



The Seraphic Review

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Editor's Note

Dear Readers & Contributors,

It has been a joy to read through so many thoughtful submissions, and I'm grateful that the Seraphic Review continues to fulfill its original goal: provide a space for the experiences that make us human. During the six months following its inception, the Review has received work from over twenty countries, from creators of vastly different backgrounds.

I do hate to plug socials, but if you're able, please spread the word! We would love for more writers to share their work with us, young or old, emerging or established. Our review is its name ([theseraphicreview](https://theseraphicreview.com)) on both Instagram and Twitter. Several of our submitters found us through these platforms, and hopefully more will follow suit.

Anyhow, here's to Issue 3! We hope you enjoy this slice of profundity, and that each work affects you in the way it did us (or totally differently!) Keep producing your art--it makes the world a more vibrant place.

Regards,

Tanya Rastogi, Editor-in-Chief

Contents

Poetry

- Kait Quinn 4
- Shoba Narayan 9
- Morgan Boyer 12
- Claudia Wysocky 16
- Amit Parmessur 17
- Stephen Mead 19
- Tom Holmes 24
- Mary Baca Haque 26
- Leslie Dianne 29

Prose

- Jonathan Allmaier 5
- Ebony Haywood 13
- Brett Stanciu 18
- Sarah Daly 22

Art

- Michael Moreth (cover) 27

Kait Quinn

Laura Palmer

Sometimes the body hits you,
 her aura a bruise
of plum and cyan, her stark absence
 swelling like a bad knee,
like a red balloon only so
inflatable before it bloats beyond
 its bounds, bursts
into salted disbelief, and you can't
imagine how life could possibly
 go
on so ruptured and empty, what was
once buoyant, now flimsy, scattered
 like plasmic confetti
on the clammy roadhouse floor.

Kait Quinn (she/her) was born with salt in her wounds. She flushes the sting of living by writing poetry. She is the author of four poetry collections, and her work appears in *Reed Magazine*, *Watershed Review*, *Chestnut Review*, and elsewhere. She received first place in the 2022 John Calvin Rezmerski Memorial Grand Prize. Kait is an Editorial Associate at Yellow Arrow Publishing and a poetry reader for *Black Fox Literary Magazine*. She enjoys repetition, coffee shops, tattoos, and vegan breakfast. Kait lives in Minneapolis with her partner, their regal cat, and their very polite Aussie mix. Find her at kaitquinn.com.

Jonathan Allmaier

The Parkway

I pulled onto the parkway. It was springtime and sunny. Just ahead, beyond the entrance ramp, I could see the orange-and-white traffic barrels.

I knew about the construction. I'd left early on purpose because of it. It was happening on both sides of the parkway. It only slowed the traffic in this direction, however. The work ended at the bridge. Then all the lanes opened and things sped up again. The speed limit on the parkway was 45, but everybody went at least 60.

A bend or two past the bridge—the parkway was full of bends—there was another wall of stopped traffic. This was not because of construction. I was past that by then. I knew what it was, though. The parkway was closed-in on both sides. To the left was a concrete barrier, separating the two directions of traffic. To the right, there was a raised grassy berm, or, in places, a wall. There was no shoulder. Whenever there was an accident, traffic stopped completely until the tow truck could get through. This took some time, because the cops had to clear the parkway first.

Pretty soon I could see a couple of SUVs pulled onto the grass on the right. It must have just happened, I thought. The SUV drivers were out of their cars. Their cars did not look smashed up. The first driver was staring off into space, his face toward the concrete barrier. The second driver was standing behind both cars, bent over a little. She was yelling into her phone, it looked like, waving her hand excitedly.

Just past the SUVs, I saw the lane closure. It was the leftmost of the three lanes, up against the barrier. There was a tall, muscular man in a plain white T-shirt standing in the road there, motioning the traffic past.

