



# *KUDZU REVIEW*

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SAMY SFOGGIA

*J'ADORE LE COUP DES FOURMIS*

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Note: “Parentheses” indicate Poetry; italics, Fiction; Nonfiction is in plain text.



## EDITOR'S NOTE

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We at Kudzu House couldn't be more excited to introduce our first-ever themed issue. The thought of a special issue focused on the idea of apocalypse and renewal first occurred when reading Kate Bonnici's poem, "Book of Revelation: A Letter to the Author," which we published back in issue 3.1. It fascinated us to think about the different ways we conceptualize "the end." Apocalyptic rhetoric saturates much of our environmental discourse, for better or worse. It can, at times, reinforce complacent attitudes toward ecological responsibility, leaving us to grieve instead of work to remediate. If the world is finite, if it is linear, then can we really feel responsible for our use of it? If the world is going to end, why shouldn't we destroy it?

This issue is one of the most diverse collections of work we have ever published, ranging from Jesse Curran's opening piece on teaching a sustainability studies course, to a beautiful lyrically reflective nonfiction piece by Bill Vernon. There are incredibly powerful poems by Leonore Hildebrant, Jim Davis, Stacey Balkun, fiction from Beth Gilstrap and many, many more! These works range from personal destruction to ecological collapse, and from revelations mused on the surfaces of foreign planets, to the surface of our own.

We hope these wonderful pieces help shake up your ideas of the apocalypse. They unveiled much to us! In fact, the idea of revelation, of unmasking or making new, seems to contradict our contemporary conceptions of the end-of-days. Our culture has become so saturated with apocalypses, ranging from the post-human *Walking Dead* to the last humans of *The Road*. The passing of the year 2012 itself revealed the problem of Western conceptions of apocalypse. The world didn't, so far as we can tell, end as the year passed, but perhaps something new was born. We hope you enjoy another summer solstice issue of *Kudzu Review*!

Thanks so much for reading, and as always:  
may the Kudzu grow!  
Cheers,

M.P. Jones  
*Editor-in-Chief*

# JESSE CURRAN

## SILKO'S CEREMONY, ECOCRITICISM, AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF RENEWAL

---

I recently taught a sustainability studies course on critical thinking in the environmental humanities. One of my objectives was to introduce the students to ecocriticism and so we read Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism*. I like Garrard's book because his ecological thinking is akin to mine. He thinks in terms of metaphor and his book is organized into master tropes that enable ecocritical inquiry. Ecological thinking is expansive and it flourishes when attention is offered to the figurative fertility of the logos. Early in the semester I broke the students into small presentation groups. They would be responsible for walking the class through each trope as we encountered it: the pastoral, the wilderness, the dwelling, the animal, the apocalypse, the earth.

For the presentations, the students lead the class. I did little, if any, talking. I noticed they ran the class like I usually would and initiated the discussion with a big question and ten minutes of free-writing. The apocalypse master-metaphor group asked the class to jot down associations with the term and started the discussion by asking: How many of you think you will experience the apocalypse in your lifetime? When we reconvened after our free-writing, I was surprised to find my hand to be the only one not raised. As it turned out, my students were unanimously convinced that it would happen in their lifetime.

As the discussion developed, I was able to understand that the students shared this view largely because of their sustainability education, which is absorbed in studying population growth, climate change, and resource depletion. For their undergraduate years, they bravely face statistics, research, arguments, and evidence that reveal the perils and responsibilities involved in our current ecological position. But this wasn't the only body of material shaping their response. I noticed over the semester that when we discussed these issues, they often were painted with alarmist and calamitous imagery. Many of the scenes they posited seemed propelled by the media—by “prepping,” nuclear holocaust, tidal waves, and comets striking earth. More than one big Hollywood movie came up to serve as an example. Everything seemed to hinge on one immanent, yet unidentifiable crisis moment, when shit would hit the fan and bedlam would take hold. And it was bound to happen within their lifetimes.

Silently observing the natural trajectory of the discussion, I wanted to guide the progression of thought. I wanted them to define what they meant by the term; it seemed that much of their sense of apocalypse had to do with the end of the world, specifically the human world, even more specifically, with our mode of life. I was curious to breach the gap between their twenty-five raised hands and my one hand, which remained quietly placed in my lap. Like any



highly charged concept, thinking of “apocalypse” involves developing one’s own relationship to its definition; it is a particularly slippery one to tack down. Lawrence Buell describes it as, “the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal” and explains how “the rhetoric of apocalypticism implies a sense of crisis.” But what does that crisis look like? And for whom? How long does it take? And does it happen all at once? After all, we are living amidst mass extinction. As I write these words, there are species and groups of people who might claim to have lived through the apocalypse—or are facing it now. I am thinking of E.O. Wilson’s example of the critically endangered Sumatran rhino, whose decline has been “gradual and subtle not abrupt and catastrophic, more like morbidity from cancer than collapse from a heart attack.” As Wilson explains, the contemporary extinction rate is “catastrophically high”—but extinction doesn’t happen in a flash or at one crisis moment. The Sumatran rhino’s decline is “gradual and subtle,” a pattern “typical of a vanishing species.” It is happening right now.

Garrard’s most provocative move in the chapter on apocalypse comes when he critiques the all-too tragic mode of apocalyptic “doom” rhetoric, which “fosters a delusive search for culprits and causes that may be reductively conceived by conflating very varied environmental problems within the concept of a singular, imminent ‘environmental crisis.’” He suggests framing environmental problems in more “comic apocalyptic narratives that emphasize the provisionality of knowledge, free will, ongoing struggle and a plurality of social groups with differing responsibility.” I would widen this comic frame to include other species, both animal and vegetable, in addition to human social groups. I would also put pressure on constructions of temporality that avoid facing the “on-going struggle” in favor of projecting some fear-driven moment when things will fall completely apart.

I paired the apocalypse unit with Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*, a book Buell positions in relation to Carson’s *Silent Spring*, both as examples of the literature of “ecocatastrophe.” Silko’s sense of apocalypse resonates with me because of what it does with scale and temporality—and how it works on constructing a language of renewal rather than deploying the rhetoric of ecocatastrophe. Rather than a single massive event precipitating the end of the world, *Ceremony* hinges upon the eternal present; everything has always been happening, is happening, and will continue to happen. Under this logic, if there will be apocalypse in the future, then we should also be able to experience it in our present. Not raising my hand in class that day had more to do with the radical uncertainty I experience when thinking about the future. It had to do with my personal interest in deconstructing linear temporal narratives in favor of working to understand what’s happening right now. It had to do with the Sumatran rhino. Not raising my hand also had to do with language. It had to do with the utility and danger of apocalyptic rhetoric. As Tayo learns from old man Ku’oosh, the way we understand and use words often determines their manifestation in our experience. Language is always evolving.

The word he chose to express “fragile” was filled with the intricacies of a continuing process, and with a strength inherent in the spider webs woven across paths through sand hills where early in the morning the sun becomes entangled in each filament of the web. It took a long time to explain the fragility and intricacy because no word exists alone, and the reason for choosing each word had to be explained with a story about why it must be said this certain way. That was the responsibility that went with being human.

Ku’oosh’s language philosophy is continuous with the Buddhist conception of Indra’s net, which serves as an image of interdependence constructive to ecological thinking. An infinite amount of polished jewels reflecting one another—forever shifting perspective—forever bending time and space. Whether a spider web or an infinite net, ecological thinking asks us to expand our conceptions of time, space, and relativity. It asks us to recognize how close we are to one another regardless of apparent distance and difference.

Usually dependent on calamity, apocalypse is a human construction that all too often hinges on fear and ego. Its etymological roots are linked to the notion of revelation and disclosure, but modern usage has attached it to violence and doomsday projections. Such framing of annihilation seems a particularly western phenomenon and an especially contemporary obsession. Perhaps this is why it is so attractive to pop-culture and fear-based politics, which all too often lack ecological scale and complexity. Its projective imaginings reveal a startling lack of empathy for radical change already happening—for what has happened and what will happen.

Because I tend to be a worrier, I have spent much of my adult life mediating debilitating fear through meditation practice. Consequently, I make it a pedagogical imperative to not incite these emotions in my classroom. I have decided it is better to model equanimity, empathy, and widened awareness in my critical reading practices. I feel in my heart that guided by these virtues, my students might go on to make careful decisions that initiate vital change—both in their lives and communities. I also try to bring to the classroom a healthy amount of optimism— if not always in the uncertain future, then certainly in the dynamic and individuated lives of my students. This is why I admire Silko’s book so much. Although her conclusion is arguably, as Buell suggests, “almost too idyllic,” I have no problem with this. I am energized by it. I interpret *Ceremony*’s sense of apocalypse closer to the etymological roots; as the book moves toward its conclusion, Tayo experiences a revelation that “he had arrived at a convergence of patterns; he could see clearly now.” Perceiving convergence is framed through acceptance, responsibility, and fortitude; as Tayo realizes, “The only thing is: it has never been easy.” After the revelatory convergence of patterns, one of Tayo’s first actions is to plant seeds. He returns to a place of spiritual significance to plant seeds because “plants would grow there like the story, strong and as translucent as stars.” Silko’s novel of “ecocatastrophe” is also a book about telling one’s story and planting new seeds. It is about widening

empathy in the present and experiencing hope for the future. It is a book about seeing clearly.

As much as we teach our students to critique and to analyze, we also teach them to write and with writing comes responsibility. As N. Scott Momaday so gracefully puts it, “language involves the elements of risk and responsibility.” Silko’s “ecocatastrophe” is ultimately a narrative of hope; a narrative on the power of narrative to shape consciousness and to mediate larger patterns of change. If we, as human beings, are compelled to indentify with a story, what story will it be? Which one will we choose to tell? And how will we use language when telling it?

