



*cæsuura*

*ascent | descent*

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cover art (above): Aya Summers, *A Revolution of Transparency*

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## Editor's Note

*Where are you? Possibly a simple question if limited to geography. But when you're caught in a wave, your location and perceptions constantly change, call them relative or oscillating. So much to discover. For instance, is your wave water, light, history, or humanity?*

When the *Cæsura* team gathered in March of 2017, a political wave dominated our thoughts. Since each team member witnessed such a wide range of reactions and emotions to this wave, a purely political theme seemed poetically repressive.

We tallied our words, tracked our ideas, and played with the sounds, synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms; “ascent, assent, descent, or dissent is decent unless incensed, in a sense.” The physicality implied by ascent and descent, the climb, the brief pause before the drop, framed our collective journey. When someone described that pause as a *cæsura*, followed with another suggestion to display that pause with the *cæsura* symbol, the title *Ascent || Descent* willed itself into existence.

So, during a chaotic moment in history, the team found a physical place, metaphorically speaking, to plant our feet. In that *cæsura*, at that peak, we called for your location. Trail maps, posted at crossroads, often say, “you are here” with an arrow pointing to your location; our call used that idea but opened with, “you are where” and an arrow pointing to a blank spot. Your poetry, your art would describe your location. Underneath that arrow we shared a poem created from the ideas and the words we discussed, sharing something about our location.

The beauty, challenge, and strangeness of this call, was that it had no theme. Sometimes, as readers, we were surprised that a poem was an actual location on someone's body or in a town. The poets, unperturbed by the constraints of an overriding theme stood together and delivered their theme, with a wave of creative, insightful, often painful and graceful, but resilient and powerful poems.

It is good to know, you are here.

Bill Cozzini



Bill Wolak, *The Mirror That Coaxes Off Your Clothes*

## **If Picasso Worked in the Mall Food Court**

Of course he flirts with all the women – young mothers pushing strollers, twenty-year-old blonde Neiman Marcus sales clerks dressed in Donna Karan or Valentino. He draws them naked in his mind, then whistles while he sweeps up pizza crust, French fries, and chicken nuggets. The spills of milkshakes and cola he eagerly anticipates so he can swipe the mop strands through, brush-like, creating pink, white, and brown liquid collages on linoleum canvas with no sense of permanence – a slipping hazard for passersby who might not make aesthetic sense of the swirls and swivels. Danger he knows, so he sets down the orange cones.

He hopes one day to be recognized for creating rather than erasing amidst the daily throwing out and cleaning up of waste that from the right perspective might become a work of art. He dreams these same mall patrons will place his future paintings in their bags instead of shoes and scarves.

## **Insomnia, Part IX**

I have mastered the elongation of time.  
Horizontal is my orientation, my verbatim.  
You think you are walking in bed  
wearing a bad prescription. You cannot  
awaken from arrhythmia, nor sleep  
through assembled fears. Sheep  
have been my ridiculous emblem,  
but these days you count only grandchildren.  
I invite you to consider the marsupial  
in which the young sleep soundly.  
How many centuries since your ancestors  
set fire to their rest and chartered  
newfound light to last until dawn?  
I was there in the space between baobabs,  
dressed in infallible nostrils and teeth,  
there to witness the fumigation  
of grievances against your own nature.  
Your torment is the retroactive hours  
of Prudhoe Bay or Tierra del Fuego.  
In between, on Route 40 West,  
you bisect the lackadaisical scenery:  
longhorn steer or long red mesa.  
This highway was built for wide states,  
for you to contemplate inopportune  
vegetation tangled in your thoughts.  
I flatten the view to your prognosis:  
California! Every night I hear you  
banging that wall you call the sea.

## **The Carnival at Night**

When the Kreepy Kastle falls dead  
and Pharaoh's Fury no longer parts the tide,  
the midway games close with the biggest bears

on the bottom shelf still un-won  
and the carnies, all but drunk, still debating  
how many ferrets it takes to power the wheel.

Gravity returns to the Orbitron at night;  
the calmed Dixie Twister lazes while the Dodgem cars  
idle at the site of the last spinout. The Cliffhanger,

where we once sat in a cage terrified of the drop,  
no longer dangles. And when the hum of generators slows,  
one by one the lights go out until at last

we walk in full darkness, wringing our cotton-candied  
hands as we watch the stars fall into place  
with only the moon now to keep us awake.

Donna J. Gelagotis Lee

## **Bus Stop, Athens, Greece**

The hiss of the bus blew out with fumes  
in front of our flat on a mountain where the road dipped  
toward the sea, the sea air rising up  
onto our garden of cucumbers and tomatoes.

I heard that bus only on hot afternoons  
when the windows were open and the hillside  
was stilled for siesta. I never got on,  
but watched it pick up speed

as it coasted downhill, collecting  
each working woman, who rose early to stand on that road,  
waiting for the wheels of the bus to roll  
to a stop, who, once home, would put her hands into the sink

to prepare supper, to wash the dishes, to fill  
the bríki and then would catch the bus again, only  
to return when evening came, when even the sun  
settled, and night came, when she could place

her legs on her bed, and the light would support her  
body, lift her body onto a cloudless night,  
where there was no bus, no work route, just silence  
and the mountain's own muffled sighs.

