



Bloodroot Literary Magazine

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Poem After the End of the World

It isn't that I promised anything: not  
the melt of late February, not the way  
I sometimes feel I am inked. I don't  
even pretend to permanence. I'm told  
it's natural to want to live, so here.  
Let me be named unnatural. You don't  
have to look at me like that—I love  
too many things to ease them out.  
Like a page under my thumb, or riding  
with the sunroof open in winter.  
Arguing about heat or chill (I always  
take heat), crushing cardboard with  
my heel, the sudden snap of vinegar.  
And eels. Anything that slithers  
and drops my belly. But remember,  
it's just ink. Fading is essential.

RUTH FOLEY

Poem After the End of the World

This morning, a dream: I could fold the earth  
 like fabric, cut a door and step through.  
 It wasn't even motion. It wasn't intent.  
 Awake, I listed the people I would see  
 and surprised myself with absences.  
 I revised my list all day, and swore to keep  
 it secret. But I can tell you a little bit.  
 This afternoon, a penny on the ground,  
 snow melt mudding around it, and I couldn't  
 remember why a coin heads-up was lucky  
 and columns should be left to lie. So I left  
 it, blank messenger, for someone who  
 hasn't learned to fold a threshold or maybe  
 for someone who knows what it all means.

RUTH FOLEY

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### Poem After the End of the World

Tell me the century is already broken. Tell me  
we have lost. Tell your story to the river  
going bracken despite itself and see how much  
the water can hold. Tell it to stop moving  
and see where that gets you. I'm told it is  
a sink, that the ferns rise out of carbon dioxide  
and sunlight, but I don't know. Tell me what  
you know of science and I'll tell you a story  
about molecules and moles. I'm telling you,  
the river has its own priorities and you  
aren't one of them, so if you want it to speak  
you have to promise to listen. Tell me  
you can stay here in the overgrowth, where  
we can pretend we haven't broken anything.  
You don't have to claim we haven't lost—  
the riverbed knows better, I can tell.

RUTH FOLEY

Poem After the End of the World

There are lights, enough, and motion. I'm not sure  
 from where. Sometimes I can still look up  
 to vast expanses, but the stars are more free  
 to clutter now. Maybe it just seems that way.  
 I had a dog who left pieces of himself behind  
 like that. Nothing could remove him. If the stars  
 go black, I'll know it's truly over. The number  
 of ways to blanket them is as much beyond me  
 as they are. Light is good for what it is, but lets me  
 see what I once was privileged to forget. Everyone  
 is hungry now for something. Everyone is trying  
 to remember how to count. I say, *Look at the stars*  
*and start with one* but maybe I forget to say it  
 aloud again. I couldn't point out Sirius to save  
 my life, so add that to the list of ways I've failed  
 to cure myself. Every time I think I've managed,  
 another star turns up, another malignant cluster.

RUTH FOLEY

*Ruth Foley*

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*Bloodroot Literary Magazine*

*Bloodroot* is a nonprofit literary magazine dedicated to publishing diverse voices through the adventure of poetry, short fiction, and creative nonfiction. Our aim is to provide a platform for the free-spirited emerging and established writer.

*Founders*

“Do” Roberts and Deloris Netzband

*Editors*

Rena Mosteirín  
Sara Biggs Chaney

*Typesetter*

James E. Dobson

[bloodroot.literary@gmail.com](mailto:bloodroot.literary@gmail.com)

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Poem After the End of the World

The house smells of oranges again  
and I suppose there should be singing

somewhere. I am hoarse. I haven't  
slept. Maybe once there was a bird—  
I seem to remember a phoebe singing

its own name to the trees. Nothing  
answered. I think something used to.

I suppose I could think of the creak  
of naked branches as a song.  
You want to know if I'm tired or

if I'll ever grow quiet, if I'll learn  
that nothing is left to answer me.

There used to be singing, something  
something love, something something  
above, arms, warm, a place for

violins and dancing. It's on film  
if you need to prove it to yourself.

