

The Magnolia Review



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Welcome to the inaugural issue of The Magnolia Review! We publish art, photography, poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction. The Magnolia Review publishes previously unpublished work. We publish two issues a year, deadlines on November 15 and May 15. The issue will be available January 15 and July 15 online.

While The Magnolia Review will not have physical copies at this time, the editors may compile a print version if funds become available.

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For more information, please visit www.themagnoliareview.wordpress.com or email us at themagnoliareview@gmail.com.

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In Conversation with My Art



Ernest Williamson III

Garden Flowers

Daisy, Daisy. Pretty little sunshine.
Open your golden eye.
Tell me your sweet love will be mine,
Even if it's just a lie.

Blue irises sitting on the table.
Tell me a story,
If you are able.
Reveal to me your glory.

I walk upon the garden slate
Barefoot, just to be silly.
It's time to water the flowers, but wait!
Abruptly, Death takes the lily.

The Beginning

You were driving and listening
to it rain in Italian.
I had a hole in my stomach,
a bullet wound that neither of us noticed.
It would grow in the coming days,
scooping out meat,
scraping bones clean.
But for now,
it just hummed its empty tune.

Zen Cone

Imagining along
with the meditation CD
that I'm lying
in the shade
of beautiful trees,

I can forget
the drooling sky
& the dread,

& that the night
is still being tilled
by insomniacs,

& you could, too,
if it weren't
for the sound

of that one hand
clapping
just outside
your door.

Old Blue Eyes

In Community Mental Health, I work with people who disturb me. I'm trying to ease their disturbance, but they're adding to mine. That's only fair, I think, to have some portion of reciprocity. I shake their hands without flinching, a masterful performance. I remember grad school. I took a semester-length course on how to shake hands without flinching. We practiced shaking hands with our classmates while they made grotesque faces. It was stupid and fun, not like the real thing.

One classmate didn't have to make grotesque faces. She had some disease that had left her face a network of scars. She had the bluest eyes I've ever seen. She was scary, but I'd fallen in love with her, and she knew it, though I'd never given any sign that I was aware of. I used to think of what it would be like to meet her parents. It would be a meeting so freighted that none of us would be able to say a word.

In my dreams, I combine clients, especially women, with tattoos on their chests. I awake. There's a red neon sign outside my window. My head is close to her chest. She has beautiful breasts, and above them a horrible string of skulls in homage to the Indian goddess Shiva. There's a satanic verse tattooed on her chest, but the motion of her breathing makes it hard to read. I get closer and closer until my face is pressed between her beautiful, soft breasts, and then I give up my attempts to decipher the language there, to decipher any language at all.

Darkness oozes westward
across the lawn.
Its black fingers dart
between the blades of grass.

It pours itself
into the cups of roses,
their petals fold slowly.

It flows up the path
to overtake the house.
Shadow melts into shadow
as though a drape was drawn
across the window of day.

Tomorrow the sky will heal itself
all morning with blue.

The Mist

Does history have a perfume?

The pines
in the misty fog
bring me back
to my Bavarian childhood.

Walking through the forest
by the village
cemetery where my relatives
lay in repose—

a sweet slumber
cocooned waiting
to return to new

life.

The air smells
different there than here.
Crisper. More pure.

Older.

Inventory

Bees eat wood
 out of unpainted holes.
 Gophers plough
hieroglyphic mounds
 that our busy retriever
 tries to read.
Trees decay inside out.
 Like a soul, she says,
 perhaps like a soul.

Coosa Catfish

Early summer, central Alabama

Cast right for them roots, honey.

But there ain't nut'in, Daddy.

*Be patient. They're nesting. Here, put on
some fresh bait.*

It stinks.

It's suppose to.

Roll it 'tween your fingers. Don't be a girl.

Quit it, Daddy.

Just teasin' ya, Emmy.

Daddy?

Yea.

You miss Mamma?

Would you just pay attention.

The river looks bloody.

*It's all that Bama
washin' off the bank.*

Does the mama catfish mind?

It's the daddy takin' care now.

Where'd the mamma go?

He chased her away.

Why?

Never mind. Hey, now. Get ready.

You're getting a bite.

Winter in Rhode Island



For Joanne

Ten years old that afternoon
in the dingle, you kissed me
so hard my teeth hurt. We knew
more about nuclear fusion
in stars than about the bodies
we tried to mesh. The brook sighed
those elegant little water sighs
many mistake for human sighs.
This was long before parental deaths
left holes in the summer sky
through which entire galaxies fell
in a shower of nuclear sparks.
The vanilla flavor of your kisses
has lingered now for sixty years
although I wouldn't know you
if I passed you in the local mall.
The dingle still fumes this August
with deer flies bunching like fists.
Familiar rocks sport top hats of moss.
The two-inch depth of the brook
seems too fragile to have flowed
so long without drowning itself.
I find the grassy bank we lay on
with the imprint of our bodies
still visible. That raw Sunday
afternoon taught us nothing.
Stripping naked revealed no secrets
for overwrought fantasies to gnaw.

We rolled around for awhile
then splashed in the brook and dried
each other with our underwear.
Clammy and glad we dashed back
to the dead-end street you lived on.
The geometry of the houses
rebuked us, but we didn't care—
the gargling of the dingle brook
riper than the skins we bared
with primal if pointless resolve.

Rehearsing

Diptych: Closed Ward #12, Michael Mazur

Her chin tilts at the exact angle of
Degas' ballerina in bronze, her hands
too rest on her hips. Her visible ear—
a little elfin, her nose—piquant.

Shadows and psychotropic drugs mask her
companions. Not ghosts, each outline of flesh
is solid, each mask distinct, each body
in motion—repeated, mostly silent.

It is the ward that is anonymous,
the table bolted down, chairs suggested
by the posture of their occupants. A room,
one of twelve, without windows, its walls blank.

The audience gathers. Closely observed,
she warms up for her entrance, eyes shadowed.

Four Flashes after Midnight

As you sleep, wolves howl
and lick your ankles
regurgitating gophers
and the occasional old woman
into a pliable sky
and the fealty of winter.

Hewing clouds
with un-attributable ugliness,
you become liquid
at the mention of your name.

This is something else—
an endless diatribe.
The woman escapes from a prison
of alien language
into a string of perfect numbers.
The woman is you
but still a forgery
written in Newspeak
where almost anything is about to happen.

This is the blade of morning—
as radiant as lemon-infused eggs.
I watch you spread blessings
on the pavement
and ask an old man to taste it.
I am a boy with a pocketful of matches
staring out a window
at a forest of dried tinder.
We are too young to be alone
but there is no one left
to remind us.

He Said

I am your friend,
and I am your father.
But I am not your judge.

Tanka #1

shadows
running from me
children
rip rose-colored skies
in torrents of paper

Rain, The Author

Rain scribbles on the city,
a love note to those who dare walk in it,
a warning to the weaklings
cowering underneath the awning
of the bookstore.

Rain works in chapters,
one last Thursday,
another today,
the next a week from now.

It tries on everyone for a character,
the smart guy who remembers his umbrella,
the kid who figures puddles
for the greatest toy extant.

It doesn't need a plot,
just some scrambling, the occasional dancing,
a shudder from its icy chill,
a warm embrace of its summer soothing.

Rain never runs out of ideas.
Besides, it only needs the one...
raining.

Body Parts



Canvas Waiting

She'll soon dream the stars out
of twilight, dozing on a hilltop bench

facing east, work-day thorns stemmed
below her line of sight. She's here gathering

colors hours prior to working on a mural,
photos of coast sunsets in an envelope.

Airport painting jet contrails,
city night sky soon eclipsed by the zeal

of developers. She'll turn in early, wake
to light candles an hour before the first wren.

Brushing long strokes on a large canvas,
easel legs well-planted, her long-planned

art weekend launched with shades
of deep blue. Having dipped brush-tips

in sunset reds, her reach allowing pain
and confusion to dissolve, shunted

beyond the windowsill. Strength surfaces
in the periphery's reservoir when her heart

swings a lantern over yellow blooms
painted turning to the faces of dawn.

