



# CORVUS REVIEW

ISSUE 14 (SUMMER 2020)

## COVER ART: BRIAN FLEMING

“Why, hello there.”

All of my work is meant to be at once accessible and non-assessable, familiar and unfamiliar. Each art piece shows the complexity of each person and a glimpse of their personality.

I post all of my work on Instagram @simplewriter2.0 and on Facebook at Flemworks Creative. I’m looking for new commissions so I welcome anyone who would like to make contact!

## HEAD MAGPIE: JANINE MERCER

Janine Mercer is an author, freelance editor, poet, podcaster, and collector of oddities who currently resides in Milwaukee, WI. Her work can be found in The Quint, Sinister Wisdom, Satan Speaks, and Stritch Magazine. The ODDentity Podcast, her other passion project, can be found on iTunes, Stitcher, iHeartRadio, or wherever you binge. Read about the creepy, weird, and macabre on her blog at [oddentitypodcast.wordpress.com](http://oddentitypodcast.wordpress.com). Twitter & IG: @oddentitypod. Facebook: The ODDentity Podcast.

## DEDICATION

For those marching against racism and inequality and supporters of the BLM movement.



“INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE.”

-Martin Luther King Jr

“YOU MUST NOT LOSE FAITH IN HUMANITY. HUMANITY IS AN OCEAN; IF A FEW DROPS OF THE OCEAN ARE DIRTY, THE OCEAN DOES NOT BECOME DIRTY.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

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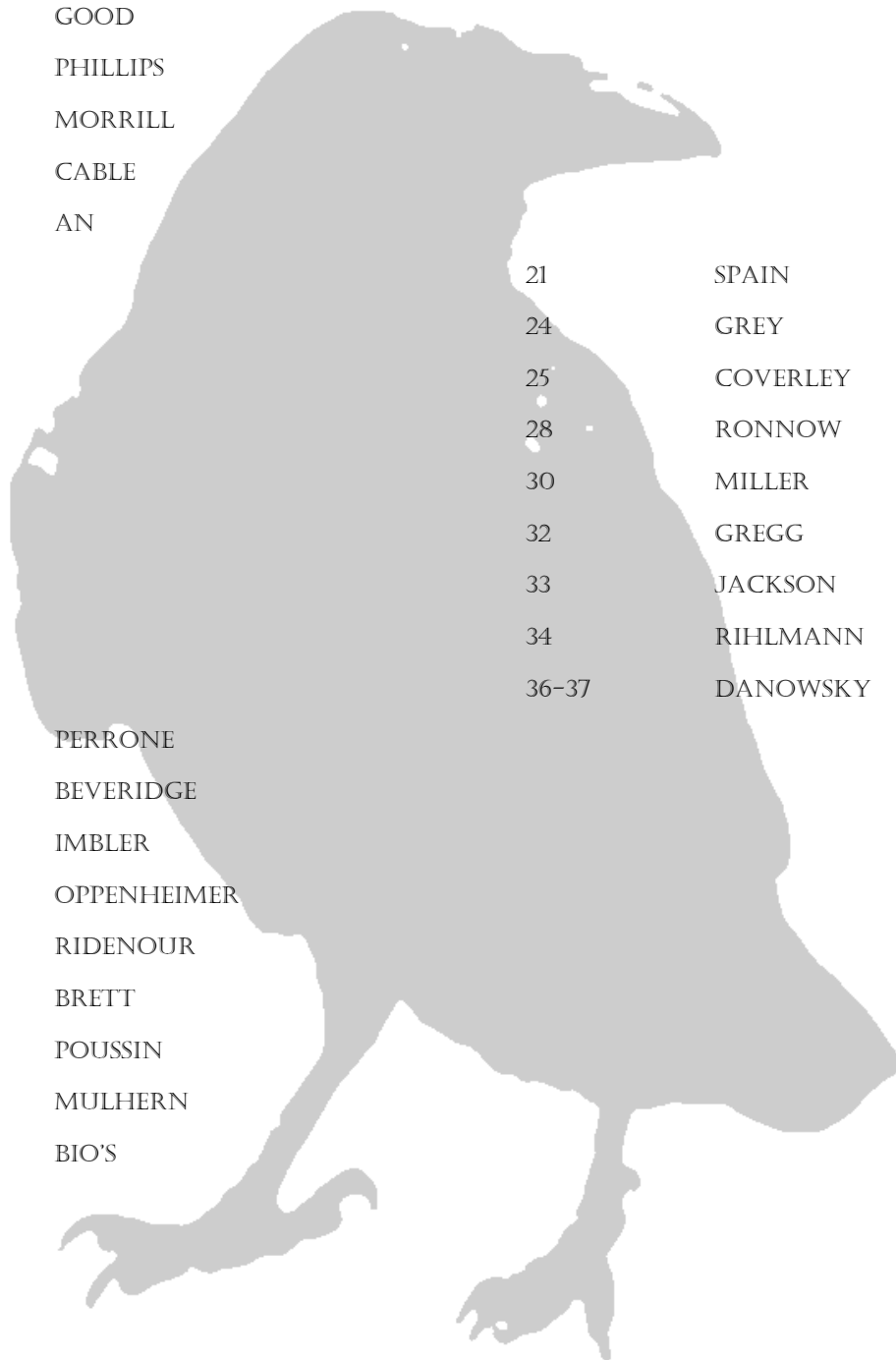
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Insomnia  
Norbert Kovacs

The man spun head to foot as if he were screwing himself into the top of the bed. All the while, his head shook much as if it were unscrewing from his body. His black hair tossing, the man asked himself, Will I stay here or go to the cabin? If I stay, will I stand remaining that quiet around my colleagues much longer? Everyone at work thinks only to do the next project, day in, day out. Are those tasks all that my co-workers are? The man twisted over the bed. The blanket that had come loose curled beside him the way a rope might unravel. His head rolled over the bedside. One of his legs shot forward, kicking at the Venetian blinds. Will I meet the next deadline while thinking to leave town? he wondered. Won't they be upset and say I'm not doing enough work? Won't my manager warn me? The man turned his body. His leg struck the alarm clock and sent it onto the floor. His foot collided with the morning lamp and it fell with a crash. Am I only supposed to live for my job? the man thought now. Or would there be sense in leaving town, despite everyone else, when I have felt so empty this long? He believed he had been circling this point all night without realizing. He grew still and opened his eyes. Through the dark, the white, crusted ceiling of his room showed in dim patches above his head. I can go this week after some excuse to the management, he decided. Then I'll drive out. Leave behind the world's electronic snares. No one to stop me. The man seized the blanket and drew it close. Once I have my things in the cabin, I'll head into the woods. But with or without food? He considered. I'll go with food on the trail. I shouldn't go hungry. He stretched like a string; his neck cricked. Will I think of work? he asked himself. No, it will be irrelevant. I will try to forget. The man turned and straightened. I will walk into the woods happy, he thought. Green life will surround me, the violets crowd the wayside, the canopy giving shade. As the man pictured these things, he dozed and fell asleep. Soon, he was dreaming of the darkness past the trailside trees. Rustling came from among the old leaves as birds called from the pines. Which creatures move in that dark? he wondered in his sleep. Which birds call? I do not know. But perhaps I will learn.

Just for the hell of it  
Michael C. Seeger

I remember you  
you beautiful son of a bitch  
writing alone and without god  
finding your way out of the ordinary  
by digging pearls out of piles of shit  
and the pieces left behind mounds  
from years ago —before you wrote  
the epitaph on the tombstone  
of all humanity

punch drunk and foolhardy —  
you were willing to write anything  
to inflame and disgust  
every depraved drunk and whore  
who read your poetry  
out of obscurity —

climbin' out of the ooze and muck  
like a latter-day Lazarus —all for the chance  
to be re-released as a car salesman  
robbing the empty vaults of banks

just for the hell of it.



“Ce N’est Pas Jim Morrison” Brian Fleming

Underwater  
John Tustin

It felt like that time-stillness of being underwater  
When she was finally finished and came down  
From on top of me.

Then

There she was beside me –  
The hair on my chest sweat-matted down  
Like the seaweed clinging to a beaten rock  
And her hair on the pillow beside me,  
Spread open like all of the waves of the sea  
As I turned my face to hers  
And slowly so slowly  
We kissed.

