

Limn Literary & Arts Journal

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Editor's Note

*A small group of thoughtful people could change the world.
Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.
- Margaret Mead*

Change...

That word, that small, simple word can be monumental and life altering. Change can be small and unnoticeable. Our body, our hair, our lives change each day. Sometimes we see the change, sometimes we don't. Change was a theme that was part of every submission we received this year. The change could have been a person's health, a relationship or maybe something very personal like disease or addiction. Change is also representing in our cover art in both a physical and abstract way.

Change is part of each of our lives and change has affected *LIMN's* second issue. In the past year our staff has changed and our business plan has changed. We moved toward a web based, green journal. We rebranded ourselves as a *Philanthro Journal* - meaning that we want to give disabled artist and writers a platform to engage people and we provide emergency assistance to disabled artists and writers in need - This change made *LIMN* better. The journal is leaner, our website is easier to navigate and a focus on being web based allows our diverse staff to communicate across the globe.

I've always thought that any type of change is good. It can provide a time for reflection and growth.

I hope you will reflect as you read our second issue.

Best,

Will Mallon
Editor in Chief
Limn

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Cover Image

Fabio Sassi
Still life with Cans

Heidi Kraay

Escapes (1, 2, 3)

The tiger ate at me
I fought his blood
from the blue kiddie pool
Him afraid of water
I hid submerged

The bottom opened under me
Shot me into a cell
where I met the devil
We had a long affair,
Mephistopheles and me

Disgusted by his reputation
I abandoned him
The man I chose afterward
kept me locked in his farmhouse
Balding. A white wife beater

fit his barrel shaped belly
with snug sweat
His shirt the same way
his hand left marks on my face
When the devil knocked on my window

I snuck down the drainpipe
Dashed into him
We made enormous love
in his tent across the river
then gathered my things
from that brutish husband
waiting up for me
My face was losing
its grey walrus sag
I would soon be home

Cameron James

ASSESSMENT

My fingers trace the newly crafted early 20th century looking chair. Each plunge into a crevice; the dirt, the grime, the sweat of detox and fresh high, the film of receiving and providing even conjuring every act of sex known to man minus the internet, minus forethought. I tell him my frequency (as seen in tides), intensity (as seen with the moon), and duration (as seen with blindness). I tell him of drugs used from age 12 'til my family potentially mourns me. We exchange war stories because we are legion and home-bound. Scars neatly under skin. We're ok. Rivers and strong sediment.

Mia Siegert

Outgrown Horses (Excerpt)

"Gleaming, huh? You think you can get him that way?" Rusty said as he helped Brent groom Sprinkles after Brent's ride. If Brent weren't so tall, Rusty didn't think that he'd be able to see Brent over the slight dip in Sprinkles' back. Rusty remembered when he was able to walk. He used to be taller than Brent was now, but the wheelchair compressed his spine and Rusty's body shrunk with inactivity. The few times he'd grab a railing and pull himself to his feet to get in bed, take a bath, use the toilet, he was hunched and small and frail. Weak. But Brent didn't seem to notice that, or at least he was good at acting.

Brent rubbed the hard brushes together to get the dander off. "Any horse can look good with a little elbow grease."

"Elbow grease? You're too young to be saying elbow grease. Even people my age don't say it," Rusty laughed, then observed his pony, "Damn. He looks better already."

"I told you, elbow grease," Brent kept his eyes down but smiled, "I had this old swayback mare with a club hoof once. Her coat could reflect the sun. Everyone thought I was using all sorts of supplements we couldn't afford. Trick was going over her coat with a little baby oil."

"Baby oil?! You're kidding."

"Just a drop or two. Almost all the show hunters do it. Trick is not too much so they get slippery. Just enough." Rusty was surprised when Brent started to laugh. "This one time, my friend, Daniel—he was going to go in the show ring. They had a new groom who used baby oil on the *mane*. Looked pretty, but you don't do that unless you're taking stud pictures because well, anyway, his reins got all slippery on his gloves, and he kept losing grip. He finally lost the reins right at the end of the jump off, went over the last combination with no hands, crossed the finish timers, and *then* fell off! It was *great!* Never laughed so hard in my life!"

Brent grabbed a metal comb, still laughing as he started to pull Sprinkles' mane, the pony stomping, irritated, as hair dropped on the floor. "Daniel was *so* pissed off. Won the class anyway, lucky bastard. Kept telling him if he was going to fall off, he chose the right time to do it. Groom would have been fired if Daniel fell off right before the end timers. God, that was hysterical. Still can't stop laughing."

Rusty didn't follow most of the conversation but wanted to continue it for nothing else than having Brent talk and laugh. It'd make lessons and training more comfortable if Brent were able to relax and seem more human, seem more

twenty. Everything always felt so tense at home as is. Rusty hoped that Brent would finally be able to bring in something new. Shake things up as his wife tended to the dairy cows and Lewis played video games. Trying to keep Brent's spirits up, Rusty said, "It'd be hilarious if that's what body builders did to make their bodies shine."