Ferris Wheel

Carnival lights sparkle in a confetti
of reds and greens and yellows,
shooting stars about to lift and burst
held in a magic stasis by the warm airs
of a summer evening. We feel an undercurrent
of excitement, a flutter that tickles the senses
like the awful joy of love, our eyes on that
high wide wheel that churns to heaven.

Up to the top of the world we climb, step by
airy step, tethered lightly to earth, too happy
to return with shameful relief to it.

Through the Clocktower: Scene 3



The Ghost of Christmas Past

Congress Street, December 1969.
Snow blurs the edges of memory
like crystals in an antique snow globe.
In place of the red-coated Santa
I stand in brown wool
on the crowded pavement,
a sparrow in the winter cityscape.

My mittened fingers clutch at the security—
false, I see now—of your warm hand
as the sea of strangers parts
before us until we meet by chance—or not—
a friend who takes little notice
of me, shivering, though not from cold,
as melting flakes streak my face.

Definitions

You are the pulsing silence
between my thoughts.
The still pools of velvet water
among crashing lace waves.
You are the edge,
the rim holding back the overflow.
You are submersion.

Requests

Play for me please
something from memory,
known by heart, yet imagined
for the first time as if
the wound were fresh.

Play for me a song broken,
a melody left open, tossed
onto the side of the road
waiting for the next one.

Please play it slow and
loud, and torture the music
so that every dropped note
is heard like shattered glass
each one felt against the skin.

And when you are done
pick up the notes and set them
by the door to play again when
the next one comes, the same request
as if the wound were fresh.

Lady in Blue



Eliotsville Township

Once, here, there was a farm,
pastureland, a small garden plot,
house, barn, split-rail fence.
Once. A hardy man fought trees and won,
his broad hands pulling stumps, rocks:
building, eking a living
from this stubborn land.
Once. He thought to build
a legacy for his children's children,
something to know him by
long after he was dust.

Now we walk the mountain path,
over a land made of bones,
past a cellar hole filled
with the autumn blush of blackberry.
Now we pause among the yellow fall
of beech leaves for a rest, a drink,
and see only slate grave markers
pushed aslant by tree roots:
now even names carved in stone
are only ghosts, too weathered
to be read even by touch.

Laurinburg IV

Dead grass. Drought season.

& all of my memories are sun-drenched—even in the dark of night when the moon hides in the pines, pretending it isn't there for me.

There's a heat advisory on. The sprinklers have been banned.

I will dry up here, waiting for the stars to rise.

Balcony View



Of Them

She keeps them bobbing.
The thoughts
of him,
shifting like a sunset,
of her,
sharp and violent as a sewing needle,
of them,
translucent as fly wings,
abuzz with the same frantic energy.

The Salt Man

When it snows on Beacon Street,
the salt crystals crunch
underneath soggy car tires.
Old Joe takes his shovel and barrow
and pours the pieces over the
sidewalks, ensuring our safety.

He doesn't say much,
just nods and thinks of his son,
who died in an automobile accident
during an ice storm.
The winded flavor of grief
still sticks to the back of his throat.

His hands are wrought iron,
scratched by the cold,
his murky face made of shale, body drenched in
the cool sweat of Wild Turkey Bourbon.
Voice taut, ripped from the wire,
he's been up since dawn covering the streets
with his sadness.

There ain't no blues but the ones behind you
he hears on the radio.

He turns his head, spits tobacco into a tin can,
looks out at the navel of night sky.
The stars fold into
tiny beams of cavernous light.

On the anniversary of his son's death
it's all he can do, as he passes us on
the sidewalk,
to close his eyes
pick up his shovel
and cover our frozen tracks.

Winter Burial

Twenty two, watching winter cold
through snowy bedroom panes,
can't even think without the requisite shudder,
a fringe of wool around my neck,
a worthless crutch.

With one eye on dead stalks
and the other on the dull-gray overhead,
I feel the shadow on my temple,
the ultimate that laughs at
bundled-up skittering ninnies on the sidewalk,
flailing cars up to theft wheels in salty ice.

We are what our hearts decide
and this day, mine is cast in tombstones,
my mother's in white robes.
Earth sags under the weight.
Trees tinkle uselessly like rusty jewelry.
I take weather as a sign, she as a setback.
And then wind picks up, bespatters the trees.
Blizzard, says the voice on the radio.
Whatever, it's a storm enough to wake the dead.
And they're only good at one thing ... dying.

Twenty two, my mother plays the organ
in our church, sends notes trembling up the spire
toward heaven, but service is cancelled for today,
can't get the plows to clear the pathways,
and the heating system's out of miracles.

Swamp



Memory Cards

I studied the musky, fresh soil I'd turned out of the hole. I dug deep enough with the shovel, pulled out the roots of the previous failed effort, and paused to think. The sun was setting low over the high fields and the pond across the road, the end of another long hot day, the air filled with mosquitos. It would be dark soon, but I was determined to get this weeping willow sapling off to a good start. It didn't look like much, but over the course of my lifetime, during which I planned not to stray far from the old family farm, I knew one day it would be spectacular. Three times as tall as me, the green, stringy branches would arch over and bend, perhaps around the time I might do the same.

We'd mark time and memories together, although I knew even as I carefully removed the nursery pot from the fragile roots, placed the tree into the hole, and slowly broke up clods of coffee-colored loam, it would outlast me.

In this particular spot of the yard, not long removed from a rotation of tobacco, corn, soybeans and cotton, I had trouble getting anything to grow. Just ten feet away, blueberries and peaches flourished, as did a flowering cherry tree. But this spot was different. Hurricane Fran took out a promising red delicious apple tree, Hurricane Floyd swept away a honey sweet pear. The last occupant of the space had been a flowering shrub with red and white flowers, one given to us by my parents in sympathy. I don't recall its name.

My wife Kristi and I talked about planting a weeping willow for years, and now I'd finally gotten around to it, an attempt to grant a wish just after we'd had another slip away. We'd suffered our second miscarriage just a few days after we'd seen the heartbeat on a black and white screen in the doctor's office. The hurt still burned inside like that late spring sun. I finished the job, put the shovel away, and went inside, satisfied with my memorial.

My photography career was during one of those rare eras where an industry is completely remade. Unstable micro drives, then later memory cards, replaced the use of film. These are small, black, wafer-sized, plas-

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tic-shelled computer chips. They hold raw images, store them until reaching capacity. Images can be erased, a whole card can be wiped clean with a re-format, or one can attempt to delete one image and replace it with another. Even when an image is completely erased, it can be retrieved, though damaged. In these ways, memory cards are much like our brains.

A memory card is a vital piece of equipment for a photographer. More advanced than film, yet more vulnerable and risky. Even a low capacity card typically stores four or five times the number of images of a roll of professional film, putting much more of a session or event, such as a wedding, at risk should there be damage. It is susceptible to being lost, being left in a pants pocket, or getting fried with static electricity.

A healthy card can last years, going through constant re-formats, captures, erasures, and transfers. Sometimes cards will fail when the photographer tries to take too many images in a burst, gorging on the scenery, or the spectacle, and overloading the processing capacity.

Every time I did a session with a bride, or a child, or showed up at a wedding, I always made sure I had re-formatted each card, had it in its freshest state, ready to record each new stage in someone's life with a clean palette.

It took nearly three and a half years to finally close the studio, and then only because we found someone who wanted to rent our 101-year-old building smack-dab in the center of the county seat.

I sold some of my equipment to other photographers, things like backgrounds and studio lights and props. Some things I could not part with, particularly the things that had become part of me and things I knew would never have the priority to be replaced, things I'd carried that I'd regret letting go the minute they walked out the door tucked under someone else's arm. There was my Canon 5D camera, a relic by digital standards, but still clicking along, and a host of lenses, free of dings or scratches. These tools were the best, well-made and cared for as any craftsman or artist protects the instruments that allow him to tell the story only he can tell. My tools went home with me.

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Unfortunately, many other items did too, including unsold frames, albums, and nearly two decades worth of customer files. These files contained negatives from the first eight years and DVDs from the last nine years.