In 1978 poet James Wright wrote Silko the following words in a letter: “I could call *Ceremony* one of the four or five best books I have read about America and I would be speaking the truth. But even this doesn’t say just what I mean.” With the open heart of his poetic intelligence, Wright then qualified his first statement: “my very life means more to me than it would have meant if you hadn’t written *Ceremony*.” Each time I read *Ceremony*, I return to Wright’s words because they echo my experience. This book teaches me about “the responsibility of being human.” It teaches me that “it has never been easy.” It teaches me how to live.

JIM DAVIS

*Rough Country*

To the woodshed, she said, & to the woodshed we went. Little brother, I cannot believe you found her, she's huge! There has to be something better than Black Cats to force inside the fanged mouth of a bloated raccoon. Don't worry about them, she said, as she took me by the hand & led me into the woodshed, which is where we went & came upon two brothers. Go on and do it, one said, no one is watching. What's ascribed to the night, what I have in my body, she has in hers. We watched the wind tear branches from sky & our eyes followed a partridge to cover, two speckled fawns suckling their mother & hatchets fell from the screws sticking out of the wall in the woodshed. Two brothers filled a raccoon carcass with matchsticks & small dynamite of red, white, bramble wick. We were in the woodshed when the smaller of the boys pulled the stick of a Blow Pop from his red teeth & mouth, spit a thick wad – the bigger boy flicked the wheel of a purple Bic until it lit – lit the wick like floss from the fanged mouth of what didn't explode the way they expected. She said what we have in our bodies is wrong, as she squirmed back into canary panties, freckle shaped like an axe on her chest above the top button of a periwinkle blouse. In the rough country bracken: laughter, footsteps, falling leaves.

## STACEY BALKUN

### Mars

*The 4,200-meter high summit of Mauna Kea in Hawaii houses the world's largest observatory.*

At the peak of Mauna Kea, telescopes squat  
like lighthouses, huddled against the wind.  
Outside their housings, I can hear the clicks  
as each lens shifts in and out of focus.

I bought a holographic sticker of Mars  
on the drive up, and an imitation Galileo-scope,  
circa 1609, not much more than a single blurry binocular,  
the kind sailors pointed at the sea, the start

of something robotic. Red desolation—this mountain  
makes me feel small and modern, a tourist  
wagging my head, poppy sunhat pulled low  
and the sun reflecting off my arms—that paleness.

In the heat I walk stiffly, wishing I had visited at night  
with our island swaddled in the deep black blankets  
of trade winds, each star floating down into sight, captured,

still as the white lips of dead coral. Constellations  
would splay across the sky like the chop of ocean  
smacking sharp black lava, waves collecting in tide pools

where, somewhere, a red sea urchin unfolds her spines,  
extraterrestrial in the gathering water.

# THE EDGE OF BAMBOO

## BILL VERNON

---

Despite the storm raging outside, it's a blizzard according to the News, National Geographic Magazine whisks me away from the flaming fireplace, over the grass in our windswept yard, which is smothered in snow, out to the creek in our valley where there are actual canes. An article says I'm living on the edge of bamboo and the grass in our lawn is its cousin. The cane I'm thinking of grows along the puny flow of that creek from its flood plains to its mouth, the waters frothy in hillocks. I've walked the whole distance, among thickets and saplings, and tripped many times through what we call canebrakes.

Before this I called them a nuisance, squeezing through them while they were all heavy with blackbirds that shrilled into red-winged flight as I neared. I remember being farther off too, where hill bulges muscle a piedmont range that steepens into mountains east and south of here. Over there the "giant grass" thrives, thicker than trees on the hills.

At that moment I think the cane is like me. This place makes us what we are, feeds us, allows us to grow to potential, here, in this climate. It puts up a limit while suggesting there's more to ourselves than what we show on the surface. We just need to look behind ourselves to see. Our roots go further back than I understand.

Of course pictures fill out the magazine story. With their transparent windows, I follow the trace of bamboo along river banks south, out of this cold zone that shrank it. Our canes are a "vestigial" jungle that becomes a real tropical lushness where hollow culms decorate homes, twenty-foot stems side the houses, slivers sliced off become fly rods, where shoots steam on plates. Years later the Far East and elsewhere will show me all this. The dream I'm in is predictive.

My eyes close and my mind opens up, yearning for the wisdom of bamboo. Although I once thought it basically useless, I have strung line from tall cane, catching bullheads, crappie and bream, but that's all I knew until now. Someday, I'll drink water from the culms. In old age, working to drumbeats thumping from instruments made out of bamboo, I'll try lacing canes into chairs and when the cane cups my buttocks, I'll perch on the flood plains, listen while the cool waters flow, spread my black, red-flashing wings and fly off, surveying the land where I live.

From now on mowing our three acres of grass as I've done for two years, the bugs nearly hidden in the blades down on the ground will be me, caught among the pillars of baby bamboo. The grass cutting's fresh smell has changed inside me forever. It will tell me there's more to our yard than a pretty green color to cover the dirt underneath.

## JOLENE BRINK

### *Peregrines*

*Birdsong is the primary indicator  
of habitats prosperous to humans.*

— Gordon Hempton

We followed lichen across a stranger's land,  
for miles, until we bent back pines

to find Lake Superior. A palimpsest of fog.  
A landscape taken over by water.

That morning it held birds, hunting  
in the clouds, their black specs curling

in the wind. This is not something  
you own. We waited for the peregrines

to chase down the swifts and starlings,  
the flickers nesting along shore.

We waited with a thermos of coffee  
and sticky rolls, picking ants off our knees

pretending  
we were once birds,

and their flight  
could still be our own.

## *The Break Up*

---

I.

A tornado once caught up with my past life.

When summer clouds became pylons  
and we hid in the mildewing basement

listening to wind pry at the shingles,  
my reincarnated fears are not wrong.

It is still searching for me.

II.

Once herds of bison blackened the Midwest.

And settlers thought wheat would fail  
on a land where trees were rare and fire aged,

until they discovered loamy soils,  
good for seeds, so ready to blossom

in someone else's home.

III.

Today you are driving north along Lake Superior.

Sedges emerge from the crust of snow  
and winter's bleached fist relaxes its grip.

The thaw rushing from every inch of rock  
and tree, looking up, startles you suddenly

to remember the color green.



# YVETTE SCHNOEKER-SHORB

## Ancestors of Canines

Lips curled in disgust, that sneer-faced cynic, coyote, is sulking in a corner of my mind. Her halfbreed buddy, dingo—brain as small as a domestic dog—dwells in diachronic limbo, forever feral with a will as ferocious as wolf. I know them all, evolved with their shadows surrounding, sniffing.

They listen within me, ears erect and tuned to a nearby dog-walker pointing to her miniature pal, spry, floppy-eared, fluffy, front paws stuffed through a blue baby shirt. The beast is curly, its fur no color that occurs in nature; I want to offer my condolences for the genetic effect that is also the object of her affection. The woman mentions tenderly, *He eats broccoli and carrots—cooked or raw, even canned. He just loves vegetables.*

Stifling a growl, I step over the newly processed pile and realize she is not speaking to me, but trying to impress a man with jowls who suddenly clicks back an extension of leash—jerk and release, jerk again and release, his slack-jawed canine companion coerced and startled into confused attention. The master at last proudly claims his dog's intention is to say hello. He wants to say hello, although didn't know how until now.

The one-woman pack inside me realizes the familiar, that oozing social lubricant shared by lovers of canids designed to be kept, domesticated, that special bond, instantaneous friendships formed in fair weather. But it is the stormy portions of the unconscious that force fragile, protected egos to feel secure in Eden. No more dark shapes prowling and yowling in the depth of the devil's wilderness.

No longer can they emerge like claws grasping the blueprints of heaven, teeth hiding in the negatives of paradisiacal proposals, or snarling snouts with incisors tearing organs lodged deeply in mammalian bellies. Predation has been tamed, for the most part—for the urban part. Almost gone are the lone shrieks of crystal sound and soft-pawed patter slipping through the night, always more than one, and meaning one less hen or sheep or pet or child.

# SUSAN RUKEYSER

## INVASIVE SPECIES \*\*

---

Regret sounds like a rubber band pulled taut, then snapped. Sara holds her breath, what they say not to do. Her leg sweats against the plastic chair. The goggled doc scrolls the laser across her anklebone, following an artist's line.

She wanted a Kudzu vine, emerging from toes and wrapping her foot. Drew missed the South, so they moved down here from Boston, where they happened to meet. Sara has a habit of rearranging her life, not always for men.

Early on, they canoed the lazy Chattahoochee. The Kudzu-wrapped riverbanks seemed to shift, vines squeaking as they passed over one another, knots tightening beneath. New shoots extended with a pop, then burrowed taproots into clay. Native life smothered, inch by inch.

When Drew leaves for work, Kudzu taps at the window. By lunchtime, a vine fingers its way in through a gap where the glass sits crooked. At sunset, Sara dons gloves and steps into mosquito clouds. Cicadas perform their shimmering swell, males vibrating their ribbed abdominals while females crouch and click. In this lusty humidity, Sara chops. She draws herbicide across the windowsill. But it only delays the inevitable. Vines thicken, turn hard.

Southern air is bloated, Sara thinks, with words withheld for the sake of manners. Drew warned her: "No politics, no religion." But she isn't good at small talk. Her only friends are his, but she did try—She chose this tattoo, didn't she?

Beneath the laser, her skin boils and the design blanches, becomes its negative.

Regret feels like a dull blade thumped into her, withdrawn and thumped again.

This doc usually deals in warts, moles, and pustules. “Skin is an organ,” he says, above the noise of the machine. “It deserves respect.” He tells her what will happen: A watery blister will balloon from skin burnt raw. The pain will become an itch.

She’s leaving, of course. Drew and the South. She does tend to hold a grudge.

Her regret bubbles up with ink, poked in deep by another man she trusted too soon, without good reason.

Most of the ink will be reabsorbed by her body, the doc says, eventually pushed out as waste. But first it will travel her bloody canals, regret flooding her, seeping through cell walls, into marrow.

“This green,” the doc frets, pushing a button to stop the machine. Silence booms. “It’s tough. But I can lighten it, at least. Make it easier to hide.”