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He looked like a cop, even without the uniform. He brought both hands up toward his chest, palms out, and pushed them down slowly again. He looked distracted. Beyond him was another cop, this one in uniform, also waving the cars past. He was waving more quickly; in contrast with the first cop, he wanted the cars to hurry up. He was also yelling. He sounded angry, even through my window. His face was red and contorted. He was standing just in front of something in the road. That thing was the problem, then. It looked like a grey car bumper. Why didn't they just move it, I wondered: they could clear the road in a second.

I pulled up a little closer, when my turn came, and I saw that it wasn't a car bumper. It was too flat. A piece of garbage, then, lying in the road. It was evidence, somehow, for the accident scene; that was why they couldn't move it. Behind it was another piece of garbage, round and black, up against the concrete barrier.

No. The grey thing was a blanket. It was a quilted moving blanket, the kind you get with a U-Haul truck. It was draped over a long straight shape. The round black thing behind was a motorcycle helmet. Dark red was coming out from under the grey blanket in a long thin pool, spreading across the black pavement. It was spreading as I drove, spreading specifically from the end of the blanket closest to the cars going by. I was going to drive through it. The second cop was standing right there, at my left, almost in the red, yelling.

Then the left lane was empty. I saw the motorcycle, 40 feet ahead; it was lying on its side against the concrete barrier. It was a sport bike. It was black, with blue trim. There was a flare next to the rear wheel, and a cop car was parked just past it. Beyond the cop car, the road was open.

There was more red here, in a pattern leading diagonally up to the bike. It was not as red as the other—this was fainter and drier; I could see the road through it. It looked like a stamp.

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It was in an elongated cashew shape. It looked like it had been stamped again and again without getting more ink.

Driving back home, on the other side of the parkway, there are no cars at all on the side where the accident was. That direction of the parkway has been closed. On my side, though, there is another sudden wall of stopped traffic, a couple of miles before my exit. A fire engine is parked diagonally across the parkway, blocking the two lanes closest to the concrete barrier. The bike is still there, right on the other side, opposite and just before the fire truck, exactly as it was. A cop is walking toward it. The black motorcycle helmet has been moved; it is balanced on top of the concrete barrier. Cops are going back and forth over the barrier—straddling it, like horse, to get from one side to the other.

At this spot along the parkway, in the direction I'm going now, lined up exactly with the accident, there is a twenty-foot stretch of sidewalk alongside the road. It is only separated from the parkway by a narrow strip of grass and a guardrail. A group has gathered there to watch the scene. Some of them are leaning on the guardrail. There are a couple of cops standing there too; one of them is talking with one of the people.

The next day, I pull onto the parkway. There is the usual construction before the bridge, and then nothing. I look for the red in the road as I drive by the spot, but there's nothing there. I even slow down, to look more carefully. The road is immaculate. Could the cops have cleaned it up? It hasn't rained. Perhaps I have the wrong spot—there are a few bends that look the same. But I don't see any signs of it anywhere, at any of the bends. Driving home again, everybody is going 60 again.

I hear a roar. Suddenly loud—loud and deep—and then immediately sharply louder, behind me and to the left. A sport bike passes me. It's going very fast. For a second it's right in front of me.

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The rider is wearing a backpack, with yellow piping, strapped on tight. Around the backpack, a windbreaker jacket is billowing, although it is not baggy. The pants are billowing too. Although they are fitted too. I hold the steering wheel carefully, gingerly, bracing myself. Don't you know? I think to myself. Then it's gone, passing more cars, way ahead of me, around a bend.

After a minute or two, I see it again. The bike is stopped now. It's up against the concrete barrier, behind the orange-and-white traffic barrels. The left-hand lane is closed off here for the construction. The traffic doesn't slow down, however, so I only get a glimpse as I go by. The rider is standing on the pavement, leaning against the barrier, still straddling the bike, still wearing the backpack. Both hands are on the white helmet, lifting it off. This must be the spot, I think. I look to my right. The stretch of sidewalk is there, up against the guardrail.