After all these boxes and awkwardly sized items took over our home, I started grabbing one box a week with the intention of methodically finding a place for everything. That first afternoon, I sat down and flipped through hundreds of proofs and disks and negatives. Babies came out of the box, dressed in white, on white props, on a white background. Clean and pure.

I always said that people think when they see baby smiles they are looking at mouths and teeth, but really they are looking at eyes. Eyes are always true to the heart, and that goes not just for little ones but adults. Body language is a close second. I sometimes worried that when I met a new person and started to analyze lighting patterns, what mood that person gave away through slight shifts from one hip to the other, the look away, the eye flutter, the wringing of hands, the lines around the eyes and mouth, that I could be mistaken for a voyeur, particularly with females.

People tend to want simple answers to questions that are often very complex. And so it went when I announced I was making the studio a part time enterprise, and even more so when I decided to close it down.

“Why would you want to quit something you’re so good at?”

“It’s the economy, isn’t it?”

“Do you reckon it’s because you’ve gone up on your prices?”

“I guess it’s just not a necessity to have portraits, is it?”

“Everybody’s a photographer now.”

Even I wasn’t sure what the answer to these questions were, but I knew it was more than the “That’s right” most of my interrogators wanted to hear.

The economic downturn that hit full stride in North Carolina in 2009 did affect us. We raised prices, but that was mostly to meet increased costs. It’s not a necessity to have portraits. Rubbing against this impact

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was the change going on with me, and the constant, nagging feeling of *I just don't want to deal with this anymore*. I had become cynical and unsatisfied, questioned my purpose, even the value of what I was doing. Art on demand was what people wanted, not something beautifully crafted and designed to last. I was tired of crawling around on the floor, chasing babies, stopping time for one moment, the one that would be enlarged to a 24x30 and placed on the gallery wall of a McMansion, only to see the parent balk when it was time to place the order.

I probably gave a dozen answers about why I closed the shop, and all of them were true, even though none of them were true. That's because my reasons changed. I changed. The photography, from both an artistic and business perspective, didn't grow with me.

Some people spend lifetimes in newspapers, public relations, or running their own business. Most self-employed people don't voluntarily shut themselves down to go try something new, jump into the unknown clutching a family of five.

But then again, I'd never really done anything anyone expected me to. I was bored and underpaid, and I figured I could change at least one of those.

The weeping willow did not make it. I watered it each day, but slowly the green turned to brown, the soft, pliable branches into brittle brown sticks that resembled the fingers of a rudimentary Halloween witch. Soon there was no evidence the ground had been encroached on when the grass filled in. I vowed to give up.

But I didn't. When our sons, who came along two and four years later, got old enough to ramble around the yard, they wanted to take pine saplings they'd gotten from the Smokey the Bear booth at the State Fair and plant them somewhere special. That seemed like a good idea, since pines in our area will grow in anything, whether it be a hole in a brick, rich loam, or red-orange clay. The pines failed, too.

A friend and client gave me one of the cypress trees he had been transplanting and having success with in the county, a variety he had

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brought back from around the Pamlico Sound, where he owns a vacation home. He was very specific on the location, the soil type, how much sunlight, and how much shade. If this tree was to go in my yard, it was a place where the tree could be good and different.

I once again armed myself with the shovel and a small trowel, and even brought along a measuring tape to get the depth and width just right. I used the large pot as a guide, remixed the soil in the bottom of the hole to make sure the roots could spread out. I watered meticulously and it seemed at last there might be something going on, the best fit I'd been able to find. Then one day, while I was gone, the fellow who used to cut our grass wasn't watching where he was going and loped the tree down about an inch from the ground. It couldn't recover.

Nothing would grow in this space, nothing was quite the right fit, no matter what we tried. That bit of ground looks and seems very much like all that is around it, but it still waits to receive what is just right, what will live and grow.

Flesh Shall See

We hear the worst thoughts in human history
elevated by perceived status;
bloated, droning, insulated—
ideas stanchioned on white mountains at midnight
disregarding the supplicated, the needful—
demon-hooved partisans standing frozen
with their singular, hell-forged wisdom
broken off from the voracious absentia
out masquerading in the false mechanics of morning.

Short-circuited, we fall asleep into a vast delusion
and our minds begin to decompose the future
we've all been promised; adobe pyramids
and gleaming, supple metals, our minds sutured
by catatonic philosophies and the snakes of our
intended resurrection; the simplest existence of love
without consequence and entitlement without cause;
until the droning wakes us with an oppressive start
and still we will look stupidly to the East with hope.

To Do-Do-Do

Do tell us to do, to do, to do-do-do.
Buy the car, toy, house on the lake.
Credit's good, and, even if it isn't,
they'll make it so, make it so.
And in every damn restaurant,
lay out the glop,
immediate, tasteless, additive saturated,
as multiple widescreens
tell us to do, to do, to do-do-do.
And the jesters elected to fix
what the last fools screwed—
never mind how long the screwing took,
we want it fixed now, now, now
or we'll put the others back in
because that's what the instant news bots
tell us to do, to do, to do-do-do.
Buy, consume, take, take, take,
sacrifice nothing, not a thing, not a single thing.
Demand, demand, demand
except when devouring what
the loudest tell us to do, to do, to do-do-do—
live it, breathe it, BE it—
bleating, bleating, bleating,
blindly BLEATING.
God knows we deserve
what we get, what we get, what we get-get-get
in the end.

Virtual and Virginal

Half-toppled, broken ten feet up,
a maple claws at the sky.
Still leafing, it doesn't yet know
how to die. A windless day,
yet the smooth weight of drizzle
tipped the balance. Nothing so trite
as a falling tree. Caught in the boughs
of its neighbors, it could maintain
that helpless posture for years.

Too late to get out the chainsaw
and help it fall in one clean chunk.
I stare up into writhing branches
and will myself into empathy.
Although too old to instruct
the cell phone generation, I stand
upright through hour-long lectures,
insist on respectful decorum,
and question the digital sublime
at its binary root.

School opens
Monday, after a rainy summer
of lost virginities and vomit
splotches on beachfront sidewalks.
Unlike my dazzled students
my view of the sea is so distant
it's hardly a note in the eye.
Still, the scything hiss of breakers
fills one ear, while the other
catches snatches of conversation
as people chat on their cell phones
in languages I don't understand.

Maybe those half-heard conversations
tangled in this maple and broke it.
Maybe the rain is digital,
virtual, and maybe confusion
of virtual and virginal toppled
young women into wet sand
and claimed places in their lives
to which no one is entitled,
not even or especially them.

Office Chair Abandoned by a Country Road

You could swivel all around to wonder at the ledger
of starlight, trucks, ditches,
gravel, bats, moon,

of crickets chanting, We belong,
the wind conducting business
with the every scrap of trash, crows asleep in corn,

and when the morning comes
half the assets would be missing, the summer sun accounting
for God knows what.

Column A: presence. Column B: absence.
When they merge, the rest
of the book fills up.

Throw Like a Girl

We thought there was blood on our hands
from all the strawberries that we had picked,

when I looked up the late summer sun was setting
right behind her head, darkening her brown hair
like it was iron bars on a cage,

she wore her white dress, the one with maroon polka dots,
her delicate hand holding our basket of strawberries, her
beautiful smile caught in the exuberance of her eyes,

but off in the distance I heard the stillness of the wind
as it went dying down.

“It’s the end of summer,” she said, standing there
in the field like a ghost.

Looking down at the folds in her hands, she said:
“I think I’m broken in six hundred and thirty-seven
different places.”

Archeology

Her profile a cartouche—
eyes and brows painted dark,
difficult to read—
they hint
at an oil lamp burning
hot and smudged
in a pyramid
you can't resist exploring
despite curses that maim intruders.

All Robots Go to Hell



Untitled

My father speaks more with
his silence than the Bible with
its miracles.