Rosanna, 2014  
Jane Snyder

Anything you want, she told the man. Surprise me.

The Seahawks muffler he held was soft, the green and blue yarn faded and frayed. "It won't hurt."

"Go Hawks." She thrust her hands behind her back. "Legion of Boom," she said, as he fastened her wrists together.

"This won't interfere with the circulation." He put his hands on her shoulders, pushed her down, so that she sat on the living room carpet, her legs out in front of her.

He ripped a t-shirt to tie her ankles together. "You see," he'd said, "nothing to it."

"What if I need to use the bathroom?"

I should have said what if I have to piss, she thought.

"Go ahead," he said and walked into the kitchenette. Stood at the kitchen counter, looking down out at her.

"Oh, it's like that, is it?" She laughed to herself. As if she couldn't be shocked.

She waited a long time, couldn't get comfortable. "Would you like to get started?"

"I'll let you know."

"Whatever you want, baby. It's your money." Striving for a note of confidence.

He came out of the kitchenette carrying a folded dishcloth. She could smell the detergent's sharp scent, couldn't taste it. The fibers filled her mouth, drying it.

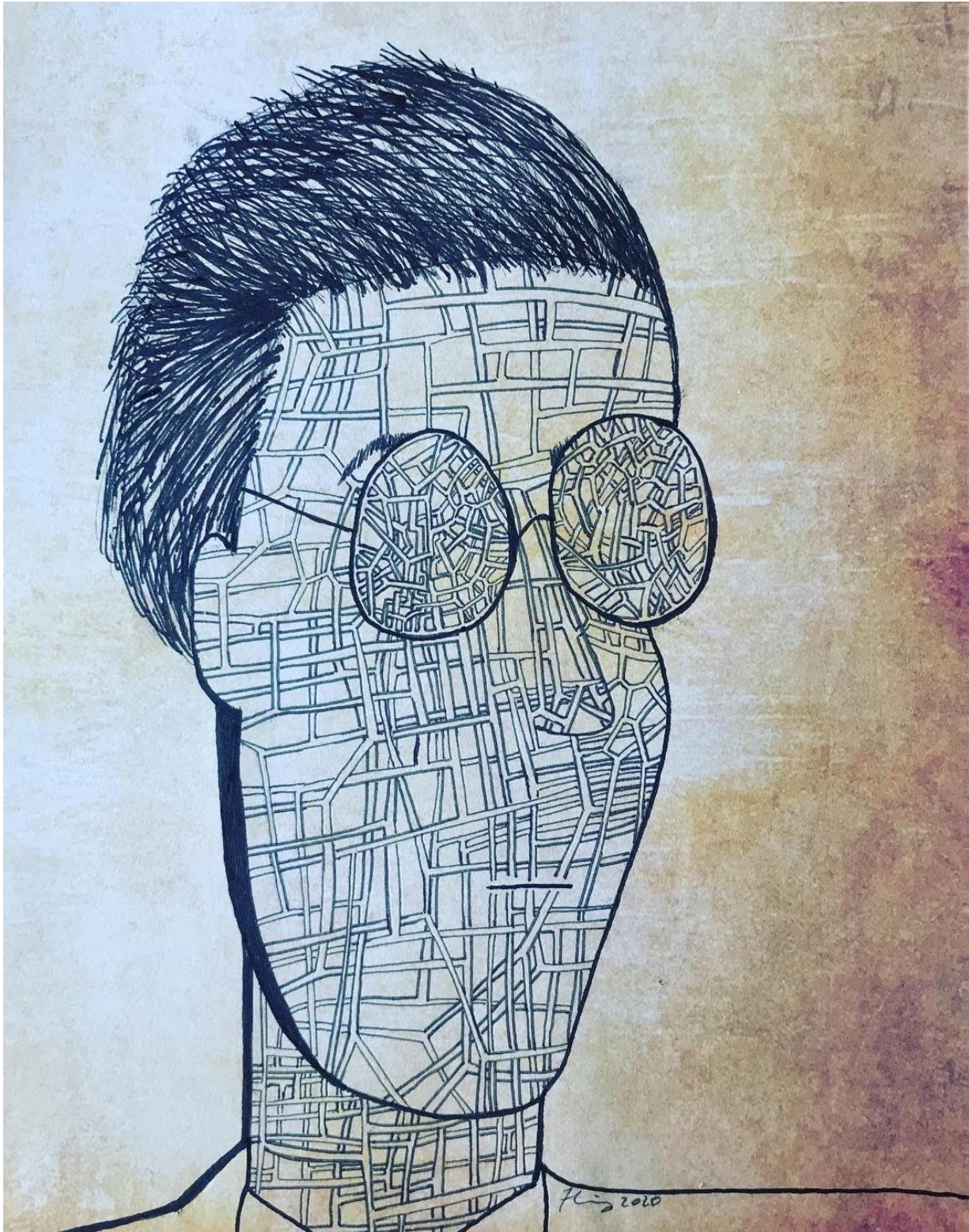
The dry mouth made her sleepy. She dozed a little, remembered the ride here. A blue 1997 Dodge Neon. A rust spot big as her head on the hood. Sacks, wrappers, aluminum cans on the floor around her ankles. Sunset. The aspens feathered bright against the black pines. She was pleased with herself thinking of that word, feathered. Imagined waking in Richard Sherman's arms, telling him about the trees. "Why you're a poet," he'd say. "My baby's a poet." She'd fall back to sleep in the warm dark, hearing his deep chuckle.

The man sliced a sausage, putting each slice on a cracker and eating it that way before fixing himself another. The knife blade, she saw, was streaked pearly white with fat.

"I'm thinking of what to do with you."

She thought of her experience with slaps and kicks and told herself it's the exposed surface that hurts. When the knife is inside you don't feel anything.





“By my calculations...” Brian Fleming

April Come She Will  
Howie Good

Men on the street would call my girlfriend *lindo*. “Get used to it,” she said. I decided the best thing for me to do was nothing. April had been designated Artichoke Month. I remember we saw a movie about U.S. astronauts on a mind-bending journey to the cosmic womb. It was confusing and a little scary. She got really into the singer-songwriter who had committed suicide by stabbing himself in the chest. There were long lines outside liquor stores and gun shops. One day we found a crudely lettered cardboard sign lying abandoned on the sidewalk: Hungry & Cold / Anything Helps.

After the Plague  
Howie Good

I'll step into the quiet of new geometries, long stretches of emptiness left by tens of thousands of unnecessary deaths. There'll be dry, wrinkled leaves scattered on the floor like notes from the kingdom of the sick, and the radio will play party songs from the sixties that, after months of our listening to lies, will sound somehow unintelligible. I'll feel rather than see the proximity of broken oaths and blood debts. All around us, the world will gratefully resume its ritual practices, preferring old familiar crimes to novel diseases. Night will end, only to begin again, a great black coffin.



“Ehh...what’s up, Doc?” Brian Fleming

Mad Ravings  
Vern Fein

Suppose someone  
began to recite the name of every  
man, woman, and child  
killed in war?

The soldiers who killed each other.  
Civilians slain in their homes,  
washing clothes by the river,  
planting or harvesting crops,  
living factory lives,  
alive in millions of ways  
before weapons spoke louder.

If that person speaks out loud  
the name of every victim,  
we might be absolved,  
go back to the beginning,  
have another chance to do it right:  
all centuries without war,  
the human imagination freed,  
able to dream beyond reality.

In my ravings, what if that person  
were you or me, our voice shaking,  
droning the names towards eternity.

December  
Adam Phillips

She pushed her body  
from the sand,  
still warm  
despite  
the setting sun. Ready. Setting  
black into the ocean.



“Qui?” Brian Fleming

Exuberance  
Jake Morrill

Once, I worked in an aluminum building, scoring the standardized tests that they make children take. That year, fourth graders across North Carolina were asked to answer, in an essay, "What is your favorite kind of weather, and why?"

You might imagine there would be any number of ways a child could answer that question. But you would be wrong. There was a right way, a wrong way, and a rubric to grade it.