I am almost to my exit when the bike passes me again. I don't hear it this time until it is alongside me. I feel it at the same time that I hear it. A crack in the sky, right next to me, even up underneath me, a great splitting clap. The force of the speed pushes the car sideways. Way up ahead, way down the parkway already, the bike dances around the cars like they are standing still, floating and spinning in the air.

Jonathan Allmaier is an artist living and working in New York, where his artwork—mostly painting—is represented by James Fuentes Gallery. His work has been discussed in *The New Yorker*, *San Francisco Arts Quarterly*, *Hyperallergic*, *TimeOut New York*, *New American Paintings*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *New York Magazine*, and other publications. In 2014, James Fuentes published *WHICH WORLD*, a collection of his essays on art, philosophy, and culture. He has a BA in Philosophy and Visual Arts (honors) from Brown University, where he studied poetry with C. D. Wright, and an MFA in Painting from the Tyler School of Art and Architecture.

Shoba Narayan

a rakish yogi plays water polo

below Santa Cruz pier where
sea lions arch...barking ardor

he stands knee-deep in water
lobs a cloth package at me.
like working women everywhere, I catch
an unwanted surprise that opens
into firecrackers
the yogi winks
story of my life

bamboo poles peek out of the water
deftly arranged, like nine of dice
I place an earlobe over one
hear arctic ice crack
summer's dawning drumbeat

on the pier, pink popsicles...lead little girls...leading harried Mums...leading...

I drop the firecracker-cloth-package-ball
into salty froth where
it fizzles...sends ripples into...fissures cleaving...us?

I frown...in consternation
prostrate myself on a
generous sea...that rushes in...to fill every
inadequacy

From the mustache, a moon cloud

Why, a country?

On the wide waves of a mustache
appears a question, blinking pearl inside a conch shell

What will it take? When will it stop? WHO is to blame?

throwing glazed camphor on a trembling lip, I saw
a mirrored image in the blue depths of a snow glacier

Me too, it said.

a bruised sky scatters shadows on a stone wall that, ha ha
stone-walled the urine of men ejaculating on lurid pink billboards of busty
sirens
pouting pink lips swallowing an index finger

What next?

on the other side of the question sat a bare-breasted old crone
she said-- they said--- or rather----

THIS IS WHAT THEY WILL SAY (pointing a finger)

you press your feet on a red hot brick...prepare to be scalded

I SAY

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before the scabby wounds dry
pickle his penis, make masala with his head, deliver his probing hand
into the cement mixer of a virgin's scorched vagina

Thus saying
she disappeared into a moon cloud

Shoba Narayan is a bilingual poet. She writes in Tamil and English. She has published five memoirs and contributed to a number of publications. Her poetry is published or forthcoming in a few literary journals including *The Stillwater Review*, *Rogue Agent*, *Red Noise Collective*, *Humans of the World* (third place winner of their Summer Poetry Contest 2023), *Lucky Jefferson* (poetry contest finalist) and others. She has published five memoirs. She believes poetry has the power to lift hearts, free the mind and enrich the spirit. Her essays have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Cond Nast Traveler*, *Gourmet*, *The Guardian*, *Financial Times*, and *The National* among others, winning a James Beard award and Pulitzer Fellowship in the process. She hosts and anchors *Bird Podcast* in between writing.

Morgan Boyer

Failing a test

shove your snuffle-tissues balls
into the left pocket of a polyester jacket
your mother bought as retail therapy
after having argued with the bank teller

hang the snot-drizzled coat up
as you ready your pencil for
your canine teeth to pierce the yellow paint
like the fur coat of a wooden gazelle

Mrs. Hobbs hands back test results
that determine whether you'll be watching
that new episode of My Hero Academia
on your teenage sister's Crunchyroll account

No.

