

TILTED HOUSE



REVIEW

ISSUE TWO FALL 2020

TILTED HOUSE

R E V I E W

ISSUE #2

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Tilted House is a New Orleans-based press which gets off on the dirty effervescence of this city's great artists. Through this outfit, we strive to cultivate a creative and communal unit from and for the city. While the door is wide open for New Orleans' minds, it remains open for the rest of the world's. Everyone is encouraged to submit.

A printed, handbound version of this issue can be found at tiltedhouse.org/shop.

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Editor's Note

Journaling unclogs the pipes. Once expelled, these habits, broodings, thoughts, and memories can be examined. I release them privately, free from judgement, knowing they will never be repeated, unless I want them to be. Seeing them on the page reminds me they are real. In a word, it's therapy.

The alleviation that results from this expulsion is, I think, analogous to that of the *absorption* of writing (and art).

In this dark time—uncertain and isolated—bibliotherapy isn't just a balm, but an accessible one. Poetry, stories remind us of the world outside our heads and outside our walls. They help us perceive reality in different ways, cope through catharsis, and realize that many of our experiences are shared.

In Wendell Berry's short essay, "The Responsibility of the Poet", he writes that a poem

has the power to remind poet and reader alike of things they have read and heard. Also—and this is partly why the subject is so complex—it has the power to remind them of things that they have not read and heard, but that have been read and heard by others whom they have read and heard. Thus the art, so private in execution, is also communal and filial.

I hope this collection of private art (or any book for that matter) will remind you of the world that still surrounds you, however distant the people in it might feel, and that with all of our various artforms and efforts we can emerge from this a little more whole. And maybe with something expressive to show for it.

*CML
New Orleans
Fall 2020*

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Glen Armstrong

Good Neighbor #49

I no longer write letters. My thoughts come out in clumps. I no longer raise my voice and do my shouting with my eyes. It has been a long time since mosquitos menaced a summer outing. The insects are dying. I pledge allegiance to the insects.

Flags no longer cut it. The boy scouts are dying. The scout masters are looking for something around which to rally, maybe the prettiest, stillest scout. The ponds are free of mosquito eggs and too small for their canoes.

I was never a scout, never much of a joiner. People clump up, and their uniforms cloud their thoughts. They land on each other. Penetrate. Draw blood.

Glen Armstrong

Still Life With Hand

How under the radar of you.
How no one expected that shirt.
I am amazed.

I have always been
impressed

with your quiet rebellion
and the subtlety
of your manicures.

Everyone these days
goes about the barely-business
-at-all

business of explaining
various turns of phrase that use
“pearl” as a metaphor.

You were the first
to approach the instructor’s
still life

to remove an orange.

For a moment your hand
was part of the composition.

Glen Armstrong

Aesthetics

Take my horse.
I can no longer feed it.

Take my daughter
and her clothes

to the circus.
Bring her home.

We will take your daughter
to the mountains

if she would like to go.
These girls eat like birds.

In this house,
we discuss aesthetics

instead of saying grace.
The horse is somehow

more bird-like
considered against

a background
with visible brushstrokes.

Cate Root

Thinning:

A sense that the world is getting worse
What's happening to my body
Attrition—who used to be here?

If the world wasn't deteriorating
You could call me fat and happy
Wait—only my friends can talk to me that way

The world, sickness, death, hunger, despair
Me, pacing, counting calories, forecasting weeks
I have so much more time now—without all those friends

Inside a bowl, only the glimmer of cut tomatoes
No, there's more, oil shimmers, wet mozzarella, clings of basil,
vinegar bath
—I am the one who takes care of myself now

Cate Root

I Keep Clothes For Any Body That Shows Up

Remember the creased red lines on my waist
Punishment from my jeans
Even as I wanted to blame fat aunts,
Wanted to blame red hair
Wanted to squeegee all this extra white dimply skin
Wanted to wipe clean, but clean, who could ever feel that in a body
I get out of the shower and wonder when the wetness between my legs
Changes from clean to dirty, as in,
If it comes from inside me, it is dirty,
As a girl would figure,
The things inside us rank and unspeakable, except I found a magic
Years ago. Yes. I can tell you what it is. If you're ready. Nothing
Is unspeakable. I keep clothes for any body that shows up.
I let her be.
Sometimes when I get out of the shower, I stand in front of
A fan with my legs open. Is air clean or dirty? Now
You see. The whole thing makes no sense.
The language. You have to change
The language. Keep lots of
Styles on hand.

Shante Little

My Love

My love cut like a knife's edge
sharp. And it hurt

In my absence I thought they'd miss the
stinging of their flesh White hot. I thought
they'd miss knowing how much they could
feel. How my suffocation shocked them into
deep belly breaths full and alive

I confused pain with love and that was my first
mistake.

No one misses that. No one lies in the comfort
of their too still plain too predictable too
simple too expected too safe partner
and misses how it felt

to be eaten alive

Shante Little

A Girl Raised By Wolves

a girl raised by wolves

backs into corners that feel like caves
swallowed whole
by woods and rooms too small to contain her
bares her teeth gnashing lashes out

hackles raised.
throwing wild fear-filled looks from face to
face to face

agirlraisedbywolves
turns on herself attacks limbs that are
hers not theirs
pries flesh bone from metal jaws
Nevermind the blood
a girlbody in the way of survival

a girl raised by wolves becomes a woman
ruining herself

in desperation freeing herself

Shante Little

There Is A Mother In You

There is a mother in you, I say
My words ring out and fall echoing deep

down

I feel for their kick

Sometimes I wrap my arms across my chest
instead, fingers finding their way into the
grooves of bone