"Jesu—jeez, I don't know if that'd be hilarious or disturbing."

Curiously, Rusty asked, "You religious?"

"Huh?"

"You religious? You caught yourself there, with the jeez." Rusty set the brushes down in his lap as he used his hands to push his wheelchair toward Sprinkles's haunches. Then, he resumed grooming. "I don't care if you are. But if you're worried about offending me, I don't care. You can say damn, Jesus Christ, whatever the hell you want here. You don't need to walk on eggshells around me." He scratched Sprinkles's hip. When Brent didn't speak and shifted his weight uncomfortably, Rusty added, "Sorry if I offended you."

Brent hesitated, "I'm not offended. I just don't talk about this sort of thing."

"Why not?"

"I just... don't..."

"You talk about horses." Rusty patted Sprinkles's shoulder.

"Well, yeah," Brent mumbled, "That's what I know."

Rusty pressed, "Don't you know anything else?" Brent pulled another lock of mane. Sprinkles turned his head and neck as far as they would go in the crossties then tried to nip Brent. Brent smacked him on the neck, and Sprinkles tried again, but after the second smack stood quietly. After a few moments, Brent rubbed Sprinkles neck with his free hand. His fur was still a little rough and sticky from sweat. Brent always seemed to fall silent when he was uncomfortable, as if the lack of words would make everything okay or that he would disappear as well as the problem. Rusty said, "You're twenty. Surely you know other things than horses." Rusty thought he saw Brent blush, but his cheeks might have been red from his ride on Sprinkles. Brent used his shoulder to wipe some of the sweat on his cheek off. Rusty didn't want to let him off the hook, "Come on. There's got to be something."

"Maybe," Brent finally conceded.

This was the one shot Rusty had to get Brent talking, get to know the man who was training his animal-legs. "College?"

"Not for me, really."

"You're smart enough for it."

"I don't know about that," Brent said, "Couldn't afford it anyway."

"Movies? Trucks? Sports?"

Brent rubbed his hands together. He ran his tongue over his chapped lips then finally said, "Played a little football in high school."

"Oh yeah? What were you?"

"Bad." Brent grabbed a rag and bottle of Show Sheen. Rusty thought he saw Brent smile. "They didn't do cuts on the team. My coach was begging my parents to let me quit. Was a benchwarmer for the entire season."

"That must have stung."

"Not really. Can't stand football, but it's what guys do. They play football, or wrestle, or ride bulls and saddlebrons." Brent's mood soured as he sprayed Sprinkles's body heavily. Rusty's eyes softened.

"What about girls?" Brent stiffened then groomed Sprinkles hard. Rusty knew he hit a spot. He briefly pictured Brent sneaking out to strip bars with his friends, maybe that Daniel King guy, hiding in the back beneath a cowboy hat and loose jeans. "I bet I'm right. I bet you know girls, don't you?"

Brent stopped grooming, took a deep breath, then looked Rusty in the eye. "You're probably the only person in Hanson who thinks that."

Rusty hadn't expected that answer. He'd thought Brent would have admitted to a girlfriend, or maybe a hard break up. "Why's that?" Brent's face twisted, struggling as if he were deciding on how to answer. Then Sprinkles stomped on Brent's foot, and Brent swore, "Goddamn pony!" before pushing his shoulder to get the pony to step off.

Rusty was disappointed. That glimpse of a human was only for a moment, and for whatever reason his pony ruined it. "Any chance of you coming tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow?"

"My legs are hurting. Sooner I can ride, sooner they'll stop hurting."

Brent groomed harder and pursed his lips. "Might not be an overnight miracle."

"I know, but it needs to happen sooner rather than later. And you said he needed to get fit, right?"

"Well, yeah—"

"So, can you come?"

Brent rubbed the back of his neck, shifted his weight from one leg to the

other. "Eight work for you? I've got to be at the slaughterhouse by ten or John'll kick my ass to Hell and back." Brent grabbed a lead rope and slipped the chain through the halter and over Sprinkles' nose. "I'll throw him in the field for you, then should be getting home. Need to flat Sam."

"See you." He watched Brent bring Sprinkles back to the field where, once free, Sprinkles bucked and galloped and farted, then dropped to his knees and rolled on his back in the dirt, legs kicking up. Only after his just-groomed coat was caked with dirt did Sprinkles get to his feet and start grazing.

Brent tacked and mounted Delilah and began to walk down the driveway, Rusty let the wheelchair go up the handicap ramp. From there, he watched the palomino and rider become smaller and smaller until they turned at the end of the driveway, picked up a trot, and disappeared behind the trees bordering the road. Someday, that'd be him, Rusty knew. Someday, when Brent left, he and Sprinkles would follow.