As you pinch the edges of a paper
with 67% written in red ink
you brace yourself for your mother
to look at you while unloading the dishwasher

like a war-worn warrior from the Iliad,
weary from work and car-training your sister,
the hue of her irises diminished into gray,
asking you why you had to pierce her heart's ankle

Morgan Boyer is the author of *The Serotonin Cradle* (Finishing Line Press, 2018) and a graduate of Carlow University. Boyer has been featured in *Kallisto Gaia Press*, *Thirty West Publishing House*, *Oyez Review*, *Pennsylvania English*, and *Voices from the Attic*. Boyer is a neurodivergent bisexual woman who resides in Pittsburgh, PA.

Ebony Haywood

What Keeps Me Up at Night

My windows startle me around two in the morning. They rattle against the fierce winds hurling across the California high desert. These winds do not blow; they terrorize. They amputate tree limbs, topple garbage cans, frighten pets, and dry your eyes.

If you're wise, you'll stay indoors. If you're reckless, good luck.

Four years ago, I was reckless. I drove the narrow road through Angeles Forest, connecting the LA basin to Antelope Valley via the San Gabriel Mountains on a windy day. A beach-ball-sized rock tumbled down the bluff. If I swerved to the left, I would invade oncoming traffic. If I swerved to the right, I would fall off the cliff.

When the rock and my car collided, I cringed at my ripping bumper, followed by the sound of it dragging.

At the end of the highway, I pulled into a gas station, assessed the damages, and almost cried. Half my bumper was kaput. I tore the limp half off and continued my route to work.

I turn on my television—I never do this at two a.m. But the louder my windows shudder, the faster my heart races. I need a distraction.

My lament over California's high winds sounds silly if you live in a world of hurricanes and tornados. The winds in your hometown do far more damage, ripping homes and businesses to shreds.

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You may be asking: *Aren't you a native Californian? Shouldn't you be accustomed to the weather?* Although I was born and raised in Los Angeles, the windy desert contrasts sharply with the breezy cityscape.

I live in the land of earthquakes. I am used to Mother Earth trembling—first, the rumble—an ominous sound snatches your breath. The windows warn you to duck and cover. The ground convulses. Photographs crash to the floor. Lighting fixtures sway like pendulums. Swimming pools swell and spill onto patios. Sometimes, entire buildings collapse.

But earthquakes are usually over within seconds. The winds unnerve us for days. I don't know how people sleep through such chaos.

The Twilight Zone. Rod Serling greets me into the fifth dimension, and I am happy to escape. Delving into the black-and-white screen, I still hear the wind's menacing presence.

Outside, a cat screams. Did the wind sweep it up, tangle its tail, and choke it?

The black-and-white drama unfolds: "My name is Talky Tina, and I don't like you." The plastic doll smirks at Erich Streater—the diabolical stepfather of Christie Streater, whose mother, Anabel, had recently gifted her the doll.

Erich glares at the toy before curling his lips into a sneer. "My name is Erich Streater," he says, "And I'm gonna get rid of you."

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I need to get rid of my rattling windows or caulk them. But I can't get rid of the winds. They come with desert territory, which I love. There is something mystical about its biosphere, something mysterious and otherworldly. At the same time, it is breathtaking.

And for now, it is home.

Ebony Haywood is a writer, teacher, and energy healer who helps people unblock their creative flow and generate solutions for their personal and professional lives. She lives in Southern California, where she enjoys cheese pizza, anything with avocado, and classic films.

Claudia Wysocky

The Resounding Silence

The silence was resounding—
Stifling as it crept into my every thought.
The silence was all consuming—
Reshaping every crevice of my imagination.
The silence was foreboding—
As the thoughts of my mind seemed to echo off the walls.
I wanted the silence to break,
But it seemed to gain on me, twisting around my heart—
Wrapping its chilled fingers around my throat.
I was powerless to stop it—
But something sounded, a bang, a crash—
Piercing through the shroud of endless silence.
—My heart?
Was I finally falling apart,
At the thought of my own silence?
No—
It was the door.
And with it, came a flood of noise—
Tumbling into the room, overwhelming every thought I had.
A bang, a crash —And smoke.
Was it a fire?
Was I wrong about the silence?
Or had it only been hiding,
waiting for this moment to consume me?
No—
Oh—
My dad's smoking again.