## Milkweed

I stroke the furred pod then pinch  
it to listen for the *pop*,  
a single milk-drop bead bleeds out  
& glistens astoundingly. I split  
it in two down the midline seam  
then blow on the fleecy seed-  
down, releasing all into the faraway  
& wing down toward the meadow's  
bottomland. The Incidentals of childhood  
I imagine I'll take with me into the Beyond,  
all those small, cherished items that might be  
a reminder of just where it was I came  
from so I'll not feel so very much alone,  
a soft but fiercely enduring echo  
of all it is I hoped would be forever  
closest to my heart's home.  
Here I am packing lightly, preparing  
to fall in with my milkweed.  
Together, we'll drift & drift with a wind,  
blown down to rest  
in autumn's homeland meadow  
at the edge of the woods.



Elizabeth Jimenez Montelongo, *Reclaiming Autonomy*

## Nautilus

I knew a lady who was medically decapitated— because of a complicated therapeutic history, the choice for her was literal and urgent: head or body? She chose to let her body go and so became nothing but a head.

They say: *One thing leads to another*  
but I learned already  
that one thing  
is another.

She did take offense at the phrase “nothing but a head.” From her point of view, the head was all and what was there that wasn’t head was nothing. One’s body was the nothing but. The body waxed and waned, had hunger pains, suffered muscle memory and UTI’s. But pleasure too! I argued (later in our relationship when we were friends and I could speak openly about such things), but she said, pleasure is nothing if not pleasure of the mind.

*Accept what’s inevitable*  
that’s another thing they said.

I met her on the bus. We sat beside each other. She sat-so-to-speak upon her neck, but she was friendly, and we struck up a conversation about (obviously) the logistics of being a head or being a body with a head as well and the way the world is set up for some but not for others.

*Ignorance is bliss.*  
That’s a classic one, but also considered now  
unpatriotic and in some circles, irresponsible.

We build a life on faith and habit. We get what we get. We work what we have. Animal instinct, cultural norms, religious influence. I went to church when I was young, and then it stopped making any kind of sense. What did these people do that Jesus needed to be crucified for their sins? God is a kind of habit, my mom said, and I think that’s true.

*Forgive and forget.*  
That’s good advice unless  
you plan on learning who to trust.

Her body, she said, had been donated to others who needed parts. The balance that was not needed was cremated. She didn’t want it buried which I rather

understand. The body that is left underneath the ground grows roots. If you let something go, let it go completely. I always thought in this country we should allow sky burials, those rituals for the dead where they put the body on a mountaintop and let the eagles and vultures carry pieces away with their talons and beaks.

*Better once to see  
than many times to hear*  
is what Tibetans say,  
and what we all learn the hard way.

I guess the point of this story is that we can't know the difference between what we have and what we want except for this bitter ache that twinges at the base of our skull. This woman was free from all desire. That's what she said. Seemed nice enough. Those of us who suffer with our bodies, we adapt. We drink or we pray. We change the subject. Honestly I was anxious the whole time we rode beside each other on the bus. How would she get off? With what power would she propel herself down the street? It was raining hard, and the streets were thick with a sandy kind of mud. I worried she had sutures still at the bottom of her neck and that they would open and be exposed to some infection.

*Although changed, I arise the same*  
some scientist said, studying self-similar spirals.  
We see ourselves in nature.

We imagine patterns, and we estimate similarity between our broken selves and the broken world. This woman had a new set of difficulties now and I was not sure if they were mine or hers or if all difficulties belong to all beings.

*Life is short and art is long.*  
This one, of course, is not true at all.

It was a little awkward to ask if I could pick her up. It seemed like the right thing to do but also I didn't know what normal was or how one should behave also as I mentioned it was raining and I wanted to get home. So kind of you, she said as I cradled her in my elbow crook, rearranging my bags on my shoulders and other arm. Did she have bags? No, she said. The nice thing about leaving your body behind—none of the bags the body required.

*Live and learn.*  
Mostly this one is used as an excuse.

The nautilus is a pelagic marine mollusk that propels itself by changing pressure inside its shell. It has an uncommon ability withstand changes in depth, moving easily from shallow to deep. The nautilus is rare now and difficult to find. The animals are hunted and killed for the value of their shells which are used as ornament, gorgeous examples of the order of nature, of mathematical perfection or evidence that God exists.

*Keep your head above water.*

This is a metaphor and offensive to some who might argue with the implied and submerged: body.

Another friend of mine asked: what about people who have their leg amputated and chose to be just the leg? What about leaving other parts behind? I was not sure as I had not read about such a thing nor had I ever met a woman who was just a leg. But I suppose that it could happen. The world now is filled with such possibility, loss and opportunity.

## **The Mourning After**

I lost my virginity in the age of innocence.

*Worthy is the lamb, who was slain.*

In the fake, gilded age of Trump  
loathsome words bleed from 45's mouth  
oblivious to the collateral damage.

*And when you're a star, you can do anything—  
grab them by the pussy. You can do anything.*

Nightmares revisit my dreams  
evolve into wide-awake  
out-of-the-blue triggers.

*If Ivanka weren't my daughter...*

I watch Kill Bill—read a Vachss novel  
detachment being key  
to amputating anger.

*Such a nasty woman.*

Shunning invasive images, I turn  
to focus on strands of moonlight  
weaving through venetian blinds.

## **Crab Mentality**

I sit on the rim of an upright bucket and watch the ocean bleed red. The wound salt cracks my nails. I use one of them, still, to force my way through the bucket's thin layer of paint, chiseling out my name, illegibly small.

