

LIT FOR

POEMAG

5



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EDITOR'S NOTE



welcome back to year five of literary forest!
we've got some incredible poets this year, from
stars of the literary world like richard
kostelanetz, to familiar faces like d.s maolalai, to
college students, like myself, and like mac
chamberlain. i am happy to have you all, and i
am happy you are reading this. in the words of
one submitter, i am happy you have entered the
forest.

i hope the words of these poets can echo in
your bones and in your walls. they certainly did
in mine.

thank you for being here. thank you for staying.
thank you for loving my magazine. she loves
you right back.

abbie hart, editor in chief

DAVID P MILLER

BLANK WISH

oh blank
on my back
on the bed
once more
but not blank
enough to
settle
the mist
in my skull
still the churn
back of
the sleep mask
gift of
the airline
our flight
to Amsterdam
everything comes
with a story
always another
story even
a warm story
oh Amsterdam

your canals

now what

oh it's food
delivery
it's early
back to my feet
blank wish
lapsed again
toward
attention
to groceries
then out
to the porch
and fourteen
purple open-
mouthed morning
glories



RAPHAEL LASSAUZE GRAVEYARD GIFTS

yesterday,
f., val and i walked through some cemeteries for our
new film. i kept talking and thinking about e. and our
walk through all faiths. its interesting. i don't feel
perfectly at ease with her honestly. i said theyre
abrasive
and that surprised them. in his words,

he used to be meek

long blue lace and gentle umbrella

fallen tree, insides in an outpouring

of soft, soft wood,

waterlogged with the dirt

of bones and memory.

and the rain comes down again and again.

we pass stained glass and marble,

traversing up mounds of nature atop

RAPHAEL LASSAUZE GRAVEYARD GIFTS



mausoleums of stone as gray as

the clouds.

we stood under a wide canopy of leaves and
smoked.

he said hed never take anything from a graveyard

and i said id never leave anything behind. except

for, of course, a gift – even for those unknown to me.

drowning this evening
in bright bray electric.
the room going light-bulb
shine yellow. drink a beer,
eat a sandwich,
read books about life
as a salesmen in england,
and worked as a salesman
at one time as well, walking soles
thin each weekend past alleys
through suburbs of dublin

selling discount subscriptions
to a recently founded
electric company.
was driven to bray
by a manager weekly,
with six other salesmen,
all tired of selling and all
council housing,
mostly for workers
at another electric plant
which was just built in bray
and which lay out above us
on the hill like a cat on a radiator.

D. S. MAOLALAI BRAY ELECTRIC

we were bad salesmen anyway,
and selling bad product;
it was sensible of him to do.
to burn out the bad staffers
and burn off some houses
which would never go along
with it anyway. I knocked
up each door and I asked
about power, as if anyone hated
their bosses that much.
went home with no paycheck
and no earned
commission. losses
each day: a ham sandwich.
lunch beers. now

the new job sells nothing,
in a place that's much better
than bray. I read,
drink a beer, eat a sandwich
each evening.
let electric light coming
from I don't know where
falls on the table,
the page, and my walls.

D. S. MAOLALAI
BRAY ELECTRIC

**RICHARD
KOSTELANETZ**

EXCERPTS

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**RICHARD
KOSTELANETZ**

EXCERPTS

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**RICHARD
KOSTELANETZ**

EXCERPTS

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MARK HENDERSON
RHIZOME

It would be cut or pulled

on sight by destructive children,
so it grows away, underground,

g
n
i
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h

r and s nonetheless—its offspring r

o
o
t
i
n
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e
m
e
m
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n
g

the children's children

n
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and turning to p

ELIZABETH CROWELL

I don't go home except Sundays.
At the kitchen table, Mother groans.

*Whatever happened to that crummy husband of yours?
Why don't you come home more often?*

I remind her she has an agreement with
the entire natural world about that.

Coffee breath and cigarette, she gets up.
Her slippers weep on the linoleum.

When it's time for me to go, she says
Well, thanks for telling me this time.

I think I'm allowed to have my own life.
She points out the window at the wind.

On a walk with a new girlfriend
who shudders in her coat, her breath like smoke,

a red-orange leaf floats to the ground.
She offers it like a gift. *This is for you.*

Don't I know it.