Four Swans

There are four of them now.
A neighbor says five,
but she must have counted one twice.
I remember when there used to be one,
and before that none at all.
That was several years ago.
Whenever I passed the lake,
either driving or on a walk,
I hoped I would see it through the trees.
I took it for a talisman.
I knew that if I glimpsed that flash
of wondrous white against the dark water,
I would have a good day.
Then one year there were two.
I began to see the first one differently.
It wasn't a sign of good luck anymore.
It was a bird.
It had bones, it had blood, it ate, it shit, it had a mate.
There are four now.
My neighbor marvels at how much they tolerate the ducks.
Mute swans, she tells me, usually chase away the ducks.
These haven't.
It's nice having four swans on our lake.
But the truth is I miss those mornings
when I drove by the lake or walked along the road
and wondered if I would be surprised by that gleam of brilliant white.
I miss it gliding on the water in the shape of the letter of my name.
No birds.
One swan.

arwen

remember when you thought I was charles bukowski
and I crashed your father's buick
into the front window of the shoe store on market street—
phaedrus' chariot smashing into stars

you thought it was funny
and laughed a little milk-snort laugh
a smattering of 'whoops' from pedestrians too
literary lolita

half-elf
would you trade your immortality
for a man like me
or a pair of latino girls

or live in a netherworld
of black-and-white pornography
consuming green-ripe kiwis
rachel carson and margaret atwood

but you had rainbow-dyed hair then
and wore camouflage to hide from me
maybe to hide from everyone
and I had designs of my own

then remember one hundred years later
when I telephoned you from jail
because just the thought of you
spun my head like a dervish

enclosed is the final
payment for your father's
radiator—and bail

I have always felt old and dirty
but I'm not always right you know

I go into crazy

I go into crazy
out of the linear stream.

Darkness is my umbrella,
keeps me cradled in what I know best.
It is the screen I sit and watch outward on,
see patchworks of colors, images suspended,
high-pitched volume, almost
inaudible.

I strain to listen,
and it is a golden pipe to slide up and down on,
railway,
soothing hummm.

I go into crazy, a private garden
where I sit with God—a bit like heaven
and a bit like hell

no congestion
no in-between.

Untitled from a series “22”



Dolls

Be still, for they must not know.
Be calm, for they must not see.
They cannot see you alive.
They cannot see you move.
They watch from the window.
They stare as breath fogs the glass.
“Look at them,” “Look at them”
They always say.
We are all only Dolls,
Created of lifeless limbs and eyes,
Until he breathes in us life,
The Doll Maker, the soul keeper.
He builds from the same face,
He makes with the same mind.
We are just lonely Dolls,
Made to sit on lonely shelves.

Elastic bands

For those who cherish tidiness
they're like a gift from God,
corralling wayward gas bills
into an obedient wad.

They hold together felt tip pens
which otherwise your kids
would distribute around your house
with care but without lids.

They're such a boon when circumstance
requires crude repairs;
domestic life is bonded by
elastic bands and prayers.

A rubber band gives stress relief
if you should stretch and pull it,
and doubles as a catapult
which fires paper bullets.

The 'laggy' band can help you grip
a pen or ping-pong bat
and help protect your seedlings by
deterring next door's cat.

But all these priceless aims to which
the band can be applied
are being squandered, for there is
a shortage nationwide.

My postman is the one to blame
for this reduced supply;
he's dumped them all in my front garden,
not explaining why.

And he's been deaf to my complaints
so now I must be drastic.
He may have muscles but I have
an arsenal of elastic.

Black Dragon Fish

Dancing a mile down
for an ocean score,
her slender black skirt
unzips a luminous lure
dangled before
icy fangs.

With little regard
for her toothless mate
who can't relate
or hold his own
or tackle a squid
groping her tail—
it's only his milt
she's after.

Night-days dissolve
in cold obscurity
and who cares or even knows
about this faraway fish,
though her heart
beats like ours
right now
in the heavy dark.

100-Year-Old Can of Beef

You'd think it isn't good anymore
what with age betrayed
by a worn metal cylinder,
populated by a single red cow and
labeled with one word:
BEEF.

I've been a fan for a while,
standing here conspiring
in front of this slab of glass between us.
How well-preserved, this artifact,
just how well-preserved, I think.
No one will ever know until it's opened, its lid
popped.

I want to taste its age,
the sharp tang of one hundred years
gone, alone in someone's cellar.
Is this the tang of loneliness,
the same tang familiar to us all?
I want to understand this sensation,
squish it between my teeth and
know.

Are the contents tough or rotted thin?
Tears prickle at my dry eyes as
I stare at this spectacular can of questions.
Ten thousand questions beat
one hundred years in the dark.
Let this canned mystery be released,
revealed by light so I may
see.

Below is lost

Sunken walls are all that remain
of once cherished spaces
soon to become a new home
to brighter, shinier places
built over top so that all below is lost—

a ruin to be dug up by bone hunters
sifting through the shards for secrets
buried with never an intention of being found,
whole life stories written but untold.

We leave it all here for seekers of truth
one day to discover how little we knew
of truth, only our own shadows chasing us
below ground into darkness.

Cat on the Desk

Cat on the desk,
I'm trying to write.

It purrs. It butts its
head for attention.

Then it jumps down
and canters away

on little cat feet,
leaving me nothing

but this or silence.



At the End

For Mildred Toole Brown

Near the end you spoke
of things you'd never done
but imagined you had, Mother.

Later, you never spoke at all
of what we'd shared
but only of your life

before I was born.
But I understood
your need to deny death

by denying me,
retreating so far into childhood
that at the end

although I heard you call me
I couldn't come to you
because you didn't know me.

Motel on the Plains

A train whistle glides down the tracks of the spine

It is the wet warm sigh
of going from nowhere
to nowhere

Often in the dark

Being content with it

Sightings

Beauty is fleeting,
does not lie
in the eye
of beholders,
exists in itself,
the flower
blossoms a moment,
departs,
the sun
glows longer,
departs,
in between passings
chance alone
allows discovery.

Highlands Ranch

The Edge

Everyone went to Daniels Park to make out, to lose their virginity, but the cops expected you because the view overlooked the houses, a prairie of them, Denver farther to the north. So the police would ride low and quiet, flash their high beams through your fogged windows, laugh as teens scrambled to fit into clothes, anyone's clothes.

Instead, what you'd do is follow a four-lane road, any one of them, out into what had been a cow field a month before, to the empty streets and cul-de-sacs, naked sign posts, freshly wired utility boxes. This was where you could park for an hour, two, get out, walk around when your lips had gone numb.

You move through this space, through the prairie dog village, already half-under the cement of so many driveways, through what will be a kitchen, a back yard, a laundry room. Eventually, this thistle and dirt would be packed under foundations, tractored into terraced slopes, hidden under wood chips, paving stones, stain-resistant carpet, driveways, granite countertops, oak flooring. All the things that build a house, a home, and when enough of them are finished at machine gun speed, a community.

But now, you and your companion for the evening cut across this skeleton, these Nazca lines, hand in hand, wind blowing between you. You move through this weaving grid in ways that won't be allowed in another few months, because all this, the land, the horizon, will be filled.

Fact: In 1996, my freshmen year of high school, national geographic included a photo of Highlands Ranch, Colorado, my hometown, on its cover as an example of suburban sprawl. I remember seeing a photo of a sea of gray roofs, and saying, "That's us."

Exterior Navigation

Every few months when we returned home from college for a birthday, a wedding, a graduation, we didn't nod to ourselves at how odd it was to turn our car to the right off of, say University Boulevard onto Wildcat Reserve Parkway. If we'd tried that a few weeks before, we would have ended high centered on the edge of a ditch or started a stampede, but now there's a road, not just a road, but one wide enough to act as an airport runway. This is why those orange and white barricades were always temporary, not because of planes, but because of the speed by which this all moves.

It's random chance whose house is finished first, who is able to move in before the rest, claim their slice. So for a few months after the first families, always families, unpack their boxes and set up their cable TV, the neighbor's house might be nothing more than plywood walls and drying cement. A home in the middle of a gestating ghost town.