A snap. My nail breaks. Inside the bucket, the last of a dozen crabs crumples down in death, its tinkertoy joints cracking. Its red body matches the other dead bodies; were it not for the last twitches of its dark eyestalks, I couldn't tell it apart from the rest.

The thing I've learned about crabs is this: belly on back on belly, they will make ladders of themselves, but one will never reach the top of the bucket before the rest. This is considered selfishness. The crab that drops itself out into the world will be alone for the rest of its life; it will exist away from family, away from friends, away from the writhing bodies of its brethren because it used those bodies like a step stool. The crab-out-of-the-bucket comes from a womb full of enemies.

(And the others will argue that their unbound claws are made for pulling family members back from the edge. They are community-minded, after all, and ascent is rarely deathless. Throwing oneself outward is narcissistic, singular. It does not do for a crab to try and make an island of itself.)

It's a matter of perspective, then.

I sit on the rim of an upright bucket full of familial carcasses. There is blood under my broken nail. I reach down and pluck up the still twitching body of the crab. Its legs sag. This is a crab that has died as it lived: safe among loved ones and friends, free of enemies. Twitching.

I break one of its legs. The meat is salty, off-white red.

**A Life**

*- after Anne Sexton*

Glass without voice,  
window pitted by persistent rain –

all winter  
raw nerves, sharp knives and dull forks  
scraping fine china,  
bent spoons and ceramic shards –  
sores salvaged like a nest,  
from a potter's field.  
Heavy hands and dwarfed hearts.  
Cold breasts.  
    Cryptic love.

Life, a thumbscrew.

## **To My Daughter, Returning**

Tomorrow has already started here  
while there you're waiting to return.  
Here, today tells time to go to bed  
but time-zones mean nothing to you  
or to the pangs of leaving.

I was your age the first time I returned.  
The whole flight I cried, watching  
my new love fall farther  
and farther away. Lightning  
struck the wing but I didn't notice.

Tomorrow presses on for you  
as today swaddles me in sheets.  
Time splashes the pond's edge  
in clouds that creep  
through holes of human sight.

Light there rises.  
Here, darkness falls.  
Light turns on, then dims.  
As you begin to ascend,  
I start my descent.



Elizabeth Jimenez Montelongo, *Xicana Birth*

**from the slow fear**

of being taken for days  
by train on which a  
red-headed woman  
babbles and moans,  
guarded by a stern lady  
in a car just in front of us  
that we have to walk through  
to get to the bathroom

by train to another town with  
yet another school and  
different air on the skin  
and to another tiny home  
but unlike the others  
this one doesn't sit alone  
on the prairie rather  
it shares a wall with people  
who mom does not quite trust.

our fourth home in seven years  
into which we bring our  
cardboard suitcases  
and the fears of parents  
who have only  
prospects for jobs,  
a home among homes where  
people don't look like us,  
who look at us  
with suspicion and distrust  
a home with a hidden side-yard  
where my brothers  
bring stolen matches  
to set dried leaves  
and grass on fire.

## Crossing Paths

I know what I was doing  
driving down my mountain to work  
worried about the deadline.

But what were you doing  
when you leapt through the manzanita?

Had something startled you?  
the scent of a mountain lion?  
the sound of a chain saw?  
a rutting stag?

What made our paths cross on the road?  
my brakes screeching  
a thud  
your graceful body arching through the air  
into a ditch on the other side.

Kneeling beside you, I watch you struggle to rise  
only to collapse again,  
thrashing, bewildered in pain.

Panicked, I call 911:  
Explain the crash, the suffering and plead:  
*Bring a gun. I don't have a gun!*

I tell you the operator says someone will come soon  
but your eyes tell me it's no use.  
Your head falls onto the grass in resignation.  
Accusation, pleading, light... all fade from your gaze  
before the kind man with the gun arrives  
too late

At the body shop  
the headlight of my car dangles like an eyeball knocked from its socket.  
The insurance agent on the line confirms: No one was hurt.  
*Hurt?* I answer. *The deer died.*

Your eyes have not left me.  
I drove today where our paths crossed ten years ago  
slower, paying attention.



Carmen Patiño, *In Transit*

## **I Wasn't Tempted to Shoot Her**

How often I see it.  
One of my grandchildren, or  
a friend's grandchild, or a curly-haired  
five-year-old, cheeks ablaze,  
at the supermarket check-out,  
little face screwed up, screaming,  
"I hate you!" at his mother.

How often I wanted to say that  
to my father (the one it turns out  
wasn't my father according to the DNA  
test he ordered) or to my stepmother.  
I never did, fearing a sharp slap to the face,  
Or worse, the belt on my ass. Or the retort  
"I hate you, too. If you don't like it, there's the door."

My father told me once – after I had  
endured an especially ambitious  
tongue-beating from my stepmother –  
"I wouldn't be surprised if you took a gun  
and shot her." (I pictured the German Lugar  
he brought home from the war, the one he  
hid in his sock drawer, next to the single  
condom, powdered and wrapped in a tissue).

In that moment, I knew he not only wanted  
to escape me. He wanted to escape both of us.  
In that moment, I knew the one thing I had respected  
him for – his courage – did not exist. He wanted  
me, a boy of 11 or 12, to be the hit man.