Sara’s not sure yet if she’ll head back North or somewhere new. She’s not sure how life will rearrange this time, or what deserves to leave a mark. Not Kudzu—she’s learned this much. Kudzu is no emblem of the South. It’s an invasive species. It’s won’t coexist with what belongs here. Like her, but more determined.

From now on she’ll heed the doc’s advice, show some respect.

He hands her a different pair of goggles and switches frequencies. And although it only makes it worse, once again she holds her breath.

## JENNIFER COLLINS

### *Behind You*

Blood comes from the muse quietly,  
dying the soil beneath her and thickening  
between blades of grass--  
above the groove, headlights slide by  
unseeing, unseen,  
too high and practical to illuminate  
any entity in any ditch.  
In a fold of her limp gypsy skirt,  
her cell phone twitches for a hand  
in the fair silence, unused  
to being ignored or forgotten.

The calls coming in,  
second-guessing a murderer's hand,  
are constant.

Even the murderer calls once,  
somewhat in hope of an answer,  
something in denial of death,  
but it's a lightning bug who lands finally  
and first on her still touch to mourn,  
his soft whirl reaching out in anger  
to cover the blank of her eyes.

## Figurations

Spiderman, baby

(all tied up with sewing thread, half  
sprawled in a pond, webbed out by some  
demented five year old and subject to  
rain, snow, mud more dangerous than the  
villainy he's meant to take on)

there layin' in the dust

(holdin' out for some Peter-Pan rescue  
of youth or magic with the snow comin'  
down and the red and the blue—the  
vibrant stuff, see—all covered in the gray  
muck of daylight)

like the way I wait

(your headlights somewhere off in the  
distance, countin' the miles away from any  
webs I ever spun, on you or anyone, your  
foot on the gas, some little MJ Watson  
feminist on a power trip)

with my webs

(or any ability to spin for you, for me,  
all wrapped up in the waiting, counting,  
hoping on my heroine who's just trying to  
hold herself out of the rain when I could  
lay groundwork for survival if not)

all tied up in you

(in your vision instead of functioning in  
or at least seeing mine here already spread  
over our world only limited by imposed  
structure with the strength of sewing  
thread because of you I'm all tied up)

like some tired action figure, baby.

# MATTHEW T. HUMMER

## *A VIEW FROM THE PATIO*

---

### I. Moon, Tree and Dog

She is a bulb with a sharp circle edge. She hangs half-formed sinking into washed out sky. She disappears into the morning horizon. Blackbirds fly through her face and skirt the neighbor's rooftop. Their flight is controlled like the river birch trimmed: a clump of green weeds before shearing. Bark shucks off the trunk like corn husk.

The wind is cool and a lawnmower drones. The neighbor girl is on the patio looking for our youngest son. She squeaks her question: "Can Caden come out, come out and play?" She shakes her McDonald's toy; it clucks and whines. The perfection of this morning destroyed.

The leaning sycamore planted in the rocky corner of the yard is now a child's picture. My wife hated it as a branch rising out of the ground like an upside down fishhook. But it sold for ten dollars at Gerz nursery: fifteen feet and bent. It grew branches from the bowed stalk and sent green shoots up from the trunk. When I cut the curve off, it looked like the kind of tree a kid would draw: slight trunk with a low crown—she likes it now. Its bark is beginning to mottle like a pinto pony or calico cat. But she's allergic to cats and won't have one around.

Instead we have a dog, an insufficient creature. Domestication dulled his wild mind. His survival instinct so deep he cannot sense the wolf within. The wolf is a real animal. It must be broken with gun or trap. The coyote too. The skulking animal expands his territory into eastern suburbs. He follows the deer. (A woman from California said it would stalk a playing child; kids falling onto cut grass—ring around the rosy.) These canines suffer no leash. We handle them with bullet and poison.

Our dog is named for the Disney deer. We have to remind people that Bambi is a boy, in the movie, the Felix Salten novel, and in our house. He has the look of a beagle mix, with longer legs and tail like a Tennessee Walker treeing hound. He was fast when young. His legs carried him like a deer through brush; his glory was running and scenting. Loyal enough on a hiking trail, unless he came on a scent. Once in County Park, he chased deer and was lost for an hour. He came back limping with a cut on his leg.

Now he is lumpy and thirsty. He hates being on the chain looped to the narrow

sycamore tree. He sleeps in the grass when his howling receives no pity. He wants to be inside lapping toilet water and sleeping on a carpet. I'd like to keep alive the illusion of his wildness; the idea that he's content with lamb bones, a bowl of water, and a grassy nap. He is needy of human affection and scraps. In his old age he has become crafty about stealing food from the table and the children's hands. He has ceased to consider consequences or rules. An old dog goes back to the untrained pup and pees in the house.

The myth of the wolf abides in him. He ignores the moon, but needs company. His pack is bare of fur, but smart enough to teach him words. The dull creature on the chain is the next stage of evolution.

## II. Neighbors

The new neighbors put a plastic fence up between our yards. My sparse line of trees hides little and the fence feels like a cage. The trees are too young to buffer sound or block the wall of wind that comes across the plain for seven months. But the patio today could be a beach resort. The play of wind in bare toes, the grit of sand between pavers, the blue zenith.

The neighbor's falsetto voice pierces the backyard gully. "What's wrooong honey?" The girl is crying. He's carrying his iPad through the yard to her play set. Our kids call it the "park." His voice is sugar. He glances up at the girl and says, "Pretty dragonfly." He looks again and his voice changes to baritone: "Wow. That really is a pretty dragonfly."

Music pops from their screen door; in the kitchen the wife sings. She comes in and out of the radio song—her voice like tin foil. She's working on dinner. She calls the dogs by their names. "Violet, Viiiiolet, go eat, go eat. Go eat or Marty's gonna get your food." Marty is the big black dog and Violet is the white mop. The way they spread their words over sentences, like honey over bacon, ruins the crisp afternoon. Their voices echo up and down the treeless subdivide.

Before the overweening voices there was sublimity. The sun warmed my feet, the cool breeze contrasted sun, locusts in the old neighborhood reverberated in maple leaves, and air conditioners droned like bees.

The little girl screams: "No daddy, no daddy, no daddy." He is carrying her away from the play set. He hands the iPad to his wife, now on the deck. He walks the girl back to the play set, while the wife muses aloud, lowing like a cow talking to herself in steel gates while the machine pumps and sucks. "I think we might have to change the gate latches. Because they don't lock." Then she's booming about back door security systems for the pool. They have no pool yet.

Grow fast little trees.

### III. Butterflies and Bees

Summer misses the honey bee. Lots of black bumbling bees crash land on purple coneflowers. They walk through the domed backs like dogs through grass fields. They gather pollen on their hairy legs by mistake and seem tired at the end of the day.

Songbirds chirp far away and our three year old is yapping to herself in the yard. The dog strains his leash. His tongue sticks out and a yelp quivers from his sagging throat. He breathes in heaves. Too stupid to let the dream go on. The child jabbers: "Thomas, I want watch Thomas." Expectation trained by memory: TV for the child, air conditioning for the dog. Contemplation killed. Bees know how to unwind after a busy day.

Two butterflies with yellow wings alight on purple flowers. Small florets open at the base. The tips are dead. They see colors we can't. Purple and yellow are only complements in the human mind. The eye perceives what is there and constructs the idea of what it sees. The fact that so many minds agree that that is what we see does not answer the question. Especially when snakes smell with tongues and we eat sun with skin. Butterflies see colors we cannot dream.

They waft careless with poison in wings: milkweed stalk their womb. The white, sticky sap bleeding poison in utero is the insect world's direct connection to earth and plant. Toxin and food trapped in shells. Clear innards boil. They depend on poison sap and pollen for their few careless, busy days before the freeze cuts them short



## LEONORE HILDEBRANDT

### *After Learning*

I ran to the margins bordering north  
where the land ends and the sea ends.  
In the quiet, I could hear my own heartbeat.

When I tried to stop thinking, space rushed in,  
uncontrollably. The water at my feet  
did not trouble itself over me, so I stayed —

at least the ocean was right in its fervor.  
The wind acted friendly sometimes,  
sweeping through, cooling heads,

but terribly, I doubted  
my own clinging — that history  
might have taught us.

## EMILY O'NEILL

### Mated

You and I are playing chess in the belly of a whale, and you are losing. I can tell that you know this: you chew your sweatshirt zipper pull, make moves incredibly slowly. The whale lists from side to side. Its moans are amplified when heard from the inside. The sounds move through us like we are near the Marshall stacks at a large concert. The white queen takes the black rook, putting the king in check for the third time.

You stare at me through foggy glasses and ask if I am happy when I write love poems. I can't answer. I take another of your pawns. The whale's stomach smells better than I expected it to, like a sushi restaurant. We went for sushi once, when we were first friends. You taught me how to use chopsticks. "Like this," you said, and the polished bamboo stretched from your hand like an ibis beak, trained to extract even the smallest grain of rice and present it to me like a rare pearl.

The whale lurches and you catch me from falling into its heaving side. The chess pieces roll off the table and through scattered puddles on the soft pink floor. You are still waiting for my answer. "I used to think the pickled ginger they put on the plate was lox." You laugh, and I cannot tell if it is because you think I am only a child, or because you are relieved about your king, now floating safely near a headless fish.

You kiss me through your fingers as a thick swell of water rushes down the whale's throat, knocking us off our knees into a dervish of pawns and bishops and krill and sand

## JENNIFER MOFFETT

### *Constellation*

In their alternate universe, the light switch is dead  
But a punctured lampshade scatters stars around the room.

The ocean is just outside, a naked stretch of beach  
Where they sit in the sand and swig from bottles, then dive  
Only coming up for air in the last necessary moment.

There is nothing but muted words,  
And the sound of water forced onto sand  
Where wavelengths tangle like seaweed caught in the surf.

Their words flow onto paper, onto the walls, onto each other.  
Blue cursive on a neck under lifted hair: Originality is non-existent.  
Small print over thread-thin veins in a wrist: I am drowning.