RUTH FOLEY

## Imprint

Little leaf let the words soak in,  
 for I am not an oak but a man  
 who clears the way for you to fall  
 and scatters you from the open sky.

Do not pretend I am the one  
 who loosed their prattle toward  
 these ill-at-case stars; if the sky  
 were a pool you'd see me still.

There are no lines in you to blur  
 except the veins that carry me:  
 even hacked-down forests  
 are speechless and sad.

And that you wish to be named is sacred  
 so I carve these shapes again  
 into what you'd become, and gone  
 I'd hope that you might find them.

ELIOT CARDINAVUX

## Note on Type

This book is set in 12 point ET Bembo, a modern face designed for the web and print by Edward Tufte and based on the Bembo family of typeface. ET Bembo is a freely available open-source font. The text was typeset using xelatex, an updated L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X typesetting package, along with several other free packages, including poemscol.

## Introductory Remarks

Last year, when I walked away from the computer that sent *Bloodroot's* first online edition out into the world, I headed toward Main Street, Hanover and cried a little bit because it was the first time *Bloodroot* came together without Do & Do, the dynamic combination of Deloris Netzband and the late "Do" Roberts. Reaching the corner of Main and Wheelock, a single white balloon was released from somewhere behind Left Bank Books. As the balloon went up into the morning sky, I realized I had been silently crying. As I watched the balloon with wonder my tears stopped. Here was the sign I had been waiting for.

I am proud to present the second digital edition of *Bloodroot Literary Magazine*. When Phyllis Katz, Ivy Schweitzer and I sat down to revive *Bloodroot*, we originally imagined a rotating editorship. In that spirit I invited the poet Sara Chaney to co-edit this edition with me. Chaney has brought new voices with her from her extensive editorial and publishing experience. If you've enjoyed a literary magazine lately, it's likely that Chaney's work has graced their pages. Together, we curated the local and national, with grand literary ambitions this issue seeks to be both an author platform and a highly curated online home for writing and writers alike.

Please read and share. Use this link to download a version you can Make some chapbooks and leave them places where people wait, like bus stops. These words beg to be spoken and sung and shared. Thank you for reading.

RENA J. MOSTEIRIN

## Lately

Lately the sun went down,  
all thankfulness aglow, all shame  
in dusk's hunger vanishing.

Soon the moon went up,  
the cages rattled and were lifted—  
like your hand upon the book.

While they howled at your mercy  
we were little white lanterns  
gone out around the brook,

and given these things,  
all thankfulness aglow, all shame  
in dusk's hunger vanishing.

ELIOT CARDINAUX



Here in the Upper Valley, we are finally crawling out of winter. It has been a long and a bleak one. But finally, we can see the ground again. Right now, it is still parched and dry, but soon it will be ready for planting.

Spring is the season for modest miracles. Under a pile of last year's dead leaves, we find the tough, budding head of a tiny crocus. I hope you all discover a multitude of tiny miracles in your own lives, and maybe one or two in the pages of this issue.

When Rena asked me to co-edit *Bloodroot*, I was excited. Not just because editing is a great way to discover and promote new writers, but because *Bloodroot* has such powerful connections to my community. I never knew Do Roberts or Deloris Netzbund, but I know that they built *Bloodroot* as a community platform and that they were loved by the circle of writers who gathered there. I'm honored to help produce another issue of this Upper Valley institution.

Curating this issue was a pleasure. It was great to hear the range of voices of this community, as it is a pleasure to promote them. This issue takes us far beyond the Upper Valley, as well. Here you'll find brick factory stacks, low-crouching midwestern towns, dead counties, and desert highways.

I hope you enjoy the journeys.