PERSEPHONE NOW

KEN GOODMAN

SWING LOW, GODCHARIOT



Yes *AH* has a melody—

it can't be written down,
subtle Power Mercifully
sideless bull's eye crown.
It's a melody that sings
dawn-fresh horizon-free—
secret mantra inner-hearing
secret/silently, profound secret
effortlessly understood

thought-free, secure
between temples (as well)
wholly edgelessly—
unseen/beholdingly—
necktop pathway entries *on*
self-meditatively,
natural awareness unglued to
mortality...or mentality

betrayed by
bodyshell is me,
consummated in the act of
creativity : highest level
splendor mastered
mind-exertion free,
unfindable by vision quest or
rote ceremony, un
pin-downable
by seeking scientifically, not
led astray by roller coasting
human history;
hidden unforbidden I AM
infinite gate/goal : wise to
con of in or out
ego-projected soul—
essence of God

body

aware essence filling the . . .
emptiness bestowing atoms
full stability, notably [these]
atoms contemplating poetry—
unarrogant I AM intimate per
discovery...
discovery itself knocking per
out of I AM way, surely as
GodSunshine's un
divided by
mindray—
elixir recognition basking
in discovery : splendor running over
necktop skullcup unity—
AH ongoingly;
AH pronounced silently...
intimately *on*
dawn-fresh uninterruptedly.

How sexual is mindcore
wholly mating God
body?

Holy of holies sabbath
rested & actively—
GodLove making central
seamless universally...
for [your] own sake contemplate
'who' hears core silently, as that
Uplinks to GodFace
all-directionally : cut off from sense
stickage (yes) but cut off healingly,
most precious gem in the universe
hollow ironically : unobstructed &

KEN GOODMAN

SWING LOW, GODCHARIOT

enskulled self-meditatively,
poetry just pointing to [your] core
naturally—

Who else can I AM be...

But AH Garden E connection
always unexpelled...
it has never been god-dammed
(although it seems senseshelled)...

Precisely where GodSky kisses
mindcloud centrality!

Thoughts aware
bliss knows thought-free...

Calm voluntarily!

'Each' fresh discovery...

GodSunrise ceaselessly!

No more craving recognition from
society,
for primal recognition...

Is
an I AM quality!

'Let there be' Day One deLight
now identically...

Genuinely understood unconceptually!
Funny how LifeTree trunk is

so central/sidelessly...

'Funny' ha ha?

Funny AH AH.

Oh : AH constancy,
faster than the speed of light
borderless unity—
maintained motionlessly—
now/eternally...

Debunking reincarnation, as
I AM is all me!

Diverse division-free.
It comes with birth so don't wait
for [your] dusty destiny.

GodChariot 'swings low'
where GodSpace mates
centrality!

Low abruptly high?

Well, high all-dimensionally...

Skull
well drink?

As concepts dry, AH
shines refreshingly!

KEN GOODMAN

SWING LOW, GODCHARIOT

14

[sings]

I looked

clear through pupils where
unseen/beholdingly:

GodSunrise aglow

horizon-free:

(miraculously active) hooked

me

Up

motionlessly,

unexpelled at once from

Garden E.

Swing low, GodChariot:

'tween the temples &

borderlessly—

swing low, LoveChariot:

mating [my] mindcore &

God

body.

DEVON NEAL NO COMPETITION

There is a small apartment just on the corner of Hill Street and Bloomfield Road with a tiny front yard with a view of a chain link fence, choked with oatmeal gravel, and rows of weather beaten luxury tool sheds for sale. On this Friday, the man that lives there is in a gray folding chair, a parallel one set out for his feet, and he's under the shoulders of a small catalpa with a glinting bag of chips and a pair of flip-flops. There is a faint breeze on his legs as he sits in his house shorts, and the cars passing by, disinterested in sheds, sound like secrets told in the wind.