She climbs a ladder, barely balanced  
To write on the ceiling, to circle a star: You are here.  
And the words connect like a burning constellation

# BETH GILSTRAP

## BUDDY AND LURCH

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Jeremy looked at Letty like she was a tree or a limb, something alive, but weathered. A branch hanging loose, bark coming undone, piled up around her like she was shooting a big ass machine gun, shells everywhere. At least, that's what she guessed since he hadn't been coming home from the road much lately.

She walked past this Pine everyday, the top had broken off last time the wind came up and its Western half looked like it was running from something, limbs all twisted back around almost hugging itself out of fear or comfort.

With a little whiskey in her morning coffee, Letty moved easier through her days. But she loved Buddy and their twelve-year-old Pug, Lurch, to bits and couldn't stand the thought of life without them. She repeated their names to herself on her walks, Buddy and Lurch, until it started to sound in her head like some kind of verb that meant something, making her gut hurt, burning at a low temperature.

Lurch wasn't much into walking since his knees started clicking out of socket and Letty knew it was only a matter of time. She had it in mind to leave after Lurch as long as Buddy got into a good college. Buddy and Lurch.

By the time she turned forty-six, her face had started to feel foreign to her, unfamiliar in a way like hearing someone in pain cry out in Italian. Her face was Romanesco for tired and fed up and neglected. Her words hovered out of reach; something like *stanco e di alimentato in su*, but that could have translated to "having eaten." Only a piece of her Nonna's native language lingered in her mind, most of it food-related.

When Letty laid her palm on the tree's trunk everyday before turning back, she knew one day it'd all be over and done. She'd stop waiting and do something for once. Save up enough to get back to Rome, Nonna's Navona, smoke where she smoked on Bernini's Fountain of the Quattro Fiumi, eat whole fish and spaghetti cacio e pepe at Antica Taverna. One day, Letty would smell the world from behind a garlic and lemon-infused veil.

It wasn't until Jeremy had been gone nine days this stretch that she got the idea to cut the tree down.

At 2:36am, she woke, body slicked over not only from the flannel, but hormones, too. She sat straight up, scooped Lurch under his front paws and told him, "Booger, Mama's got it. I'm gonna cut that old Pine down." Lurch snorted

and wriggled out of her arms to reclaim his spot at the foot of the bed.

Jeremy had a chainsaw. The tree wasn't so big. She knew deep in her belly pain that the tree had had it. Buddy and Lurch.

In her plaid pajamas and bear slippers, she grabbed Jeremy's headlamp from the garage and snapped on some safety goggles. True, she'd never worked the thing before, but she had been with Jeremy at Home Depot when he bought it. As she looked at green paint samples for the bathroom, she heard the salesclerk say it had almost a pound of horsepower per engine weight.

When Letty pulled the cord, it felt like that time Jeremy had made her fire the double barrel, nearly knocking her on her ass, but she got ahold of it, felt the vibrations clear through her body. Even the bear claws shook. Buddy and Lurch.

Buddy hadn't always been easy on her. He blamed her for their troubles –the times when they only had chicken wings to eat and Goodwill clothes. “You couldn't have married someone who gave a damn?” he'd ask as he slammed his bedroom door and cranked up Iron Maiden. “Can't you do more than sell cheap make-up to divorcees? Didn't you want more out of life, Ma?”

For a time, Letty wondered if Buddy would ever understand how hard it had been with just her GED. She couldn't really fault him though, for saying the shit she conjured up all on her own. Things didn't start to change between them until he'd found her passed out next to their Civic. She wouldn't let him take her to the hospital, told him it was just anxiety, but she'd watched his movements alter as he dabbed peroxide on her abrasions and bandaged them up.

Now and then these days, he'd borrow the car and pick up Captain D's for dinner, just to give her a break. Buddy and Lurch.

Streetlights flickered as she took her usual route zigzagging through her neighborhood. She thought someone, Ms. Peabody maybe, who stayed up to all hours online shopping, would instinctively come out to stop her. Buddy and Lurch.

At the tree, Letty held the chainsaw with two hands. She tested it out on the scraggy lower limbs. Quick zipping, a momentary resistance and she was almost spun around by the force of it cutting through. She clenched her teeth and bore down hard near the base.

Buddy and Lurch.

JOAN FISET

Offering

say one word

taken from

away from here

*breath*

will it go on if you

bring it in

*small bird flits from branch to branch  
splinter song beside the water*

will it go on

*all I have  
this pocket  
to fit my hand*

if you bring it in

*once I saw you and thought I knew you  
this became a lie*

one you kept on telling

*no one listened  
splinter song  
pocket to fit my hand*

days of waiting

*splinter song  
I bring*

*Early Light*

what is leaving  
left before

it was  
this waiting

here by the water  
year after year

if only  
and if

now the horizon expands  
suture of sky and sea

no ship to crest  
and then arrive

here is the day  
without and wit

# TOM LESKIW

## THE ROAD THAT LEADS HOME

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Northwestern California, the town of Willow Creek, 1981.

“Scott, they’ve assigned me the Horse Linto slide control project. Contracting told me that the project was initiated by the fisheries department, so I thought I’d come to you for some background. What’s the deal with this graphite schist? I’ve never even heard of it,” I admitted.

“That’s what Lester, the geologist, calls it. You should see it in the winter, when it’s wet. Imagine a steep hillside of wet, mucky, ground-up pencil lead – which, as you know, is really graphite. You ever use powdered graphite to lubricate a padlock?”

“Yep.”

“Well, the whole mountain’s about that slick. Every winter, when the creek rises, it undercuts the toe of the slide, eroding fine sediments that cover over the gravels that salmon use for spawning.”

“How far downstream is affected?”

Scott shook his head. “Right now, we’re getting no spawning by Chinook salmon downstream of the slide, all the way to the mouth, where Horse Linto joins the Trinity River. And only a token few spawning fish upstream of the slide as well. It’s a shame, because the creek used to be chock full of salmon... before the ’64 flood hammered everything.”

“Sounds grim. The contract was

awarded for \$170,000. Given the price tag, I hope the project works.”

“So do we,” Scott said. “In order to armor the toe of the slide, we need big rock, I mean, *really* big rock –two to three cubic yards in size—if it’s going to stay put when the winter flows rise.”

Scott reached into a desk drawer and handed me a photo of the landslide. I could tell the photo was taken during spring, as streamside alders were still leafing out. An immense delta of black dirt spanned the channel. The stream had partially down-cut through the deposited material; the water downstream was inky black.

Scott pulled a sheet of paper from his project file and handed it to me. “If the project works, within several years the area downstream of the slide will cleanse itself of silts and clays. If we get the number of spawning fish that I predict, the project will pay for itself in five to seven years’ time. Of course, the Forest Service won’t see any of the money; it’s the commercial and sport fishers—and those who benefit from spin-offs like gas, food, and lodging—who will benefit.”

The importance of fishing to our local economy began to sink in. “Maybe I’ll see you out on the project site next week?”

The project started slowly, as a convoy of four trucks hauled boulders from two rock pits, one forty miles away. The equipment operator was highly skilled, always a godsend for a harried inspector juggling several contracts. At intervals, the operator would shut off his equipment and light up a fresh Swisher Sweet cigarillo, while I checked the elevation of the boulders, to make sure they were



being placed in accordance with the survey stakes.

Two months later, all the boulders had been placed. Closing the steep road that had been constructed to haul the rock to the project was all that remained to do. I carefully selected locations to construct waterbars—mounds of dirt just downslope of shallow troughs that would channel surface water off the road. The gate at the top of the road would later be welded shut; no one was likely to drive *this* road again. Above the roar of the diesel engine, I shouted to the operator and pointed out the location of each waterbar. When we reached the main road, our work was complete. I ate my lunch under the trees, shaded from the hot September sun while we waited for a lowbed to transport the loader down the mountain.

Over the course of a project, an inspector develops a relationship with the equipment operator: sometimes good, sometimes bad. This particular operator was an artist; I was amazed by his ability to place irregular-shaped boulders into a seamless “rock blanket.” The contractor and his employees had completed another restoration project just prior to Horse Linto. The quality of their work spoke for itself; it wasn’t just another job for them. The way I saw it, all of us were getting in on the ground floor—of experiencing firsthand the new relationship being forged between people, heavy equipment, and nature.

We shook hands. “You’re a helluva operator,” I said.

“Thanks. Been doing it for some time now. I hope the fish come back.”

“So do I.” Pulling out first in order

to avoid their dust, I headed back to town.

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In the Pacific Northwest, stories abound of the devastating December 1964 floods. One especially harrowing tale concerns a holiday pageant that was being performed on the evening of December 23 at the elementary school in the small town of Bridgeville, California. Torrential rains during the previous four days had swollen rivers to near-record flood stage. Anxious families feared that the bridge over the Van Duzen might be overwhelmed by a combination of raging floodwaters and river-borne debris, so a member of the audience was designated to monitor the river at half-hour intervals.

“River coming up... river still rising,” were his first two reports. Then, after his third trip to the bridge, he reported that the river level had dropped substantially. The audience was jubilant. “Although it’s still raining cats and dogs here, it must have stopped raining in the headwaters,” someone suggested.

Despite this bit of good news, caution dictated that the river-watcher continue his vigil. Sometime later, he burst into the hall, shouting, “The river’s higher than ever... Everyone head for home.” Only later did it come to light that the reduced flow was due to a massive landslide temporarily blocking the river, before rising floodwaters cut through the earthen dam.

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Fast-forward 23 years, to 1987. I’ve just seized an opportunity to leave the engineering department for the

“greener pastures” of fisheries. My employer, Six Rivers National Forest, can be counted among the many entities and interested citizens intent on restoring salmon and steelhead to levels resembling their historical numbers.

The Forest’s fisheries program manager, Kerry Overton, and his assistant, Karen Kenfield, are showing a photograph to a cadre of new fisheries employees. The scene is of Horse Linto Creek, near the slide stabilization project I’d worked on six years before—and a focus of the Forest’s restoration efforts.