I was not tempted to shoot her. I was tempted  
to lean in close to his face and say,  
"I hate you!" But I didn't. I pitied him.  
I would get out in just a couple of years.  
Not him. He was a lifer

## The Stick Men

*(A sculpture group by Judith Selby)  
The Pentagon said yesterday that a "gap in the laws  
governing warfare made it legally permissible during  
the gulf war for U.S. tanks to bury thousands of  
Iraqi troops in their trenches...*

They are stick men  
weighted to the ground by sins  
they have forgotten to tell,  
that pour out the pipe stems  
of armless sockets,  
holes snarled with torn wires.

They tell nothing, though mouths  
are open and red slips around their teeth,  
over the dark holes of lips  
filled with the silence of fear.

They cannot move, rooted as they are  
into lead squares, holed  
for the stiff wood of their one  
good leg, a leg formed  
from a straining of thorax,  
torn into edges.

Will they tell their secrets  
if you incline your head,  
offer your ear, pushing it close  
to their cold, rough mouths?  
Will you hear the wind of mountain caves?

And what of the missing man  
his base vacant  
the hole agape, edges torn and sharp  
where the leg pulled free  
where the painted leg, the pipe-empty arms  
and the half-body have taken away the head,  
moved off stage into the inks of darkness,

slipping into the mud-rich  
night, tar night, the back side  
of night where we can not follow,  
indeed would not make one step  
to follow.

## **The Banjo**

The man played the banjo, over in the shed. He lived in the shed some days, but not others. You could tell he was there by the banjo music. Every summer he came to the shed, an old man with a baseball cap and ragged overalls that looked like from a gas station. There was a faded spot where the name patch fell off.

The kids watched him when they had nothing to do. They made up stories about his life. They figured he had a gun, and maybe a book or two, but the main thing was the banjo. He carried it with him, slung over his back like a rifle. He never left it in the shed. Not that the kids would have busted in and took it. Or maybe they would have, just being kids. But then who would have played it? The kids could barely tie their shoes, and didn't know anyone who could make music. All they did was run wild through the woods until they were too old, and then somebody made them go to work.

So the kids listened to him play the banjo, and watched him from behind the bushes and from up the big oaks. The banjo music made them think of strange things, like trains going South, or howling dogs, or dancing like they saw in a movie somewhere. Or chainsaws. They scared themselves by whispering stories about murdered children and werewolves, then their Ma would yell for them, and they'd run home in terror with no explanation that made any sense. It was the banjo.

Larry Pike

## **On Seeing the Van Goghs in Chicago**

For once, waiting in traffic didn't matter.  
We enjoyed our leisure, eventually  
taking in not only the yellow house in Arles,  
but row houses on North Astor and coffeehouses on Rush.  
Remember the unforced pace of days  
achieving lift from the collective spirit  
with which we answered the persistent wind,  
always in our faces. We rose on its gusts  
like a wedge of geese against the vault of heaven,  
in which Jesus assured us there are many mansions.  
He could've said that even in the slums of Providence  
there are luxuries that exceed our grace, pleasures  
enough to make us sing, a gospel choir, standing  
unrobed in the doorways to our rooms.

## The American Dream Anagrammed

*listen : silent*

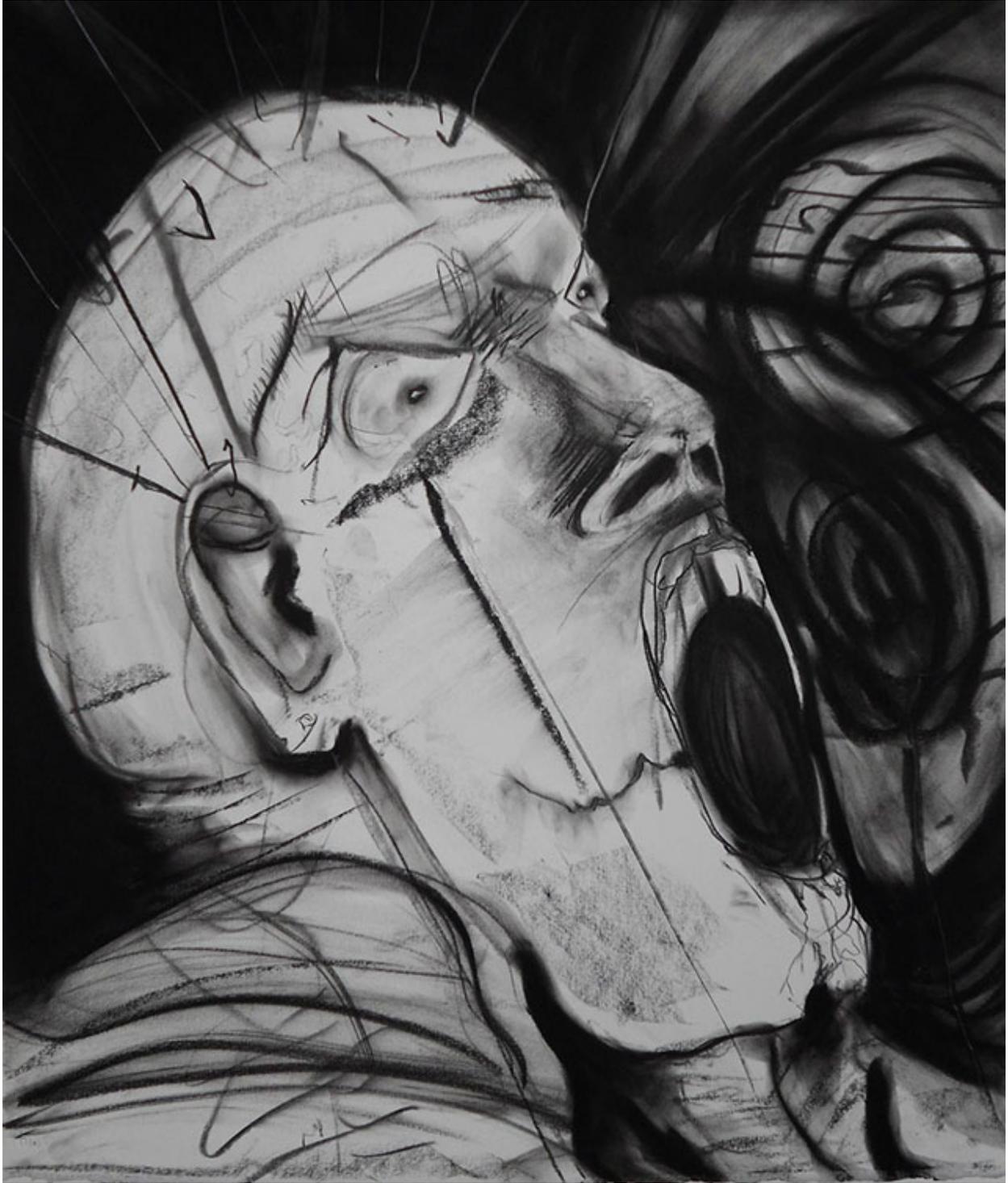
As freedom turns into a dorm fee  
Democracy to a car comedy, and  
Human rights to harming huts