My cubicle-mates were all victims of the latest recession—middle-aged people with nothing left to lose. We nursed frequent headaches. Under fluorescent lights, we applied the prescribed rubric to the children's answers: Was there a thesis statement? Supporting rationale? Did they stay on topic? Some wrote in tiny, neat letters. Others had looping scrawls wandered all over. I liked the exuberant answers, the ones with explanatory diagrams. There were wild tales of tornadoes or ice storms, a vivid picture of lightning. One child simply filled the box with black scribbles.

All these, of course, got the lowest possible score.

Every hour, the boss gathered up the team to calibrate us. "Now," she would say, holding up an essay, "Can someone please tell me why this is a 'four?'" You weren't supposed to argue it should be a "three." Calibration was meant to make us all think the same, to ensure uniform scoring. There was only one answer, only one way to see things.

One day, during mid-morning break, I walked out and left. I had no idea how I'd make rent that month. My friend Sam found me walking down the shoulder of the highway, and gathered me into his ancient convertible.

So, what's my favorite weather? When the wind whips your face, you're alive, and you can think what you will.



Dive Through  
Oliver Cable

When it rains, puddles form in the street outside my window. Some people love the rain for the sound it makes on the roof as they sleep. I love it for the windows it creates into a world far beneath, and for the sight of tiny droplets, seen only upon impact, as if the sky is trying to become one with the earth. In another world, they are fish, nibbling the surface of a gigantic underground lake, only revealed when it rains.

Shutting the front door behind me, I cross the street, barefoot. It's been raining all afternoon, and now the yellow streetlights draw lines on the dark concrete, like suns setting all around me. I hunch down at the largest pool. If I sit still and look close, I can see myself reflected in the eyes of my reflection. Through those eyes, I watch myself sit motionless: a tiny mirrored me under the streetlight.

The water is cold on my bare legs, legs that disappear under the water as I plunge them into the pool. The ripples caused by my entrance send tiny wrinkles of light dancing across my thighs. The impact marks of the pitter-patter rain cease to be falling drops and instead become tiny fish, gasping at the roof of the world.

I hold my breath, and as I break the surface, a world of light floods my senses, a world of azure and sunshine a million miles from the grey city I've left behind. I find myself swimming, quite naturally, eyes open. I trace the outlines of the world first, pushing out until cliffs block my path, dotted with caves. In two of these lurk my eyes, in two more my nostrils. My mouth is a giant outcrop, unmoving now but for the rise and fall of breathing. I dive deeper, taking in every inch, edging along the lines that I know must form my chin, and then back up, swimming in the maze that is my ear. Then I push off from the rocks and swim inwards, towards a blaze of colour that looms up at the heart of this submerged world.

I realise then that I'm swimming around my psyche. As fish glint and shimmer and reveal hidden neon blues and underbellies of brightest red, I realise that these are my thoughts, floating idly among the coral mass of my brain.

I rarely get to observe my thoughts as though a third person. The city above requires so much of my attention that these dives are few and far between. Yet I enjoy them. It's peaceful down here. I feel safe swimming these waters. That promotion you're going for, those groceries you've got to buy; it's all meaningless here, lost in the face of overwhelming stillness. What hour of what day it is; that too is immaterial.

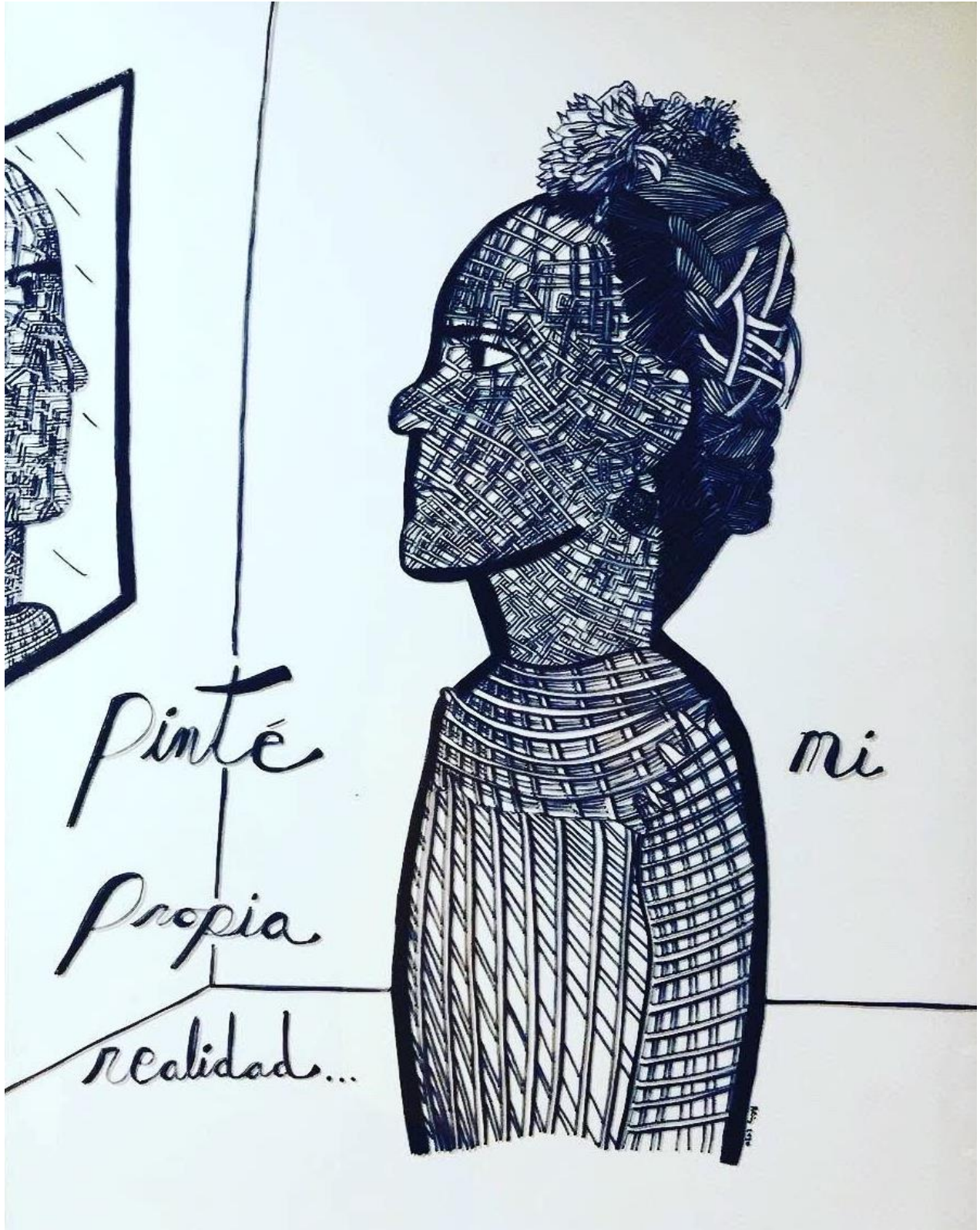
Arms spread, I fly over this submarine world. A school of thought catches up with me, then passes me by, tiny black and yellow things unconcerned by my presence as I soar over them. Deep in a crevice, the protruding black spines of a sea urchin. Further on, amongst a city of skyscrapers lifting their fingers towards the surface, a hundred or more fish, like specks of dust, mill together, before they're scattered by a passing parrotfish that nibbles at the coral. When the fish moves on, the dust mites regroup as if they had never dispersed.

Eventually, I feel the tug of the outside world requiring my attention. My body can't go unattended for too long. I do a final lap of the reef, taking it in for the last time, then push up and break the surface once more.

The street is still dark. The lamplight still shines. I have no idea how long I've been gone. It doesn't matter. I emerge and climb from the puddle, wet as a newborn. If it's still raining, I can't tell. On hands and knees, I survey the world: the pavements, the parked cars, the sad drip-

drip trees. I stand to go inside, then turn to take a last look at the puddle. In the lamplight, a fish nibbles the surface, calling out for my return. I'll be back, I know. But now it's time to return to reality.

Later, lying in bed, I feel the rocking of the sea and I swear, a hundred miles or more from the coast, I can hear waves breaking on sun-baked rocks as if coming from inside my head.