Dinner was quiet for the Harrisons. Rusty's wife, Juneifer, always said you could tell when people were hungry if no one talked at dinner, but that wasn't the case that day. Lewis's history teacher called and said he wasn't doing well in class, and Juneifer grounded him again, this time taking away his cell phone. Lewis gave both his parents the silent treatment, glaring as he scraped his silverware on the bottom of his plate cutting through his steak. Each time his knife sliced through, the rust-colored juice would pool on his plate and absorb into his mashed potatoes. Rusty was used to ignoring his son's misbehavior, but it was hard on Juneifer. She tried to discipline Lewis, but Lewis was stubborn and his grades were only getting worse.

"How's Sprinkles going?" Juneifer asked, trying to not look at her son.

"Fine," Rusty replied, chewing and swallowing. "Slow, but fine." Rusty reached for his half-empty bottle of Coors Lite that was already sweating and left a damp ring on the tablecloth. He sipped the beer slowly, holding the bitter taste in his mouth several moments before setting down the bottle and swallowing.

"Do you know when you're going to start riding?"

"Don't know. Brent said he wanted him more fit and bombproof."

"Bombproof?" Lewis asked with his mouth full, breaking his silent treatment.

Rusty spoke as if Lewis hadn't been silent to begin with. "I think he means so he won't spook so I don't fall off. You should have seen Sprinkles this morning. Brent was using this tarp with him. Brent got him to walk over it, even lie down on it. That kid's incredible. I swear, he can do anything with a horse."

"Good." Juneifer rubbed her forehead. Rusty wondered if another

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migraine was coming on or whether she was just exhausted. She always looked tired. Maybe it was lyme, or just the hours of work adding up over the years. But she was always in good enough help. Always made three meals a day, got out to take care of the cows and feed the peacocks. School conferences and basketball games before Lewis got bored of playing. "Not sure how we'll be able to afford all this. Fifty bucks a ride, three times a week, four weeks to a month, six hundred a month."

Rusty looked at his plate. Now was a good a time as ever to bring it up, "Four days a week."

"What?"

"I said he could come four days." Juneifer slammed her glass down on the table, wine sloshing over the side. Rusty exhaled, "Look, he knows what he's doing. He needs to get Sprinkles fit enough to ride so he can get me walking. You do want me walking again, don't you?"

"That's unfair, Richard." Juneifer rounded her heavy shoulders. "We might have to cut out cable and internet."

"WHAT? Mom, NO! I need it," Lewis argued, shoving his plate away and folding his arms over his chest. "It's not fair! Dad gets a horse, and I get everything taken away!"

Rusty looked at Juneifer. "He's right. It'll take more work but we can do it."

"You mean I can do it. Richard, I want to do this for you, you know I do, but I don't see how-" Rusty rolled his chair back from the table and into the living room. He had enough. When Juneifer got angry, she would argue for days. He heard Juneifer picked up the dishes, noisily letting them clang as she put them in the sink and turned the faucet on to wash them. To her son, "You done yet?"

"No," Lewis answered, then pulling the plate back towards him. He cut through the steak more slowly but this time it screeched when the blade touched the plate.

"Don't scratch it," Juneifer weakly warned, then walked into the living room. Rusty turned on the TV. "It's not right," Juneifer began, "I'm the only one working. I should have a say in what we do with our money." Rusty turned up the volume. "This isn't unreasonable!"

"You said you wanted me to walk." Rusty raised his voice over the TV.

"You're not even riding the damn thing yet."

"I'm finished," Lewis said as he walked up next to his mother, dishes in hand.

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"Put them in the sink. I'll do them later." Lewis fidgeted as if he wanted to comment on their situation, but Juneifer looked tired, patience worn thin. "What?"

"Never mind, forget it." Lewis stomped into the kitchen. His dishes clinked in the sink, then he thudded up the stairs to his bedroom. Rusty heard the door slam. Juneifer scratched fingers through her hair and didn't chase after her son. "When does Brent come out next?" Rusty ignored her until Juneifer walked in front of the TV, turned it off, and faced him. "Richard, we need to make a plan to pay for this."

"We'll talk about it tomorrow." But Rusty knew there'd be no talk tomorrow. He'd make sure of it. Juneifer was better at this stuff than him. There was no point hashing out details that would make both of them furious. Rusty rolled his wheelchair back into the kitchen, returned with a beer and turned the TV back on.

"Brent's so private," Rusty tried to change the subject, even though Juneifer seemed somewhat disinterested in Brent. He gripped the cap of the beer bottle and twisted it off and took a sip. "I tried to get him to open up a bit. Get him talking about horses, and he won't shut up, then ask if he's got a girlfriend and he clamps up."

Juneifer's sat upright, for a moment looked completely baffled. "You seriously didn't ask him that, did you?"

Rusty's brow quirked. "Why shouldn't I have?"