SARA BIGGS CHANEY

## Whetstone Tunisia

It wanted to explode me  
 that gob of spit on my cheek,  
 insult to my father,  
 not the fine—I pressed ten dinars  
 into her deaf hands but  
 big with authority the police  
 woman grabbed the car  
 smacked my face cracked  
 me open

Before the arched windows of provincial headquarters  
 I cradled my complaints  
 like an ailing child  
 felt my mind  
 detonate

fuel drenched me, quenched  
 all indignities  
 I drank and drank  
 struck the match  
 flames leapt melting me down

*Bowazizi* voices called  
 but I was already far away  
 from mother and the others in our cramped  
 rooms  
 so far I could barely hear  
*Bowazizi*  
 sounds sharpened on the flint  
 ribs of my rage.

IVY SCHWEITZER

A southern stingray flaps past  
its pale underbelly  
an old-fashioned hankie  
waved in truce  
or farewell.

IVY SCHWEITZER

## “Dead Country”

Term for a country that has ceased to issue stamps.  
—postalmuseum.org, “Glossary of Philatelic Terms”

There are forty-four territories in the Dead Country. Twenty-six are still unoccupied, landscapes of hazards, miles of sand and crumbling rock. Empty canyons. Crows pecking at shadows. Wind whistling through the husks of empty ships. Seven territories are closed for renovations. Two house vast administrative buildings, bureaucracies, offices of the man-into-nothingness. Our lights beam out into nothingness. Caught between water and air, I struggle while the others sink leisurely, hoses looped protectively in a vinyl hug. *Breath the deep*, I coax myself, as we drift down the wall of corals. Twenty, thirty, or sixty feet it’s all the same silent swaying profusion of forms. Drunk with looking I forget momentarily what we are—puppets on thin strings of air. Drawn down by dim phosphorescence, I am stricken with an urge to go deeper, and finally disappear. Burdened and masked, thrashing in the depths—then, they are there signalling it’s time to return. In the gradual ascent relief floods me as shore currents tug like memories.

MATTHEW OLZMANN

Then they stare into the dust as if trying to return.

## Night Diving

We suit up briskly on the deserted dock sun sinking down beyond Klein Bonaire, then, weighted and rigged, plunge into darkness. Our lights beam out into nothingness. Caught between water and air, I struggle while the others sink leisurely, hoses looped protectively in a vinyl hug. *Breath the deep*, I coax myself, as we drift down the wall of corals. Twenty, thirty, or sixty feet it’s all the same silent swaying profusion of forms. Drunk with looking I forget momentarily what we are—puppets on thin strings of air. Drawn down by dim phosphorescence, I am stricken with an urge to go deeper, and finally disappear. Burdened and masked, thrashing in the depths—then, they are there signalling it’s time to return. In the gradual ascent relief floods me as shore currents tug like memories.

## Krakens

Other times, it's just an accident when a Kraken annihilates a shipping vessel. Splinters flung into the sky. The crew screaming and going under. Not every tendril is looking for a frigate obliterate. Not every tentacle searches for a sailor to fling from the deck. Even a Kraken sees the hulls of the boats above, all smooth and adumbral, and wants to maybe touch one. For the Kraken, love is mysterious, and after grapeshot and harpoons, it retreats to the ocean floor vowing never to return. Even I have held a fragile object in my hands. A crystal bowl for an important dinner engagement. An antique clock. Trust. A ceramic jardinière. Things my wife gave me. Be careful, she said. Don't break this, she said.

MATTHEW OLZMANN

## "Shapes"

It was confounding  
as a child: the way Mom  
folded socks—

transformed, under  
quick hands, two weak  
snakes  
into one sturdy column—

because I did not  
understand  
how she did it.

Then I learned the secrets  
of Mom's sock folding  
as an adolescent—

wrung inside-out & backwards,  
folded over like intestine  
turning out on itself—

and moved on,  
discovered better  
ways to fold socks.

So I choreographed my own  
sock-folding method;

and we grow apart like this.