“Tell me what you see,” Kerry asks the group. To me, the stream looks unremarkable: a flat-gradient creek lacking waterfalls or cascades. The water is crystal-clear and of uniform depth, revealing a bottom composed mainly of cobble-sized materials, maybe 6-12” in diameter. Some of the larger rocks protrude above the water surface. Streamside alders are cloaked in bright green leaves, indicating that the photo was taken during late spring or summer.

No one steps forward to say anything insightful, to point out the lack of what we’d soon come to describe as *habitat elements*, so Karen answers for us. “Salmon and steelhead require two main kinds of habitat: deep pools for avoiding predators and riffles, where appropriate-sized gravels are deposited for spawning. The photo displays what we call a flood riffle: rock deposited by the ’64 flood that has buried pools and is too large for salmon to maneuver with their tails in order to construct their spawning nests, called redds. You’ve all heard

of a pool-to-riffle ratio. Well, in this photo—which is representative of a lot of Horse Linto—there *are* no pools.” Heads nod in assent and we begin to get a feel for what a restored stream channel might look like.

“We call these altered, degraded habitats ‘bowling alleys,’” Kerry added. “Restoring them to some semblance of their pre-’64 condition is our task. We’ll transform these dead zones into something more complex, adding logs and boulders for cover and to create a range of water velocities. Pools will scour and deepen in some areas, while others will see deposition of spawning gravels.”

The opportunity to work on restoring fish populations couldn’t have come along at a better time. I’d had my fill of inspecting the construction of logging roads. Loggers were cutting corners, building roads contrary to contract specifications. When I cited them, my superiors wouldn’t back me, stating that Six Rivers had entered an era where “We’re leaving the overseeing of the construction up to the roadbuilders. If the roads are good enough to haul the logs away from the upcoming timber sale, that’s all we care about.”

“So what am I *doing* here?” I wondered, a question at once existential and practical. The opportunity to change jobs wasn’t without its drawbacks, however. My new position in fisheries required taking a hefty pay cut and less than full-time work. None of that mattered, though—a restoration community was forming, sustained by a mix of volunteerism, grant dollars and agency funds. The general public, once

informed of the plight of salmon, had voted for several state propositions that funded fish habitat restoration. People from myriad backgrounds—fisheries, geology, engineering—were recruited for jobs that were focused on restoring habitat, not just working in hatcheries designed to mitigate altered or destroyed habitat.

Although I was furloughed each winter, restoring fish populations was a multi-faceted, year-round endeavor. The season began in late September when we helped out at a small-scale hatchery, funded by commercial salmon fishermen. The goal of the rearing facility was markedly different from that of a traditional hatchery. Here, we were merely attempting to jump-start the natural populations for a short period of time. Then, our work accomplished, we'd move the facility to the next watershed requiring our assistance.

Working under a permit from the California Department of Fish and Game, rearing facility manager Dave Hillemeir would trap several male and about 15 female Chinook salmon during the run from early October to January. To prepare for our trapping operations, we'd erect a fishing weir that spanned the entire width of Horse Linto Creek. Fence pickets of the weir could be raised to let fish pass, but conversely, we had the ability to temporarily shut off upstream access, save for the route into our trap. The fish were then transferred into large-diameter PVC pipes that floated in a fiberglass tub until the females were ready to spawn.

One by one, Dave stroked the male Chinook on their undersides until

they produced milt—sperm—that squirted into a measuring cup I held. We pulled the holding tube that contained a female out of the water and removed the grate from one end. It was all I could do to maintain a grip on the tube, against the force of her thrashing, muscled energy. Holding the tube at an angle, the salmon slid partially out and Dave's practiced hand killed her with a blow to the head with a wooden club. On those occasions when a single blow didn't suffice, Dave would grunt or grimace and his face grew red, indicating not only concern for the creature but also the weight of "playing God." When the female was dead, I'd place a clean bucket below her while Dave reached for a box cutter-like sharp implement. With one sure stroke, he slit her belly and several thousand jewel-like salmon eggs cascaded into the bucket.

After carefully mixing the male's milt into the egg mass, we transferred the slurry to trays in a plywood hatchbox. Spring water circulated through the box, mimicking the conditions—minus the muddy water and flooding that can wash out a redd—found in Horse Linto.

As embryos grew into fry, they were transferred into fiberglass tubs and, later, a large earthen rearing pond into which some of the stream had been diverted. Contrary to the methods of many large-scale hatcheries, we trapped only native-run fish, believing that natural selection had best equipped them to survive the site-specific vagaries of the watershed.

Research had shown that the longer we kept our fish at our facility, the better chance they had to survive

their gauntlet-like journey to the ocean. So, they remained in our pond until they were about nine months old. A plethora of wildlife that feed on fish—including raccoon, heron, egret, kingfisher—are known to hunt by the bright light of a full moon. To minimize their predation, we scheduled the release of our fish with the first new moon following the onset of fall rains. Release day was a momentous occasion, filled with a mixture of joy and trepidation—not unlike the swirling emotions parents experience when sending their teenagers off to college.

Spring and summer, we donned wetsuits, masks and snorkels to dive streams, counting fish that ranged from juvenile to three years of age. There's no better strategy for learning to think like a fish than slipping into the water to observe them. As the water warms in late summer, its oxygen level declines. Fish respond by spending more time in the "bubble-curtain"—aerated water at the head of pools. Because feeding fish face upstream, into the current, our dives proceeded in an upstream direction. By carefully entering the water at the downstream end of a pool, the fish remained oblivious to our presence.

My favorite pools were those that had a large boulder or bedrock outcrop at the head of the pool, which shielded me from the full force of the current. Out-flanking the fish by slowly swimming upstream at the edge of the pool, I'd disappear into rock shadow. Floating near-motionless with arms and legs spread, I *became* a fish: the school not reacting to my presence. Easing my way beyond

current-stilling rock, I'd drift into the bubble curtain. The combination of this cold water jacuzzi and sunlight—refracting off bubbles that moved with a kind of non-random Brownian motion—was mesmerizing.

Autumn found us wading streams, counting redds and carcasses of spawned out dead fish. Smelly carcasses steaming in the heat of an early October day was an olfactory experience never to be forgotten. Scavengers including bear, raccoon, and Bald Eagle ensured that their remains were always undercounted.

Although many of the Six Rivers' projects were successful, we had our share of failures. There's an aspect of the 1964 floods that's not often discussed. Namely, the massive scope of watershed destruction occurred because of a perfect storm of cultural and climatic events.

The post-World War II logging boom took place in a time of little regulation. Consider: California's Forest Practice Rules weren't enacted until 1973. Imagine a gold rush mentality where log bridges were constructed and tens of thousands of undersized culverts were installed—destined for plugging during high water. Logs were routinely skidded with heavy equipment right down stream channels.

The practice of high-grading—cutting large swaths of trees but leaving the culls and taking only the best wood to the mills—was also a culprit, as felled timber left behind plugged stream channels and forced flows to carve new routes. In 1978, in Lucy Gulch on the slopes of South Fork Mountain, I was nearly

stymied in my effort to cross a log jam more than ten acres in size. Not coincidentally, near the downstream hamlet of Hyampom, the river was buried beneath nearly 20 feet of sediment.

Cull logs and uprooted trees that washed into streams choked their channels, in some cases forming log jams that blocked upstream access to returning adult salmon. For several years following the floods, heavy equipment was used to remove these logs. In their zeal to unclog stream channels, managers went too far, forgetting that large logs had always played a part in pool and gravel bar formation.

An almost equally large storm that slammed into northern California nine years before, in December 1955, unleashed nowhere near the amount of sediment into local rivers. When the 1955 storm arrived, the clearcuts were less than a decade old—the time it takes for tree roots to rot. By 1964, the roots of logged trees had had time to rot, so there were no underground anchors to keep hillslopes in place in the face of torrential rain.

In short, watersheds throughout the Pacific Northwest were catastrophically damaged by the '64 flood. Hydrologists held differing opinions as to whether the event was either a 100-year flood or one that, statistically, should occur only every 500 years. The key to understanding the flood's effects is that although watersheds had experienced similar *rainfall intensity and duration* throughout the long passage of geologic "deep time," the effects were much more severe because of improper watershed management

prior to the flood.

I became responsible for the district's trails program in 1990. One day, it occurred to me that the Forest needed an interpretive trail, one that highlighted both the life history of Chinook salmon and our habitat restoration efforts. Inspiration for the trail sprang from my belief that it's critical to educate people about the need to preserve salmon. We're at a crossroads. If we fail in our efforts to restore salmon today, they might not be here tomorrow.

The Forest's Recreation Officer, fisheries colleagues, and I worked together to plan the trail and produce a brochure. I enlisted the help of the American Hiking Society's "Volunteer Vacations" program and discovered that volunteers were willing to travel from as far as New York to help build the trail. Because of Horse Lint's semi-remote location, I was both gratified and surprised when, upon the trail's completion, the first of many school buses filled with students arrived at the site.

There's something about the plight of the salmon and our connection to them. Oh, to be streamside on a crisp November morning following a rain—enough to make the water level rise and bring salmon upriver, but not so much as to make the water muddy or the footing treacherous. Dead, spawned out salmon lie framed by fallen yellow leaves of big-leaf maples. Suddenly, the steady rush of the creek is broken by a series of arrhythmic splashes, as a female Chinook salmon digs her redd, her body sometimes half out of the water with exertion. The male circles slowly, awaiting his role.

We stand in awe of these creatures for many reasons, perhaps because they embody traits we hold dear. Strength, tenacity, a sense of fidelity—a resolute desire to return home, regardless of the obstacles.

Amazingly, it's now the 33rd anniversary of the Horse Linto slide control project. Every once in a while, I find myself studying faded photos of the project. I marvel at the immensity of the heavy equipment relative to the tiny stream during late summer's low flow and the slim, bearded inspector in his bright yellow hardhat. Crews later returned to the slide to plant alders upslope of our rockwork and—despite floods that occurred in 1983, 1997, and 2006—the slide has stabilized.