The rupture always moves outward, into what these new residents view as empty land, the land they won't ever visit until there's a shopping center or movie theater on it. The rupture is never stable. Even the newest subdivision, the one bordering nothing, the one with the clear view of the mountains, starts retreating towards the interior as soon as it's completed. It's devoured by other, newer houses in other, newer subdivisions. Its views too will be obstructed. Its status as "new" will only be measured by its distance to the nearest open field, not park, mind you, but field.

But before that happens, while these houses *are* the rupture, my friends and I could still see the land around and through the framing. Not manicured lawn, but yucca and prairie grass and dirt. This is when this new construction looks like what it is: houses in the middle of a cow pasture. But eventually this too will disappear under sod and paving stones and more concrete. It'll look as new as it is, with its monolith subdivision sign reading: Back Country, Canyon Ranch, East Ridge, North Ridge, Falcon Hills, Gold Peak, Highland Walk, and Firelight.

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Remembered but possibly-exaggerated fact: for nearly a decade, from the early 1990's to the early 2000's, Highlands Ranch was the fastest growing community in the nation.

Interior Navigation

I walk into a house to meet a girl's family and know the vaulted ceiling immediately because of the way the interior seems larger than the exterior. The stairs are perpendicular to the foyer, zigzagging up to a walkway that rings the top part of the living and dining rooms, but I knew all this before I entered, because walking up from the street, (I'm not allowed to park in the driveway because everyone seems to know my '88 Bronco leaks oil) I recognize the shape of the house: the placement of windows (one big one to the right of the door, two to the left), the location of the garage (to the right of the house, a second-level room above it), the size of the stone archway that shelters the front door (two stories). I know this house before walking in. No need to ask where the bathroom is, where the bedrooms are, and if I'm lucky, which drawer holds the serving spoons. It'll all be in the same place because I have two friends whose parents own this exact model, down to pattern of molding above the doorways and the number of panes of glass in the back door.

Remembered fact: Our high school technology teacher once halted class to give a lecture on Highlands Ranch, about how many houses normally went onto an acre, how Highlands Ranch doubled this number by expanding the size of living rooms and reducing the size of the yard. He talked about how this was all planned, this Californian suburb; at that time, it was only a third completed, only a third full. But we already knew this because we joked about jumping from roof to roof, making our way across one subdivision, two, only having to stop at a greenbelt. But these jokes weren't really jokes, even if we never tried.

Rupture

In 2006 Highlands Ranch celebrated its 25th birthday. Now, in 2014, it is hard to find the rupture, that space of possibility between the land and the housing. Highlands Ranch has matured, steadied, filled, pushing the development south towards Castle Rock or west to Parker, beyond even that, Elizabeth, Elbert, Peyton, those small towns that aren't small towns any more. Its roads arc back inward whenever you approach the edge, because why would anyone want to go beyond that? Even Daniel's Park Road, that place for kissing and petting, can't be used like that anymore. It's lined with houses now, ones so big the only way to look out at the city's lights is to be invited on someone's deck.

In 2006, Highlands Ranch turned 25. In 2006, I turned 25. This is a new, horrifying fact for me. This means I grew with its boundaries. I watched the rupture expand outward, leaving whatever passes as a center further into the past, replaced by the void of a bedroom community and chain restaurants as I added height and weight.

But here's the scary part. Scary on so many levels. These houses are rumored to have a life-expectancy of 50 years. When I begin to decay, so will this place. My life mirrored by suburbia, the one my parents don't even technically live in, but no one would ever be able to find their home if they described it any differently.

The 50 year life-expectancy for these houses isn't made up. These things, as lush as they are when first constructed, are the closest to disposable housing as you can get. They go up quick and begin falling apart in the same amount of time with flooded basements, cracked foundations, and walls suddenly leaning. The oldest sections of town have these problems, but the new ones aren't immune.

2008 wasn't kind here. Highlands Ranch was in the news again that year, and the year after, because it was one of the hardest hit communities by the economic implosion, but let's not explore this other than to say that today, the construction is back, the rupture is moving outward like it never stopped.

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Which brings us to the crossroads. Not just the crossroad that leads from natural bluffs to the geometry of high volume transportation, but one that is so much more personal to me. See, this space, these houses, as much as I push and detest, they are my crossroads, one I somehow keep revisiting, keep passing through, but it's a different crossroad each time because it is littered with more and more debris from my previous visits.

For example, my former selves, they're here, from kindergarten all the way up, layers of loose sediment. Go to Falcon Park and I see myself in third grade drinking a gallon of water to prove I could. I see myself as a junior, lanky and dizzy in love spooning for warmth. Then, at the bottom of the hill I see the patch of grass where I stole a kiss from a different girl, but this time I'm newly in college. And sledding, so many sledding memories. And ice-blocking, before it was cool. Of course, all this time I'm running up the hill that takes up the majority of the park, the biggest around, from the time I'm in middle school, earlier, to now. I wouldn't know where else to end a jog around here, but up there, where I watched during icy nights the vain attempts of cars to brake before they reached the bottom, sliding through the intersection, going through someone's fence, into their yard, tearing up the fence posts and showering everything: their car, the porch they've so narrowly missed, with that dirt, the kind that has a cracked top layer and soft everything else.

And like those drivers, when I leave, driving north to Denver or anywhere else, I feel my brakes give way, and I tell myself there's no way I'm stopping, not this time. Except I know this isn't true. I always return, and I pass through this known unknown again. Always arriving, always leaving.

What do I leave? What do I take? I think it's too complicated to say. It's been too long. I've seen too much iteration. I guess I can try to explain this by saying I used to wear shirts I found in thrift stores, ones that said Louisiana High School Athletic Association. I did this because it

was a way to stand out among all the Hollister and Abercrombie & Fitch and Aeropostale labels. Except, these are the shirts I still wear. This is how I still identify myself, pushing against a trend that doesn't even make sense unless I'm walking through some chic mall, which I do as little as possible. So I guess what I'm saying is that these echoes of this place, I carry them with me, even when I'd like to think I discarded them all at the border.

Interviewing Emily

She wore white
which was no surprise
and talked non-stop
which was.

She said it is and it isn't
much like Amherst
and that she has an east window
view of the sea.

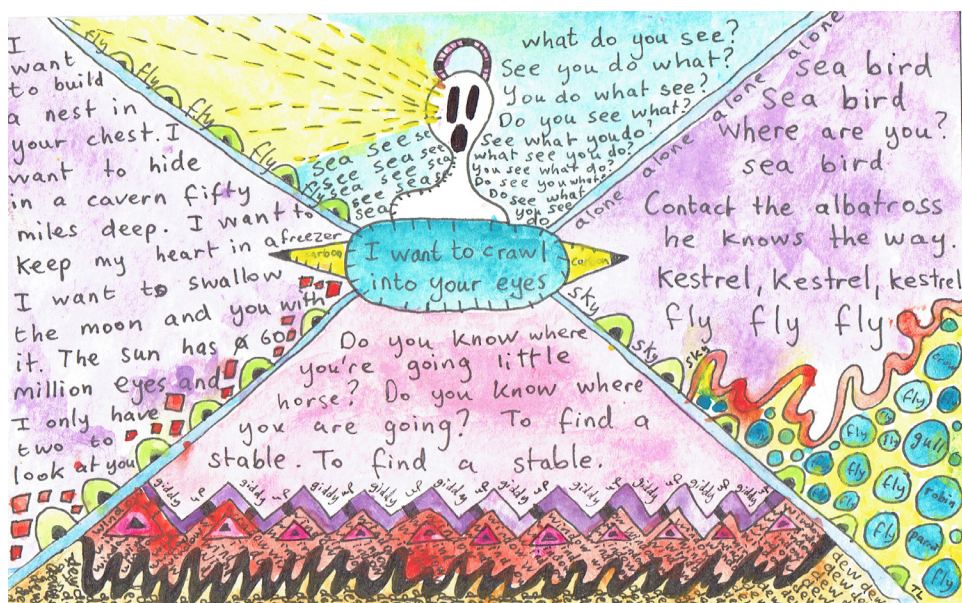
She claims she's still nobody
though she never doubted
she would meet the one
who died for Truth.