TIM HALTEMAN

ON THE PHONE IN NEW YORK, I HEAR YOU MAKE  
SWEET TEA IN MISSISSIPPI

It's a lushness I haven't seen, the hunter shade  
of grass, the watermelon's red meat,  
crushed raw like pink

glass. You wet your tongue  
with what ground offers. You stir  
cold water and earth. I imagine

the boil, hear the circle the spoon makes against  
the pitcher, a whir. I hear the slit  
of spiced root hit the wood. Then sugar,

always thumping the yellow fruit. Sugar—  
*That's what makes it*  
*sweet*. But I only know this:

that between the ginger and lemons on the cutting board,  
the knife's distance speaks, says  
they'll be drowning in heat, too,

says the first flakes of leaves  
sit impatient in a music. I don't see you  
throw bags into the dark,

I don't see thirst or a jealous cup. I don't see  
when you had a mother,  
how she taught you to touch lips. I haven't

kissed you, but I can hear you lick, let  
a soft tongue wipe away an excess. I want to believe  
it all starts with water, the rush of it.

DIANNELY ANTIQUA

let me tell you—

the tune in my head's

out of tune

thirty-two measures

on the far side of *ma la la*

I've played it before

cut my chops on quarter tones

skittle of bears

matches of yackety-yak

warbled verse and refrain

night day

of no matter

let me tell you—

this tune in my head's

not grooved

your way

PAMELA AHLEN

## SOMETHING DIES IN ME EVERY MONTH

Today I screenshot a picture  
of an internet baby who looks like my ex  
sleeping, mouth open, little fist above his head,  
and it's a tiny poison in my  
eggs, how we can be allergic  
to whatever we want, a week in bruises, or  
when I said sorry to my face  
like the time I stopped  
breathing and a man called me  
a name, something less than animal but more than  
stone, and all I can say is  
I'm trying to be decent, I'm trying  
to believe in the therapy of sweeping rooms, of sugar  
on my wrists. Yesterday I bought  
fried chicken and orange juice  
for a homeless man on 6th  
to make myself needed, and the act  
conjured a weirdness in me, like wanting to have  
his baby. I don't want to be told  
about the bitches inside me that want out  
and want the pleasure of watching my body  
do things without permission. Or maybe  
I have an awkward courage, or maybe I've hugged  
too many grocery bags on walks home and felt  
the lonely power of feeding myself, or how  
the moon appears  
even in the morning, a pale thing  
drowned in blue sky.

DIANNELY ANTIGUA

The Organist Plays the Bach Fugue in E Flat in the  
Sphere of Gods

Once ignored like burdock or dusty petunias in a Horticultural  
Hall, the Thayer organ was bought for a song, then hauled by  
rail from Boston to the North Chapel on the Woodstock  
Green where it has resided for fifty years.

wide open  
mouths  
of pipes  
part brass  
part feral  
part astronomic  
all stops pulled  
to swell  
an E flat offering  
Bach's  
polyphony  
of Trinitarian  
speculation  
far surpassing  
any sermons  
I've ever  
wanted to hear

PAMELA AHLEN

## Cardiology

*"Inside is not a heart // But a katidoscope" – Sara Bareilles*

If so, see here, all the fragments of my heart  
dancing in swirls for eyes' attentions,

or is it a drum? Beating a rhythm, speaking  
to a stethoscope for a diagnosis in  
"okay I'm not okay I'm not okay I'm –"

though perhaps more like a tick, like a  
quick time tipping to less time to the  
inevitable, BOM. A confetti explosion

from a paper bomb, a fickle folded mess –  
who would have thought the flimsy valentine  
had so much depth to its dimension? It's

lost like cotton, woven and worn  
and worn washed wrinkled ripped off  
by the seams on my shirt sleeve.

Or maybe it's exactly what it is: a pump  
of flesh, in the center-left of my chest,  
an organ mourning the same tune,

bleeding.