If I breathe deeply enough I can feel
something

Shante Little

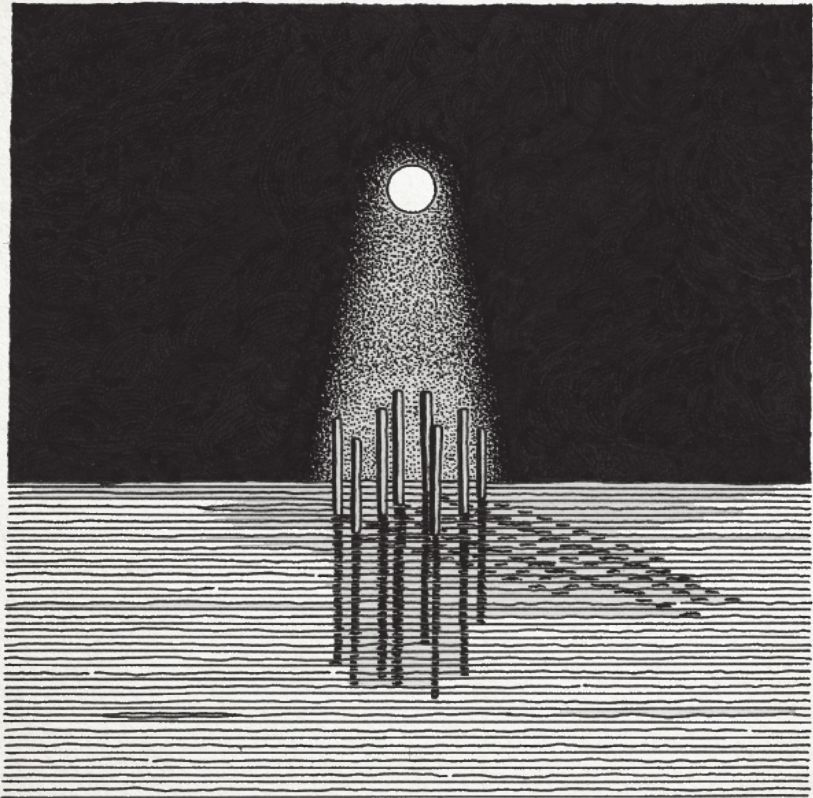
Daughters Of Motherless Women

Daughters of motherless women collect things
like cheap rosaries with abalone inlays, the
names of flowers: chrysanthemum, narcissus,
myosotis, secondhand books with inscriptions
from strangers, empty locket tarnished and bent

A penchant for other people's bad habits and
codependent tendencies

A taste for blood

Rocks to line their pockets
Just in case



found a new way

Isaac George Lauritsen

The Sky's Present Lowering Ensemble

The Moon descends, then rummages around
the mountain, then tumbles on into the land and sea
then shatters into Moon rocks and Moon debris
scattered and needing to be raked. If your money's in
Big Gravity, your stocks are skyward with these
tides to roofs as they've never been before, and you'd barely
see the martins with beaks clutching Moon if their shimmers
weren't smooth as the suede of Telvy Velter's suit
glassed in television, his late-night talk show shimmering
on chunks of Moon as he speaks in the baritone of gravity,
broadcasts boredom then attempts a ditty to recover,
but no one's there to witness his sad act, so he knobs off
and we don't see this either. We sleep at each other.
We dream of a blanket sky-wide with stars in it, draped on
what we're saying: *Moon, please get off my lamp.*
That's my favorite lamp. In fact, stop peeping
in my window, ya lunatic. But what're we
going on about lamps for? The Moon fell
on the school. It's on the grocery store.
What're we to look up to at night?
Telvy Velter? Velter's all washed up,
the poor guy. We'll give him a call
when we wake up.

Bree Brincat

The Stork

Ring. Ring. Ring.

S: Good afternoon! This is Sandra with *MyFamily*, how can I help you today?

M: Hi, yeah, I just got my results back and I think there's been a mistake.

S: I am sorry to hear that, can you tell me your kit number and a little bit more about the issue?

M: Yeah, uh. Kit #624420. My results say that I don't relate to anyone in my family? But I know I'm not adopted. I mean I have my birth certificate and let me tell you—for better or for worse I look just like my Dad—

S: I see. Not to worry! You are 100% biologically related to your family.

M: Oh. Am I reading these results wrong?

S: No ma'am. The results are correct.

M: [*nervous laugh*]

S: Not to worry, ma'am, this happens all the time. You are *biologically* related to your family. Under the "Ancestor" section you will find the breakdown of your biological heritage; for example, 30% German, 10% Indonesian, etc... Do you see it?

M: Yes.

S: Wonderful! Now look to our "My Family Tree" section.

M: Right, this is where I don't think I'm understanding.

S: Now "My Family Tree" determines where you came from.

M: [...]

S: For our conversation purposes I am going to use the story of the Stork; that seems to help Americans understand most efficiently.

M: Uhm, okay?

S: The Stork was responsible for carrying you to your parents on the night you were born, right?

M: I mean, I guess, yeah.

S: The "Stork", like Santa Claus on Christmas Eve, has many deliveries to make and sometimes an unfortunate mix up can occur and the wrong baby ends up with the wrong family.

M: You're saying I was *dropped off* to the wrong family?

S: In a manner of speaking, yes. You *came* from your parents but you were not *meant* for your parents.

M: Excuse me?

S: This is not an insult to you or your family. Think of it this way: have you ever felt different than your family? The "black sheep" so to speak? Do they seem to fit together but you're left the outlier?

M: I mean...doesn't everyone?

S: No.

M: [...]

M: But this was a DNA test, how can you even tell something like that?

S: That's proprietary, ma'am.

M: What?!

S: Our unique system is able to test you against the familial DNA and make our determination.

M: How?

S: That's proprietary, ma'am.

M: Then who was I meant for if I was "sent to the wrong family"?

S: Unfortunately, there is no way to answer to that question.

M: Oh come on!

S: Is there anything else I can help you with today?

M: Yeah, get me the number for the Stork!

S: The Stork is not real, ma'am.

M: [...]

S: It has been a pleasure helping you today. Thank-you for choosing *MyFamily*. Have a good day.

Click.

M: WHAT?!

[keypad dialing]

Ring. Ring—

O: We're sorry, this number is not in service. Please hang up and try your call again.

M: This is impossible.

Ring. Ring—

O: We're sorry, this number is not in service. Please hang up and try your call again.

Kelsey Wartelle

Mangroves & Monglier

She said the sun burns you differently this far south
We're four hours from the Keys
And the water is somewhere between
The aquamarine of her eyes
And the brackish bay of mine that matches
The color of her dad's old house on Telemachus
Still welcoming the corner long after
The flood line faded out
She hasn't been back in so long she's almost forgotten
How to swim in water you can't see to the bottom of
Salt buries us thick like the wall of mangroves
That hum at night as we sail through the box of wine
Our grandmother returned with
When I let her go into the liquor store by herself

Kelsey Wartelle

August: Act 1

Scene: back patio

Maybe I insist on sitting out here to write
Because I grow in places
Where you can't put the dead underground
The venus fly traps on the picnic table
Wilted black under August's cruelest blessings
Still green at the stems
He left them with her when he went back to the northeast
For good, for now
A string of kudzu, my favorite invasive species
Died on the vine trying to climb the gutter
It takes me all of the last three days of this month
To take it down
I'm losing track of what has been planted here intentionally

Paris Tate

La Boucherie

(Louisiana, 1963)

As a little girl,
she hated the season
between October and February,
when uncles came to surround
the pig in her father's pen.

This was how *la boucherie* started:

She would close the closet door
behind her, press her palms
into her ears just as the high-pitched
squeals pierced the men's exhaled air.

When her ears burned, and tears escaped
the pressure—that's how she knew
they were draining life into a bucket.

Under the supervision
of loud Creole tongues, nothing went
to waste: bacon for breakfast,
pork chops for dinner,
ham for Christmas;
she grew older, couldn't believe
the meat soaked inside the boiled blood,
lining up for a taste of lips and the brain.

Over Christmas coffee,
she tells her youngest daughter
every bloody detail.

These days,
she hates the taste of pork.

Now the next generation gets it.