“Pinté mi propia realidad...” Brian Fleming

You Must be the Divine Thief  
Yvonne An

and so they kissed my feet and prayed the capability of healing myself worthless I was left unappreciated and exploited as they stepped on my sheets and washed the sky with carbon with fear I could hear the chuckles of the crawlers either merrily picking up their pacifiers or ready to be the boogeyman in a bloodbath camp but for my quest is to shelter and protect I gave you my breath my soiled skin my grazed fur and you fed me motherboards methane and weed but even though I shed my bark and spill out my fluids for your gluttonous bodies I will give you every limb and organ it was a magic wand whippin' the clouds a drizzle of rain for potatoes and wheat then it matched me on fire before the cold war would erupt child's play and so came the intrinsic flames of offerings the belief by intelligent design they fell into the trick of the sly serpent and teasing apple it was Midas touch it merged elements and gaudy minerals for them to flaunt their chains idiotic as a child advertising his own mother's milk traitor

Stocking the Pond  
Andy Spain

“Is fishes?” She arched an eyebrow and cocked her head to the opposite side. The other restless passengers bristled past us to the baggage carousel like water flowing around a rock.

“I’m sorry, is what fishes?” I said, hoisting an attaché strap over my shoulder and contorting my neck to look behind her.

“For when you go bathroom. Is fishes?”

I saw my bag emerge from the yawning mouth of the conveyor chute and motioned toward it. “I’m afraid I don’t understand.” I twisted away to make my escape, but her raised hand stopped me.

“I ask how you say this word in English. Is fishes? For when you go bathroom.”

I couldn’t imagine what feature of my travel-haggard face suggested I should be singled out for an impromptu pronunciation interrogation amidst the sea of dizzying commotion. I sighed, more noticeably than I’d meant to. “I’m very sorry, but I don’t know what you’re asking. Bathroom? Like the bathroom itself?” I snapped my fingers. “Oh, do you mean faucet? Like the part of the sink —”

She grabbed hold of my lapels and shook them urgently. “No no no, when *go* bathroom. Is fishes? Is this how you say?” She scanned my lips as if anticipating some physical sign of the clarifying words which would bubble up from the depths of my throat. She leaned in close; I flinched and buried my nose in my shirt collar, my residual plane-cabin musk preferable to her fetid mingling of astringent perfume and stale breakfast pastry.

“Is what...” I coughed. “I mean what is... What kind of go bathroom do you mean?” I shuddered and hastily glanced around, worried a passerby might construe the bizarre exchange as something skeevey on my part. “You’re asking for a word that means ‘go to the bathroom’ in English. Is that right?”

“Yes yes, that is correct. Is fishes? Is one of these words fishes?”

I stole a peek at my bag as it rounded the carousel’s horseshoe and fell on its side, just outside my reach. I took a sly step backward to reposition my stance for a sudden fast break. “I don’t see how... It doesn’t sound like... I mean, I have no idea what word you could mean.”

She held fast to my suit jacket and clawed at my collarbone. “No no, you do. Trust me. It is a word in English. I’m asking how you say fishes. I believe it is fishes. No?” “Like for peeing?” I teetered dopily and clutched the back of my neck; still, she held on. “Do you mean... peepee?” I said, quieter this time.

“Urine? Ah, no, it is not that, but the other thing. From the other side, you know. Like when a man sits, yes?”

I closed my eyes and rubbed my face, helplessly picturing someone perched atop a fishbowl, pants down, lumpy brown fish curling around the edges of the glass. I nodded and grimaced. “Yes, of course. But... Fishes... I can’t imagine what —”

“You can’t imagine fishes? No, everyone go fishes. Believe me. But you say is not fishes? You spell F-E-C-E-S. You say is not fishes?”

“What?” I howled. “You mean FEE-SEES?”

“FEE-SEES?” She finally let go and threw her hands up, pitching back like I’d sneezed in her face. “That is so strange. I don’t understand. You are sure that is how you say?”

“Well, yeah, it’s technically correct, but it’s not a word people normally use for the bathroom.”

“I know, it is for to make bathroom,” she barked over her shoulder and turned away, the steady click of her heels echoing insistently as she strutted across the claim area past a grid of half-zombies slumped over in rigid chairs.

An unamused custodian leaned on a long-handled mop outside the bathroom door. He wrinkled his lips in a dramatic sigh and stretched nonchalantly as the woman approached. She constricted her brow and pointed at the door. “My daughter in there go make FEE-SEES. You understand now?”

The custodian grunted and slammed the mop into a wheeled bucket. He shoved off behind it like a seaman with a harpoon fastened to a fleeing whale. The woman cleared her throat to get my attention and thrust her chin toward the custodian, rolling her eyes. I returned a half-smile and pivoted away just in time to catch a glimpse of my bag disappearing into the exit cavern of the baggage carousel.



“Yesterday...” Brian Fleming

The Man and the Darkness  
John Grey

You are not fit to live,  
aimless, red-nosed drunkard.  
I could tell you how worthless you are.  
I could list the times  
you stumble home from the bar.  
But I'm all business on this  
blotted-ink-dark night,  
with its invisible moon,  
starless sky.  
While you totter between  
walls and gutter,  
I scrape out my place  
with the sole of my shoe,  
kick away the curious rat  
like I banish the inconsequential,  
press my fingernails into my palms,  
prepare my hands for business.  
My teeth clench tight,  
press against my breath.  
I don't even observe your approach.  
The staggered sounds you make,  
the cough, the groan, the belch,  
are like compass needles  
pointing at where you'll be  
any moment now.  
You're my reason  
for roaming these streets,  
for stalking, for watching from  
this murky storefront.  
It's just you now.  
It's just thirty years of hating  
every fat clone of my father.  
It just my tongue  
flicking my lips,  
my hands rising to the horizontal,  
the muffled cry of the unsuspecting,  
the death throes of my old man.



Amusement  
Harris Coverley

Battling the salty winds  
That blow the air *out* of your chest  
And squeeze the piss out of your bladder  
We made our way to the back of the place  
Where the stakes were high (but not too high)  
And the Vietnamese women were crowded  
    About the spinning wheel  
Boasting and jabbering about their pots  
That they flung about the table like  
Confetti upon a parade of their pretense to opulence  
(It wouldn't last)

I sat at the half-circle to win  
    And came up £17.50 down  
Me making my deranged excuses:  
The dealer was wrong  
The seat was wrong  
The cards were wrong  
The air was bad  
And the light too bright  
And that doorman had scared  
    What little piss had remained out of me

And I stormed off and wasted the remainder  
Of my loose change in  
    Belting down clown heads  
And shooting hoops for tickets that  
    I exchanged for small pseudo-foods  
Full of glucose to clog my arteries sooner at a tenderer age