MICHAEL SUN

## DIARY ENTRY #17: IBIZA

And then there was one. I put on my woman  
skin, the red short skirt. It's been weeks,  
like the solitude after puking twice.  
I didn't mind my boyfriend  
in my mouth. We've already imagined  
our children. We watch the little German kids  
still floating in the pool, their ugly faces and yellow teeth.  
On Wednesday, I heard a woman laughing  
as the birds dropped from the trees like  
oranges, and I thought this is just another  
stepfather—it always goes back to him—  
the veil, those doors, like being slammed into his parts.  
But on a cool December night, I don't need permission  
to have sex with me in the ocean. I want  
to make love outside the plastic, sensation  
of mediterranean and awe.  
I want to listen to the music,  
how the body loses a river. I can  
kiss out of pity. I can be a statue.

DIANNE ANTIQUA

Sylvia to Ted, Telepathically:

“I will come as close or far to your cock as I feel like.”  
 & underwear-at-the-knee Ted & underwear-at-the-knee Sylvia  
 sat seven years, three villages away, awaiting the next instruction.

J. HOPE STEIN

here I mean *remember*—  
 I-10’s dawn-pink asphalt

stretched ahead like a river  
 of possibility.

Morning riding into view,  
 our voices hoarse

from singing “Tainted Love”  
 with the windows down,

hands tangled in each other’s zippers  
 at 65 mph. We were so young;

already the heat was unbearable.

AMORAK HUEY



A DESERT HIGHWAY IS THE BEST KIND OF  
HIGHWAY WHEN YOU ARE  
TWENTY-FOUR AND HELPING A FRIEND  
MOVE ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO GET  
MARRIED

Imagine we had another chance.  
Two more hours, say,

or whole new lifetime.  
Another road trip to Phoenix,

all hand jobs and toll roads.  
Imagine the green-eyed babies

we might have made.  
Imagine the mountains

turned upside down.  
The distance inside our

The desert underwater.  
South American novelists

would have written of us,  
this idea of us I'm inventing

in which you are sand  
and I am sun, you are sky

and I cannot breathe.  
We made the right decision,

we did, and regret is the worst  
kind of lie. Still, the difference

between love poem and elegy  
is only timing. Imagine—

Early Evening on 4th Street  
In Troy, above the brick factory stack  
already the moon is visible  
a sheer, papery disk.  
The Frito-Lay truck  
bounces from 4th to Canal,  
axels straddling holes and patched pavements.

Boys on bikes race the wrong way  
down one-way streets,

and three firemen lounge out front of the station,  
frowning, tapping quiet codes on their phones,

as tiny petals draw down  
from spring's flowering trees  
and collect in lacy piles

on slate sidewalks,  
on street corners,  
and in the rusted raised letters  
of circular sewer caps.

S. PETRUE

March  
Burden Iron Works – A History of Disappearance

It's called the understory.

It's what springs up from the forest floor  
Springs up from the forest floor beneath trees  
Beneath trees but there's nothing here  
Nothing here, except dry leaves  
Except dry leaves  
And stacks of mossy iron ore, iron slag  
Slag and two rusty hand cranks  
Hand cranks

Can you feel how *heavy* this is?  
Imagine

Imagine one thousand Sons of Vulcan. In unison.  
90,000 tons of coal  
600 tons of horseshoes

The magnificence of labor. The menace.  
Their waterwheel. Its sixty feet of spin and whirl. Their Work.

Now, just tree trunks with a canopy  
Not even branches, no  
Not branches, not even weeds.

S. PETRIE

changed him, though I never knew him before,  
so what do I know? Maybe I shoot  
at squirrels but can never hit one.  
Maybe I'm hanging out on the girders  
of the old bridge with the volume on 10,  
hoping one of these songs will piss off someone  
enough to stop and give me a talking-to.  
Maybe I'm setting fire to sticks  
and dropping them in the water.  
Maybe I killed one of the bluetick hounds  
caged up by Stella's asshole dad  
who maybe hits her sometimes, too,  
maybe hurts her in more silent ways.  
Maybe I hope she is as lonely as I am.  
Maybe this is the most fucked-up time  
in the history of the world  
to be fourteen, maybe there's poison  
in the river that feeds our wells.  
Maybe I can feel my skin blistering  
from the inside out, maybe the bruises  
are bleeding into each other. What a mess.  
Maybe the gun never even goes off.  
Maybe it's only the music announcing  
I am here. Maybe I'm shouting  
my own name, over and over, synced  
with the beat. Boom, boom,  
like that. Boom.