Salmon have responded to the improvement in water quality and spawning conditions, coming back to the creek in great numbers. Because of this, the rearing facility was closed in 1994. Many now term Horse Linto Creek the shining star of the entire Trinity River system for salmon. In a reversal of pre-1981 conditions, about 80% of the fall-run Chinook salmon in Horse Linto spawned *downstream* of the slide project in 1992, a pattern that continued in subsequent years.

The need to contribute to something bigger than one's self is universal. When I first started working to restore salmon, I was empathetic to their plight, albeit in an abstract fashion. I'd yet to fully grasp the central place that they occupy in many indigenous cultures and the reverence accorded them. Through close association with these creatures I grew to know them... with my heart as well as my head.

I'm unable to separate the thread of

my personal renewal from the fabric of a quarter-century's involvement in fish and watershed restoration. Over the years, I've struggled to find the proper words to convey to others what it means to be involved in ecological restoration. What was clear to me from the onset is that my colleagues and I formed a *community*, one with a shared world view and even a kind of cosmology that sought to explain the structure, evolution—and *future* trajectory—of our world. Even in the dark hours of adversity, when floods damaged our weirs and traps, we kept our faith: if we repair the watersheds, we *will* see salmon flourish within our lifetime. This desire to leave the planet better off than we found it answered the question of “Why are we here?” in resounding fashion. Grateful for the opportunity to steward a landscape and its creatures back to health, I discovered that looking outward and giving back is a good strategy for personal renewal.

Fourteen years ago, three co-workers and myself waded the sparkling waters of Horse Linto. In 1999, the largest fire to occur in our area since the 1950s burned the upper portion of the watershed. We were wading the stream to conduct V-Star measurements—determining the amount of sediment in pools—to see if the fire had elevated sediment run-off. The bedrock pools were as deep, mysterious, and beckoning as I remembered them. After wading upstream for a time, we came to the slide control project.

When originally placed in the stream, many of the boulders had razor-sharp edges, an artifact of their

creation in the quarry by dynamite. During the intervening three decades, floating logs, lichens and moss, and the stream's bedload—suspended fine sediments and gravels carried by the stream during flood stage—had all conspired to dull their edges. Alders a foot and more in diameter poked through the blanket of stone. And a high-water mark of undetermined frequency—maybe a flood that occurred every 10 years—was delineated by freshly scoured rock below and a thick mat of moss above. I entered the water while grasping a tape measure and a metal rod designed to probe the deposited sediments. A fallen alder leaf floated downstream, pausing to swirl about in a small eddy before resuming its journey. The fragrances of sun-baked grass and white sweet clover on a bar beyond the reach of dappled shade mingled with those of wet moss on rock, coltsfoot, and streamside Indian rhubarb. The scene felt so *right*, evoking emotions difficult to put into words. Like the salmon, I'd returned home.

*Epilogue:* One day, my friend Rick and I went for a walk on Trinidad Head, an imposing mass of rock that looks down upon—and provides shelter to—Trinidad harbor. We rounded a bend in the trail and came upon a couple scanning the western horizon for whale spouts. The four of us got to talking and before long, "Tracy" told us that he was born and raised in Providence, Rhode Island. As a teenager, he'd hitchhiked westward, eventually settling down in Trinidad in 1972. Several weeks before, he'd phoned his father, ending

the silence of a 22-year estrangement. He recounted to his father that he now lived in a small town on the north coast of California, Trinidad. Several moments of silence followed his disclosure. With amusement, his father replied that he and Tracy's mother had spent a portion of their honeymoon in Trinidad. Furthermore, they'd always felt that Tracy had been conceived there.

Salmon forage widely in the ocean—sometimes many thousands of miles from their birth stream—before returning home to spawn. Fish biologists are unsure exactly how they navigate back to their birthplace. Theories range from using their sense of smell to an ability to detect differences in electrical fields or a particular watercourse's chemical composition. Salmon can't merely memorize the way back, for they take a different route home than they did on their outward trip. We humans, too, employ a number of senses—some yet to be identified—to help guide us home.

And sometimes, we return home to a place we've never seen before.

## DAVID TAGNANI

### *Huckleberrying*

The purple permeates clothes and skin  
though I cradle each one like a child  
careful to preserve the precious flesh  
Kneeling before the blue-red constellations in the yellow-green sky  
kneeling close enough to taste  
the pines above shimmer and wave in slow unison  
the winged small ones, my companions in the feast  
omit a dim lazy hum, a drone trance of dark energy  
a slow and sensual pulsar repeating the dance  
We move lazy with sugar and heavy with heat  
and the alpine summer day  
a meadow in the sky  
My vessel is fathomless, the berries disappear in its depths  
the friction of a raven's wing scrapes the air above my head  
but I never look away from the purple pleasure in the bush  
A nuthatch taps triplets on tamarack, a sharp cadence  
for the give and take, here and there motion  
of harvesting the wild feast.



## DUSTIN LEE INFINGER

### *The Ghost Bridge*

On the news, in public bathrooms,  
the end was all  
anyone could talk about.  
When it came  
we were almost relieved.

People left their old selves  
behind:  
hung straight among business suits,  
stacked  
between board games.

We walked a lot back then.  
You had to.

The zoo  
was like a natural history museum.  
The zebras, all bones,  
looked just like  
dead horses. You laughed.

The beaches were beautiful.  
The sand, soft, white:  
billions of tiny bones.  
I kissed you, there  
in the elegant gloom,

as the last living bird  
fell dead in our shadow.  
In the distance,  
the ghost bridge  
gleamed, like a drained rainbow.

# BRI CASTELLINI

## BRAINS

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The zombie was faster than I'd anticipated, so the first two swings of my machete just cut through the sexual tension the air, instead of the undead monster's rotting flesh. It threw a fist ragged with skin in my direction and I dodged, swiping a third time and finally connecting.

"Braaaaaaaains." The zombie's left hand flew into the air as Damian unloaded his shotgun into the thing's skull. I stepped back so as not to get blood-sprayed. I adjusted my red shirt as well as I could underneath my jacket so that when Damian turned around again I would be as put together as possible.

Red was, I'd recently decided, my go-to accent color. It's why I had the red streak in my hair, why my nails, or what was left of them, were painted a dark burgundy, and it's why I was definitely getting some that night. I had calf-high tan boots over a slim-fitted pair of black canvas pants and a sleek black hunting jacket over a red tank top to complete the look. Plus, the color red has been proven to get your brain primed for sexy times, given that it's present on a person you could hypothetically be sexually attracted to. It also stimulates your adrenal glands, which increases stamina, which dually helps my lack of loving and our collective ability to kill the shit out of zombies. The brain is awesome.

Damian, true love with a buzz cut and multipurpose cargo pants, hadn't reacted when I volunteered to be his patrol partner that night, but he was probably just playing it cool. We walked in comfortable silence around the perimeter of the wall, enclosing our university's campus like a security blanket. The nearest wall-surrounded area was two miles away, so the night, save for the occasional zombie, was dark and calm.

In between fights, Damian handed off his weapons to me and scribbled complicated equations into a small notebook. God, what I would do to PET scan his brain while he worked. Damian was a science major, working on a cure for the undead pandemic. In another life he might have been a baseball player or a history major, but in this one our society only had use for a few areas of study. I was of the psychology persuasion, more aptly referred to as "Future PTSD Therapist," because I found the human brain *fascinating*, especially when it came to the zombies.

A few months back, a college campus in Ithaca was infiltrated by an undead. No one realized it at first because the thing was so human-like in behavior and motor control. Eventually, though, it was found out after it was spotted feasting on the brains of the Dean of Students. After some further studying, the capital's psychologists found that the longer a zombie walked the earth and the more brains it consumed, the more human-like it became.

“Hey, Al, could I borrow your art history notes later?” Damian said, glancing up from his notebook.

“You can call me Alison.”

“Too many syllables.” Damian subscribed to the severe abbreviation of names for quick-call purposes during zombie fights. This was unfortunate, as “Al” sounded like a geriatric man, and not a cute, hip girl a certain zombie patroller might want to have sex with.

“Right. Yeah, sure, you can borrow them. But you gotta buy me a coffee for the trouble.” I gave him an exaggerated wink to sell it, though my prefrontal cortex had basically shut down in sheer panic over my ballsiness.

Damian laughed and ran a hand through his short-cropped hair. His eyes had this adorable way of crinkling at the sides when he smiled, so I tried to give him a reason to do so as often as possible. “Sure, sounds good. I don’t know why I have to go to that class in the first place, though. Art’s kinda useless when I’m measuring test tubes, amiright?”

Internally, I shook my head. As soon as society stops doing art, it becomes easier to forget the world beyond the zombies. Getting rid of art makes it harder to distinguish the line between humanity and simply existing. Plus, brain scans of people looking at beautiful art showed increased blood flow in a certain part of the brain that mimicked the blood flow when looking at a loved one. To detach ourselves from art would be to detach ourselves from love. I said all of this in my own head, but to Damian I just shrugged.

“It doesn’t matter at this point. You need it to graduate.” I said instead. He nodded absently in agreement and went back to his equations. I shifted the various weaponry in my arms, making sure I didn’t accidentally nick myself with the machete.

“Help!” A man suddenly cried, running from out of the forest, making eye contact first with Damian and then with me. “You have to help me!”

“Where did you come from, sir? You know it’s dangerous outside the walls.” Damian stowed his notebook and held out a hand for his gun. I passed it to him as Damian placed a comforting hand on the man’s shoulder.

“I’m from Arcadia. I was just going for a walk and got stuck outside my wall after dark.” The man gulped and stared at me, the bags under his eyes so deep I could pack a week’s worth of clothes into them. “I’ve been on the run for days. The zed- they were too thick to get back into my city so I just ran. I just ran.”

“It’s alright, sir, we’ll take care of you.” I tried to sound reassuring, but something was off about this man, probably in his late twenties. “What’s your name?”