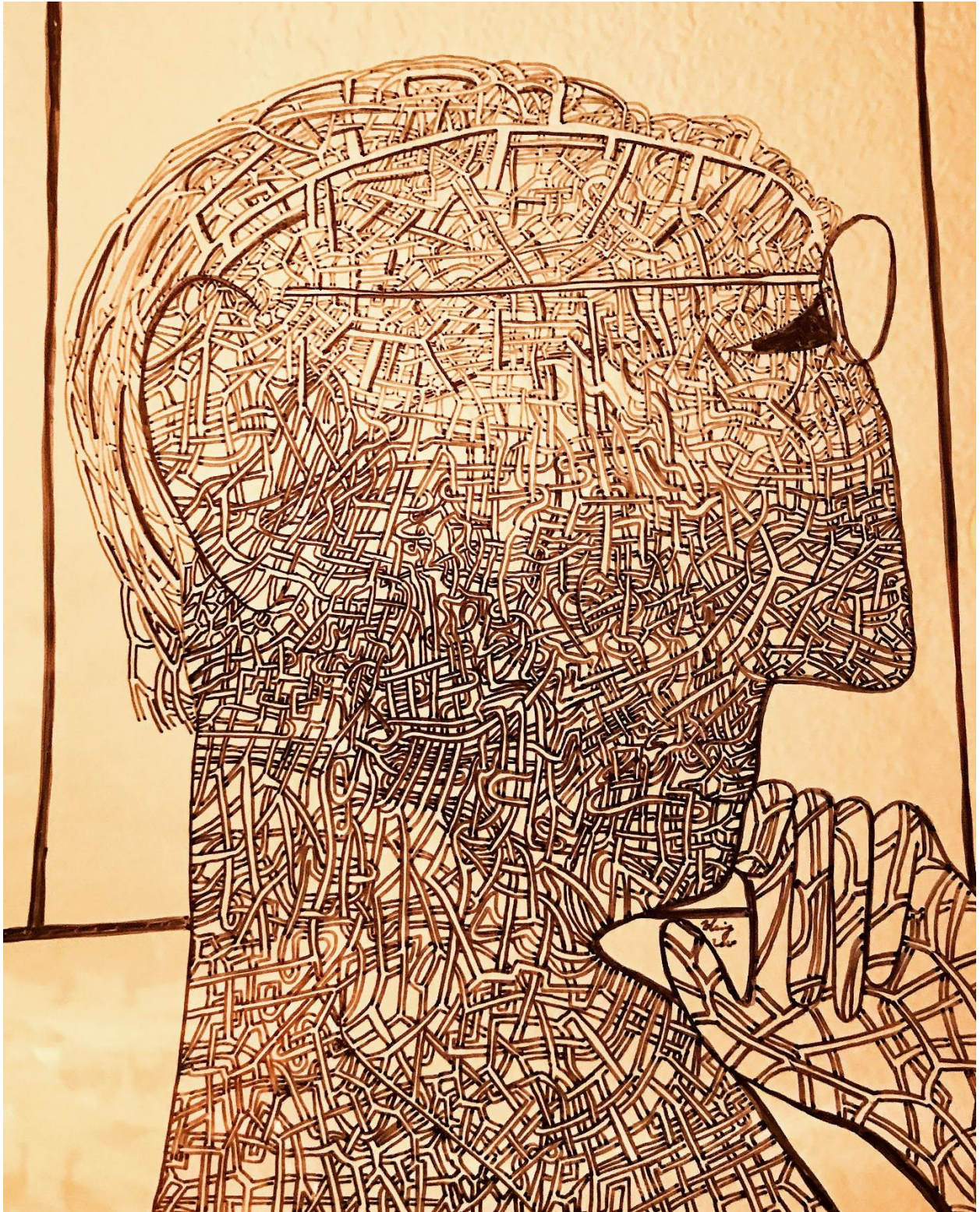
And my people tried to coax me back to the table:  
“Won you a tenner to play—  
    Come back to us, we miss you,” they phoned

But no:  
I was spent  
I was done for  
I was finished  
I was a dead and lonely man  
That smell of dirty metal on my fingers like a plague

All I know is that I know I'm no fool  
And the winning streak is over

The Queen of Black Hearts was played on me  
And bad luck became divine rule again  
As it does in all else

But then again: I shouldn't believe in luck  
But maybe put Probability on a  
Better throne in the pantheon.



“Jungian Thoughts...” Brian Fleming

Polar Bear Mugs Wino  
Robert Ronnow

Have I ever been profoundly lost? Yes. Railroad tracks and a river wide as the Amazon, yet lost. Living in the intense sunshine of northern New York summer, but lost in the shade of a gazebo. And here? Here I am enclosed in a tomb of porcelain machinery. With another winter passing its calling card in at the window. The warm steam no longer cutting the rough edge. Wearing wool sweater nights. The freedom of summer gone and only one fuck. What a nightmare, what a strange dream, life on planet, winter all around.

A system, they call it a system. I call it an evolved anarchy. Repetition, never. What do I know? Repetition, every two thousand years. Coming of a frost, coming of a fire. When nature proves furious beyond remembrance. Polar bear mugs wino.

\* \* \*

CUNNILINGUS

Tall, attractive, talented WM, 31,  
trumpet player, takes pleasure in  
performing cunnilingus with clean  
attractive women. Age, race, marital  
status no object. All replies answered.

Here is where it started, amusing myself in an undisciplined manner in the playpen. Being rude when interrupted. Height of bad taste hitting the wall, what's he talking about. Marlowe went to bed. He had a headache. Used an empty bottle for a teddy bear/sap. In the middle of the night, three secret men approached the rock he slept under. They did not see him there, the fire had long ago gone out. But they'd seen it across the valley and tried to estimate. They were close.

What do I care? They did this, he did that, they did this and this and that. He used his feet, took off his shoes. It mauled him to death in two minutes of the first round. Would have been better for him if it happened faster. Never got his knife out of his pocket. But he lived, with one eye after that.

\* \* \*

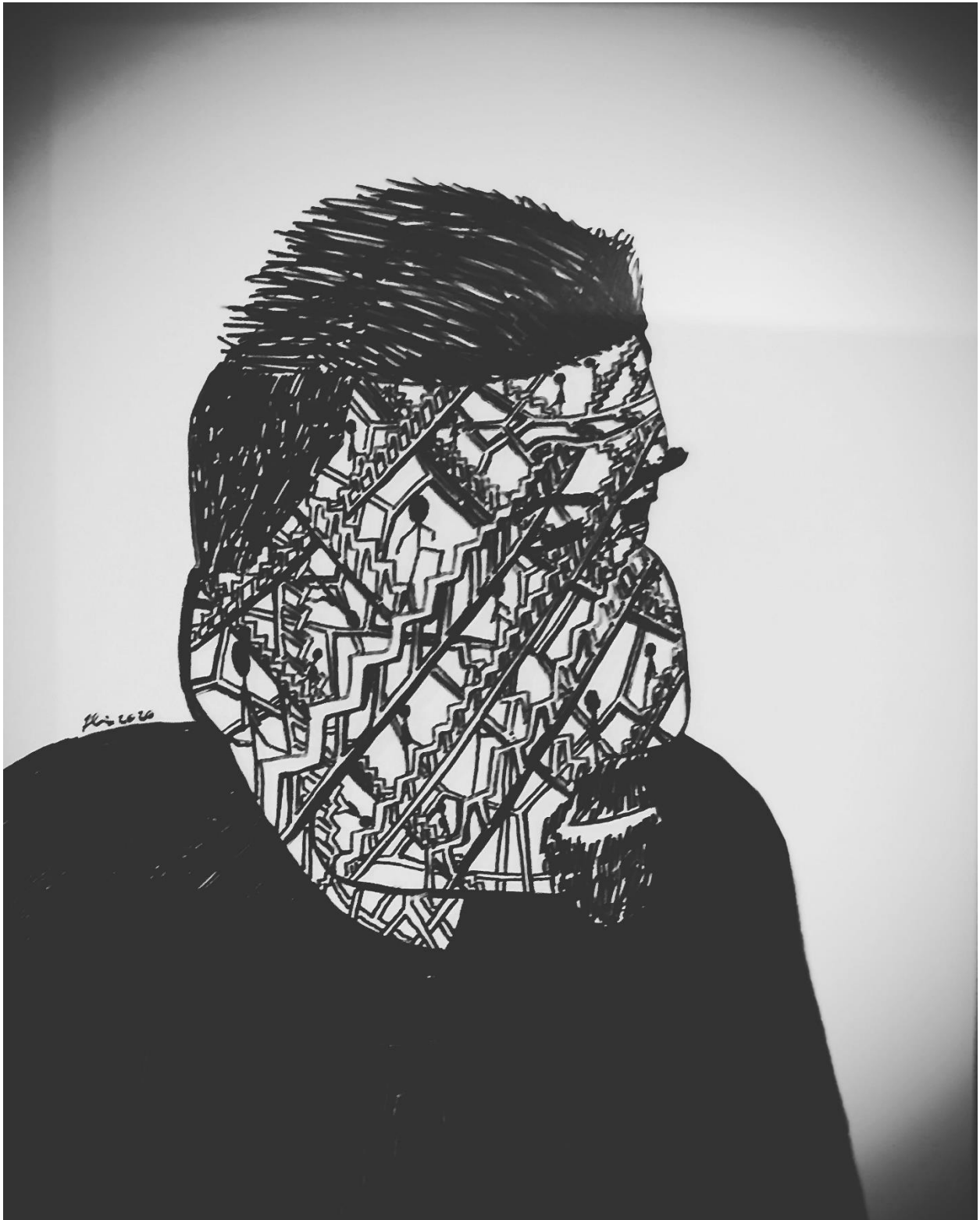
What do you do with a drunken sailor early  
in the morning?  
You pull that sailor out of bed by his hairy  
moorings.