BECK ANSON

COFFEE SHOP WITH AMETHYST

like a timid tomato / he steps up to the register
she asks "the usual?" / "so predictable" he replies
she hands him a drink ticket / fingertips flicker
he takes note of her smile / even on days that taste burnt before they begin
the same as a monarch sipping on a milkweed flower / the opposite of a cold rain
like when you take a deep inhale / exhale all former desires
four men chitter-chatter / "spectacles, testicles, wallet, and watch"
distracts him from the limerence / mutters to himself men
he doubts himself / will she forgive his wishful thinking?
his heart / a smoldering lightbulb of hesitation
"gibraltar for order #65" / he leaps from the table
"a heart, just for you" / he does not write fiction
he drinks his coffee / watches bronze foam clinging to the Picardie
her heart shrinking to the bottom of the glass / nothing left but a longing
ice pellets pelting at the shop window / northeast winter's symphony
cracks him open like amethyst / he lets the geologists do their job
a crystal broken into many pieces / is still crystal
which is to say / he's all heart today

My grandfather ate a colony of herbs
while spinning his body from town to town
healing the sick, touching souls
at the point of their appointed hour;
seven days with him on his sick bed,
I saw his body turn into a garden of lilies,
daisies, wild violets with thorns;
I knew he was going through a valley
full of grey mud and green vegetables,
where his churned, hurting stomach
rebuked the horde of masquerading worms.

He knew the times and the seasons,
As he watched his spirit separate from his body,
and his dreams of a hundred years
clustered in this last ebbing breath.
When the curtains of his eyes shut
and night took over the affairs of his day,
my screams pierced through his empty soul,
as my eyes turned into a flooded stream,
tossing him back to life, anger at another time.
My father said he knew the world was ending
but nothing changed without his consent.

At midnight, he heard the birdsong,
the same song he listened to every morning
when he rode his bicycle through a field of cosmos

UKRAH
JONATHAN THE NIGHT MY GRANDFATHER
DIED

across a thousand cities of sickness and pain,
in whose heart he heard the songs of death,
the soul-piercing cries of agony and loss,
the flare of loneliness and shedding leaves
caught in the middle between branches.
A smile rode across his lips like a butterfly
like a horse stomping through a field of corn.

JONATHAN UKAH

THE NIGHT MY GRANDFATHER DIED

DAN RAPHAEL COVERAGE

My body has no windows but is full of sunshine,
as my house's windows are flat screens
changing their tunes gradually, not always agreeing.

It's almost always night and starry in the bathroom,
the kitchen window usually displays aromatic settings,
from jungles to open air markets, clouds of fried oil
coconuts and fruits I can't name split open, leaking juice and flies

Two pieces of hide to cover a baseball, how many to cover a globe
like the world's most irregular pastry largely immersed in a sphere
of self-involved water, leaving most of the pastry alone, changing
colors
with memories of wheat fields, egg ranches, autumnal rains of
sugar-nuts

Matadors wear suits of light; janitors work at night
camouflaged by slow movement and lack of audience
turning yesterday into tomorrow, like punching holes
in time's pages, not to see through or thread,
to barely whistle when dropped from rooftops or low planes
unable to pull themselves together, to compress and accelerate
driving home the message to the hatless and wandering
puzzled by paragraphs with most of the vowels removed
capital letters on the edge of open manholes

Whether laying turf, carpet, subdermal chlorophyll, thermoplastic
membranes
jostling to reposition, floating through, catting against the borders,
how much time for my skin to chameleon,
to choose the color of shirt appropriate for where I'm going
the first time
when I reach the where and look up before around

DAN RAPHAEL COVERAGE

What my feet are trying to tell me, why my nose has nothing to say,
I didn't realize one of my hands had left until I saw it flying back
eager to show me what it had grasped

MAC CHAMBERLAIN THE BOY- PRIEST

The boy-priest speaks prismatically / his tongue knows
living color / reflects the God-language

The boy-priest wears the color well / his voice was first
met in secret / none of his congregation
remembers gifting him the Joseph-robe / gift him a
pulpit / match God's investments

The boy-priest / happily recognizes his good thing /
accepts the pulpit / when it is offered /
studies in quiet rooms / scratches his head / pricks the
elder-brains / A man of God / he loves the weight / the
tickle at the edge of condemnation / doing it right / he
teaches right / not many do

The boy-priest exposes his wound / from the pulpit / the
congregation gasps / the boy-priest thinks the
community-knot is held tightest / by vulnerability / it is a
divot in the flesh / just above the waist / black veins
pump devil-blood / he let them see it all / he smiled / I
give you this piece of myself / I trust you to keep it / I
trust you / the boy-priest said / the congregation forgot
God