Justin Lacour

Speed Dating

You say personalities are just something we concoct to survive childhood. I've always aimed for bohemian apparatchik for my personality, landing closer to middle-class know-it-all most of the time. If you strip either personality down, though, there's just a scared child trying to act debonair. A child asking "What's your tippie? Mine's a vodka tonic," in a voice not their own. Anyway, I'll bet your tippie is something exotic, a Moscow Mule or a 1-800-FUC-MEUP. You strike me as one willing to risk decorum for the sake of discovery, that is, willing to risk it all on the truth. I barely know you, but, when it gets dark, we should set out with flashlights, out to the abandoned golf course. We wouldn't be alone. There are broken kites in the trees. Theater kids roaming the tall grass busy with their own obscure rituals. We could sit by the water hazard, tossing rocks and breadcrumbs as metaphor for the rude trajectories of our lives, the sparkling highs followed by lows without end. You might lean in and say these extremes make us appreciate the simple things, green grass, black water, yellow moon. This would be the perfect thing to say. I could segue from that. I could tell you. There's still light in the earth. Your heart is light, your heart is the light in your mouth.

Justin Lacour

Sonnet (Process)

For you, I would travel to your past,
kill all those who have hurt you.
Well, not “kill,” but maybe “maim.”
Okay, “bludgeon,” which is only a fancy
word for “hit.” I could *hit* them for you.
Hit them and run away quickly; that’s my jam.
But does that even excite you?
We’re not people who’ll lose
entire days on Jane Austen novels, but maybe
some true crime and strong coffee?
This is a place where we can read, a place
with painted brick and lots of natural light.
My dog-choking pile of sonnets is here. In your
nude hands, each page trembles like a slice of brain.

Neil Shah

Coke Is A Reason To Smile

Juan the little Latino boy now can buy a bottle of Coke with his name on it.

Marcus the little black boy with the smile like Mick Jagger can too. So can Kayla, the brown girl who nobody really knows what she is, she may be part white.

Iranian maybe, also Latina? Well, it doesn't matter, she can buy a Coke with her name on it (too). And Coke is still sponsoring the NAACP,

I think, at least it was a couple years ago, but kids in the ghetto with rather "ebonic" sounding names probably still can't buy Coke bottles with their names on them, probably. Also I've noticed a trend in the popularization of the confederate flag as front license plate here in Michigan recently after the whole Capital of South Carolina removes the flag, I doubt Coke would put a rebel flag on their bottles for all the people in South Carolina (and here apparently) who feel as though they, or their ancestors, have been dishonored by this, especially with their tie-in with the NAACP, but then again Coke would probably do whatever it had to do to keep being stronger than the EU or the Old Testament. Or say, would Coke go the opposite direction and put a toppled statue of Andrew Jackson

or Robert E Lee on the front of a bottle?

But rebel flags really are culturally ingrained in some southern states how could it be otherwise?

At my own father's funeral, in the funeral home, somewhere on one of the many shelves in those giant rooms that had to be taken up with *something* was a confederate flag.

This was in Georgia, but still.

A confederate flag at an Indian funeral. The funeral wasn't even in fucking English, I had no idea what was being said. It was small, the flag I mean, not a full sized flag, but still. A truth is stranger than fiction moment for sure. All the damned place was missing was a Coke

machine. A lot of those sweaty fuckers at the funeral sure could have used one, myself included, I can say that much, summertime in the middle of Atlanta's pretty hot.

One of the two men who ran the funeral home, he actually got mad at us pallbearers because

apparently me and five other middle to late aged Indian men (who by now almost all had acquired a nice Coca-Cola tummy) weren't strong enough to lug the

casket up into the oven they had ready downstairs

in one steady "HEAVE HO!" He said "aaauughghu come on guys, *Jesus*,

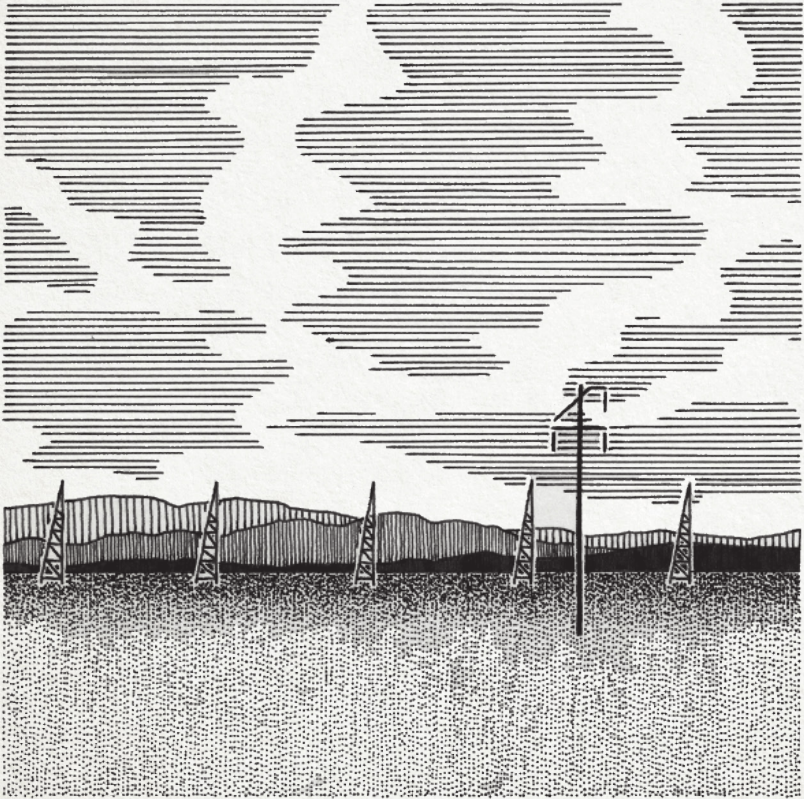
that's it!" His face sweaty and red as all hell. He looked like he could have used a Coke (*I bet his name was already printed on a bottle*),

maybe then I would have thought his face didn't look so oafishly loathsome and detestable but looked crisp, ebullient, and beautiful like Juan's or Marcus's or Kayla's. They all had teeth as white as fuck.

Neil Shah

Sure As Shit

Sure as the oil and the gas in the river
sure as trash in the streets after a parade
sure as trash in the streets
sure as the greasy tops of trash cans
used for dining room tables for people
eating fried chicken outside of the corner store,
sometimes licking their fingers even after
they've shoved the almost translucent with grease
paper bag into the almost overflowing can
sure as the death of a used-to-be friend
before you've made amends
sure as the death of yet another friend
sure as wheels sliding sideways on wet cement
sure as *"this thing is starting late as usual, right?"*
sure as the cops coming too late if they ever come at all
sure as another murder gone undisclosed
sure as *"sorry I came too soon..."*
sure as the bubbling ocean once at our toes
turns to feet turns to our almost knees
sure as the dog that bites which never gets told not to
sure as the bite that gets infected
sure as the inevitable pain of separation
once the teeth get pulled out
sure as shit as the inevitable pain of separation
sure as a plant regrows itself,
somewhere somehow
even on the brink
of oil country



punctured wastelands

Colleen Rothman

Attention In The Terminal

After raising her three-second touchdown arms in the whirring plastic tube, she sprints down the concourse as a disembodied voice announces a maintenance delay. Thanks to the incompetence of this airline that she recently learned no longer offers bereavement fares, she will now be able to eat.