AMORAK HUEY

---

In the 1860s, the Burden Iron Works employed 1400 men in the service of iron. Crowded with buildings. Smoke stacks. A railroad. Once, there was a waterwheel, 60' tall. Temple of Vulcan. Imagine.

My father leaves again. Returns, falls asleep  
 in the driveway with a warm six-pack of Pabst  
 like a fist between his thighs. He swears  
 he has not been gone that long, is not  
 that drunk. My mother smokes more now  
 than before she quit. Though the fire  
 was four years ago, we're still living  
 in a trailer parked behind  
 the charcoaled foundation of our old house.  
 I should mention the rifle  
 before it's too late, the box of bullets  
 I found in the back of the closet  
 behind the skin mags, the vibrator.  
 My parents don't even talk to each other,  
 I'm supposed to imagine  
 them getting naked and grabbing  
 whatever flesh they can find?  
 The body is capable of so many kinds of lies.  
 My mother will not let me listen  
 to Run-DMC, which she says  
 is because of God but I know better.  
 All those gold chains, such audacity.  
 She doesn't know anything about me.  
 I steal Martaboros one at time,  
 matches from the back of the stove,  
 I'm cutting the sleeves out of my t-shirts  
 these days, freaking out the neighbor kids  
 by spelling *dussy* on my Oujia board,  
 trying to make it sound like bragging,  
 telling them how this summer I'm going to get  
 Stella from up the hill to pull up her shirt for me.  
 I carry my boom box everywhere,  
 my secret cassette of *Raising Hell*,  
 and sometimes the gun. I can make  
 you believe anything. Maybe  
 my father hits me. Maybe the war

BOOM BOX

As if  
 she swims  
 once where there was  
 a canal  
 a lock I  
 where she swan-dived  
 once, into the place  
 where there was a canal  
 she touched  
 touched  
 face first  
 into the water, sputtered water  
 from a river  
 her friends dove in  
 dove in too, into the canal,  
 where there was once a canal  
 and an intake valve  
 that opened  
 as if the fourteen-year-old  
 was my grandmother  
 toward the intake valve  
 as if it was a lock, an arm  
 locked around her neck  
 saving her, the arm  
 when the intake valve opened  
 drew water down, down with a fourteen-year-old  
 in it, with an arm, when the arm  
 around her neck would save her.

Lock

once there was a canal  
 as if it was here  
 once it drew  
 drew the world's attention  
 drew water down. as if.

S. PETRIE

---

Lock One of the Erie Canal in Albany, on the Hudson River—legends say kids used to swim in it. The Erie Canal—easy to forget—opened up our country to the world. Lock One has been backfilled. Huck Finn's Furniture Warehouse is there, on top of it.

### You Only Get One

crack at a greeting card. I've ruined  
 many, smeared ink, misspelled words, misspelled  
 names, missed words altogether. Most people don't  
 care, most people don't notice, but me—

I buy two at a time. I collect cards. I don't know  
 whose hands the cards will pass to or when, but of all  
 the places I imagined this card going, to your wife  
 today never crossed my mind. Most sympathy

cards have religious connotations. This one reads,  
*May your memories give you strength.*  
 Now shocked to hear, *he shot*  
*himself*, I'm thinking of you, but the things I think

don't seem right, like how you still have my good set  
 of earphones, or how you warned my boyfriend,  
 "I may be old, but I'm not too old to go  
 to jail one more time if you hurt her."