A ram cairned me  
In a crammed era [where]  
Cameramen raid

A dire cameraman [or]  
Arid cameramen

[Becoming]

A creamed airman [or]  
A carmine dream  
A minced ram ear  
[a] maniac rearmed



Julie Barrett, *Yell*

## **Embrace**

We lie, two sleeping puddles at the bottom of a dried sea bed. At break of day we yawn, misty-eyed, reach up and try to shake away the shackles of a long night's lonesome rest. Above I see your flexing fingers, vapor rising, swirling. Are you pointing down and beckoning or are you indicating upward, with no memory of being at the bottom of  
the dried sea bed?

If I could only see your face,  
or you would only nod your head,  
then I should reach, rise, and embrace  
the spirit swirl and leave this bed,  
too. Unsure of you, though, or what  
it's like to be up there, I think  
I'd disappear in a sudden  
gust of air.

I therefore only face the sky  
in soggy search for you from here,  
knowing too well that if you miss  
me, why, then you will shed a tear  
or two, one day, to fall upon  
me like a melancholy kiss  
that dampens as it rues. And I  
shall know the drops are you, and try  
to rise, and yawn, and be content  
to disappear at dawn.

## **All I Want, An Ecstatic Death**

*You are talking to a corpse she smiles.*  
Patient as a panther on a branch.  
her hospital bed looms silent  
in the tiny living room

Bird-thin, radiant  
she wears her 60's tee shirt  
from the Woolworth sit-ins  
in Greensboro. *Going out fighting*  
muses her son.

*Always put flowers in the vase*  
*one at a time, she taught me that,*  
her husband arranges the four stalks  
of lavender a friend brought. *Lavender*  
*helps you sleep* says the friend.

*We recited two of Shakespeare's love sonnets*  
*this morning, we know them all by heart,*  
they hold hands.

*I don't have the energy to entertain you,*  
she chides the family  
poised like a square dance circle  
waiting for her call.

Porcelain tea saucers, royal blue  
and carmine, cup the pills in careful  
order. She sucks down the final potion  
through a rainbow straw. A summer breeze  
slips in the balcony door. Her husband's  
face a rainfall over her body.

## The Worthy

I returned to this broken land.  
Stood on the painted plateau,  
startled again by how the river  
had its way with these mountains.

Imagined what other men thought,  
tongue-tied and light-headed in air  
so dense they would close their eyes to feel it.

Do I see the same sights  
as when time played unpetrified by maps –  
where light finds the labyrinth  
both irresistible and extreme?

Take just the angle of shadows – edges of rim  
sharper than cactus thorns,  
erupted from millennia new again each hour;  
or the capriciousness of clouds upon water and rock,  
their gel of vermilion lenses best left unnamed.

Certainly this shimmering terror  
of polished schist remains as it always has been –  
ugly with heat and blacker than the raven's breast.  
Earth scoured down to its equivalent  
of that unknown space between and beyond the stars.