She hates airports at dinnertime. Everyone would rather be elsewhere, but the demands of bodies and itineraries render home-cooked meals impossible. She fills her empty bottle at a fountain with a digital readout that brags about how many it's saved and grabs a package of airport sushi—one step above drugstores in the sushi hierarchy—though this one doesn't come with chopsticks or a pouch of wasabi. Maybe these, too, are considered weapons.

Side-eyeing the family in front of her in line, she texts her ex: *i'm eavesdropping on these hipster parents at the airport who have a kid named sebastian but they keep calling him SEA BASS omg i'm dying.* They always had a similar sense of humor. Too bad he actually meant it when he swore, so early on, that he never wanted kids.

Paging the Savage family, flight something-or-other. The numbers mean nothing unless they're yours, she realizes, these digits so quickly memorized, forgotten after landing. The message implores the Savages to return from wherever they've wandered, likely in search of food, stuck in line at a burger joint one concourse over, unaware the doors are about to close.

Perching on a plastic chair at her gate, she balances the plastic clamshell on her lap, pokes her maki with a plastic fork, and observes who stands still on the moving walkway. An Eagle Scout in uniform. A teen in a vintage tee that says, *Make It a Blockbuster Night*. A smug baby snuggled in a front-facing Bjorn. All these people, in no particular hurry.

Her ex texts back: *Maybe Sebastian's real name is Toothfish.* He adds, *Hey, how's your mom doing?* They haven't spoken in a while. Too much to explain.

Ceiling condensation drips onto a puppy pad in the corner. Attention in the terminal: final boarding call for another number that's not hers. It's funny, she thinks, how, once you're on the plane, you never hear your own flight's announcements. Like how, even when you're lucky, you never get to see which casket your loved ones chose for you.

Michael Quess? Moore

Black To Africa

i imagine the heat holds something for me in the ground
a violence a love so thick so worn
it make you feel safe
like your favorite t-shirt with the holes in it
you wore as a young boy
or the plush arms of your grandma's couch

bet the smiles hold you like your grandma's living room
bet the eyes be like glowing ellipses
leading you back to a series of broken life sentences
you been inadvertently rewording your whole life
bet it be like your whole life reduced
to a seashell pregnant with an ocean of ancestral echoes

chambering your heart into a concert hall of palpitations
bet the ocean make its way through your eyes too yeah
bet you find out what you really made of
sea yore self looking black at you a million x over
till you baptized in yore self
till you washed Black and Brown and drum and calabash clean

...

maybe a scarred glare holds distance
wide as the Atlantic ocean
maybe a quick tongue holds hustle
fast as depleting oil stocks
may I remember the art of polishing a smudged reflection
of finding my self amidst the shards of a broken mirror

Michael Quess? Moore

Hard

they tried to convince us that hardness equaled bravery
as though the concrete didn't find its roots in the soft clay
who found roots deeper still in the wet mud
and we children of old earth
born color of soil
come to know toil like second skin
turn bleached stone in our raggedly aged state
some of us, thinking we fancy
"twinkle and glisten"
like shiny metal in a dying sun's twilight
dream of becoming machines
greater than the ones we been harnessed to

Michael Quess? Moore

Sometimes Love Is A Bassline

is a hum of desire
tremors the heart and rattles the bones
to a slight harmony
calls your feet to move
to its rhythm like a block party
beckoning from a distance unknown

sometimes you get to the block party
and it's all good, the bodies gyrate
in sync, the music be that new new
mixed with a sample of sum'n old
ya pops used to play on vinyl
(talkin bout yeah this where it all started son and
when the nonsense is done, what it's going back to)
the food smell like somebody grandma
put they whole foot in it
baptizing the air and flooding yo' nostrils with want

and all the steps and the rhythm and the movement
of hands to flesh of what they need to feel
and tongues to touch what they wanna taste
be all good

till a sudden violence erupts

from some place unseen and rooted in
something deeper still maybe seen and unseen
and bodies disperse like a flock of pigeons
never to return to this place in time again
but you can bet they remember
what called them in the first place

that bassline be humming in they bones
in the days and weeks and months to come
and they be listening to its murmur
pining for its breath
tryna find they way home

Sophie Nau

Lo

*This is the chapel where I pray
This is the steeple where they ring the bells
I'm going to ring the bells
I'm going to sing inside of the bells*

Lo is nineteen like me, but her buttery-smooth skin is the only giveaway to her age. An ancientness circulates inside of her. Her comfort with aging, like she doesn't mind skipping past all of the trifling rites of young life, her commitment to a Holy Order, alarms me. There's no disease inside of her to so urgently incite this devotion. Her body hasn't betrayed her, and neither has her mind. Who does that then leave?

We walk around her college campus in Thursday morning overcast, and she shows me the old chapel and reintroduces me to the saints etched into the windows, shimmering in jewel tones.

Optical illusions, I think.

Basil, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, she says. She nods to each.

And where I am chilled and hardened, a walnut refusing to release from its shell, Lo is porous. She talks about visitations and miracles, humbled servants and thinkers, pilgrimages and acts of service. These are her real college friends, whispering out from pages thin as the skin of a newborn.

Where did you learn to believe like this? I want to ask. Where did you learn to forget?

I like lighting the candles. I drop a quarter in the slot and it collides with the other tokens, a growing collection of prayers. The person I think of when I light the candle is not the person I expected to think of, but it's like they were waiting in the spark from flame to wick, and this candle was theirs all along, so I don't fight it. I can't bring myself to kneel, like all of the other patrons whose knees have melted the hassocks before me.

Lo has been sitting in the front pew, her hands folded in her khaki

covered lap. Her fingers kiss her forehead, her heart, her shoulders, then she stands up. At the church door she crosses herself again and I do it too, feel like I'm lying, or maybe just white lying; I do appreciate the home found in the familiar movement.

She walks with patience around the quad, as if she's making sure everything is as it is, like a Saint Francis statue looking out over his charges in the lawn. When Lo points to the bell tower and tells me what an honor it is to ring the bell, her arm doesn't bend straight. The disability is a consequence of her mysterious fall—the shattered bone—that should have killed her.

On the sidewalk just outside campus is a half-moon of candles and dewy flowers around a picture frame. The photo inside is of a face we knew and the reason I'm here.

She is at home now, and someday we will join her and be together again, the priest said.

Amen, we had to say.

We look at the memorial for a while, the mad dash for memory we make to commemorate where a life was lost, was severed, knocked out of its body, moved on, transitioned, transmuted, dissipated, reincarnated, fell to pieces, began the process of forgetting or of being forgotten.

There's a body. There's a mind. There's a spirit? There's a fall. There's a breaking. There's a getting up, sometimes. A spirit that pushes. A spirit that spares.