Claudia Wysocky, a Polish poet based now in New York, is known for her ability to capture the beauty of life through rich descriptions in her writing. She firmly believes that art has the potential to inspire positive change. With over five years of experience in fiction writing, Claudia has had her poems published in local newspapers and magazines. For her, writing is an endless journey and a powerful source of motivation.

Amit Parmessur

The Slipper in the Pond

The slipper, thin as a bed sheet,
susurrates like a guided bomb
when I miss the ball and kick the air.

My brother freezes.

I climb the wall like a wounded soldier
to find the turtles in my neighbour's pond
gone delirious with the rubbery invasion.
A blue paper boat in an ocean beyond my reach.

I find an old pair in late grandpa's army trunk.
The slipper cruises into oblivion.
The bomb detonates the next sunrise
when grandma finds the spouseless slipper.

Her thick voice declares that a Churel
who wants to harm her family has stolen it.
My silence follows the adhān that interrupts
her anger. Three sunsets later,

an icy sorcerer removes the dry slipper,
a punctured gondola, from a nearby cemetery.

How could that be?

My spirit melts when my brother climbs
the wall and cannot find the slipper in the pond.

Amit Parmessur spent his adolescence hating poetry before falling in love with its beauty. His poems have recently appeared in magazines like *Setu*, *Borderless Journal*, *miniMAG*, *Aphelion*, and *The Lumiere Review*. He lives in Quatre-Bornes, Mauritius.

Brett Stanciu

My Wowed Teen

My mother stares through the window at the neighbors' piñon tree at children who don't exist.

"Twins. Two little heads peeking over that bottom branch. See them?" She glares at me and my father across the dining room table. I know that glint in her eye, a kind of I'm smarter than you edge she's shown me her whole life. Decades ago, I learned to cringe away, let her have her space, nod, and agree.

Which is exactly what my father does. "Sure," he says. "Twins."

Is my mother outsmarting us, tricking us into going along with her game to amuse herself, or is dementia getting the upper hand on her?

I've jettisoned my meager vacation time and dollars for this 2,500 mile journey to my parents, holed up in New Mexico. With my mother's severe respiratory disease, moving back to the east coast and their three grown children is no longer an option. Nor, apparently, is enjoying the gorgeous New Mexico climate. Curtains drawn, they age in their house.

Long before her old age, my mother alleged I stole from her house. Sheets, Bennington pottery plates, my sister's college Faulkner paperbacks. (My petty crimes are manifold, but do not include theft from my mother.)

A few days into my visit, my mother complains about the boys on the roof. These are orphaned boys who I think she believes are real. The boys live down the hall past the laundry room and her little sewing room where the house walls disappear in her mind and the desert spreads without end: sand, spiky cholla, snake and lizard, the distant constellations.

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The boys crept into her house and absconded with her handmade quilts. I've sent my father out for respite for cappuccino and library books. In the back bedroom closet, I pull out quilt after quilt and pile them on the bed for my mother. She runs her hands over the impeccable stitches she sewed, years ago in New Hampshire, on a quilting frame she bought at a barn sale.

Truth is, I desperately want one of her quilts. I've admired the quilts on my sister's bed that my mother gave her years ago. How exquisitely beautiful these are.

My mother runs her hands over the patchwork squares, uncertain. Elizabeth Gilbert writes in *Committed: A Skeptic Makes Peace with Marriage* that her grandmother cut up a cherished wine-colored coat that she had bought for herself as a young working woman and sewed it into a Christmas outfit for her baby daughter. Gilbert's grandmother "did what all the women of that generation (and before) did for their families and their husbands and their children. They cut up the finest and proudest parts of themselves and gave it all away. They repatterned what was theirs and shaped it for others." My female friends and I — we do this, too: repurpose the beautiful and creative pieces of ourselves for our children, lovers, husbands, family, the world.