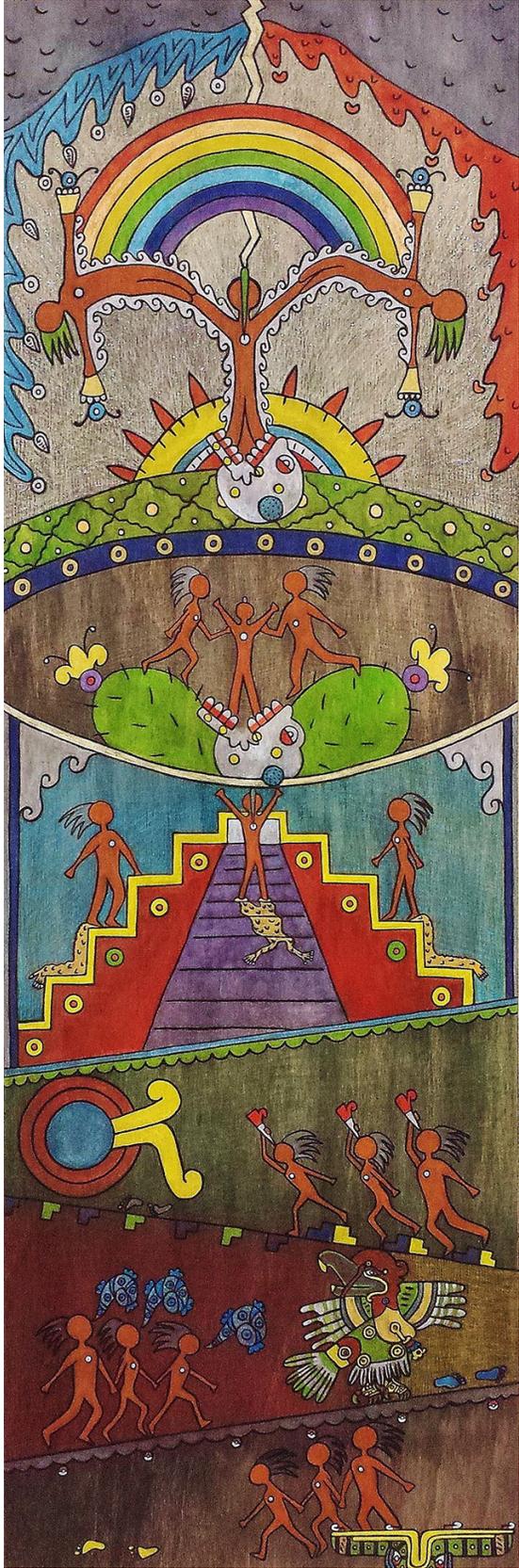
And here's another moment shared over the eons:  
rays of golden sunshine bounced from cliffs  
towering in the distance reflect  
in a water pocket glowing flame-tipped at my feet.

For this trip, I have mostly kept my map folded.  
It provides me less hope than before,  
its angles of roads and dams seemingly played out,  
and broke in my lifetime.

Surely dawn will never cease to fill  
these plunging gorges with pewter and purple?

And dusk? Won't she always faithfully aim  
her western torch to set ablaze the highest pinnacles?

And the terrible schist – won't it always be there, too?  
Dark and hot, long after this sun has set.



Elizabeth Jimenez Montelongo, *The Way*

## About the Poets:

**Maureen Sherbondy** is a poet and fiction writer. She has published nine poetry books and one short story collection. She received her MFA degree from Queens University of Charlotte. Maureen resides in Raleigh and teaches English at Alamance Community College. [www.maureensherbondy.com](http://www.maureensherbondy.com)

**Alan Elyshevitz** is a poet and short story writer from East Norriton, Pennsylvania. Stephen F. Austin State University Press published his collection of stories, *The Widows and Orphans Fund*. In addition, he has published three poetry chapbooks, most recently *Imaginary Planet*, Červená Barva Press. Twice he has been the recipient of a fellowship in fiction writing from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Currently he teaches writing at the Community College of Philadelphia. For further information, go to <https://aelyshevitz.ink>.

**Jerry Bradley** is University Professor of English at Lamar University. A member of the Texas Institute of Letters, he is the author of 8 books including *The Great American Wise Ass Poetry Anthology*. His poetry has appeared in *New England Review*, *Modern Poetry Studies*, *Poetry Magazine*, and *Southern Humanities Review*. He is poetry editor of *Concho River Review* and won the 2017 Boswell Poetry Prize awarded by TCU.

**Donna J. Gelagotis Lee** is the author of *On the Altar of Greece*, winner of the Seventh Annual Gival Press Poetry Award and recipient of a 2007 Eric Hoffer Book Award: Notable for Art Category. Her poetry has appeared in journals internationally, including *The Bitter Oleander*, *Cæsuræ: The Journal of Poetry Center San José*, *Feminist Studies*, *The Massachusetts Review*, and *Pacific REVIEW: A West Coast Arts Review Annual*. Her website is [www.donnajgelagotislee.com](http://www.donnajgelagotislee.com).

**Terry Savoie** has retired from teaching and living just outside Iowa City. Beyond a previous appearance in *Cæsuræ*, more than three hundred and fifty poems have been published in literary journals over the past three decades. These include *The American Poetry Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Cider Press Review*, *Spillway*, *Tiferet*, *The Iowa Review*, and *North American Review*.

**Lisa Allen Ortiz** is the author of *Guide to the Exhibit* which won the 2016 Perugia Press Prize. Her poems have also appeared in *Cæsura*, *Zyzzzyva*, *Beloit Poetry Journal* and have been featured on the site *Verse Daily* and in the series *Best New Poets*. She is also the author of two chapbooks, *Turns Out* (Main Street Rag, 2011) and *Self Portrait as a Clock* (Finishing Line Press, 2013). She lives in Santa Cruz.

**Leslie E. Hoffman** is an independent copy editor who moonlights as a poet. Results of her midnight sojourns have appeared in *The California Writers Club Literary Review*; *Third Thursdays*; *Cæsura: The Journal of Poetry Center San José*; *Helen: FNS*; and *Nevada State College's 300 Days of Sun*. As an editor, Leslie has enjoyed giving back to the writing community by volunteering her skills in collaboration with the editorial teams of *Writer's Bloc, Las Vegas*; *Cæsura*; and *The CWC Literary Review*.