Lo and I walk holding hands. I'm careful not to swing her bad arm too much. Her soft-like-laundry fingers mingle with mine.

Were you always so sure? Are you still so sure?

Yes, yes.

It's just the autumn wind and ash trees and a statue of Mary.

What about the fall? Weren't you scared?

Afterwards, I was. It was a stupid thing to do.

I take this in. The equation of motion changing, the force redefined.

The way the world works hasn't changed. It just happened sooner for our friend.

Lo even has a rocking chair in her dorm, next to a bottle of whiskey. Later, when I close the door to step out into the hall, she's rocking and smiling and reaching for a textbook. I don't know what else she needs to learn.

TT Kooken

The Death Of A Green Monk Parakeet

a green monk
fell from the sky
he-she looked
in stillness,
an injured monk

there's a great
green gift
in death
when the open
wing is held softly

friend of
bridge, turned
from their space,
green year, a green
mile and he-she

plush quiet,
still landing
templed ground
he-she of the
dome sky

TT Kooken

All Long Days Alone And With The Camphor Tree

when I need to hear the tree's song
again it's a small patch of dirt against
which I push my heels whether the
dirt is wet or dry I feel that I can sink
into it and every day to clear and clear
again my space now the tree is going
to lean in and say you're not nearly
alone I'm not nearly there I'd half
expect it to stay this way laughingly
still and unnoticed you may leave
again for other places where there's
so much to see but I can hear the
sounds come and go and while
looking for so much my space now
widely clear and full of the rain
sparkles for you and I would need
to hear it but while I'm caught
stuck still taking form from the tree
its all never much and everything
startling the wind

Amy Li

And So, I Unearth

My mother cuts my fingernails to the flesh,
snipped in falling piles on gaping tile, leaving skin naked

& rifting bruise into femininity. After, I dig naked fingertips
into the earth, hungry for some semblance

of a truth. Sifting promise into neat little piles. A man molds me
from clay. When extirpation comes out clean, slick curls

up my forearm & the worms wrap around my eyes. I
stick them down my throat and hide them in my belly,

stand to wipe off my skirt before heading indoors. Autumn
weaves itself between the tendrils of my hair. A worm reaches

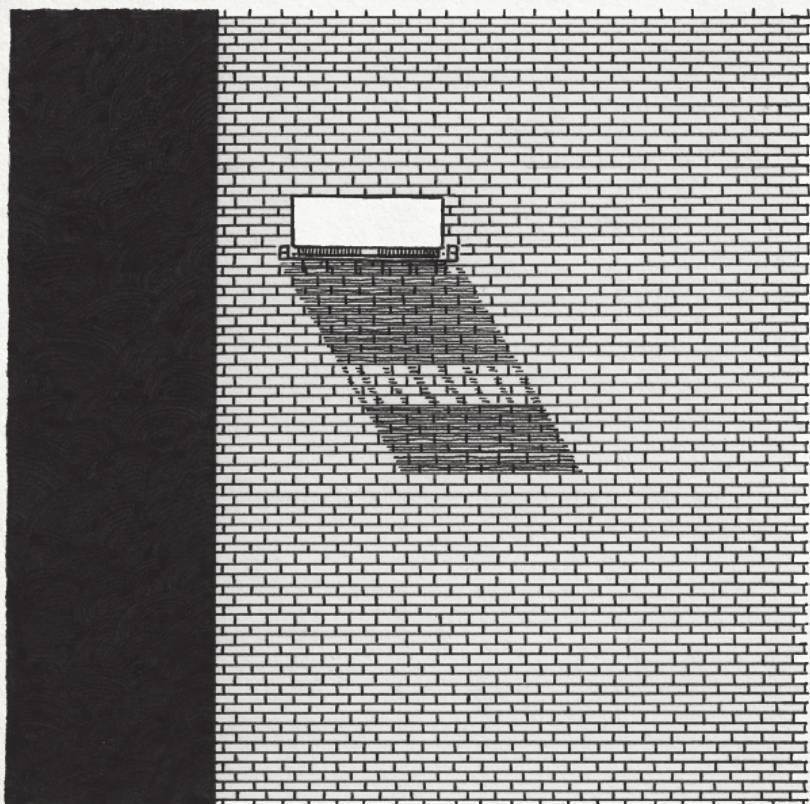
for it, beckons, begs. I usher it back inside me. My skin tick tocks
until standstill. I wait for becoming. I edge at ataraxy. A ledge
overlooks a field,

& I stand atop it. I am running from the ground. *Who was it
that unearthed you?* The worms writhe amongst a harvest.

Amy Li

Function Revolving

We graph ourselves, grid / our molars into parabolas. The universe tilts / onto this plane of movement. & I / keep scrubbing pencil marks. & we / strike the flame unto our tongues. Wait. / The candle forgets to burn out. / I wrap a cardigan around my shoulders, knot / it into my hair, cotton braid bleached / to pearlescent moonshine. / The limits stretch across my limbs / unit circle inching beneath my arms / until snakeskin stops moving. My hair dangles / in the wind, pulled up like a puppet / on a string. / $f(\text{you}) = \text{me}$. / Flames burn through my stomach lining. / I am adding the variables / building to break down. Simplification. / Factoring equations & trying to solve / for zero. If I am the function of you, / what is the function of me? / I wait for the graphs to align, and yet my vertex / remains undefined.



this is it

Noah Tapper

Another Shill

For a while I identified as mostly villain. I was living in a haunted closet someone else had left full of racist suspenders. There was a damp certainty along the treeline outside, and my shadow was like a murderer calling from inside the house. At night the moon woke me with an apologetic doctor's hand, and in mornings I found myself ruffled by impersonal light that had a thin smell, like the armpit of a cloud. I lived there as a riddle: defined by what I was missing.

Five decades of poison academics were waiting in that closet's internet, full of virility codes and warlock charisma. They showed me how being mean and correct was the ladder to my dreams, and sure enough: I shook that invisible hand, I sent away for the power tapes, I vision-boarded that status pussy. You could see me on the feed, hauling my body around like a bored wife or projecting sex onto economic warfare. I spent time in the mirror, practicing my sneer and laughing into an outraged face. I took verbal self-defense classes at the local white terrorist center and made flow charts of the female brain.

It was not a productive place: the walls breathed thirsty confusions, and every room glared back at me like a bug I wished someone else would kill. The vortex in my bed drained eons of sleep and replaced them with a heart that spoke in betrayal. I could feel gridlock groaning along the highway out back, and the woods loomed around me like a rival ideology.

What path is waiting for you when history looks like a stranger's madlib and the news is a suicide note from the future? I really wanted to fit in, to be on the winning side. It's embarrassing to me now, but I was undercover at all the enemy rallies, covered in their promotional gear. If you go back, you can see me at the edges of the press, inching closer to the podium, my sweaty hand hidden in a dark bag.