The boy-priest eats a flurry of damnation the
congregation is experiencing the great God-test they sit

MAC CHAMBERLAIN THE BOY- PRIEST

the boy-priest in the back he forgets the feeling of the fake wood paneling under his fingers the way his voice ricochets off the tubes in his throat making an imperceptible nervous rattle he writes color on page but no one reads it anymore he is naked before these people let's us ignore the bruises on his ears the slight cuts where tongues slit what they once drooled for

He is just a boy after all / they comfort themselves / he left / found a foothold / blasted it cavernous / stored his love / Polyphemus / roared into his congregation / silence-met / all to say I am lost to you / he bares his flesh / he yaps his color-tongue / samson meeting his mission / his punishment / one and the same / the congregation stares / the corrupted, writhing flesh of the boy-priest / the wound is spread / the black blood clutches the heart / the congregation wants the boy-priest back / evil knows no regret / knows no personal wrong / it is devil-work / outside-in

PAUL LOJESKI EVOLUTIONARY BLUES

on a certain burning
world murder is an
every day, religious
celebration. constant
gunfire cracking dark
skies, while an army
called indifference
marches into flames.
No one cares about
desolation or a lost
sun, except perhaps
you, moaning, gut
shot, blood erupting
from wild wounds
pulsating in a last,
fast ambulance ride
on a death rock once
fondly called home.

LA FELLEMAN SWIMMER'S FEET

Mommy would scold if she was here instead of
at kiddie pool coaxing floats from sissy

“Mustn’t stare! Staring is rude!” chided inner
mother, who was not otherwise occupied

To cope, first born turned arms into pillow to
hide her rule-breaking atop a Barbie towel

With one eye, she squinted at the man colored
like the briquettes Daddy grills hamburgers on

The swimmer was solidly the same except
for the bottoms of his feet, which were like hers

Her stare fixated halfway up his heels where
he changed from inky sleek to wrinkled puckers

The seamless transition dumbfounded every
lesson taught at Heights Elementary School

She wished she knew someone who could help her ask
the questions that grappled to grab hold of words

Something about the similarities she sensed
between her and him however obscured by

A covering that needed to be peeled back.

BIOSTAT

beck anson (he/they/it) is a genderqueer writer, mad frolicker, and dandelion picker. His work appears in Rattle, RHINO, Humana Obscura, and others. Their poem "I Admit Myself to the Psych Ward in a Pandemic" was a finalist for the 2020 Rattle Poetry Prize. They are an MFA candidate at the Bennington Writing Seminars.

dan raphael's poetry collection In the Wordshed was published by Last Work Books last December. More recent poems appear in Otoliths, e-ratio, A Word Too Powerful, Strix and Egophobia. Most Wednesdays Dan writes and records a current events poem for The KBOO Evening News

David P. Miller's collection, Bend in the Stair, was published by Lily Poetry Review Books in 2021. Sprawled Asleep was published by Nixes Mate Books in 2019. His poems have appeared in Meat for Tea, Solstice, Kestrel, Salamander, Paterson Literary Review, subTerrain, Jerry Jazz Musician, Nixes Mate Review, Lily Poetry Review, Last Stanza, and LEON Literary Review, among others, as well as several anthologies. His poems "Interview" and "And You" were included in an issue of Magma (UK) focused on teaching poetry to secondary school students. He lives with his wife, the visual artist Jane Wiley, in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts.

Devon Neal (he/him) is a Bardstown, KY resident who received a B.A. in Creative Writing from Eastern Kentucky University and an MBA from The University of the Cumberlands. He currently works as a Human Resources Manager in Louisville, KY. His work has been featured in Moss Puppy Magazine, Dead Peasant, Paddler Press, MIDLVLMAG, and others.

BIOS

DS Maolalai has received eleven nominations for Best of the Net and seven for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry has been released in three collections; "Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden" (Encircle Press, 2016), "Sad Havoc Among the Birds" (Turas Press, 2019) and "Noble Rot" (Turas Press, 2022)

Elizabeth Crowell grew up in northern New Jersey and has a B.A. from Smith College in English Literature and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing/Poetry from Columbia University. She taught college and high school English for many years. She lives outside of Boston with her wife and teenage children.

