University Community Press. The Press produces attractive full-color, illustrated editions serving a community readership while providing students with practical knowledge of book editing and production using a cross-disciplinary and collaborative focus. She lives in Des Moines, IA with her husband, Tim, and son Jonah.

END