Why should anybody believe this, this tiresome outpouring of old moans and groans, grumbles about loneliness of life and dominance of telephone? This gamble on print, above the spoken, sung word. The meditative call to inhabitants of planet to kneel woefully and pray. No, to chant as if the planet were mending.

Mending rhymes with ending, why not. And television, radio appreciated. Drugs and booze, jagged bent faces, black wet rock. The mantle of moss ripped away. Period. Amen to men. Absolute magical ripcord.

Overpass  
Karl Miller

Near	By
an	the
overpass	
a young	where the
girl begs in	deer lies splayed
the cold but	the red-brick ghost stands
no one's	debased by graffiti
stopping	with all its windows broken



“Illusions on the Brain” Brian Fleming

Obit  
Dave Gregg

unrequited love was  
found dead last night  
naked and alone  
in a hotel room  
killed by a single bullet  
to the heart  
police have no suspects  
believe suicide the cause  
there is no family  
to speak of although  
thousands have sent  
flowers



The Similarities  
James Croal Jackson

The Similarities  
between you, both are more Picasso  
Pollack than Leibovitz however  
much I disengage the Oculus will never  
be Pennsylvania though I have advanced  
technology in my pocket (I still have  
the broken faces we captured) I seek  
the thin thread between real what  
I wish to be real where I want to go  
if time ever bends into black hole  
I'll head back home to Ohio and give  
a hug to everyone I somehow love  
as an alarm or Chekhov's gun  
telling you are the people I still love  
in the future, you will reassemble into  
magazine collage and still resemble  
the hummus-stained server in 2012

Idolatry  
Brian Rihlmann

false are all portraits  
stone monuments  
and our words too—  
like pale shadows  
of flickering life

symbolic—  
like titles for people  
and flags for the land  
like crosses for sacrifice  
and dollars for wealth

but their importance  
is seared into our youth—  
a cruel branding

and as the shackles  
of ghostly concepts tighten  
we move differently...  
slavishly  
mechanically

as though the gods  
dangled a promise—  
of understanding  
of power and control  
even immortality  
before us  
like raw meat before wolves

and then drink, feast and laugh  
watching from the heavenly gallery  
as we—  
thoroughly bewitched—  
tear each other apart  
bloodying the arena  
for their amusement

while defending our phantom truths—  
true as tombstones are true  
as their inscriptions fill with moss  
and they crumble...

returned to the soil  
by vines like tiny  
grasping  
fingers

Bird Bones  
Mark Danowsky

Let me construct a world  
like the neon fruit supermarket  
looks so fresh & so clean  
bold color & horrible light  
dustless as we believe  
a sharpened cherry cross breaks  
this vampire's empty heart

Omen  
Mark Danowsky

a large man on a steep green incline  
raises his arms behind his back  
stretching as an active weed whacker  
twirls against ice sky

an off day pulls seamlessly  
toward an inevitable burnt gloaming  
cautionary as the stretching man's  
neon orange shirt

I Swear I Dreamt About You  
Vincent James Perrone

We criticize the moon—tonight  
it's dark as hell in a drawer.

My truth is lazy  
and infinite as broken glass.

You are in my prayers—  
I pray infinitely.

I would like to have  
an affair with myself—

tumultuous but  
informative.

You Don't Remind Me of Anyone  
Vincent James Perrone

Fernet breath and puppy-print  
galoshes. Friendly with centipedes—  
you pluck olives off the branch.

Hips pull—smiling bones—  
exaggerated and smooth.  
You know the exact angle.

This is the image of two heads on one pillow.  
This is the image of snow.

Solve puzzles with your spine.  
Find pennies heads up.  
Play the jukebox all night.

You know there is a caveat to longing—  
keep a soap bubble afloat.  
A streak of flesh and Christmas lights.

Your fingers are quite long and aggressive.  
One winter becomes the next.

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Gary Beck has spent most of his life as a theater director and as an art dealer when he couldn't earn a living in the theater. He has also been a tennis pro, a ditch digger, and a salvage diver. His original plays and translations of Moliere, Aristophanes, and Sophocles have been produced Off-Broadway. His poetry, fiction, and essays have appeared in hundreds of literary magazines and his published books include 26 poetry collections, 10 novels, 3 short story collections, 1 collection of essays, and 1 collection of one-act plays.

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Rio Grande  
Robert Beveridge

they snuck  
over the border  
last night  
while the guards  
were asleep

they make me think  
about things like  
chastity, poverty,  
obedience, stability  
the death penalty

so I shot the border patrol  
replaced them  
with robots that don't sleep

purged my thoughts  
now sex and death  
have moved  
back into their townhouses  
with much celebration

and the robots  
chase the aliens  
back over the border  
guns ablaze and ten-gallon  
hats glued to their heads

feels good to be back home

Good Vibrations  
Linda Imbler

Through the skylight,  
I view  
a small rectangular patch  
of moon's shine,  
so bright,  
like a highway line  
under a Day-Glo light.

The power of the moon  
to bring forth altruism.

Championing those,  
who'll walk  
across a room,  
and put a new member  
of a group at ease.

Advocating for those,  
unabashed,  
while dancing in front of others,  
(even if they're solo.)

Promoting those,  
whose smiles reach their eyes.

Upholding those,  
who recognize misery,  
and work to eradicate it.

The world will truly  
be full of music  
when the moon teaches the sun  
to sing just as benevolently.



Into the Sea  
Amber Ridenour

*how could we miss someone as dumb as this?*

I can't remember meeting Dan. He was simply suddenly and irrevocably there, like a fact of nature, a revolting sibling, or similar familiar loved irritant.

We worked together in his dad's music store from the time we were 16 until I left for college. The store sold records and 8-track tapes and beads and trash and was creatively named, "The Music Store." Dan had bad skin, a bad attitude. He had the unkempt smell that denotes a basement dweller and read paperback fantasy novels with dragons and babes on the covers until I slapped them out of his hands.

The last time I talked to Dan was the year before he killed himself. He simply said, *Hey You*, as he picked up the phone. He was making a batch of pot brownies and he sounded like it. He was still in our hometown, holed up somewhere in the canyons.

When I heard the news, I was in Colorado. My sister told me in a punk rock bar. I screamed *No No No No No* and pounded on the counter. I wanted everything in my hands so I could smash it against the wall.

I wanted mess and wreck, glass shards and splinters, so I could see the answer to the question burning my throat:

Who was I, then, without him?

*you and me*

Our music had to be as black as our outfits, black as our nail polish, black with a dreamy, glittery undercurrent. We found a compilation CD called "Darkwave: Music of the Shadows" and turned it into our musical bible.

Dan loved Dream Theatre's "Space-Dye Vest" and began putting it on every mix CD he made me, along with the Cure's "Lovecats" and "Strange Attraction." I can't believe I was so oblivious as to miss these messages entirely; it's more probable I ignored the subtext and hope it would go away.

He ended nearly every mix with Kansas's "Dust in the Wind." Now it seems like an obvious plot device, a ham-fisted foreshadowing. What did I learn in writing classes? If there is a gun on the mantelpiece in the first act, it has to go off by the end of the third.

At 16 we promised each we'd get out of our hometown, one way or another.

At 26 Dan began collecting weapons.

The gun went off.

I forgot: the gun always goes off.