“Nathan.” He breathes, and then he did something strange. While Damian, still holding the man’s shoulder, looked into the forest warily, Nathan took a long whiff of my beloved. Slowly, I took a few steps towards them, under the guise of placing my own reassuring appendage on one of Nathan’s, really

wanting to take a whiff of my own.

“Damian, you should let go of him.” I said calmly, not taking my eyes off Nathan, who narrowed his in response.

“It’s Dom. Why?” He removed his hand from the shoulder but remained where he was.

“Damian, just back away.” I raised my own gun to Nathan’s head.

“Dom. It’s- Al, what are you doing?” Damian stammered, alarmed.

“It’s Alison.” I said through gritted teeth. “And he smells like he’s dead.”

“You’re interested in this guy?” Nathan raised an eyebrow at me, revealing a small layer of scabbed, dead skin above his right eye. I gasped, Nathan realized his jig was up, and he lurched not at Damian, who was closer, but me.

I screamed and pulled the trigger of my comically large hunting rifle, but the realization of how truly human Nathan appeared threw off my aim. He would be a *fascinating* case study for my thesis. Damian brought his crowbar, which had been strapped to his belt, down on Nathan’s back, who yelped in pain and lashed backwards. Knocked off balance, Damian thrust his crowbar up from the ground but missed Nathan, who started running back into the forest. I shot again at him for good measure, but he was long gone.

We survived the rest of our shift in near-silence and met back at the gate with the rest of that night’s patrol, when we were attacked, the whole group of us. As I swung my machete after abandoning the rifle, I searched the horde of undead for Nathan, worried he might trick someone else, but I didn’t see him.

I went all out, frustrated that after all the walking around and fighting and sweating with Damian he still hadn’t tried to make a pass at me. By the end of the skirmish, we’d won, but three of our men were dead and that’s never something you get used to.

I craned my bloodied neck for Damian, but he’d already been swept up by the crowd of patrollers, celebrating our success wearily. I was about to follow when I heard something behind me, something that sounded distinctly inhuman. Turning, I found myself face to face with an obviously new zombie, skin hanging off every bone like seaweed, barely able to mutter the word “braaaaains” over and over as he advanced. New zombies were pretty slow, so I hiked up my sleeves and easily sliced through his thin neck with my machete, watching as his head, mouth agape, soared through the air. I was so mesmerized by this, in fact, that I didn’t have time to get out of its falling path, and as the gate into campus closed behind me, unaware I was still outside, the zombie’s gaping, dead-undead mouth rocketing towards me.

I felt the pain before it reached me, but it was even worse when the broken teeth penetrated the skin of my trembling arm as I raised it to protect my face. The sound effect of nails on a chalkboard played in my head as the head grazed the surface of my forearm, taking a thin sliver of skin with it.

The effects started immediately, and the first thing that came to mind was a

thought so infuriating I wanted to kill myself, before remembering that I was dying already. *Crap, I forgot to turn in my last neuroscience paper!*

Of course, after that first, insanely irrational thought, I had a few others.

*I totally forgot to call my mom yesterday and now I'm never going to talk to her again-*

*Well, if I eat enough brains maybe I could play it as if I just went on a soul-searching trip of some kind-*

*Oh god, my dad is going to be so upset. He hates liberals-*

I collapsed to the ground as the strength left my legs, and desperately I felt around my mouth with my tongue for the cyanide tablet under my back tooth. It was standard procedure that if you were alone and attacked and infected, the honorable thing was to kill yourself before you became a zombie. Cyanide was strong enough that it negated the effects of zombification. But even as I felt the edge of the false tooth, I hesitated. Why would I kill myself now when I was in the position to revolutionize the psychological study of zombies? No, I would not do the honorable thing. I would do the scientifically responsible thing.

And right as I could physically feel my organs failing, one by one, I had a single thought to end my human life.

*I'm never going to get to have coffee with Damian.*



SFOGGIA

*DIE SCHRAUBE UND DER BAUER*

JOHN MCKERNAN

*Silence After the Eulogy*

These plates are tiny  
On this beautiful linen table cloth

It seems  
We are still children  
Inspecting our new play tea sets

*It's awful*  
One hears it  
Over and over again  
Some say artfully

I actually liked it  
When my mother  
Sent me to my room  
Without my dinner  
And I screamed as loud as I could

# AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES:

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**Samy Sfoggia** has a bachelor's degree in History and postgraduate in Art, Body and Education. Currently, she is an undergraduate Photography student. Samy shoots with film cameras and primarily with black and white negative film scanned and digitally altered (assemblies, color inversion, drawings on the tablet). Her work is influenced by movies (David Lynch) and literature (Franz Kafka). She tries to represent the subconscious mind by creating fantastic imagery and by juxtaposing elements that seem to contradict each other. Her pictures are like frames of an unconscious deliberately incoherent and illogical. She tries to create the nightmare aesthetics.

**Jesse Curran** received her PhD in English from Stony Brook University, where she currently teaches courses in literature, writing, and the environmental humanities. Her poetry and essays have been published (or are forthcoming) in *The Emily Dickinson Journal*, *The Journal of Sustainability Education*, *Green Humanities*, *Blueline*, *The Fourth River*, and *The Common Ground Review*. She also holds certifications in hatha yoga and permaculture design.

**Jesse Curran** received her PhD in English from Stony Brook University in 2012, where she currently teaches courses in literature, writing, and sustainability studies. She has essays forthcoming in *The Emily Dickinson Journal* and *SHAW: The Annual of*

*Bernard Shaw Studies*. She recently won the 2013 Robert Frost Haiku Prize sponsored by the Studios of Key West.

**Jim Davis** is a graduate of Knox College and an MFA candidate at Northwestern University. Jim lives, writes, and paints in Chicago, where he edits *North Chicago Review*. His work has received Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominations, and has appeared in *Wisconsin Review*, *Seneca Review*, *Adirondack Review*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, and *Columbia College Literary Review*, among others. In addition to the arts, Jim is a teacher, coach, and international semi-professional football player. [jimdavisart.com](http://jimdavisart.com)

**Stacey Balkun's** work has appeared or will appear in *The Los Angeles Review*, *THRUSH*, *Bodega*, *The Feminist Wire*, and others. She received the 2013 C.G. Hanzlicek Poetry Writing Fellowship. Stacey served as Artist-in-Residence at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in the summer of 2013.

**Bill Vernon** served in the United States Marine Corps, studied English literature, then taught it. Writing is his therapy, along with exercising outdoors and doing international folk dances. Five Star Mysteries published his novel *Old Town* in 2005, and his poems, stories and nonfiction have appeared in a variety of magazines and anthologies. Recent publications include stories in *Biostories*, *The Brooklyner*, *Dead Flowers*, *The Circle Review* *Quarter Life Quarterly*, *Border Crossing*, *Memior Journal*, and *Elohi Gadugi Journal*.

**Jolene Brink** grew up wearing wool socks in northern Minnesota. She



graduated with a B.A. in English from the College of St. Benedict. Her work has appeared in *Camas* and *Studio 1*, and is forthcoming from *Dislocate* and *Wilderness House Literary Review*. She lives in St. Paul with her husband, John, and their cat-in-residence, Steve, where she works for the University of Minnesota College of Design.

**Yvette A. Schnoeker-Shorb's** work has appeared in *Spectrum*, *Dark Matter: A Journal of Speculative Writing*, *Spillway Magazine*, *The Voices Project*, *Terrain.org: A Journal of the Built and Natural Environments*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *Science Poetry* (a Canadian anthology edited by Neil McAlister), *Wild Earth*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Entelechy: Mind & Culture*, *The Blueline Anthology* (Syracuse University Press), *Jelly Bucket*, *The Broken Plate*, *Poydras Review*, *Concho River Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Amarillo Bay*, *Red River Review*, and many other journals, with work forthcoming in the anthology *200 New Mexico Poems* (University of New Mexico Press), *The Meadowland Review*, *Sleet*, and others. A recent Pushcart Prize nominee, she holds an interdisciplinary MA from Prescott College and is cofounder of Native West Press a 501(c)(3) nonprofit natural history press (which most recently published the anthology *What's Nature Got to Do with Me?: Staying Wildly Sane in a Mad World*).

**Susan Rukeyser** lives in the South but hails from New England and dreams of life in the Mojave. She writes stories because she can't stop. Believe it, she's tried. "Invasive Species" was first published by *Atticus Review*. Other work appears in *Monkeybicycle*,

*SmokeLong Quarterly*, *WhiskeyPaper*, and *Necessary Fiction*, among others. Find her here:

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**Jennifer L. Collins** grew up in Richmond, VA., where she accidentally developed into a tattooed poet. After spending time in various east coast cities, she's found herself living and teaching in Pittsburgh, PA., where she serves as the Editor of *:Lexicon* and hosts poetry readings. Utterly addicted to teaching and art, she has also served as the Creative Writing Director for Shenandoah University's Performing Arts Camp, and she is currently a summer faculty member with the Cardigan Mountain School, where she teaches creative writing and drama. Jennifer was nominated for a Pushcart Prize by Puerto Del Sol, and her work was chosen by A. Van Jordan as the AWP Quickie Poem Prize Winner in 2007. Her poems have been published or are forthcoming in various journals and anthologies, including *Chelsea*, *Puerto Del Sol*, *Post Poems*, *dirtcakes*, *13th Moon*, *Redivider*, *The Birmingham Arts Journal*, *Nerve Cowboy*, and *The Potomac Review*.

**Matthew Hummer** is a Latin and English teacher in Pennsylvania. He is finishing his M.F.A. at the Sewanee School of Letters and holds an M.A. in Classics from Villanova University. He participated as a Creative Reader at Auburn University's Writer's Conference (2013) and has been published in several literary journals.

**Leonore Hildebrandt** has published poetry and translations in the *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Cerise Press*, *The Denver Quarterly*, and the *Poetry Salzburg Review*, among other

journals. Her letterpress chapbook, *The Work at Hand* (2011) is available through *Flat Bay Press*, and a first book of poems, *The Next Unknown*, is forthcoming with Pecan Grove Press. Winner of the 2013 Gemini Poetry Contest, she has received fellowships from the Elizabeth George Foundation, the Maine Community Foundation, and the Maine Arts Commission. A native of Germany, Hildebrandt lives “off the grid” in easternmost Maine and teaches writing at the University of Maine. She serves as an editor for the Beloit Poetry Journal.