Kate LaDew

*Every Year, On Average, 100 Americans
Choke And Die On The Top Of A Pen Cap*

imagine that,
it's almost hard to feel sorry
for anyone who dies in such a stupid,
preventable, nonsensical way
some pen manufacturers heard about the problem
and put holes in the tops of pen caps to prevent asphyxiation
imagine that, companies having to design and build
brand new machines to make holes in pen caps
because people decided to choke on them
but companies did
and, imagine, flying up to heaven
expelling a pen cap from your mouth
directly into st. peter's face
imagine the look he'd have on it, how embarrassing
and in the year of our lord 2020 and beyond,
imagine, all the thousands and thousands of people
flying up to heaven after receiving and not following
easy-to-understand-easy-to-manage-bare-minimum-safety-precautions
to prevent themselves and those they love
from suffering a horrible, brutal, painful weeks long collapse
that punches holes in your lungs till you can no longer breathe
rendering your body a hazard to any living thing
imagine if you allowed that to happen
because a supposedly rich man with fake hair and fake facts tells you to
it's almost hard to feel sorry for anyone who dies in such a stupid,
preventable, nonsensical way
it's almost hard to imagine changing everything to prevent 100 deaths
and changing nothing to prevent millions
almost
now imagine, for every pen stuck in a throat,

the 100 closest people to that very stupid person choking on it, die too
through absolutely no fault of their own
imagine that, walking into heaven, decades before your time,
with clean hands and a masked face
as st. peter squeezes your shoulder, the first touch you've felt in months
imagine how angry you'd be, following the rules, giving a damn and
dying anyway
now imagine this, imagine walking into heaven with blood on
your hands
holes in your lungs, face shining for all to see, defiant in defeat
you dropped this, st. peter will say, holding a mask out,
no, you'll say, *I didn't*
exactly! he'll yell and you'll have to go to the corner of eternity
where the selfish stay—did you think you'd get to be with
everybody else?—
you'll go where the selfish people shiver, clutching their stomachs,
cold and starving because the blankets are on the top shelf
and the food's on a long, long table a mile away,
if you all made a ladder with your eternal souls,
you could reach the blankets,
if you made a chain, you could reach the food,
if you depended on another person and allowed them to depend on you,
you could have most of what you wanted and all of what you need,
but you don't.
imagine that.
you don't make a move
selfish people never do

Kate LaDew

You Bolt The Windows, Bolt The Doors,

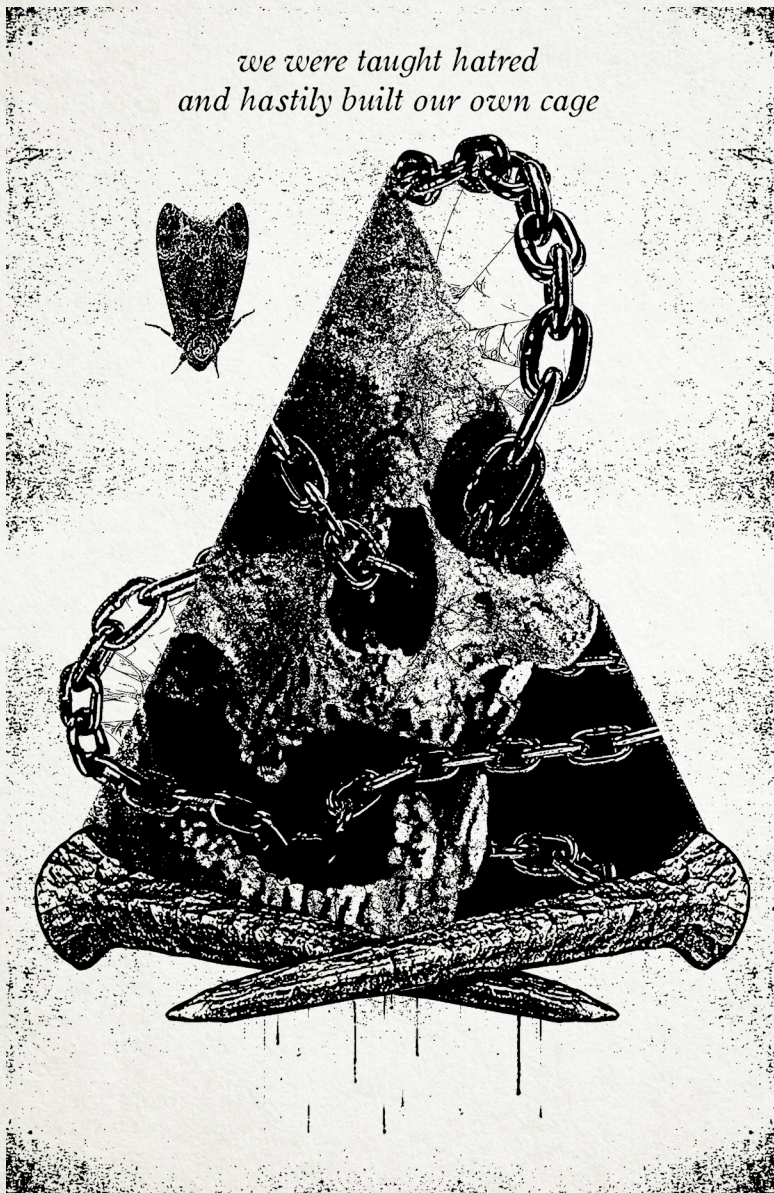
stop up the keyhole,
slide your shoes by the bed, toes facing out
walk backwards, reach your hand,
feel the edges for the covers, and climb in
crossing your arms, your legs,
sinking into the mattress, steel scissors underneath it,
holding your grandmother's silk glove over your heart,
you chant your charm against the demons who only walk at night
*as I lay me down, I shall suffer no harm
till the nightmares count every star
and gallop round the world on a unicorn,*
you watch the upside down broom in the corner,
turn your pillow over, make the sign of the cross on its face,
swivel your head towards the window and wait,
listening for the albraum's approach,
the mår, the alp, the wåridèrske, the drude, the murraue,
the karabasan, the éjfeljáró, the night-goer
it sounds like the gnawing teeth of a rat
the creeping claws of a cat, the drumming legs of a spider,
skittering up and down, inside the walls, and soon, outside them
breath xylophones over your ribs, catching under your heart,
blood sloshes in its wake, sparks popping behind your eyes
as you shut them tight, knowing the mår, the alp, the murraue,
the night-goer crawls up a sleeper's body from below
first, there are tingles in the feet, hot breath against tender soles,
then, a weight grasps the heels and pulls, bed springs sinking in a
metal groan,
next, the wåridèrske, the drude, the karabasan, clutches the knees like
climbing holds,
slithers across the stomach and settles on the chest,
eyes suspended, twin foxfires in the dark