**Celia Daniels** is a poet, essayist, and short story writer who grows catnip but doesn't own a cat. Her works have been or will be published in *Road Maps and Life Rafts*, *Magic Jar*, *Entropy*, *Timeless Tales*, *11/9: The Fall of American Democracy*, and *Claudius Speaks*.

**John M. Davis** lives in Visalia, California, where he teaches philosophy and social sciences at the College of the Sequoias. His work has appeared in *Reunion: The Dallas Review*, *The Comstock Review*, *West Trade Review*, *Silk Road*, *Bloodroot Literary Magazine*, *Descant* (Canada), *Illya's Honey*, among others.

**Elizabeth Rees**: Codhill Press published my first full collection, *Every Root a Branch*, in late 2014. Additionally, three of my four chapbooks have won national contests, most recently, *Tilting Gravity*, 2010. Twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize, my poetry has appeared in *Partisan Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Kenyon Review*, and *Agni*, among other journals. New work recently appeared in *The Southern Review* and *Barrow Street*.

**Michael Jack O'Brien** has published in print and on-line journals, including *Cimarron Review*, *The Orange Room*, *Out of Line*, *Rag Mag*, *Rio Grande Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Review*, *Main Channel Voices*, and, recently, *Madness Muse Magazine*. Also, his work has appeared in three anthologies: *Gridlock: Poetry of Southern California*, *Proposal on Brooklyn Bridge*, and *California: Dreams and Realities*. He still works on inspiration and craft, trying to write his truest poem.

**Ruth Mota** has a degree in English from Oberlin College and an MPH from San Jose State. She currently lives in the Santa Cruz Mountains where she writes poetry about nature and her decades of experience living and working in developing countries on HIV/AIDS. Recently she taught poetry classes and published anthologies by male writers at the Rountree Correctional Facility in Watsonville. Her verse is soon to appear in an anthology of poems by teachers in jails and prisons throughout the United States.

**John J. Bowman:** I was conceived by a 17-year-old, German-Irish woman, from Camden New Jersey, and a father I never met. I'm told he was Sicilian. Who knows how that data informs who I am or what my poetry is about? I know this: I am a retired journalist who edits books, writes poetry and an occasional column for the local newspaper. I live with my partner, Valerie, also an editor, and our Tibetan Terrier, Ziggy Marley, in the Sierra Foothills.

**CB Follett** is author of 11 poetry books, most recently *NOAH'S BOAT*, 2016, and several chapbooks. She has ten nominations for Pushcart Prizes as an individual and also nine for particular poems. She was awarded a Marin Arts Council Grant for Poetry, and is widely published nationally and internationally. She has many awards and prizes. Follett served as Marin County Poet Laureate from 2010-2013.

**Dixie Pine:** I'm a newly awakened poet who spends days writing about computers, and nights dreaming about everything except computers. I'm a parent. A comrade. An orphan. A dancer. A traveller. A hummer. A lover of trees, dogs, and empty spaces. I went to college, and every state in the union, but not to Europe. I have no idea how to write a biography of myself

**Larry Pike's** poetry and fiction has appeared in *Athlon: The Journal of Sport Literature*, *The Louisville Review*, *Hospital Drive*, *Seminary Ridge Review*, the MOTIF anthologies *Writing by Ear* and *Come What May*, the chapbook *Absent Photographer*, and other publications. Horse Cave (Ky.) Theatre produced his play *Beating the Varsity in 2000*, and it was published in *World Premieres from Horse Cave Theatre* (MotesBooks, 2009). In June 2017, he won the George Scarbrough Prize for Poetry.

**Yuan Changming**, nine-time Pushcart and one-time Best of Net nominee, published monographs on translation before moving out of China. Currently, Yuan edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Yuan in Vancouver; credits include *Best of Best Canadian Poetry*, *BestNewPoemsOnline*, *Threepenny Review* and 1309 others.

**James B. Nicola's** poems have appeared twice previously in *Cæsura* and recently in the *Antioch*, *Southwest* and *Atlanta Reviews*, *Rattle*, and *Poetry East*. His nonfiction book *Playing the Audience* won a Choice award. His two poetry collections (Word Poetry) are *Manhattan Plaza* (2014) and *Stage to Page: Poems from the Theater* (2016). A Yale graduate, James has been giving both theater and poetry workshops at libraries, literary festivals, schools, and community centers all over the country. Visit <https://sites.google.com/site/jamesbnicola>

**Nancy L. Meyer** an avid cyclist, grandmother of 5, and End of Life Counselor, lives in Portola Valley, CA. Published in: *Colorado Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly 3*, *Bitterzoet*, *Poet's Touchstone*, *Wordland*, *Kneel Downe's Stolen Indie*, *Persimmon Tree*, *HIV Project Then and Now*, *Kind of a Hurricane Press Tranquility Anthology*, and *Pyrokinecton*, *The Centrifugal Eye Tenth Anniversary Edition*. Forthcoming *Tupelo Press 30/30 Anthology*, *WAVES Anthology of AROHO* and *Songs for a Passbook Torch*, Cherry Castle Publishing, Finalist, New Orleans Poetry Festival 2016.

**Scott Knies** lives and works in San Jose and dreams of finding more time for poetry in his life. His poems have been published in *Santa Clara Review*, *Cæsura*, *Boatman's Quarterly Review* and *Downtown Magazine*.