My mother never did so. She hoarded the best of her, sewed capably and hid her talents in closets, guarding her treasures fiercely. In very old age, she doubts herself. Doubts her own life. Gilbert writes in that same book, "Psychologists suggest that we must reach back at least three generations to look for clues whenever we begin untangling the emotional legacy of any one family's legacy." In my family, that third generation back is long deceased, irretrievably silenced. To discover the mirror of my own past, I have only my unwilling mother.

On the back patio, I arrange her quilts over the garden fence and spread them out: Log Cabin, Broken Pinwheel, Evening Star.

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She's made so many I go back and forth for multiple trips. I tie a rope between the pergola poles and hang two more for display in the brilliant New Mexican sunlight. My mother sewed alone on her bedroom floor in the New Hampshire village house where I grew up. Downstairs, my father wrote and published his books. When she finally moved to New Mexico, my father followed. She never quilted again. For a time, they were happier than I had ever seen them. I pause for a moment and rub my thumb over her meticulous stitches, her thread like my love of language and writing. Inside the back bedroom, my mother has emptied the closet of pillowcases and towels. We shuffle outside, my hand holding the oxygen's transparent cord, her old-age umbilical cord.

On the patio, I ease her into a chair and crouch down. The quilt display spreads all along the house. On the line hangs the double wedding ring quilt, white and turquoise. In a sage-scented breeze, the edge of the quilt lifts and waves, undulating.

Staring, my mother asked, "Mine?"

I touch her skin frail as dried flower petals. As a little girl, I played with the thick veins on the backs of her hands. My mother was always mighty and mysterious. On my wedding day, she had nothing to say to me: not caution, sorrow, joy. Only silence. In a way I've never understood, my mother has always been heading down that hallway only she can see, heading out into the night desert. Nearing ninety, the walls between my world and hers are crumbling. I reach out to hold the rising quilt, but a sudden gust lifts the quilt out of my reach.

"Mine?" my mother asks.

I answer, "Yours."

Brett Ann Stanciu is the author of a memoir, *Unstitched* (Steerforth Press, 2021) and a novel *Hidden View* (Green Writers Press, 2016). A recipient of a 2020 Vermont Arts Council Creation Grant, Stanciu's writing has appeared in *The Rumpus*, *Taproot*, and *Green Mountains Review*, among other publications. She lives in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom and blogs at stonysilververmont.com.

Stephen Mead

Hidden

Beyond the shelves under the bookcase behind the drawer past the wall
the secret world starts. Words hold it afloat, lantern-true, inextinguishable
words mapping stars in architect's plans on glass.

They are gold dust etchings flaking away in the shower of fireworks
where, at the core, another show exists.

They are the visions of my brain-injured pal seeing a kneeling beggar
with a backpack & out of that satchel, Krishna-pure,
the cut sleeve revealing a rose.

Let thorns scratch, I would hold the hand bearing them all night long.
There the quiet desperations live, gentled so suddenly.
There the petals tell of flesh made literal which will sweep away
every mundane irritability & also the deepest sleeping wounds.

Those petals awake with the laughter of my parents watching,
each night, their favorite games. They awaken & dissolve
in the pages of journals named Ruth & Mercy.

Now the journey turns, continuing in the mirror,
the rivers of them, an ocean's soul, a cosmos seed
& the bushels hidden in it.

Flame from quill, you read it as you write it.
Breathe the lines to me as sun upon lemon juice.

Lacuna

"In one exhale he was skeleton." - Tom Spanbauer, *I Loved You More*

Beloved,
be loved -
instructions to the self,
imperative to anyone, that goal to strive for,
whispered as a scribble on a post-it time-capsule kept
deep in the hole of a childhood tree.