Juneifer knew something, and Rusty didn't like being in the dark. Whatever happened must have happened after he stopped going to town all those years ago. It was hard to imagine what sort of whispers he missed. Maybe Brent had tried and failed priesthood. He could believe that. Lots of young guys tried and failed priesthood. It was hard to find anyone that devout nowadays. Would be more believable than something like Brent knocking a girl up. Would explain his issues with saying Jesus or damn without looking like he was going to hell.

Lewis ran to the stairs and leaned over the banister. "Uh Mom?"

"What?"

"Lumiere got out of the coop. I can see him down the driveway."

"Again? Shit." Juneifer stepped around the wheelchair to the door and pulled on her rain boots. The door rattled when she opened it and walked out into the brisk night to catch the peacock, arms huddled around her middle. It'd be different once Rusty could walk again. He'd help Juneifer catch the damn bird. He'd become a good man, great father, strong husband. He'd show her that

the hours she spent slaving away at work were worth it. He'd make love to her, and show her how good it'd be when he walked again like a man.



Heidi Kraay

Clear

Dead leaves
raked up months ago
under stump and birch

In glistening January light
its twig housed a clear ring
one careful, clinical circle

The stark branch's earring
but also
a feeding tube

like the stick women
eating through plastic
fighting disorder at Remuda Ranch

When I write
there is no more sickness
I am clear

Changming Yuan

Autumnal Stanzas

September

In the open fields
Nothing is left
Except bare stems, deep holes, bald twigs
But behind each closed door
Is a cozy room
Rented or owned, full of
Colored fruit, plump seeds
And overflowing minds

October

Burning, blooming
Like spring flowers
All tree leaves
Giggle, guffawing
With the west wind
In their fierce defiance
Against the elegy of the land
Recited aloud
In blood-throated voices

November

Most monotonous month:

Each passing day is depressed
Into a crow, its wings
Its body and tails
Newly glazed in the mists
Of thick dusk
Though its heart still
Lingers in the memory of
Summer's orange morning glows



Dominika Bednarska

Sundays Spent Reading Raymond Carver

Real writers work even on Sundays. Raymond Carver made no mention of church when he said that. If one thinks of steeples, is she sufficed for the night? I am trying to decide on a theme for my new and selected poems, because as of yet I have not written or selected any. We all hate the library and cooking on Sunday. I made corn bread like my mother never would with peppers and the hot sun of my skipping church to go walking.

On Sundays, working writers become real. They do not leave their houses or apartments and eat day-old bagels. If only I did not have this passion for cream cheese. My mother would not serve me the lox until I clasped my hands. If one thinks of stained glass, can she drink like father? I am trying to write my provocative memoir, except that I have been living life backwards, so I don't have a beginning. Cutting my finger while cutting the pepper. My mother would have made me throw them away, like she did the novels I read in church. We all hate public radio and getting our periods before Monday. I am the only one in class who has read Raymond Carver.

Real working Sundays are hard for writers. They must type memos on ancient computers. No one would think they studied literature older than that. For the two years, I studied Latin and did not pray. If one reads out loud rhythmically, has she found God? I am trying to write the next great American novel, but I find the first. My mother always knew the books were too sad. We all hate ad inserts and unknotting our hair. I wrote my first story after Raymond Carver.

Changming Yuan

1

first formed in the far east
a horizontal line
kept moving westwards
point by point
as it rose gradually
trying to stand up straight
like the axis of the earth
to be identical with the first person singular
with or without a serif at the top
with or without a support at the bottom
until 1 and i became one and the same
presenting itself as a single unity
one that is its own factorial
its own square, its own cube, the identity
For multiplicities, each derived from *tai chi* or nothingness
First of all there was, there has been

Cameron James

GUTS

I bought a box for storage.
Buttons are measurement
and goal when fingers
and hip don't touch.
I bought those pants
less than one year ago;
the shelf life of things
these days is atrocious.
I bought new pants, ones
with room to wiggle
around in for more than
an expanse of sloth.
I have a history of buying
drugs instead of food,
but drugs aren't an option
and food is righteous

Dominika Bednarska

Blood: A Prose Poem

The first time we bleed and remember it, skin is torn and we look down where we are (a playground, a backyard, our mother's kitchen, a sidewalk, etc.) and notice a substance that is clearly supposed to be on the inside of our body, on the outside, and wail at this comprehension. It is so thin and red and willing to leave us. (What is willing to leave us is a rather large category; its content, if deliberated on at all, should be left private.)

Alone in my room, I would feel the guitar vibrations through the floor, letting other words and rhythms bleed into me.

To learn guitar your fingers must bleed and then form calluses. My best friend Sam wanted to learn how then she found out about the calluses and said oh no thank you.

Blood is central to the narratives of many women, but not hers. I tried to learn guitar several times, but would not bleed for it. When my stomach constricts it is not from blood but hunger.

