

Bloodroot Literary Magazine

Volume 9

Spring 2017

bloodrootlit.org



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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.

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Bloodroot Literary Magazine

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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 \LaTeX 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

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 Netzband, 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 countries, and desert highways.

I hope you enjoy the journeys.

SARA BIGGS CHANEY

“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 management. But the last nine are crowded with the dead. Eight of these territories are bustling metropolises, great cities where the dead sing and play cards and wash their clothes in antediluvian rivers. The toll booth operators in the Dead Country live like kings. The dead pay them with coins, wedding bands, the soles of old sneakers. In general, it's relatively cheap to travel from one territory to another. But admission into the ninth territory is expensive, and when you get there, it is nearly silent. This is the territory next to the Country of the Living and there's an impenetrable wall of glass along the border. The wall is opaque and covered in layers of dust, so they can't really see what's going on on the other side. Using their fingernails or the edges of sharpened stones, they etch words into the dust—long, careful letters to their sons and daughters, to their friends and lost loves. No postman will arrive to cart their letters away, but no postage is needed. Whatever they write vanishes in the dust almost as soon as it is written. Still, they write their letters with extravagant care. Then they stare into the dust as if trying to return.

MATTHEW OLZMAN

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 OLZMAN

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 whirl. 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 ANTIGUA

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

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 mediocre 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.

DIANNELY ANTIGUA

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

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. PETRIE

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 whir. Their Work.

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

S. PETRIE

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.

Lock

As if
she swims
once where there was
a canal
a lock 1
where she swan-dived
once, into the place
where there was a canal
she touched
touched
face first
into the water, slurred 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.

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.

Grain

Shoveling grain in the Port on Saturdays,
 Peter ((twelve children)) for extra money
 Margaret ((twelve children))
 boiling water for bath night.

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

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

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 coniferous
 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?

How do we know to grieve—
or not?

ALICE GILBORN

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 dross: 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, reprieves, accolades—
a meal coalesces from your tomb.

JULIA SHIPLEY

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.

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

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

*LOSGELASSENHEIT**

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

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

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

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

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

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

BOOM BOX

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 Marlboros 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 *pussy* on my Ouija 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

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

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 out.

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—

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

Cardiology

“Inside is not a heart // But a kaleidoscope” – 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 tine tipping to less time to the
inevitable, BOOM. 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

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

let me tell you—
 the tune in my head's
 out of tune
 thirty-two measures
 on the far side of *tra la la*

I've played it before
 cut my chops on quarter tones
 skiffle of beats
 snatches 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

“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

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.

Breathe deep, I coax myself, as
meeting the reef's edge
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
signaling it's time to return.

In the gradual ascent
relief floods me as
shore currents tug like memories.

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

IVY SCHWEITZER

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 cart
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 smelting me down

Bouazizi voices called
but I was already far away
from mother and the others in our cramped
rooms
so far I could barely hear

Bouazizi
sounds sharpened on the flint
ribs of my rage.

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

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-ease 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 CARDINAUX

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

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 expanse, 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

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

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

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