Feel the trunk's bark, a sort of druidic altar, before the arm's length
of pulpy wood reaching to meet what prayer the hand,
unclasping, drops like a feather, the secret dark swallows
like cracks between stone, a fortress of statuary,
the patted-down moss at some saint's un-telling feet.

Lacuna is the silence in music,
that pause denoting volumes for weight descending
or light on the rise. Lacuna too is missing text
in life's manuscript the writing soul almost knows
whole passages of if given time to read again
visions-in-the-making.

What an opportunity that would be
in a world of so many wild dogs howling out the cold everywhere
for true winter's start seeming to be buried endlessly deep.

This is the sharpness of that answer & that knowing.

Stephen Mead is a retired Civil Servant, having worked two decades for three state agencies. Before that his more personally fulfilling career was fifteen years in healthcare. Throughout all these day jobs he was able to find time for writing poetry/essays, and creating art. Occasionally, he even got paid for this work. Currently he is resident artist/curator for The Chroma Museum, artistic renderings of LGBTQI historical figures, organizations and allies predominantly before Stonewall, <https://thestephenmeadchromamuseum.weebly.com/>

Sarah Daly

Fallen Dream

Running, running, sights, sounds, colors blur — useless. Mud, grass, water, stones — his feet hardly touch the ground as he escapes from himself.

Masses. Masses of bodies moving in unison; red, blue, gray, teal, they are brightly colored fish. Move! Move! Will the masses part biblically? Of course not! Who is he to expect or deserve such a miracle?

Prey. He is prey, susceptible. No manicured lawns to numb the pain. He stumbles, leaps, pushes, claws against the masses; they are not dangerous--only, collectively can they suffocate him.

He is escaping.

What?

Her. Clutching him, pursuing him, haunting him, mesmerizing him. A ghost without substance, a ghost without reason.

Spineless fool.

No nerve — the sun, a mocking eye, a jester. Run, run, run — burst his heart, his lungs, his brain, anything to wake up! Anything to escape this dream!

Where is she?

He can almost see her. Her shadowed eyes, darkened hair. Sun-stilled afternoons, lying on the grass, feathery like swans down...those days as insubstantial and fleeting as clouds.

Now, all he sees is *blank*. Reality dissolving with the glare of the sun. Conformity, dissolution, desperation. No nerve, no gumption to say —

Why can't I wake up?

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He can't see Her now--all he sees are shuffling eyes, hundreds of them, empty as idiots' eyes, puppets' eyes, dummies' eyes. Eyes drugged on coffee, adrenaline, fatigue.

They march past, like automatons, who emulate the perpetuity of a clock.

He pushes through those bodies, closer, closer — maybe this will wake him up? The rushing of the water, its voracious churning is a stimulant, an antidote. Rushing water which will receive him, rushing water which will nourish him, rushing water which will heal him.

Ties, suits, briefcases...fish, robots, prey — the endless parade of conformity. He will not, *he will not*, join them, become one of them.

Forcing the crowd apart, the mocking crowd, the mainly indifferent crowd, the anonymous crowd — *don't stop!* — one foot forward, then the next, again, and again, he is vindicated, morning is in sight...

(He awakens).

Sarah Daly is an American writer whose fiction, poetry, and drama have appeared in twenty literary journals including *One Art*, *Quail Bell Magazine*, *Two Hawks Quarterly*, and *Euphemism*.

Tom Holmes

The Man without a Nose Visits a Town on Monday, March 20th, 1353

At the town wall's entrance with staked
shrivelled heads from the plagued,
the barber without a nose arrives.

He wears a black cloak,
and carries a case and rotting bread.
The road is littered with rats.

Some scurry to him. The others are dead.
The man on the tavern's spire
waves his torch and drops it.

In the sky, the newest comet appears.
Nothing happens. Then the tavern flames
and a few rat tails burn and glow.