drops its black, shaggy head, back curving in a question mark,
tongue writhing, wetting the edges of the hair
braiding it into snarls, and, pressing its open mouth over the sleeper's,
sucks in all the air and empties them out
the albtraum steals breath, speech, draining energy till the body
 won't move
leaving the soul as witness to a complete and vigorous destruction
of the mind and the structure that contains it.
the mårt, the alp, the wåridèrske, the drude, the murraue, the karabasan,
 the éjfeljáró,
all waiting for the eyes to droop, the heart to slow, the breath to deepen.
if you stand under a certain kind of tree after a rainstorm
and let a drop of water from its branches roll down, down, down
tremble in the air and touch any part of you,
a mårt will ride you through the fields at night
and leave you frothing and exhausted and miles from home.
simply existing as a body with breath when the day dies
allows a murraue to sit on your chest, claws curled in the spaces
 between your ribs,
and suffocate you, for the pure thrill of the kill.
but, drink coffee grounds at night,
throw a noose at the drude when it enters your room,
place something steel under your mattress,
wear an inherited glove and grab the karabasan by the scruff of the neck,
cross your arms over your body, sleep with a scythe,
leave a bundle of hay in the shape of you under the covers to trick
 the wåridèrske,
hang a mirror over your bed and scare the éjfeljáró with its
 own reflection,
urinate into a bottle, hang it in the sun for three days, carry it,
without saying a word, to a running stream,
throw it over your head into the water, and the next night,
an albtraum will be repelled.
take a small child free of sin, soak it in a bath for two hours,
dry it on goat or lamb's skin, sleep with the naked baby in your bed,

and the night-goer can do you no harm.
follow these simple steps and you're free of nightmares for ever
and always,
though, with no evidence of success after implementation, results
may vary.
and if none of these folkloric traditions, legends or fairytale
superstitions
keeps your room free of mythological demons,
instead of reaching for the nearest sinless baby, breathe in, out,
remember you live in the modern world, google sleep paralysis, buy
a nightlight,
avoid caffeine in the afternoon, sleep on your stomach
go to bed at the same time every evening
and the scary sensations will gradually dissipate, with no lasting damage.
so when, in the light of day, a billion dreamers are undone by a thing
made of air,
taking up everywhere, suffocating as their lungs turn to glass,
every breath passing their fate to another
when they refuse to do the little that's asked of them
to save an entire population, of which they are a part,
leaving hands unwashed, pressing bodies together,
burning the only known weapon against what's destroying them,
a strip of cloth made to fit a face,
in order to take back a freedom never in jeopardy,
it's like we've tumbled into the past, a thousand years,
forgetting all we've learned and tried and tested,
because there's another legend,
the legend of the baku, a creature stitched together
from the leftover parts after the gods created animals,
the baku devours nightmares and, when left unsatisfied, and it is
always unsatisfied,
consumes hopes and dreams too.
it's like one morning, the world opened its eyes, the rest of its life
erased, a blank,
and found itself in the belly of a baku

instead of locking hands and climbing out, lifting each other,
one by one,
the world closed its eyes, pretended nobody else was alive,
wrapped its arms around its shoulders,
pressed its forehead into its knees so only darkness showed,
and whispered a charm against reality
*it's just a nightmare
if I just lie here,
I can trust the light
to wash away my fright
if I just do nothing long enough
when I wake up, it'll all be over, it'll all be over,
I shall suffer no harm
till the nightmares count every star
and gallop 'round the world on a unicorn,
and when I wake up, it'll all be over
it'll all be over, it'll all be over,
every
single
thing
will all be over*

*we were taught hatred
and hastily built our own cage*



Paul Bisagni

Shades Of Repetition

No, the bags beneath the eyes don't haunt me. They're burgundy and natural, though stark. As if an igneous rock, like rhyolite or scoria, ground to powder, had settled on her cheek bones. A semicircle, such as a bag, though geometrically sound, is unsettling because it lacks an expected complement. But view the bag *with* the eye and circularity obtains. From this I register harmony, pleasure of completion. Yet completion won't ensure satiety. If concentricity is indulgence in the circular, let me pursue that. Contextualizing the eye-bag—by this I mean eye with bag as circular unit—within the head, ovoid though it may be, achieves concentricity. I savor it, the satisfaction of perceiving repetition on the person of my ailing mother. A person, such as my mother, is a dynamic concatenation of patterns. This is known. She might photograph the harbor from a different angle than before, adjust the saturation to blend bay and gull, then ask

me as before to suggest a witty title. But how
an ailment—cancer, say—figures
is less known. It equates
to bodily hyperactivity, wherein
a blossoming of cells—many
spherical—is undesired. In
proliferating, a thing, such as
a cell, repeats to an unspecified and
often illimitable degree. Repetition
of this kind—esurient, unlike
that of the eye-bag—does not inspire
harmony. Yet the burgundy of my
mother's bags is an evocation,
thus not new. For when her hair
was thick, before she warmed
to grey, burgundy was her
chosen dye.

Paul Bisagni

Action Network

*Days are the colors of petals; sequence aggregates into a rosette
(civilization) turning with the sun and what sun partakes of.*
—Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, “Verdant Heart”

Each cough is a lavender bud
loose in my shoe
or lodged in the seams
between sidewalk
or vertically
between the sidewalk
and my shoe in which
a lavender bud rattles
unless it’s her cough.

Smooth voices
on the phone
catalogue
nodules, clogged tubes, clinical trials
or tubules soggy from clobbered phials.
Phone calls and coughs
measure time
without splicing
or enforcing sequence.

Pace—my mother’s and
the concept of—fumbles
in the fog-growth of
unbidden biology,
like how *infinity* + 1
is both child’s hyperbole
and mathematical sophistication.

Once I wondered
aloud to a boyfriend
why I had been born
a human and not
a tree. This question
rankled him. We walked
in silence past
the oaks.

Melody Storms

Witnesses

I could only prove
we were there—
not the crime
that took place.
But if one
listened closely
they might hear
whispered assurances
in the leaves.
The trees saw everything.

Contributors' Notes

Glen Armstrong holds an MFA in English from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and teaches writing at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. He edits a poetry journal called *Cruel Garters* and has two current books of poems: *Invisible Histories* and *The New Vaudeville*. His work has appeared in *Poetry Northwest*, *Conduit*, and *Cream City Review*.

Cate Root writes and lives in New Orleans. You can find more of her work at *Current Affairs*, *Catapult*, *River River*, *Antenna*, and *Infection House*. She's on the internet generally as @cateroot.

Shante Little is a New England native who has since made her home in the American South. She is an aspiring writer and storyteller, full-time researcher in the social justice sector, avid coffee drinker, and dog mom of 2.

Noelle Richard (they/them) is a transgender/non-binary artist and filmmaker from Cleveland, OH, based in New Orleans, LA. Noelle's practice includes experimental video, illustration, and artist publications. Noelle earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Drawing with an emphasis in Photography+Video from the Cleveland Institute of Art in May, 2017. Their video work is screened at galleries and film events throughout the United States and internationally. They've self-published numerous books and zines, and table at comic and independent print conventions. Their 2019 show through the Gordon Square Arts District, "no water," was their first solo show. Currently, Noelle is riding out quarantine in sunny New Orleans, LA, and continues to make drawings and cinematic work that explores intimacy and community in this singular time through their lens as a white queer person. When they're not hunched over a laptop gulping iced coffee, they can be found driving along back roads taking photos of abandoned gas station signs and billboards.