I watch my father take the card to the kitchen table  
 and draft his note in caps on scratch paper:  
 WE ARE ALL SADDENED BY OUR LOSS

WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER  
 HIM AS A GOOD MAN AND A VERY GOOD FRIEND.  
 He transcribes the letters carefully on the card. It's permanent.  
 Below that my mother's loose-knit cursive: *Water*  
*under the bridge—let your life begin again*

MAE REMME

## Lucy at the Well

All those mornings he slapped her face  
 across the room, the scent of another woman  
 still lingering in his hands,  
 Lucy never struck back.  
 All those women he chased  
 who spun him dizzy, he couldn't see  
 they were one-born inside him,  
 old as Eve, seductive as Delilah,  
 Venus in the dream  
 he seldom awoke from,  
 even with his eyes wide open.  
 He tended his deep wound,  
 the hunger and thirst that engulfed him,  
 tossed in the twisted winds  
 of long, late night storms.  
 Stumbling toward daybreak,  
 he couldn't see the armored iron-man  
 raging inside Lucy—silence  
 that hit like a hammer  
 and shook the ground where he stood.  
 When he grew old and died,  
 she had him cremated,  
 and poured his ashes down the kitchen sink.  
 Even then, she loved him.  
 Watching his flesh and bone dissolve,  
 she cupped her hands beneath the faucet  
 and brought the morning's cool, fresh water  
 to her mouth and face.

JOHN WARNER SMITH

## Grain

Shoveling grain in the Port on Saturdays,  
 Peter ((twelve children)) for extra money,  
 Margaret ((twelve children))  
 boiling water for bath might:  
 I wonder if he rode the bus with  
 his shovel or walked home carrying it  
 at midnight.  
 Did he borrow one?  
 Rope barge to dock,  
 ((her apron, her swollen feet))  
 did all the men climb into the hull  
 or was there a chute?  
 How many and was it soft beneath  
 their boots or bare feet  
 and where did all the children sleep?  
 Before bed did he stroke her hair.  
 Did she towel grain dust from his.

S. PETRIE

Albany, NY, has been a port city for over four hundred years. Once it was furs. Once it was grain. Now it is oil. Molasses. Wood. Turbines. Into and out of the country. Turkey. China. Jamaica.

August  
Henry Hudson Park

Evening's soft static skims the river's surface. Transparent. An eagle draws up from deadwood, herons drop in pairs. Sun blazes itself scarlet across the eastern shore, across pale faced homes on 9J. *People of the waters that are never still*. On the western shore, a sycamore. Beneath its flaking bark, its dangling achenes, beneath its cambered arms, a barge is partially submerged. Fifty feet of rough board rotting in the mud. Its century of invention, forgotten. Fists of iron, once fierce, slurried. I barely know its language. The last speed boat of the night dashes past, tossing laughter and a little Tom Petty in its wake. Across the green, a man folds a crippled woman into his arms, carries her toward their car. Oblivious, a small boy darts between picnic tables with an arrow, with a bow.

fashioned by hand  
usefulness flares than passes  
bright coins sinking

S. PETRIE

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*People of the waters that are never still* is the English translation of the Mahican name for themselves:  
Muh-he-con-ne-ok

Woodwind

A woodwind,  
earthbound state;  
the clearing billowed,  
a thistle in place;  
as the bow raised,  
elongated in stature –  
the trees held their breath.

JADE WOLIN

## Valley of Vermont

—for my friend, the artist

Just as I crest the hill, car  
loaded with your once important  
now disposable items: art supplies,  
books, clothes, boxes and bags  
bound for the rummage sale, the sun  
strikes the mountain. What follows  
is October's fire, kindled in a split  
second: orange, red, sienna burning  
a hole in a canvas of deep confertous  
green. So many autumns I have  
marveled at the spectacle, yet today,  
as once more I catch my breath,  
I sense the futility at the heart  
of this ruinous beauty, a transient  
invitation to sorrow. As if ridding you  
of your ties to this place is the one  
small favor I can do for you.

In your *Autumn in Vermont*  
a strand of emerald mountains is  
sliced by a band of tumbling rusts  
and reds, bright stones in a river  
pebbled with gold, earth's artery  
exposed. Your brush has fixed  
the scene the way you want it;  
nothing hints of the season to come,  
though where you're going seasons  
will be different. And now, as rivers  
seek the ocean you begin your journey;  
blue will command the green of your  
palette, earth will succumb to water  
just as this valley was once covered  
by water. So we seek the elements  
crucial to each, I, the mountains,  
you, the sea. How do we know  
to leave one for the other?