BLEED - a word used to describe the margin of space between the "E" string and the edge of the fretboard. If a guitar has too little "BLEED" it won't allow the player to bend...

I am well aware how inflexible I am in spite of biology, the way in which I will not even so much as move to cover paper I am writing on in the rain, watching the ink bleed and bend without me. If it were not for that rigidity, would I continue to run like ink or blood until I ran out? Even the deepest metaphors must be tempered.

I wonder if my ability to bite my cuticles has anything to do with the fact that I have accepted blood, that a long time ago my attitude towards bleeding changed from: when will it stop bleeding? to: will it stop bleeding? to simply noticing that my fingers, like every other part of me, have the capacity to bleed and make use of it at various intervals, sometimes, even on paper.

I had another teacher who said your writing in workshop is like a child when it is just born. If writing is an act of creation, why should it remain painless? Why should it not involve blood?

Sam's story: A couple breaking up who wrote on each other with ballpoint pens that made them bleed. It went on for several pages and never finished. Someone pointed out that it was strangely violent and Sam did not notice. I thought it was kind of realistic, but did not say so.

David's Story: Two sisters who paint using one another's menstrual blood. Sam and I both rolled our eyes and stopped paying attention. You would need some kind of paint thinner Samantha pointed out. I told her he probably hadn't thought it through. Moral of the story: When discussing blood, write what you know.

There is a sense of distrust towards anyone that bleeds continuously for several days and does not die, never mind a lifetime. It is the fact that I have taken it on that worries me.

A fear of blood, of bleeding, seems so counter to the human condition. I have the type of blood that can take anyone else's, not the type that can be given to anyone else. Not all blood is created equal.

But now the cold cracks open my lips so that I am reminded that they are fluid. Possibility exists, even if we do not make use of it. My ex-boyfriend got nose bleeds all the time, while dancing or laughing. Sometimes I wonder if it was just life rushing out to meet itself, forgetting a container.

Blood always pushes us toward the extremes we can barely contain. I am thinking now of sexdeathbirth because they encompass one another, the way blood will take anything in without drawing boundaries. I am sorry that there is no single word that gets them all across, the way blood can carry them all.

The first time I bled thick, I saw its potential not to birth but to kill, to drain someone and was surprised that the imperative was not to stop it, but find something to absorb it and to do that as quietly as possible. From now on bathroom doors get locked and bleeding is your own business.

Heidi Kraay

Speechless

Square puzzle-pieces set in order
drawings
metaphysical landscapes

his thick book molded art and science
in mind-blowing ways
discussions on perpendiculars
complex dimensions
explosive conversations caves and Plato
the glass window 8 X 10 at our side
the air glowing
all around us

How tingly and stiff
my lips
too much coffee
too little sleep Verbalize...
Demise.

worlds wars worms
words won't escape

Agitation. Builds up. BANG.
His drumsticks.
Throw down. Catch. And twirl.
And spin.

The concrete floor. Thin carpeting.
Throw down, catch and twirl and spin and bounce again.
Layering doodle shapes grow web like
cells in meiosis mitosis
spreading out spidery strands
in reds, yellows, purples, blues

Rainbows
M.C. Escher Mirages
Step-by-step metamorphoses
make him hallucinate
onto the page

I can relate to that

Manic Designs creep up on me
When the light glows
my heart races

fragmented frustrated speech
on my tongue
bursting out to remain mute

Cyclic brain churns out pictures multiplying
overpopulating the skies
thoughts
out
of
order

Operator. Operator.
Magistrator. Validator.
tossed salad noise
white noise

Scrambling brain cells in a tango
a mixed mess

I don't know right from left
sentences take eternities to come out straight

But then
all over
itching, shaking
dig this spaghetti salad
out from under my skull
spewing something sick

So I try and cover up the mishap
So I flounder wave my hands
for expression

So I clam up
yell a little
painful destruction

I don't feel right today
Just stay silent it's easier.

April Salzano

Tonsillitis?

Who would know? Not the doctor with the miner's lamp on his head who has come into the exam room to assist the Physician's Assistant. Not the blue-eyed boy with *D.O.* sewn onto his lab coat. Not the patient because he's 7, autistic, and much more concerned with the metal of the tongue depressor repeatedly approaching his face. Not the X-ray technician who was somehow able to get the image, in profile, of the boy's tonsils, adenoids, epiglottis, all mildly swollen, I'm told. But no one wants to utilize this diagnostic tool entered into evidence. Certainly not me, who isn't shown the image anyway because I am positioned on the chair with my son on my lap, all writhing muscle rigid against me. Everyone avoids the use of necessary force in favor of logic. *Open up open up,* they repeat until the doctor excuses himself to take a call from the mother of a child who can express his pain in words more effective than "doctor please," and "hurts."