***we bite and scratch and scream all night***

*So, This Morning My Dad Was Giving Me Shit About Eating Sugar-Frosted Whatever—You Know, Kid’s Cereal— With Chocolate Milk. So I’m Like, ‘What Did You Eat For Breakfast When You Were My Age, Bob? Heroin?’ And He Thinks About It, And He Goes, ‘Well... Yeah. But You Should Still Eat Better.’ Dan cackled. His skin was worse than usual. We hadn’t sold a thing all day. Our fingers were still black from dying each other’s hair in the employee bathroom.*

*What-ever. I rolled my eyes. I Bet You Grow Up to Be Just Like Him, Dan. You’re Gonna Be A Junkie with Delusions of Rock N’ Roll. Then You’ll, Like, Get Off Smack for Jesus. Make Your Kids Work in Your Crappy Record Store.*

*And You, Dan, shook a finger in my face, Will Be A Spoiled, Sad, And Bitchy Housewife Like Your Mom.*

*Fair Enough.*

Dan shoved the door open to the roof. We looked down on the lights of our hometown winking on like phony stars. We’d already thrown the good garbage: bits of leftover burger slime on greasy paper, ancient Twinkies, soda slopping in the bottom of cans. Next came the 8-track tapes, landing with a scooting sound onto the roof of the bookstore across the alley.

Nothing was like how it was supposed to be but there it was. I aimed a bright green bottle like a prayer and hit an SUV.

***always the right way ‘round***

The last time I saw Dan was in our hometown. Finally, alleged grown-ups, we drank gin at a local bar. I was sad about something that I can’t remember now. We still dyed our hair black. We still dressed like nothing that was a great idea.

Dan climbed up the side of Saint Andrew’s Episcopal Church. He thought it was appropriate to ding the bell, remembering how at 17 I’d jumped off the roof to impress a boy, later called it my Fall from Grace. *Attention must be paid.*

I ran my hands over the spikes of the church fence. Some of the points were still broken, never repaired. Years ago, they blamed it on us. They, the town, thought that even if we didn’t do it, we still deserved to be punished.

The picture I keep in my mind: lilac dusk, a nowhere street corner. Dan, up in the air, ringing the bell and whooping. And me, down on the ground, where I am smiling.

*into the sea*

In dreams, The Music Store moves around. The place is always our hometown but with subtle differences. Streets are re-arranged. People that should be dead aren't. Sometimes I wonder if it is my underworld, like the mirror-world of Cocteau's *Orphee*, and I am both Lady Death and Orpheus.

What did we learn from Orpheus? Don't look back. Or, if you do, don't expect to bring the dead back with you.

In dreams, Dan is still working at The Music Store. He is the age he would be now: my age. Ours. Not old, but not young anymore.

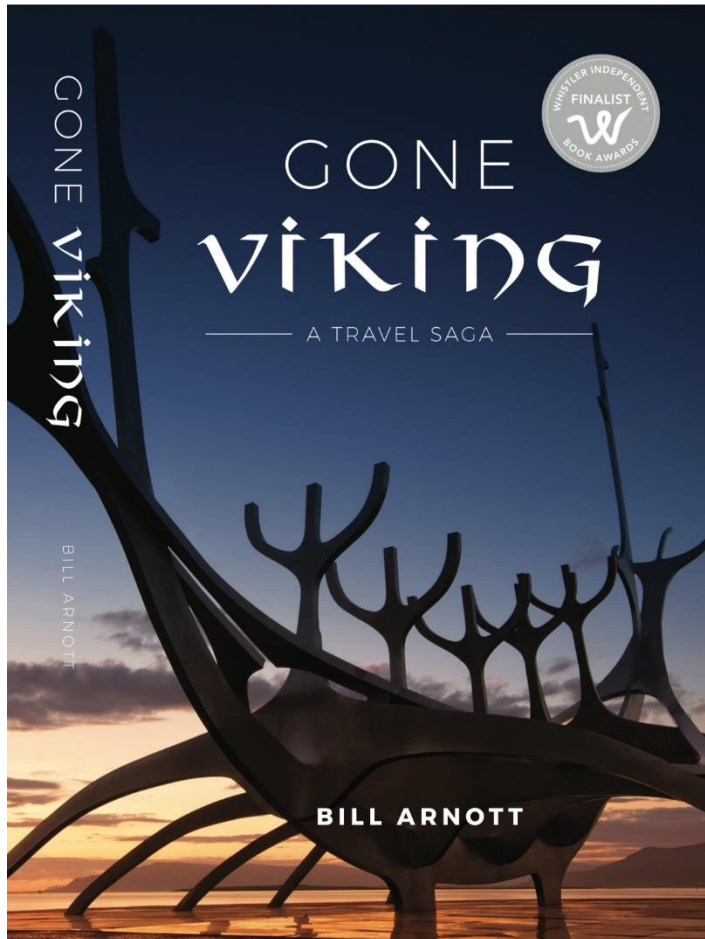
He's calm. Not so skinny anymore. His skin is better. We don't fight anymore.

When I cry, he hugs me and says, *I'm Not Dead! That's the Stupidest Fucking Thing I Ever Heard.*

He says, *Come On, I Want to Show You Something*, then takes my hand. He leads me back and back through endless beaded curtains, till I see...

and the waves crash out,

*oh, I love you let's go.*



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## Mid-Air

J. Randall Brett

You will want to catch her mid-air. At least break her fall after she sews all the little silk circles together, knots in shroud lines, and tries jumping off the barn roof. She had stolen (just a few) of the tiny parachutes she packed into bombs every day out at Pueblo Field. With her brothers flying by the light of their flames over Tokyo's docks, she felt she had a calling.

Or when she was younger, angry that they wouldn't let a girl go hunting, she saved her penny candy money to buy bullets. You will want to tip their trajectories away mid-flight when she used the neighbor's turkeys for target practice.

You will want to spare the lift of her hand to her mouth because roasting a bullfrog over a campfire is not the best way to find out why the French eat *les grenouilles*.

Because when you are her very spit and image, what is true for her is true for you.

So much that when you are a teenager, those brothers have to leave the room when you walk in, unable to bear the grief from the sight of their loss.

Because you have eaten bullfrog.

Because you love the smell of cordite.

Because your grief needs a parachute

for every tall building, you enter.



Invasion  
Fabrice Poussin

T'is a fearful season  
it comes with the harvest  
before death sets its chilly shroud  
upon summers passed below the tomb

Shiny asphalt of darkest shades of  
early morning rain soon  
will turn to ice.

Flashing lights in bloody bulbs and  
warning signs ordering a pause  
inches become eternities.

It was once shiny insects in exoskeletons  
furry hoppers down under  
Spanish moss in unknown climes.

Mechanical monsters now roam the land  
born in another millennium  
the color of cowardice they slither  
as if threatening snakes in a wasteland.

They swallow the tiny crowds  
shunning the slumber of a restful darkness  
and the metal carcasses echo of laughter  
in frequencies unsafe to the engineer.

Giant bugs their excrement is asphyxiating smog  
soon regurgitating their early meal onto  
the pavement of docile concrete and  
wooden traps where knowledge must be acquired.

Then they too rest for the bright hours  
eager for another feast  
when again they will create chaotic avenues  
instilling panic in those anxious for a little peace.

Dark City  
James Mulhern

My only memory of you—  
in the dark hallway of your Boston house,  
just off the sunny kitchen.  
I was two and you sixty.  
Tall and thin, wispy hair, light-blue eyes  
illuminated by a slant of kitchen sun.  
"You don't know me?"

I couldn't speak,  
but I understood what you meant when you rubbed my head  
and walked down the shellacked hallway towards the parlor.

You died in your sleep a few years later.  
Years of hard work behind you—  
a gravedigger during the day,  
hauling bags of mail onto the trains  
at South Station every night.  
Raising five children.

Close to your age now,  
I visit your homestead in Ireland.  
Cars whizz by where once was a dirt road.  
No one lives in the tiny stone house.

I hear birdsong and smell cut grass.  
The air is cool and damp.  
Sheep amble in the fields.  
The sun moves into clouds,  
and then lightness comes again.

What were you thinking as you exited this door?  
How conflicted you must have felt.  
Twenty-one-years-old, off to America,  
leaving nine siblings and parents behind,  
knowing you would never see them again.

From Athlone on the Shannon River, dead center of Ireland,  
you walked and somehow made it to Southampton, England,  
where you boarded the ship *Adriatic*, a word that means "dark city."

You knew no one in the promised land of your imagination,  
but you had courage and a dream.

Just a few belongings, I'm sure, and not much money.  
Mostly you had hope.

I press my palm against the stone wall,  
just as you touched my head so many years ago.  
I see you move from light into darkness and beyond.