Raphael Lassauze is a queer transfemme writer living in Astoria. She's been writing short stories her whole life, ranging from magical transfeminist fairy and folktale/fabulist writings to absurd experimental wanderings. All her fiction centers upon queer people in various convergences of self and reality, mostly transfemmes like herself.

Jonathan Chibuiké Ukah is a graduate of English and Law living in the UK. Some of their poems have appeared in the Sparrows Trombone, Discretionary Love, Poet Magazine, New Note Poetry, New Reader Magazine, the Sweetycat Press, State of Matter, the Journal of Undiscovered Poets, the Whiskyblot Literary Magazine, the Pierian, Compass Rose Literary, etc. Their poems, A Touch of Purple and On-Street Conversation won the Voices of Lincoln Poetry Contest 2022, and their chapbook manuscript, The Last Anger of Man was Longlisted for the Kingdom in the Wild Competition 2022. They are also a winner of the Voices of Lincoln Poetry Contest 2022.

Ken Goodman mates ecstatic meditation & poetry creation in Cleveland, Ohio. kenpgoodman@yahoo.com

BIOSTAT

Currently, LA is a financial analyst at the University of Iowa. Before that, she was a seminary professor. Prior to that, she was a pastor. She credits the Free Generative Writing Workshops, the Midwest Writing Center, and workshops offered through Iowa City Poetry with her development as a poet. Her poetry recently appeared in Moot Point Magazine, Feral Journal, and Skyway Journal. To give back to the writing community, she organizes a writers open mic at the public library (or via Zoom during pandemics) and serves on the advisory council of Iowa City Poetry. She is the author of the chapbook *The Length of a Clenched Fist* (Finishing Line Press) and blogs at <http://lafelleman.blogspot.com>.

Mac Chamberlain is a rising sophomore English student at Lipscomb University. He draws inspiration from all the places any writer should - the pets and people which hold little pieces of his heart, for better or worse.

Mark Henderson teaches English at Tuskegee University. He earned his Ph. D. at Auburn University with concentrations in American literature and psychoanalytic theory. He has poems published or forthcoming in *Cozy Cat Press*, *From Whispers to Roars*, *Defenestrationism.net*, *Bombfire*, *Former People*, *Neologism*, *Broad River Review*, *Rune Bear*, *Flora Fiction*, *Flare*, *Visitant*, *Blood Tree Literature*, *The Closed Eye Open*, *Last Stanza Poetry Journal*, *Burningword*, *Better Than Starbucks*, *The Racket Journal*, *Torrid Literature Journal*, *Sunspot Lit*, *Writer's Digest*, *W-Poesis*, and *Red Ogre Review*. He was born and raised in Monroe, Louisiana, and currently resides in Auburn, Alabama.

Paul Lojeski was born and raised in Lakewood, Ohio. His poetry has appeared online and in print. He lives in Port Jefferson, NY.

BIOSTAT

Individual entries on Richard Kostelanetz's work in several fields appear in various editions of Readers Guide to Twentieth-Century Writers, Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature, Contemporary Poets, Contemporary Novelists, Postmodern Fiction, Webster's Dictionary of American Writers, The HarperCollins Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature, Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, Directory of American Scholars, Who's Who in America, Who's Who in the World, Who's Who in American Art, NNDB.com, Wikipedia.com, and Britannica.com, among other distinguished directories.

Otherwise, he survives in New York, where he was born, unemployed and thus overworked.

Abbie Hart (she/they) is a 19 year old poet from Houston, TX currently living in Worcester, MA and attending Clark University as a sophomore. She has been published over 30 times, including in the Hiram Poetry Review, SAND, and BRIDGE, among others, and is the editor in chief for the Literary Forest Poetry Magazine. She was also previously a semi-finalist for the Houston Youth Poet Laureate, and is currently pursuing a degree and career in museum curation. In her spare time, she learns useless skills, daydreams about pottery, and does her best to be a nice warm soup. She hopes you can love her, at least a little bit. Her first chapbook, "head is a home," was released by Bottlecap Press in August 2023. Her website is abbiemhart.wordpress.com.



LIT FOR

POEMAG

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