**Emily O’Neill** is a proud Jersey girl who tells loud stories in her inside voice because she wants to keep you close. Her most recent work is present or forthcoming in *Sugar House Review*, *Weave Magazine*, *Whiskey Island*, *Paper Darts*, and *FRiGG Magazine*. She edits nonfiction for *Printer’s Devil Review*. You can pick her brain at <http://emily-oneill.com>.

**Jennifer Moffett** completed her master’s degree in Creative Writing at The University of Mississippi and has been a freelance writer for more than 10 years. Her essays and book reviews have appeared in various print publications, including *Jackson Free Press*. She has published short fiction and poetry in *The New Orleans Review*, *The Citron Review*, *Marco Polo Arts Mag* and *Revolution House*. Her novel was a short-listed finalist in the Faulkner-Wisdom Creative Writing Competition. Additional work is forthcoming in Sundress Publication’s book *Not Somewhere Else But Here: A Contemporary Anthology of Women and Place*. She lives on the Mississippi

Gulf Coast where she teaches creative writing and literature at a community college.

**Beth Gilstrap** was a recent writer-in-residence at Shotpouch Cabin with the Spring Creek Project for ideas, nature, and the written word at Oregon State University. She earned her MFA from Chatham University. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Ambit*, *The Minnesota Review*, and *Superstition Review*, among others.

**Joan Fiset** is a psychotherapist and lives in Seattle, Washington. *Now the Day is Over* (Blue Begonia 1997), a book of memoir prose poems focusing on her father, won the King County Publication Award. In fall of 2014 Blue Begonia will publish “Namesake,” prose poems focusing on her mother. Her work has appeared in *Tarpaulin Sky*, *Trickhouse*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Calyx*, *The Seattle Review*, *Crab Creek Review* and others.

**Tom Leskiw** lives outside Eureka, California with his wife Sue and their dog Zevon. He retired in 2009 following a 31-year career as a hydrologic/biologic technician for Six Rivers National Forest. His research, essays, lyrics, book and movie reviews have appeared in a variety of scientific and literary journals and a CD (“Hurwitz in Handcuffs”). Awards include The Motherhood Muse (1st place contest winner). His column appears at [www.RRAS.org](http://www.RRAS.org) and his website resides at [www.tomleskiw.com](http://www.tomleskiw.com).

**David Tagnani** is a PhD candidate at Washington State University, where he studies American Literature, mysticism, nature writing, and ecocriticism. He also is the Book

Review Editor for the *Journal of Ecocriticism*. His poetry has appeared in *Camas*, *Written River*, and *Wilderness House Literary Review*.

**Dustin Lee Infinger** is a recent graduate of the Florida State University's creative writing program. Dustin is currently working on his first novel, which is best described as dystopian neo-noir, but he enjoys writing poetry as a way to cleanse his pallet between heaping portions of prose. Much of his literary work is possessed by his environmental anxiety, and hinges on humanities unnatural state in the natural world. He currently lives in Thomasville, Georgia with his wife, two cats, and Shiba Inu.

**Bri Castellini** never got her Hogwarts letter, but recently graduated from Pacific University in Oregon with a BA in Creative Writing and a double minor in integrated media and editing and publishing. Her short story "Super," which follows a girl with three superhero roommates and the hilarity/frustration that ensues, was accepted into the National Undergraduate Literature Conference in Ogden, Utah in 2013. As well as participating in poetry slams and open mics, she's all set to attend Long Island University in the fall to start her MFA in Television Writing.

**John McKernan** – who grew up in Omaha Nebraska – is now a retired comma herder after teaching 40 years at Marshall University. He lives – mostly – in West Virginia where he edits ABZ Press. His most recent book is *Resurrection of the Dust*. Recent poems appear in *Sakura Review*,

*Poetry Ireland Review*, *Front Porch Review*, *Borderlands*, and *Artemis Journal*.

**Jéanpaul Ferro** is a novelist, short fiction author, and poet from Providence, Rhode Island. A 9-time Pushcart Prize nominee, his work has appeared on National Public Radio, *Contemporary American Voices*, *Columbia Review*, *Emerson Review*, *Connecticut Review*, *Cleveland Review*, *Cortland Review*, *Portland Monthly*, *Arts & Understanding Magazine*, *Saltsburg Review*, *Hawaii Review*, and others. He is the author of *All The Good Promises* (Plowman Press, 1994), *Becoming X* (BlazeVox Books, 2008), *You Know Too Much About Flying Saucers* (Thumbscrew Press, 2009), *Hemispheres* (Maverick Duck Press, 2009) *Essendo Morti – Being Dead* (Goldfish Press, 2009), nominated for the 2010 Griffin Prize in Poetry; and *Jazz* (Honest Publishing, 2011), nominated for both the 2012 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Prize and the 2012 Griffin Prize in Poetry. He is represented by the Jennifer Lyons Literary Agency. Website: [www.jeanpaulferro.com](http://www.jeanpaulferro.com)  
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## ***M. P. Jones IV: Editor-in-Chief***

Madison Jones is a fifth-generation Alabamian and recently received a master's in literature from Auburn University, where he read for *Southern Humanities Review*. Recent poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Harpur Palate*, *Portland Review*, *Tampa Review*, *Canary Magazine*, and *Town Creek Poetry*, among others. His poetry has been awarded Auburn University's 2013 and 2014 Robert Hughes Mount, Jr., Poetry Prizes, sponsored by the Academy of American Poets, among others. His creative nonfiction has appeared in *Sleet Magazine* and *decomp magazinE*; and an article on W.S. Merwin's recent poetry collection *The Shadow of Sirius* appears in the current issue of *Merwin Studies*. *Live at Lethe*, his first collection of poetry, was released by Sweatshoppe Publications this past fall (2013), and his second manuscript, *The Broken Branch* is seeking publishers. For more information, visit his author's page: [ecopotiesis.com](http://ecopotiesis.com).

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## ***Robin Conn Ward: Executive Design Editor***

Robin Ward is the mastermind of our website design, having achieved a degree in computer networking from Cochise College and Web Development from ASU. Robin's interests lie in the hyper-real, the increasing development of an artificial world in the face of an eroding biosphere.

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## ***Arthur Wilke: Managing Editor***

Arthur Wilke is a provocateur of environmental studies of the literary and socio-political realms. Known for undertaking such extended expeditions as the Appalachian Trail, the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, as well as many others without the privilege of a name, Arthur studies the real world relationships of humanity, wilderness, and the environment. When he can be torn away from the woods, he is most often found tinkering with old cameras in search of the big Other, reading the latest Žižek, and agreeing way too much with Gore Vidal and Edward Abbey.

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## ***Jane Alford: Assistant Editor, Nonfiction***

Jane Alford is our resident ecofeminist and strict grammarian (someone around here has to be). She's always on call, reminding us of the right place for a direct object and when we're describing women as such. She received her BA in English and history from the University of Montevallo and is currently pursuing her M.Ed. in English Language Arts at Auburn University. She is particularly interested in language acquisition and teaching English to speakers of other languages. She enjoys adventures of the outdoor variety, growing food and cooking it, and playing with her loyal feline, Romeo.

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**John Nicholson:** *Assistant Editor, Layout*

John, who now lives in Southside, Birmingham, has his BFA in Graphic Design from the University of Montevallo, and tends to work part time freelance to keep an open schedule for various vices. He loves banana pudding, Zeppelin, and his one pair of pants that fit just right, and he's down to hike with you any day of the week if you ask him.

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**John Abbott:** *Assistant Editor, Poetry*

John Abbott is a writer, musician, English instructor, and avid reader. When he isn't involved with one of these activities, he enjoys walking the bogs and woods of Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he lives with his wife and daughter. For information about his writing, please visit [johnabbottauthor.com](http://johnabbottauthor.com).

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**Robinson William Schupp:** *Marketing & Assistant Editor*

Robinson William Schupp is a contributing editor and resident absurdist at Kudzu, as well as its promotion and marketing director. Like many of our dedicated staff, Rob is a native Alabamian and a proud Huntsvillian. Having achieved an undergraduate degree in English Literature from the University of Montevallo, he now spends his time writing short fiction and planning to pursue a master's degree in either education or english literature. An inherent fondness for multi-layered abstractions and science-fiction, the crucible from which his persistent interest in authors such as Huxley, Orwell, Vonnegut and Robbins arose, has also fed his motivation to pursue a career in English. Adding to the varied interests of an already diverse staff, he focuses on exploring the facets of Postmodern philosophy and Millennialism and their relationship to a pragmatic understanding of the human condition, as well as the concept of "difference" and the relation of signs in sound and syntax. When not deconstructing Curious George over a bottle of Glenlivet and a Steely Dan album, Rob can either be found reveling in the indelible mysteries of the guitar fretboard, and on more sublime nights, arguing the finer points of Lyrical Ballads to a parking meter.

**Charlie Sterchi:** *Fiction Editor*

Charlie Sterchi lives in Auburn, Alabama, where he is a master's student in English at Auburn University. His surname is Romanche for "one who dreams of Jeannie" and may possibly be the inspiration for the American sitcom I Dream of Jeannie, created by Sidney Sheldon and starring Barbara Eden and Larry Hagman, that ran from September 1965 to May 1970. To this very day, dreaming of Barbara Eden and other genies – but mainly Barbara Eden as she appeared in her famous, shall we say celestial, television role – remains an involuntary patrilineal preoccupation among Charlie and his kin. When he isn't watching TV Land, Charlie enjoys reading Lorca and Barthelme whether in or out of the bath.





JEANPAUL FERRO

*YOU AND I*

*“I will listen until the flute stops  
and the light is old again”*

— **W.S. Merwin**  
from “The Nomad Flute”



May the Kudzu grow!  
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