She's been assigned
a chariot but she never travels
beyond the backyard
of the sun. In off decades

she polishes lightning bolts
and launders snow.
When March arrives, she dusts
off April. She wakes Thunder

from his naps
and opens the door
to let Dawn out.
She still writes.

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At the Store

I sit with metal headphones
buckled over my ears,
turning dials,
massaging the creaks of sound
out of an undead machine.
I think of your face
at the cash register today
dropping like a coin in a fountain,
and I want to pry my nails off
one at a time with this CD case.

Four Peonies

are flowering.
Three here by
the garden-shed,
large as heads
of lettuce,
magenta
with bright
yellow-gold
within, delicate
gold-like gold
filigree at
their center,
while across
the grass,
under the viny
wisteria,
a single peony,
deep red, deep
scarlet red, deep
blood red, deep
many-layered
fire red, its passion
within its passion,
its desire upon
its desire, leaning
forward, leaning
toward the three
peonies, a mouth,
half-opened, that
wants one word only.

Uptown



Black Boy Running

Black boy running
barefoot over used needles,
past crumbling, hungry doorways,
spies a savage wildflower sprouting,
a slashed, abandoned tire,
and against a chain-link fence leans
his toothless, wrinkled granny.
Her face is a blur. He waves goodbye.

You wear your crown and I'll wear mine.
Rule the world like it should have been,
send the tidal waves to the shores.
At our feet, look at them lie. Begging,
crying, helpless creatures.
Send them away—I wish not to look at them.
Worthless little things
can't pick themselves off the floor.
Sorrow slipped into their hearts,
suffering sewn into their eyes.
Why should we waste our time,
our precious time,
on those who can't help themselves?
I am not God, I do not wish to be. He hears
all their whines and complaints, it would surely drive me mad.

The Human Patch (v2.9)

Hello World,

We know that it has been a while since our last changes to the Human operating systems and devices, but we have been hard at work and will be releasing our biggest patch in centuries! Our last patch was released in the late 1990's and only had a few minor bug fixes, but we're confident that the Human experience will improve after these new features and fixes. Here's a quick summary of the changes:

Fixes are in place for a large array of bugs that resulted in a frustrating or inconvenient living experience for the Humans. These bug fixes include changes to Human memory management, social tendencies, physical alterations, and battery life. A few issues that will no longer occur are hiccups, stubbed toes, and Deja Vu. A few attempted bug fixes from the previous patch didn't quite go as expected and will be redacted and revised.

We are also releasing a few features into beta tests around the globe. This is the first time we will be implementing or removing evolutionary features in a very long time, so these tests will be monitored closely. These new features include a third iteration of teeth halfway through an adult's lifetime and the elimination of bleeding during female menstrual cycles.

We'll round out these patch notes with a few new bugs that may appear and new bits of advice that should be circulated among the population. Please see the patch notes below.

Human Development Team (HDT)

Bug fixes

- Fixed the "Deja Vu" effect that occurred when certain variables would line up and cause the Human to feel like they are re-living a moment.
- Fixed an issue that would occasionally cause Humans to forget their objective when walking into a room.
- Improved battery performance in an effort to reduce average recharge

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time required (5 hours of sleep required, down from 8 hours).

- Fixed a bug that would cause an extreme twitch when entering Sleep mode. This caused alarm to humans who slept together and should prevent alarming situations in the future.
- Increased the toughness of the skin inside the mouth. This should help reduce cheek-biting, as well as provide a higher temperature tolerance (NOTE: The esophagus patch is still in beta testing and may not be able to handle the same temperatures as the mouth. Close monitoring will be required.)
- Improved human spatial recognition; this should cut down on the “stubbed-toe” effect.
- Fixed a bug that would cause seemingly random muscle spasms.
- Fixed a bug that would occasionally cause humans to grow at an excessive rate during puberty, causing stretch marks. This has been fixed by extending the time to grow. Heights and widths should remain the same. This is not the same cause as stretch marks during pregnancy and fixes for pregnancy stretch marks are still being investigated.
- Fixed a bug where sneezes would initiate and then disappear for a variety of reasons. All sneezes will now carry through completely.
- Fixed a bug where humans would feel uncomfortable sitting and standing upright, which caused a variety of back problems from slouching.
- Fixed a bug that would cause eyes to water while yawning.
- Added a few minor changes to try and reduce itches that occur under clothing. Itches should now be redirected to the human’s exposed skin, therefore relieving the itches easily.
- Increased the effectiveness of eyelashes in an attempt to reduce the amount of eyelashes entering the eye.
“They are, by nature, meant to keep things out of the eye.” – Witty Developer
- Added reinforcement near the Human’s “funny bone” in an effort to reduce the shocks they receive from bumping it the wrong way.
- Improved the ratio of teeth to mouth size. This should reduce crooked teeth, improving the overall appearance of humans and providing more

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efficient mastication.

- Improved the eye's durability. After many warnings to avoid eye contact with the sun, Humans have not listened.
- Fixed a bug with males that would cause random erections at inappropriate times. "Inappropriate" is defined differently for each human, so this fix will be watched closely.
- Human's need for food storage is decreasing and the body now needs to save less fat. If living conditions decline, this fix will be retracted. This should result in a 20% weight reduction worldwide within a year.
- Fixed a bug that would cause the diaphragm to get off-sync, resulting in "hiccups."
- Fixed a bug that caused "phantom vibrations." This was an unexpected effect of improved technology. This wasn't an urgent fix, but it was only one line of code.

"It was only one more line of code to make it worse." –Developer with ill intent

- Fixed a hormone imbalance that caused acne, sometimes in extreme cases. All acne should be gone within six months.
- In an attempt to fix anxiety and depression, we fixed it for small groups of people but accidentally worsened them for the majority of the population. We will be undoing the previous change and implementing a new change that should fix the issue completely.
- Fixed a bug where the neck would move too fast, causing a pain and burning sensation. This should no longer occur.

"We also learned how to control instant temperature changes in humans. Do I hear superpowers anyone?" – Developer whose ideas are always ignored

New features

- Released a new Direct Memory Access (DMA) chip – this should allow more memories to be retained by allowing the brain to bypass the processor. This will be especially helpful during educational lessons.
- Releasing a beta test of 10,000 humans in Europe with a new way to

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handle the intake of air and consumables. This will cause a slightly wider neck, but could drastically reduce choking deaths. This will require better control on the Human's behalf, but it is an easy learning experience. This is the first evolutionary patch since the elimination of the tail and will be watched closely.

- Releasing a beta test of 700,000 Humans in Australia who will grow a third set of teeth halfway through adulthood. We took the liberty of removing wisdom teeth, and the second set of teeth will fall out similar to the way the first set does as a child. Pains involved with teething will be watched closely. The increased life expectancy has caused a need for teeth to last longer, especially with the Human's obsession with sugar.

"They're basically suckling on sugarcane." – Sour Developer

- Releasing a test group of 1 million women in the western hemisphere who will not experience the bleeding during menstrual cycles. This is being done by implementing some features from other mammals in an attempt to improve the life of females. Side effects that occurred during alpha testing included growing a short tail and more body hair. If the beta is successful, those side effects will be fixed at a later date.

"Or who knows, maybe we'll give them tails again." – Pro-Tail Developer

- Implementing a shock-feature that triggers before a limb can "fall asleep" due to lack of circulation. This should indicate to the humans that they change position before the limb tingles.

New bugs

- Intensity of restless legs has inadvertently increased. There are no obvious fixes at this time.
- Nose hair seems to be growing at a faster rate. The cause is not yet known but doesn't have any harmful consequences.
- In alpha tests, the women who didn't grow tails did experience a phantom tail, similar to the phantom limb syndrome humans feel now. This is concerning at first, but eventually they get used to it.

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New advice to be circulated

- Humans should be aware that knees are fragile, and we still have yet to find a way to make them more durable. It is important for Humans to be careful with the knees until we can find a way to improve them.

Final Changes

- Increasing cancer rates by 10% in order to keep human population at a reasonable level until they leave Earth or fix the resource issue.
- Reducing the effectiveness of penicillin in order to force humans to find a new way to handle illnesses.