Isaac George Lauritsen is a poet, playwright, and graduate student in the Creative Writing Workshop at the University of New Orleans. His poems can be found in *Habitat Magazine*, *Inklette*, *The Roadrunner Review*, and on a broadside from *Octopus Books*. Previews of his plays can be found at the *New Play Exchange*. He serves as Associate Poetry Editor for *Bayou Magazine* and teaches first-year composition at UNO.

Bree Brincat is a writer based in New Orleans, LA. Originally from Michigan, she escaped the snow and now lives with her rescue pets in Uptown. Bree also works in Hollywood South during times unaffected by international pandemics.

Kelsey Wartelle is an actress, poet, and playwright born and raised in Lafayette, Louisiana and currently living in New Orleans. Her work has appeared in *Capulet Magazine*. Her one-act play, *Chains of Spanish Moss*, received an honorable mention in the 2018 New Works of Merit playwrighting contest.

Born in a suburb near New Orleans, Louisiana, **Paris Tate** received her BA in English from the University of New Orleans. Her debut poetry collection, *All the Words in Between* (Portals Press) was published in 2018. She was also a semi-finalist in *The New Guard Review's* 2015 Knightville Poetry Contest. Her poetry can also be found in *LiVE MAG!*, *Literary Yard*, *Mojave Heart Review*, the anthology *Maple Leaf Rag*, and *Infection House*, an online literary journal focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic and other events that took place in 2020. Tate currently lives with her husband near New Orleans, where she works as a librarian.

Justin Lacour lives in New Orleans and edits *Trampoline: A Journal of Poetry*. His poetry has appeared in *Bayou Magazine*, *The New Orleans Review* (Web Features), *B O D Y*, and other journals.

Neil Shah, originally from the Midwest and afterwards living in Georgia and Tennessee, has now been in New Orleans for a handful of years. After a failed attempt at graduating from the Literature

and Creative Writing program at Western Michigan University, he has managed to get a few pieces published in places such as *Forth Magazine*, *Horror Sleaze and Trash*, *Situate Magazine*, and *Open Palm Print*. If he's not helping his friends with construction projects or at work, you can generally find him hanging out back in Bayou Bienvenue or at Parisite.

Colleen Rothman's writing has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, *Literary Hub*, *The Kenyon Review Online*, *The Adroit Journal*, *Hobart*, and elsewhere. She lives in New Orleans.

Michael Quess? Moore is a poet, educator, actor, playwright, and activist. He has been published in *Pluck!*, *Peauxdunque Review*, *Maple Leaf Rag*, *Boog City*, and other publications, and presented by Nike, Spotify, RedBull, BalconyTV, Congo TV, Write About Now, Button Poetry, and other platforms. A two-time National Poetry Slam champion, he appreciates words on page and stage. His poetry explores issues of race and social justice, mental and emotional healing, love and relationships—in short, what it means to be a black man-child in the broken promise land.

Sophie Nau is an MFA candidate in fiction at The University of New Orleans. She hails from Los Angeles and writes pastry recipes as often as she writes stories.

TT Kooken is a Queer Non-binary writer, teacher, poet, healer, performer, improviser, and thinker dedicated to radical awareness and collective growth in the arts, philosophy, and Somatics. They are most driven by and towards nature, kinship, playfulness, mindfulness, embodiment, and creative and philosophical adaptation. TT is a full-time parent, part-time teacher & facilitator, and endless student of life.

Amy Li is a young writer from Georgia. Her work appears or is forthcoming in the *Aurora Review*, *The Lumiere Review*, and *Sandpiper*, among others. In addition to writing, she enjoys photography, playing piano, and procrastinating.

Noah Tapper is a writer living in New Orleans, where he was or is a regular at the Dogfish, Maple Leaf, and Under the Creole Chandelier open mics. He is a member of the New Orleans chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America and the Krewe of Hellarious Wingnuts. He is happy to give you feedback on some writing. He is working on finding enjambment he likes. He puts up rejected pieces on his blog VolcanoReviews.blogspot.com.

Kate LaDew is a graduate from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a BA in Studio Art. She resides in Graham, NC with her cats, Charlie Chaplin and Janis Joplin.

CVSPE is a monochrome manifestation from the suburbs of Lisbon, born between Punk and Death Metal with an acquired taste for all things macabre and undying love for details. Nowadays he focuses more on digital illustration for bands, but he's always keen to grab a pen and slay some ink on paper. Ater Aeternum! @cvspe

Paul Bisagni is a lapsed classicist, one-time applied linguist, and current MFA candidate in poetry at the University of Idaho. His poems can be found in *Dream Pop Journal*.

Melody Storms lives in a tiny room upstairs in her parents' house, decorated with the portraits of poets and writers that inspire her. She was once told she and Emily Dickinson would have made a great couple and took it as a high compliment. Her free time is spent writing poems about life, trauma, and the love she hopes to someday find with another woman. When she emerges into the outside world, she spends time with the friends she made in a local writing group.

Christopher Payne is an illustrator, designer, and printmaker who grew up on the outskirts of California's Mojave Desert. Working in ink, watercolor, screen printing, and other practices, his work examines nature through a distorted lens. He is the co-founder of the literary and visual arts publication *Fine Print* and currently works through his design studio, Salted Teeth.

Submission Guidelines

Tilted House is a New Orleans-based press which gets off on the dirty effervescence of this city's great artists. Through this outfit, we strive to cultivate a creative and communal unit from and for the city. While the door is wide open for New Orleans' minds, it remains open for the rest of the world's. **Everyone is encouraged to submit.**

We publish fresh and pickled writers alike. MFAers and outliers, professors and punks. Whether you are new to the pen or a veteran, we want to read your work. We encourage underserved artists to submit: BIPOC, LGBTQ+, those with disabilities, children, teenagers, the elderly, and those outside of academia or compulsory school.

We like both experimental and traditional work. We like dark. Surprise turns, nuance, metaphor. We want poems we can smell. Fiction that sickens. Art that double-takes. We like hard-hitting endings. Polemics. Protest. Confession that isn't like every other confession. Sonnets, American sonnets, sonnets all splintered. We like work that has its heart on its sleeve—and nothing on the nose. Crawl into our veins and sit there a while.

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Simultaneous submissions are accepted, but please notify us if your work makes it big elsewhere. No previously published work, please.

We accept work in all languages. Please provide an English translation.

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ESSAY Submit up to 2 essays at 1,000 words or less (combined).

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FLASH FICTION Submit up to 3 pieces at 800 words or less (combined).

PLAYS Submit one short play, or an excerpt from a longer play. Up to 1,000 words. Standard format.

VISUAL ART Submit up to 3 pieces, 600dpi .png, black & white only (**color is welcome for online-only work**). The page specs for the *Review* are around 8.5 x 5.5, so submit accordingly.

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