Dominika Bednarska

To Maura, About Hands

Maura says hands are what make us human. It is the last line in one of her poems. It is a poem about fucking, describing slicing apples as obscenely public erotica. I heard her say it out loud the night I remember first really meeting her. It did not happen all at once. When I first noticed the odd tingling, the tingling I feel as I write this, I told people. I told Maura. She laughed and said, "At least you are not mute."

I laughed too, but worried. After the doctor tells me no hands, which means no writing, typing, dancing, or walking, because I use canes. Because I use my hands to walk. I am mute. I can no longer speak. There is too much water and noise erupting from me and from my mute numb hands.

No one will be scared with you, they will ask for a diagnosis, offer vitamins, tell you about the brother's mother's sister's cousin who had it, or say it will go away, I mean, it's not like you use your hands all the time. Sometimes I do have to correct them and say, yes, actually I do, and I have to do this without coming undone. Because no one will hold you when you do and say I don't know either.

Maura, you will tear this writing apart if you ever see it, the way my tendons fail to repair themselves again and again. I will pass over this piece, unable to make it less raw, unable to apply heat because it won't bring down my swollen, inflamed words, passing through a hand, already choppy, blurry and misspelled.

I am sorry, poem. I am sorry, hands. Pands hoem. I don't know how to slice you, each a scalpel apart. How do we talk about fucking without the body, without hands? How do we talk about writing without a thumb pressing into the pen so these words won't die, fruit flies in our heads?

If these words are not my hands, then these hands are not my words. If these hands do not write, they hit the keyboard or press play or someone else's hands, your hands. Can you tell which is which?

I don't know anymore, Maura. I don't know about hands anymore than creams or pills or a protein diet, I only know that your poem that has always left me uneasy now makes me teary in a way you did not intend.

Changming Yuan

Y

You love 'Y', not because it's the first letter
In your family name, but because it's like
A horn, which the water buffalo in your
Native village uses to fight against injustice
Or, because it's like a twig, where a crow
Can come down to perch, a cicada can sing
Towards the setting sun as loud as it wants to
More important, it's like a real reed deeply
At the bank of the Nile, something you can
Into a whistle or hit a drum with; in

rooted
bend
pronouncing it

You can get all the answers you need, besides
You can make it into a heart-felt catapult
And shoot at a snakehead or sparrow, as long
As it is within the range of your boyhood

Dominka Bednarska

Shower, Morning After the Olympics

I woke up and took a shower without
cuts on my feet without having to
stand
without almost falling.
and having to balance with only one hand on a small thin pole,
that holds the showerhead up
The door to my room now opens and closes
like veins and arteries (and things of that nature.)
It was once believed that washing up
would kill you but nevertheless
I take a long shower sitting down.
I breathe in and out.
I like the way we survive all of us who do
this is something you don't know
going in
that there is always beauty in almost not existing
in making an art of each scrape you acquire
in moving the only way you can
in moving only
the way you can

Grace Spencer

Wednesday Night Haunts

It's freezing and I curse Poppy mentally as I narrowly skirt a pile of dog shit. I hurry across the street to Poppy's favorite Wednesday night haunt. Warmth and smoke stream out when I wrench open the door, and I have to blink a couple of times before I see her, collapsed over the bar, cackling hysterically.

"Poppy!" I hiss, and she turns around, her eyes lighting up when they land on me and I swear again because that fucking smile is the reason why I will always come rescue her drunk ass.

"Carla! Darling! Lover-la-dee-da!" she exclaims as she throws her arms around my neck, leaning against me heavily.

"Jesus Christ, Pop, you reek!" I say crossly, pushing her onto an empty barstool. She flails momentarily, searching for balance on the stationary seat, and that's when I notice that in place of the hot pink clogs she had on when she left the apartment earlier, she is now wearing a pair of dingy grey tennis shoes.

"Pop," I say cautiously, "who's shoes are those?"

She watches me vacantly through bleary eyes, an absent, lip gloss-smear smile on her face. "I don't know."

"Okay, well, where are *your* shoes?"

"I don't know."

I give up, and instead collect her coat and purse and shove them into her arms, where she stares at them curiously before trying to put her head through the jacket sleeve.

"Hey, Carla," Ted, the bartender, greets me as he cleans a glass with an old rag and an expert twist of his wrist. "I take it you'll be getting the usual, then?"

"One Poppy to go, please," I say, rolling my eyes at him.

"On the house," he answers and winks conspiratorially before moving down to serve other customers. It's become somewhat of an inside joke between the two of us whenever I come to pick up Poppy.

I manage to get Poppy onto her feet and start maneuvering her towards the exit. It's slow going as she frequently feels the need to stop and consider the process of putting one foot in front of the other, and when a group of guys at the next table over start yelling, the whole fucking process just comes to a complete halt.

"Wife come to take you home?" shouts one of the dickheads at the table that I've rather uncharitably nicknamed Dick Breath, for reasons I assume need no explanation.

\ "Yeah, just as well, she's no fun when she's not putting out," another dickhead known to me as Dick Face says with a mock pout.