## BIO'S

Karl Miller's fiction and poetry have appeared in numerous periodicals, including RE: AL, Portland Review, Subtle Tea, Cold Mountain Review, and others. His play, A Night in Ruins, was produced Off-Broadway in 2013; "Elena," a novelette, was published in 2018. A 2016 Best of the Net nominee, Miller lives in Coral Springs, FL.

Gregory C. Wilder Jr. (also known by the stage name Slay! the Dragon) is an award-winning writer, full-time student, and spoken word poetry performer, currently residing in Schenectady, N.Y. After a long, downhill battle with alcohol and drug addiction, Greg entered treatment in June of 2017 and rediscovered the therapeutic potential of art and writing. Today, with over three years clean and while interning for a drug and alcohol treatment center, Greg now shares the healing power of poetry with other recovering addicts.

Jeffrey Zable is a teacher, conga drummer/percussionist, and writer of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. His work has appeared in hundreds of literary magazines and anthologies, more recently in Former People, The Daily Drunk, Hypnopomp, Brushfire, Smoky Blue, Alba, Third Wednesday, and many others.

Norbert Kovacs lives and writes in Hartford, Connecticut. He has published stories in Westview, Thin Air, Hypnopomp, Corvus Review, and The Write Launch. His website is [www.norbertkovacs.net](http://www.norbertkovacs.net).

Michael Seeger lives with his lovely wife, Catherine, and still-precocious 16-year-old daughter, Jenetta, in a house with a magnificent Maine Coon (Jill) and two high-spirited Chihuahuas (Coco and Blue). He is an educator (like his wife) residing in the Coachella Valley near Palm Springs, California.

John Tustin's poetry has appeared in many disparate literary journals in the last dozen years. [fritzware.com/johntustinpoetry](http://fritzware.com/johntustinpoetry) contains links to his published poetry online.

Jane Snyder's stories have appeared in Bull, Men's Fiction, Nothing in the Rulebook, and Cobalt Weekly. She lives in Spokane.

Howie Good is the author most recently of Stick Figure Opera: 99 100-word Prose Poems from Cajun Mutt Press. He co-edits the online journals Unbroken and UnLost.

A retired special education teacher, Vern Fein has published over one hundred poems on over forty sites, a few being: \*82 Review, The Literary Nest, Gyroscope Review, Courtship of Winds, 500 Miles, The Write Launch, Broadkill Review, Soft Cartel, and River and South.

Adam Phillips currently works as a teacher and coach in Boise. He will have three novels coming into the world this year, from Propertius, Prospective, and Montag Presses. On Wednesday afternoons, he hosts a cool radio show on Radio Boise. He says...Thanks!!!!

Jake Morrill lives in East Tennessee. He holds degrees from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and Harvard Divinity School and is a recipient of the post-graduate Michener-Copernicus Fellowship from the Iowa Writers' Workshop. His 2011 novella, Randy Bradley, was published by Solid Objects (New York).

Oliver Cable is a writer based in London. His first novel, *Fresh Air and Empty Streets*, was published in 2016. He is currently working on a collection of short stories. His writing seeks to write on the knife-edge of reality.

Korean poet Yvonne An lived in the Philippines her whole life and is currently a junior in International School Manila. Growing up with the aromas of street food, she spends her days inventing projects to advocate for zero poverty and social justice, creating hypotheses, birthing imaginative characters and their stories, hammering her black velvet piano, and portraying our current world by communicating through a universal language, music. Her accomplishments include gold keys by her poems admitted to the Scholastic Arts and Writing Awards, publications in *Aerie International* and *WhatRoughBeast Indolent Books*, investigative research papers admitted to the National Research Conference of Arts, Sciences, and Health (NRCASH), service clubs accredited by UNESCO, and awards in international youth piano concours.

Andy Spain is a video editor and motion graphics designer living in Durham, NC, with his wife and four children. His humor writing has appeared in *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, *Slackjaw*, and *Weekly Humorist*. His short fiction has appeared in *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature* and *X-R-A-Y Literary Magazine*.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in *Transcend*, *Dalhousie Review*, and *Qwerty* with work upcoming in *Blueline*, *Hawaii Pacific Review*, and *Clade Song*.

Harris Coverley has had poetry most recently accepted for *New Reader Magazine*, *Better Than Starbucks*, *The Oddville Press*, *Bard*, and *Star\*Line*, amongst others. He is also a short story writer, with fiction published or forthcoming in *Curiosities*, *Planet Scumm*, and *The J.J. Outré Review*. He lives in Manchester, England.

Robert Ronnow's most recent poetry collections are *New & Selected Poems: 1975-2005* (Barnwood Press, 2007) and *Communicating the Bird* (Broken Publications, 2012). Visit his web site at [www.ronnowpoetry.com](http://www.ronnowpoetry.com).

Dave Gregg has stumbled about the mortal coil for six decades writing poetry in each decade. A favorite axiom from the Far East is "There is always another side to the other side." James Croal Jackson (he/him) has a chapbook, *The Frayed Edge of Memory* (Writing Knights Press, 2017), and poems in *Pacifica*, *Reservoir*, and *Rattle*. He edits *The Mantle Poetry* ([themantlepoetry.com](http://themantlepoetry.com)). Currently, he works in the film industry in Pittsburgh, PA. ([jimjakk.com](http://jimjakk.com))

Brian Rihlmann was born in New Jersey and currently resides in Reno, Nevada. He writes free verse poetry and has been published in *The Blue Nib*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Cajun Mutt Press*, *The Rye Whiskey Review*, and others. His first poetry collection, "Ordinary Trauma," (2019) was published by Alien Buddha Press.

Mark Danowsky is author of the poetry collection *As Falls Trees* (NightBallet Press, 2018). His poems have appeared in *Eunoia Review*, *Gargoyle*, *The Healing Muse*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Right Hand Pointing*, and elsewhere. He's Managing Editor for the *Schuylkill Valley Journal*.

Vincent James Perrone is a writer and musician from Detroit. He is the author of "Starving Romantic" (11:11 Press, 2018) and occasionally writes funny/sad things on twitter @spookyghostclub.

Robert Beveridge (he/him) makes noise ([xterminal.bandcamp.com](http://xterminal.bandcamp.com)) and writes poetry in Akron, OH. Recent/upcoming appearances in Collective Unrest, Cough Syrup, and Blood & Bourbon, among others.

Linda Imbler has five published poetry collections and one hybrid ebook of short fiction and poetry. She is a Kansas-based Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net Nominee. More information can be found at [lindaspotryblog.blogspot.com](http://lindaspotryblog.blogspot.com).

Joe Oppenheimer is an award-winning poet, playwright, and fiction writer. His latest major effort is Mixed Blood, a play about a family in post-war Germany. His story "Charlemagne," first published in Corvus, has been recently republished in the anthology Us Against Alzheimer's: Stories of Family, Love, and Faith (2019) ed. Marita Golden.

Amber Walker Ridenour is a recent MFA graduate from the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics. Some of her work has appeared in Alarm Magazine, Gumball Poetry, 20 Minutes in Portland - A Special Edition of The Portland Review, elimae, Word Riot, and a modest pile of chapbooks. She lives in Colorado.

J. Randall Brett lives and works in NYC. He has previously published poems in Euphemism and Poetry Breakfast.

Fabrice Poussin teaches French and English at Shorter University. Author of novels and poetry, his work has appeared in Kestrel, Symposium, The Chimes, and many other magazines. His photography has been published in The Front Porch Review, the San Pedro River Review as well as other publications.

James Mulhern has published fiction or poetry in literary journals and anthologies over seventy times. In 2013, he was a Finalist for the Tuscany Prize in Catholic Fiction. In 2015, Mr. Mulhern was awarded a fully paid writing fellowship to Oxford University in the United Kingdom. That same year, a story was longlisted for the Fish Short Story Prize. In 2017, he was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His writing (novels and short story collection) earned favorable critiques from Kirkus Reviews, including a Kirkus Star. His most recent novel, Give Them Unquiet Dreams, is a Readers' Favorite Book Award winner, a Notable Best Indie Book of 2019, and a Kirkus Reviews Best Book of 2019.