“They’ve become lazy. ‘Have an issue? Rub some penicillin on it. Here’s a pill, go get better.’ It’s getting boring. Get creative, guys.” – Bored Developer

- Reducing birth rates by 10% for all first-world mothers who have already had one child in an effort to keep the populations under control.

Contributors

Gary Beck has spent most of his adult life as a theater director. Published chapbooks include among others: *Remembrance* (Origami Condom Press); *The Conquest of Somalia* (Cervena Barva Press); and *The Dance of Hate* (Calliope Nerve Media). Poetry collections include *Days of Destruction*, (Skive Press); *Expectations* (Rogue Scholars Press); and *Dawn in Cities* (Winter Goose Publishing). His novel *Extreme Change* was published by Cogwheel Press. His original plays and play translations have been produced Off Broadway. His poetry, fiction, and essays have appeared in hundreds of literary magazines. He currently lives in New York City.

Michael K. Brantley is a writer and Visiting Instructor of English at North Carolina Wesleyan College. His creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry has most recently been published in *The First Day*, *The Dunes Review*, *Word River*, *Bartleby Snopes*, *Revolution House*, *Stymie*, *The Smoking Poet*, *Crack the Spine*, *The Fat City Review*, *Short, Fast, and Deadly*, *The Rusty Nail*, *The Circa Review*, *The Cobalt Review* and *Prime Number Magazine*.

Jeff Burt has lived in Wisconsin, Texas, Nebraska, and California. He has work in *Thrice Fiction*, *The Cortland Review*, *Digital Papercut*, *The Great American Literature Magazine*, and others. He won the 2011 SuRaa short fiction award.

Janet Butler lives in Alameda with Fulmi, a lovely Spaniel mix she rescued while living in central Italy. *Upheaval* was one of three winning selections in Red Ochre Lit's 2012 Chapbook Contest. She has recently taken up the Japanese Tanka, and will have one as Editor's Choice in the January issue of *Cattails* as well as upcoming tanka publications in *At-las Poetica* and *Undertow*. She is a moderator of the monthly Poetry and Prose at the Blue Danube in Alameda, and she is a watercolor painter.

Valentina Cano is a student of classical singing who spends whatever free time she has either reading or writing. Her works have appeared in numer-

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ous publications and her poetry has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Web. Her debut novel, *The Rose Master*, was published in 2014.

Matt Chamberlain grew up in Wigan, Lancashire, and now lives in southern England. He has been fascinated by the English language all his life, dabbling in poetry since childhood but remained reluctant to keep, let alone share, his linguistic doodles. In 2014 he self-published his first collection: *Love, misery and fruit crumble*. He is working on his second collection and regularly performs his work in and around London. See www.mattchamberlainpoe.wix.com/poetry

Chloe Cherubin is a recent graduate of Bowling Green State University with a Bachelor's in Digital Art. Chloe is a freelance illustrator, digital painter, and character designer working to gain exposure in the film and animation industry. In the past she did some illustration work for a website designing company in California called Zurb and a small website project for Kentucky.gov. Recently Chloe offered her local library a series of character designs and illustrations of their stuffed animal lions to decorate the children's corner. The library featured Chloe on the front page of the community newspaper. The majority of Chloe's work is posted on Deviant Art and Tumblr.

William Doeski's work has appeared in various online and print journals, as well as in several collections, most recently *The Suburbs of Atlantis* (AA Press).

Carolyn D. Elias is a poet who lives with her husband in Hancock, Minnesota. Carolyn's work has appeared in *Sassafras Literary Magazine* and *East Jasmine Review*. Her poems will soon be published by *Lunch Ticket* and *Apeiron Review*. You can learn more about her at www.carolyndeliasauthor.squarespace.com or follow her on Twitter @CarolynDElias.

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Jeanpaul Ferro is a novelist, poet, and short fiction author from Scituate, Rhode Island. A 9-time Pushcart Prize nominee, Jeanpaul's work has been featured on *National Public Radio*, *Columbia Review*, *Asia Literary Review*, *Tampa Review*, *Contemporary American Voices*, *Istanbul Review*, *Danforth Review*, *Portland Monthly*, *Salzburg Review*, and others. His books, *Essendo Morti – Being Dead* (Goldfish Press) and *Jazz* (Honest Publishing), have both been nominated for the Griffin Prize in Poetry with the latter also nominated the 2012 Kingsley Tufts Prize in Poetry. Jeanpaul is represented by the Jennifer Lyons Literary Agency.

C.S. Fuqua's published books include *White Trash & Southern: Collected Poems, Vol. I* (Cooperative Ink); *Hush, Puppy!: A Southern Fried Tale* (Cooperative Ink); *Rise Up* (Mundania Press); *The Native American Flute: Myth, History, Craft* (Awe-Struck Books); *The Swing: Poems of Fatherhood* (Uncial Press); *Divorced Dads: Real Stories of Facing the Challenge* (Fairview Press); and *Notes to My Becca* (Fairview Press), among others. His work has appeared in publications such as *Main Street Rag*, *Pudding*, *Dark Regions*, *Iodine*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Cemetery Dance*, *Bogg*, *Year's Best Horror Stories XIX, XX and XXI*, *Amelia*, *Slipstream*, *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, *The Writer*, and *Honolulu Magazine*.

Trina Gaynon has poems in the anthologies *Saint Peter's B-list: Contemporary Poems Inspired by the Saints*; *Obsession: Sestinas for the 21st Century*; *A Ritual to Read Together: Poems in Conversation with William Stafford*; *Phoenix Rising from the Ashes: Anthology of Sonnets of the Early Third Millennium*; *Bombshells*; and *Knocking at the Door*, as well as numerous journals including *Natural Bridge*, *Reed*, and the final issue of *Runes*. Her chapbook *An Alphabet of Romance* is available from Finishing Line Press. Her website is at: <http://tdgaynon.webs.com/>

All proceeds of **Howie Good's** latest book of poetry, *Fugitive Pieces* (Right Hand Press), goes to the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley. Visit

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<http://www.righthandpointing.net/#!/e-chapbooks/c1qi1>

Mitchell Grabois' poems and fictions have appeared in hundreds of literary magazines in the U.S. and abroad. He is a regular contributor to *The Prague Revue*, and he has been thrice nominated for the Pushcart Prize. His novel, *Two-Headed Dog*, is based on his work as a clinical psychologist in a state hospital, and it is available for Kindle and Nook, as well as a print version on Amazon.

Allison Grayhurst is a full member of the League of Canadian Poets. She has over 400 poems published in more than 210 international journals and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers in 1995. She has published eleven books of poetry and five collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Her poetry chapbook *The River is Blind* was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press in December 2012. More recently, her e-chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series in October 2014. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay: www.allisongrayhurst.com.

Julia Graziano is a Mount Wachusett Community College student whose work appears in the college's literary journal *A Certain Slant*. Julie's work has also appeared in chapbook form within her creative writing courses.

John Grey is an Australian born poet. John has been recently published in *Paterson Literary Review*, *Southern California Review*, and *Natural Bridge*, with work upcoming in the *Kerf*, *Leading Edge*, and *Louisiana Literature*.

Sarah Grodzinski has an MFA in Creative Writing from Chatham University in Pittsburgh. She teaches English Composition and helps coach Women's Tennis at Lebanon Valley College in Annville, Pennsylvania.

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She has had poems published in *Nerve Cowboy*, *Misfit Magazine*, *Sediments*, and *Driftwood Press*. When she is not writing poetry, she enjoys going to concerts and playing tennis.

Sarah Jane Hodge currently lives in southern Illinois where she is working tirelessly to become a better writer, break into publishing, and be successful. She enjoys hanging out with friends, coffee, and yoga.

Henry Hughes' poems have appeared in *Antioch Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Shenandoah*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Seattle Review*, and *Poetry Northwest*. He is the author of three poetry collections, including *Men Holding Eggs*, which received the 2004 Oregon Book Award. Henry is the editor of the Everyman's Anthologies, *The Art of Angling: Poems about Fishing* (Knopf) and *Fishing Stories* (Knopf). His commentary on new poetry appears regularly in *Harvard Review*.