"Fuck you, asshole!" Poppy snaps at him, lunging forward. The guys flinch back laughing, spilling a beer in the process. I grab Poppy and manhandle her to the best of my ability toward the door, which is no easy feat considering most days I'm 5'2" and she's 5'7," except when she's plastered and becomes 5'7" and a piece of limp spaghetti. The mysterious sneakers on her feet make quiet *snick*, *snick* noises as we trudge across the sticky bar floor.

"I'm better than those guys, I really am," she slurs miserably as we stumble out into the frigid night air.

"I know, Poppy."

"I don't know why I keep doing this to myself," she adds, picking at a loose thread on her sleeve until I bat her hand away.

"I know, Poppy," I reply automatically, rifling through my pockets for cab fare. "Jesus Christ, where the fuck did my money go?" glance up to see Poppy looking at me woefully through huge, watery eyes.

"Poppy..."

"I'm sorry!" she wails.

"Poppy!"

"I only borrowed it! I swear I'll pay you back when I get paid!"

"Poppy, you've been waiting for that check for *three weeks!*"

"I know!" she sniffles.

"I'm already paying for your half of the rent this month!"

"I know! And I'll pay you back, every cent, I promise!"

I close my eyes and count backwards from ten so I don't completely lose my cool, and when that doesn't work, I count off the top ten ways to kill Brian Talbot. Brian Talbot, usually identifiable by his queasy smug smile and asphyxiating cologne, is Poppy's on-again-off-again ex-boyfriend, who, like teen Hollywood monster franchises, or herpes, tended to pop up again just when you thought you got rid of it for good. He was always "popping in," just "stopping by" to see how Poppy was doing, and always ended up leaving with her half of the rent money, her dignity, and, on one slightly more memorable occasion, the toaster. The part that pissed me off the most about the whole wretched cycle wasn't Poppy's gullibility or even her denial; it was her adamant defense of him.

"It's just a loan," she would insist, scrubbing dishes with the manic energy that always seemed to infect her post-Brian. "He just needs some start-up money, he swore he'd pay me back, just a couple of days!" But days would turn into weeks, and weeks into months, all without a peep, much less a check, from Brian. At least until his next big idea, when he would come around again.

I'm debating whether to leave decapitation at number seven on my list or replace it with death by a thousand paper cuts when I realize that Poppy is no longer beside. She is, in fact, several yards behind, sprawled out in the middle of the street.

"Jesus, Pop, are you okay?" I say, rushing over. "Did you fall? Are you hurt?"

She smiles dopily and tugs at my shoelaces. "Come here."

"What?"

"I want to act out *The Notebook*. You have to be Ryan Gosling."

I roll my eyes. "Fuck that, why do I have to be Ryan Gosling? Why can't you be Ryan Gosling?"

"Because, Carls, let's face it, you make a way more believable guy than I would. Plus, your arms are kind of manly."

"My arms are not manly!" I protest, but Poppy only closes her eyes and hums in response, so I stretch out next to her on the pavement. When she gets these ideas in her head, it's better just to go along with it. And it is kind of nice, I have to admit, just lying there in the dark, staring up at the sky.

"Canada should totally be a super power. I don't get it. They really should."

I smile briefly at her drunken declaration. "And why's that?"

"Duh, because they have Ryan Gosling. And Ryan Reynolds." She turns to me, wide-eyed. "Omigod, they probably have, like, a whole army of gorgeous ab-a-licious Canadian guys named Ryan. Everybody's like, oh, Canada, silly *Canada*, the Hufflepuff of planet Earth but NAH, BRO! They're just pretending to be all sweet and *Canadian-y* but they're REALLY breeding a top-secret army of Ryans and they're gonna take over the world!"

She calms down for a moment, then: "Justin Bieber is probably their spy."

I laugh, "Justin Bieber? Nah, he's too controversial."

"That's their game! He's only PRETENDING to be controversial and annoying so he can brainwash all the twelve-year-old girls so they turn against us when Canada decides to invade." She yawns and stretches. "I can't wait for Canada to take over. It'll be totally awesome."

"Uh-huh."

There was a long pause after that.

"Hey Carla?"

"Yeah?"

"These are some ugly-ass shoes I'm wearing."

"Yup."

"Are they yours?"

"Nope."

"That's so weird. Where are *my* shoes? I love my shoes! They were all sparkly and stuff. Like stars. I like stars. Carla, where are all the stars?" Another pause. "I bet Ryan Gosling took them."

I laugh quietly, but there's something in the way she asked me about the stars that I can't shake loose. I look up at the sky and she's right - there are no stars. Could just be cloudy but actually, now that I'm thinking about it, I realize that in all the time I've lived in this city, I've never seen more than a handful of

stars in the night sky.