## About the Artists:

**Julie Barrett:** I am a California-grown artist, born and raised in the bay area. Graduated 1999 California State University Chico with a BA degree in Drawing and Ceramics. I consider my work to be dark expressionism and have always loved to work in the grey scale. Charcoal, dry pastel, graphite and conte are my favorite mediums to draw with as they are quite pure and natural, as is the paper that I use. My hanging techniques using over-kill hardware and found objects to hang and weight my drawings originated from the need to cut costs in framing and because i felt too limited by common frames. Some of my work is darker than others, i do have color pieces too, but the subject remains dark, passionate, compassionate, and always searching for grace.

**Elizabeth Jiménez Montelongo** is a visual artist, poet, and educator based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her artwork revolves around themes of identity, transformation, and empowerment. She is intrigued by anything having to do with her indigenous Anahuak (Mesoamerican) roots. Her ancestors' worldviews have influenced the ideas, iconography, and aesthetics of her work. Elizabeth Jiménez Montelongo's art has been included in over fifty exhibitions in: California, Washington, Colorado, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York. [www.ejmontelongo.com](http://www.ejmontelongo.com)

**Carmen Patiño** is currently pursuing a degree in Communication Studies and a concentration in Creative Writing at San José State University. She is a Fiction Editor and the Marketing Director at *Reed Magazine*. An intrepid globetrotter, writer, and equal rights advocate—her dream is to become a travel writer.

**Aya Summers:** Poetry, for me, is the edge of consciousness. When I dance, when I dive, when I speak to trees - it becomes a poem in movement, seeping through everyday life. I love to travel and experience the Earth and its people - they're all living poems. I'm just a translator, a vessel. I've found that words can touch people and create new worlds. And maybe, just maybe, it can save us too.

**Bill Wolak** has just published his fifteenth book of poetry entitled *The Nakedness Defense* with Ekstasis Press. His collages have appeared recently in *Naked in New Hope 2016* and The 2017 Seattle Erotic Art Festival. Mr. Wolak teaches Creative Writing at William Paterson University in New Jersey.

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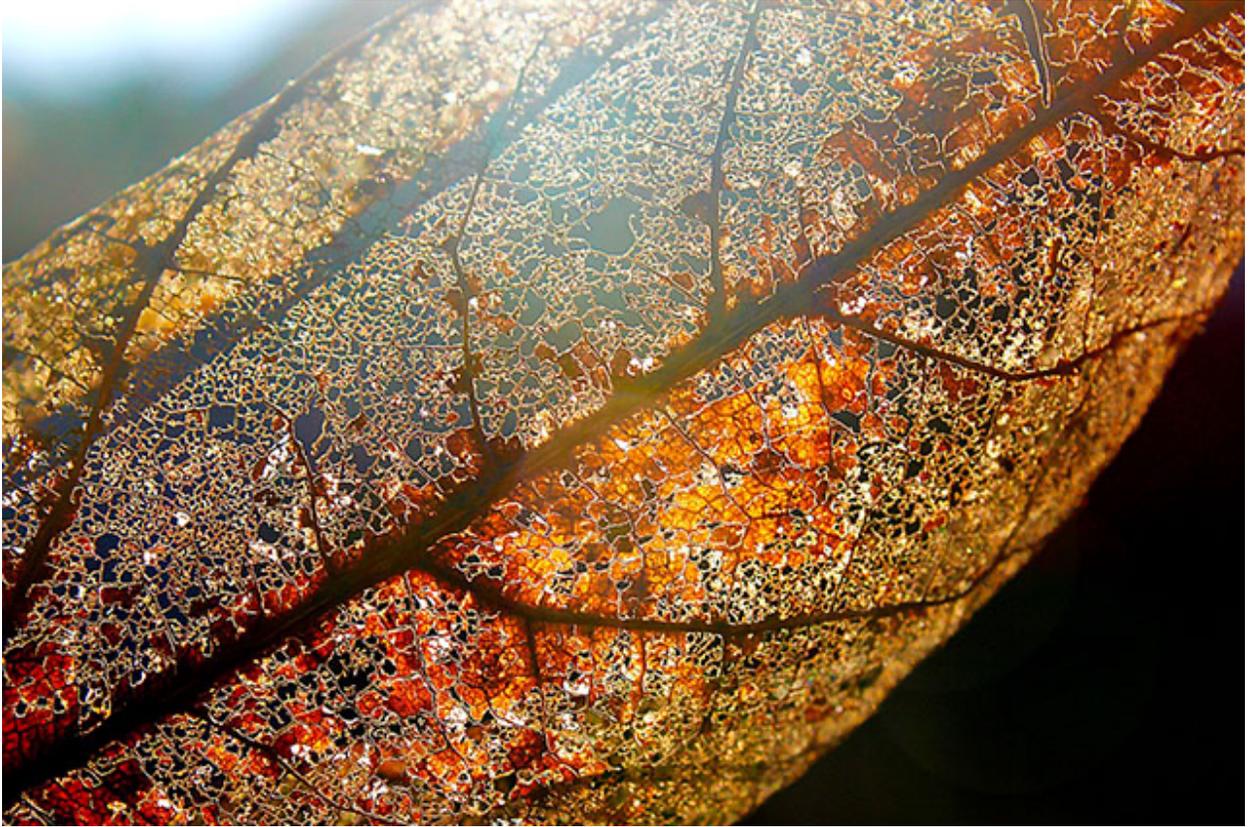
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*Aya Summers, A Revolution of Transparency*