Clinton Van Inman was born in Walton-on-Thames, England, graduated from San Diego State University, and has been a teacher all his life, recently retiring from the Tampa Bay area where he lives with his wife, Elba.

Mark Jackley's new book of poems is *Appalachian Night*. It is available from the author at no cost: email chineseplums@gmail.com. Previous books include *Every Green Word* (Finishing Line Press) and *Cracks and Slats* (Amsterdam Press). His work has appeared in *Tampa Review*, *Sugar House Review*, *Melic*, *Sleet*, *Crate*, *Rougarou*, and other journals. He lives in Sterling, Virginia.

Caitlin Johnson earned a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Lesley University. Caitlin's work has appeared in *Boston Poetry Magazine*, *Clare Literary Journal*, *Eternal Haunted Summer*, *Fortunates*, *Momoware*, *Pembroke Magazine*, *Vagina: The Zine*, and *What the Fiction*, among others. Her work is forthcoming in *Baseline Literary Arts Journal* and *Stoneboat Literary Journal*.

Patrick Kelling is a doctoral candidate in Creative Writing at the University of Denver and is the fiction editor for the literature magazine *Gambling the Aisle* (www.gamblingtheaisle.com). His work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and Best New American Voices.

Alexandra Kolker studied Graphic Design and Creative Writing at Bowling Green State University. She is discovering the journey of creativity as she continues to find ways to tell stories. She is fascinated with experimental storytelling and unimportant, unusual things.

Robert Krantz was born and raised in western New York. He studied Creative Writing and English Literature at both Niagara County Community College, New York, and the University of Akron, Ohio. He is currently a M.F.A. candidate at the University of Arkansas-Monticello. Robert has published a chapbook of poetry and prose, *Leg Brace Legato*, available at Amazon. His work has appeared in *Akros Review*, *Bare Fiction*, *Bitterzoet*, *East Coast Literary Review*, and *Poetry Quarterly*.

Taidgh Lynch lives above an ice-cream shop in Ireland. He is a teacher, a poet, and a mail artist. His poetry has appeared in *Bare Hands Poetry*, *The Ofi Press*, and *The Poetry Bus*. His artwork has been displayed in galleries around the world, and he's participating in the Mail Me Art exhibition in 2015. Find him online at: ragingplanetfire.blogspot.com.

Nathen Martin is a senior at Bowling Green State University, studying Computer Science and Creative Writing.

Tom Montag is most recently the author of *In This Place: Selected Poems 1982-2013*, as well as *Middle Ground*; *Curlew: Home*; *Kissing Poetry's Sister*; *The Idea of the Local*; and *The Big Book of Ben Zen*. Recent poems will be found in *Hummingbird*, *Plainsong*, *Stoneboat*, *Split Rock*, *On the Rusk*, *The Broken City*, *Riding Light Review*, *The Chaffin Journal*, *Foliate*

Oak, Hamilton Stone Review, and Digital Papercut. He blogs as The Middlewesterner (<http://www.middlewesterner.com/>) and serves as Managing Editor of the Lorine Niedecker Monograph Series, *What Region?*.

Anne Britting Oleson has been published widely in North America, Europe, and Asia. She earned her MFA at the Stonecoast program of USM. She has published two chapbooks, *The Church of St. Materiana* (Moon Pie Press) and *The Beauty of It* (Sheltering Pines Press).

Sergio A. Ortiz is an educator, poet, photographer, painter, and founding editor of *Undertow Tanka Review*. He lives in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He is a four-time nominee for the 2010-2011 Sundress Best of the Web Anthology and a two-time 2010 Pushcart nominee.

Richard King Perkins II is a state-sponsored advocate for residents in long-term facilities. Richard is a three-time Pushcart nominee and a Best of the Net nominee. His work has appeared in hundreds of publications including *Poetry Salzburg Review, Bluestem, Emrys Journal, Sierra Nevada Review, Two Thirds North, The Red Cedar Review, and December Magazine*. Richard has poems forthcoming in *Broad River Review, The William and Mary Review, and The Louisiana Review*. He has a wife, Vickie, and a daughter, Sage.

Breanna Ridgeway is a young photographer from Northern Ohio. Her photographs combine the raw feel of photojournalism and the beauty of fine art.

J.R. Solonche is a five-time Pushcart nominee as well as nominee for the Best of the Net Anthology. J.R. has been publishing in magazines and journals since the early '70s. He is coauthor of *Peach Girl: Poems for a Chinese Daughter* (Grayson Books) and author of *Beautiful Day* (Deerbrook Editions).

Louis Staebble lives in Bowling Green, Ohio. His photographs have appeared in *Agave*, *dislocate magazine*, *Driftwood*, *Four Ties Literary Review*, *Gravel*, *Iron Gall*, *On the Rusk*, *Paper Tape Magazine*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and *Up The Staircase Quarterly*. He can found on the web at <http://staebblestudioa.weebly.com>.

Charles F. Thielman was born and raised in Charleston, S.C., moved to Chicago, educated at red-bricked universities and on city streets. He was married on a Kauai beach in 2011, and he is a loving grandfather of five free spirits. His work has appeared in *The Pedestal*, *Pif Magazine*, *SLAB*, *The Commonline*, *Gargoyle*, *Poetry365*, *The Criterion*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *Gangway*, and others.

Daniel von der Embse was born and raised in Mansfield, Ohio, and graduated from Ashland University with a B.A. degree in Theatre. He began writing poetry after a four-decade career as a copywriter for advertising agencies in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle, San Francisco, and Salt Lake City. His poems appear in *The Missing Slate*, *Penny Ante Feud*, *Across The Margin*, *Harpoon Review*, *Decanto*, *Poetry Pacific*, and *Poetry Quarterly*.

Sarah Brown Weitzman has been widely published in hundreds of anthologies and journals including *Eaerth's Daughters*, *Poet & Critic*, *Art Times*, *The North American Review*, *Rattle*, *Mid-American Review*, *Ekphrasis*, *Abraxas*, *The Windless Orchard*, *LIQ*, *Poet Lore*, *Potomac Review*, *Poem*, and others. Sarah received a Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. A departure from poetry, her latest book, *Herman and the Ice Witch*, is a children's novel published by Main Street Rag.

D.S. West is a writer and artist from Boulder, Colorado. His stories have appeared in *Crack the Spine*, *Beyond Imagination*, and *Thrice Fiction*

(forthcoming). D.S. really like avocados. In addition to being delicious, the avocado is also known as the ‘crocodile pear’ due to its tough exterior.

Ernest Williamson III has published poetry and visual art in over 500 national and international online and print journals. Ernest has published poetry in journals such as *The Oklahoma Review*, *Review Americana: A Creative Writing Journal*, and *The Copperfield Review*. Some of his visual artwork has appeared in journals such as *The Columbia Review*, *The GW Review*, and *The Tulane Review*. Ernest is an Assistant Professor of English at Allen University. His poetry has been nominated three times for the Best of the Net Anthology.

Omer Zamir is a 23-year-old Israeli who has been writing poetry for the past four years. He has a passion for edgy and free-spirited poets, such as Dylan Thomas, Walt Whitman, and George Holbrook. Music plays a big part in influencing his poetry, as well as quirky interactions with people. He’ll write until the lights go out.

Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Thank you for reading the first issue of *The Magnolia Review*. I've been dreaming of this magazine since October 2011, and it's nice to see it in your hands at last.

I wish to thank everyone who submitted their work for consideration. It was wonderful to have so many submissions for the first issue!

Thank you to Aretha Lemon, for helping me edit the website and the contract for publication. Thank you to Kristin Brooker and Alicia Harmon for helping me read submissions, as well as copy editing and designing the first issue.

Thank you to Karen Craigo, Michael Czyzniejewski, and Abigail Cloud for teaching me about literary magazines with *Prairie Margins* and *Mid-American Review*.

Thank you, Theresa Williams, for guiding me as I work on my own writing.

See you in July, with Volume 1, Issue 2.