## Rat queen

The sun will rise in her mouth,  
I bless the rats that scurry in six//am mist;  
An outpouring of tethers  
And a sour stomach to match,  
Strike.

JADE WOLIN

How do we know to grieve—  
or not?

ALICE GILBORN

*LOSSELASSENHEIT\**

Think of anatomy as a refuge,  
palpable, certain.  
Finding a precise alignment  
to convey a path to the heart.

Consider the curve  
of the slender gracilis muscle,  
like an unfurled ribbon  
crossing the inner hip and knee.

An artifact of evolution,  
gracilis runs in a straight line  
in bent-knee quadrupeds.  
When humans stood upright,  
and our knees extended,  
gracilis, bound by fascia,  
stayed behind.

Guided by its rider,  
the horse gathers up speed  
and leaps with a power  
beyond human measure.

Horse and rider in perfect union,  
loose and completely relaxed,  
like a child connected to its mother  
before its first breath.

ANNE WHITEHOUSE

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\**Losgelassenheit*—a German word, literally, the quality of having loosened and let go, conveying a union of horse and rider.



## HEART BEAT

The rhythm of life is life itself,  
 the body's timekeeper  
 that recedes as it advances,  
 like the sun slipping  
 past the horizon  
 and reappearing  
 on the other side  
 of the world.

ANNE WHITEHOUSE

JULIA SIMPLEY

While You Wait  
 Mice are born in the hay bales; hot water gushes,  
 then cools; acorns plummet to your car hood, ricochet  
 into the grass; and while you become engrossed  
 with dress: a response you don't want, the brocade  
 of mail, the gate's broken latch—while you sweep  
 or forget to sweep and weep in your car, or turn  
 toward or away from someone you love: a tuber  
 forms on the root. While you sort laundry—  
 colors from delicates, sort issues—wishes  
 from facts, a spud ripens in lightlessness,  
 swells into a fist of food, the knob leading to a room,  
 so far, unused. While you are gamely hoping  
 for salvations, stays, reprises, accolades—  
 a meal coalesces from your tomb.

## In the Event

Normally, I'd love further exam-  
 applause for the finalists: *the envelope,*  
*please,* (delicious ripping)...but I dread  
 my 10am call-back mammogram,  
 the gown she has me don,

like the smock from kindergarten  
 my father's shirt assumed backward,  
 to paint pinecones, make bark rubbings,  
 she wants two X-rays of the left (dense tissue),  
 she handles it like a ham sandwich.

While she reloads the film,  
 I study *The Lives of Conifers:*  
*a seed of a conifer*  
*contains the embryo of a future tree.*  
 She's ready for me to be waiting for her.

I keep reading: balsam, fir, spruces,  
 eastern hemlock *are all equipped with a wing.*  
 She smushes the breast again, scolding:

*Place your hand here.*  
*Hold your breath.*

While she confers with the radiologist,

I learn: *wings develop from the surface layers*  
*of supporting cone scales and not from seed themselves.*  
 These glands, glad-handed what if they  
 are more than mammalian, and maybe,  
 put on backward, like the smock?

Meant to lift me above this morass,  
 misplaced base of nascent wings?  
 She reports I have no aberrance.  
 I almost fly away.

JULIA SHIPLEY

## Midwest Tornado Season

a tornado's hips  
 collapse a Kroger  
 in the center of life  
 a screaming house  
 shifts on its haunches  
 and naps there  
 as the town wakes  
 the woods, still bent  
 from last year's breeze,  
 open themselves again  
 inviting remembrance  
 of their presence  
 their mother  
 the tunes she can make  
 wind sings to the sink  
*ping pung pung*  
 it happy drools back

CHARNELL PETERS