The noseless man follows. The breeze
tastes like rotting flesh and mold.
From the case, he lifts a flask.

He scrapes the green bread into it.
From the case, he unscrews a vial
and pours it over the bread.

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From his cloak, he draws a sword
and slices a dead mother.

With the mixture,

he seals her wound. She fades to green.
From her fingers blossom poisonous leaves.
He throws her to the rats.

He survives another day. He continues
to serve anyone living by shaving beards
and chopping off noses

until he finds the one that fits and sniffs.
Until then, he cannot smell the flowers
or inhale the plague's spittle.

He will not die until he does.

For over twenty years, **Tom Holmes** has been the founding editor and curator of *Redactions: Poetry & Poetics*. Holmes is also the author of five full-length collections of poetry, including *The Book of Incurable Dreams* (Xavier Review Press) and *The Cave*, which won The Bitter Oleander Press Library of Poetry Book Award for 2013, as well as four chapbooks. He teaches at Nashville State Community College (Clarksville). His writings about wine, poetry book reviews, and poetry can be found at his blog, *The Line Break*: thelinebreak.wordpress.com. Follow him on Twitter:

@TheLineBreak

Mary Baca Haque

Projectors

My toss and turn out of skin
happenings at night, like silver
projectors with clicking sounds,
pieces of my life in vintage film,
reels turning on tape, threaded in
machines playing the lively
events, needing fixes
I warily attend-

my worries

seeing only black and white
footage twisting, dark shadows
composing their own, remnants
surely not there, meandering
pleads for peace behind my eyes-

the fan whirs quiet black, the fall
goes deeper to a different scene
with tranquil crashes somewhere
next to heavy sighs, buried
past the pretend things
never really things
to begin with-

END

Mary Baca Haque prefers to capture the essence of the natural world in her poetry, coupled with love and peace, hence her forthcoming publication, *Painting the Sky with Love*, (Macmillan/Feiwel & Friends Fall 2024). You can find her work featured in *The Wild Roof Journal* (July 2023), *Cosmic Daffodils Journal* (May 2023) and forthcoming 2024 features in *Amethyst Review* (January 2024), and two additional features in *Closed Eye Open Journal* (Spring 2024). She is a mom of two artsy adults and resides with her partner in Chicago and her mini goldendoodle Georgina.

Michael Moreth

Delectable



Enduring



Michael Moreth is a recovering Chicagoan living in the rural, micropolitan city of Sterling, the Paris of Northwest Illinois.

Leslie Dianne

Evolution of a Species

I imagine that when the
gallop is good
the horse's head
strains against the reins
and her eyes flashblink
the scenery is
colorsblurred into a
miles long painting:
flowers, trees, boulders,
branch, rabbit, raccoon,

hummingbird, the tip
of the eagle's wing
the crane bowing her head
in prayer, the dog
longing for a friend
the flies bewildered
by her speed
the grass leaning into
obedience, the rider's
muscles rolling
with the rhythm
of the gait
the rider leaning
into the wind

> > >

letting go of the earth
letting go of his form
no longer man
the horse
no longer horse
the transformation
complete
this is how the
centaur was formed

Leslie Dianne is a playwright, poet, novelist, screenwriter and performer whose work has been acclaimed internationally at the Harrogate Fringe Festival in Great Britain, The International Arts Festival in Tuscany, Italy, The Teatro Lirico in Milan, Italy and at La Mama, ETC in NYC. Her stage plays have been produced in NYC at The American Theater of Actors, The Raw Space, The Puerto Rican Traveling Theater and The Lamb's Theater, and at Theater Festivals in Texas and Indiana. She holds a BA in French Literature from CUNY and her poetry appears in *The Wild Word*, *Sparks of Calliope*, *The Elevation Review*, *Quaranzine*, *The Dillydoun Review*, *Line Rider Press*, *Flashes* and elsewhere. Her writing was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize and Best Of The Net.