It's a little jarring, to be honest, because the stars used to be such a big part of my life, growing up in rural Virginia. Small town, nothing very remarkable. In the day everything was okay, but the nights were not. Winter nights were the worst, when all you could do was curl up and pull the blankets over your head, but the warm evenings of summer set us free. We would escape, Andrew and I, to our tree house in the backyard. It wasn't much more than a couple of boards nailed to a tree with a rope ladder that we could roll up and down as we pleased, but despite that it was the safest place we knew. It was a place we could go to get away from the noise - the shouting and screaming and never-ending fighting - and from the even deadlier quiet. We went there to gossip, to play Scrabble, to talk for hours about meaningless, random shit that had an equal chance of being forgotten the next day or remembered for the next twenty years. But mostly we looked at the sky. A sky full of stars. Stars like someone had spilled salt across a black tabletop.

"Here, I'll show you a trick," my brother Andrew said, and he showed me how to lie down on my back with my head tilted so that the sky looked like it was falling. And, in spite of everything I've gone through since then, all the disappointments and successes, it's this feeling that I clutch onto more than anything else, the feeling of being a small child in the grip of the universe, stars rushing towards your face, but the ground firm beneath you and your brother's hand in your own and feeling alive and possible and safe.

It's early morning by the time we get home and we fall into Poppy's bed. It's sort of become our ritual on her nights of binge-drinking, because God forbid she chokes on her own vomit or anything and I have to roll her over. There are no stars on our ceiling, but the feeling is the same as those warm starry Virginia nights. Outside the world rushes on, exciting and terrifying, but inside it's just the two of us, grounded and protected by each other and our sins and strengths. And it feels safe. And anything feels possible. Poppy's skin smells like booze and bar smoke, but her hair is soft and smells like soap and lilacs, and that's what stays with me as I drift off while the world and the stars rush by our window.

April Salzano

Anopisthograph

Mine is only one side of a two-sided tale, admittedly. Shaped by perspective, formed by response, an equal and opposite reaction to every action. A law of separation. Predictable, perhaps, pages in a tale that seemed to write itself long before me, whose ending only I will control.

Contributors

Dominika Bednarska's work is in *A Different Art*, *The James Joyce Quarterly*, *Wordgathering*, *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender and Conformity*, *The Culture of Efficiency: Technology in Everyday Life*, *What I Want From You: An Anthology of East Bay Lesbian Poets*, *Ghosting Atoms*, and *Crippling Femme*, and my poetry manuscript, *Smothered Breath*, is forthcoming. Dominika teaches at U.C. Berkeley, and has a PhD in English and Disability Studies. For more information please visit <http://dominikabednarskaspeaks.blogspot.it/>

Cameron James hails from the southeastern corner of New Mexico. He is an Irish American with a propensity for experiential narrative poetry. This vehicle has led him down a path of exposing readers to the sublime angst of not only his vision, but those cognitions he sees in the mental health field. Cameron is a licensed social worker and unruly heathen, holds a master's degree in social work, a bachelor's degree in English studies, and other unofficial merits not captured on paper

Playwright **Heidi Kraay** also writes poetry and nonfiction. Her poems are published *Anastamoo*, *The 5-2*, *The Used Gravitrons* and others., *Me and My Shadow*, *Kilgore*, *Robots in the Ring* others been developed Boise, Idaho, regionally in NYC. She holds a BA in Theatre Arts from Boise State University and loves working educational programs through Contemporary Theater and Cabin, a literary center.

April Salzano teaches college writing in Pennsylvania where she lives with her husband and two sons. She recently finished her first collection of poetry, for which she is seeking a publisher. She is working on a memoir about raising a child with autism. Her work has appeared insuch as *Poetry Salzburg*, *Convergence*, *Ascent Aspirations*, *Camel Saloon*, *Centrifugal Eye*, *Review*, *Uterus* and *Salome*, *Quarterly*, and is forthcoming in *Writing Tomorrow* and *Rattle*. The author also serves as co-editor at Kind of a Hurricane Press.

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Grace Spencer is nineteen years old and graduated from Columbia High School. Although a Jersey girl through and through, she will be attending Emerson College in Boston to pursue a major in Writing, Literature, and Publishing. When not writing, Grace likes collecting shoes and painting. She currently lives with two sisters, two nephews, and two parents in her NJ home.

Changming Yuan, 5-time Pushcart nominee and author of *Chansons of a Chinaman* (2009) and (2013), grew up in rural China and currently works as an English tutor in Vancouver, where he co-edits *Pacific*. Recently interviewed by PANK, Yuan has poetry

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Fabio Sassi started making visual artworks after varied experiences in music and writing. He makes acrylics with the stencil technique on board, canvas, or other media. He uses logos, tiny objects and what is hidden, discarded or considered to have no worth by the mainstream. Nevertheless, he still prefers to shoot with an analog camera. Fabio lives and works in Bologna, Italy. His work can be viewed at www.fabiosassi.foliohd.com

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