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## FEATURE INTERVIEW WITH REBECCA BROWN BY ELIZABETH ROLLINS

+New work from: Pattie McCarthy

Nate Pritts

Craig Watson

Kristi Maxwell

Bern Porter

& more



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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

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**FACT-SIMILE** is edited and published by Travis and JenMarie Macdonald.

Dear Reader:

If you're reading this, then the world has not yet ended. It is, after all, just another innocuous winter solstice.

And yet, there is no use denying that this past year has brought with it many tensions, anxieties and dreads: the devastation of Hurricane Sandy, the divisive presidential election, the so-called fiscal cliff, heart-breaking massacre after massacre (in the US and abroad). It is easy to get wrapped up in a media-fueled despair for the future. But then again, what age has not wondered how humanity could possibly progress past its already unimaginable bounds? The world is always ending.

In times like these, we must look to our poets and our storytellers to voice that which defies all explanation, to provide the forms that help us hold the void at bay. And so we here at Fact-Simile invite you to turn with us to the writers in our eighth issue to make some order and sense of this mad world. We do so knowing full well that, even if the world hasn't ended, we are not yet safe. As Nate Pritts observes in his poem "Ecstasy": *This life won't let us conceive of a different life / without engendering extreme danger for the current shape.*

As you navigate the following pages, we urge you to note not only the scenes of potentially apocalyptic turmoil but the seeds of emergent possibility as well. For this, it seems to us, is a book of both beginnings and endings.

And while we doubt that Rebecca Brown could have prophesied this issue would be released on the shortest day of the year, the moment where those of us here in the northern hemisphere experience the greatest darkness, her sentiment and advice is telling: "We are living in an apocalyptic age ... We need to think about it and live with the kinds of world-warps it shows."

We're happy to be traveling with you, dear reader, and hope that you enjoy the world-warps within this issue of Fact-Simile.

Happy Reading,

Travis & JenMarie  
The Editors

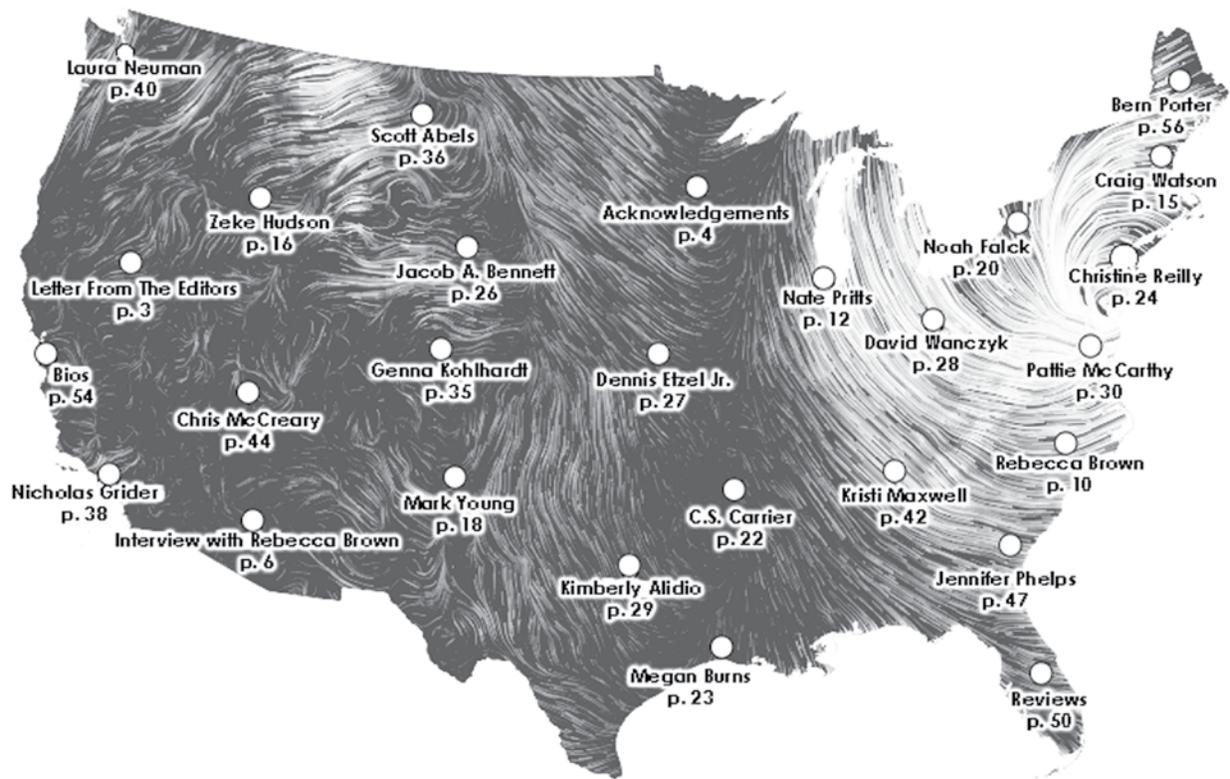
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# Fact-Simile No. 8 | 2012



## “THAT WHICH TOWARD”: AN INTERVIEW WITH REBECCA BROWN

by Elizabeth Frankie Karamazov Rollins

This interview took place by email and at Casa Libre en la Solana in Tucson, Arizona in May of 2012.

**Elizabeth Frankie Karamazov Rollins:** Tell us about something you know very well.

**Rebecca Brown:** I know how to pet a cat really well. Especially one of my own cats.

**EFKR:** Your sentences are crisp collars, clear water, perfect angles. Do you think you were born with this crispness or was it learned? If born with, how? If learned, from whom?

**RB:** Born crisp? Hardly—I was sticky, goeey, gluey in words, fatty and oily for a long time. Auden then helped to clarify and lean. Then Stein and Hemingway shifted his rhythm from Anglican to plain American. Beckett for pace and Kafka for weirdness and lots of other people and things all learned, learned, learned, studied. Like muscles or diet.

**EFKR:** Who/what unhinges you from tradition? Who/what keeps you in tradition?

**RB:** Tradition feeds me. When I re-read Kafka or Woolf or Stein or Cather or Beckett or others, I feel like writing and reading are worthy endeavors. Also, they feed me, regardless of my trying to write, by their making beauty and content. By their decision, each and every one, to stay alive. (Well, I guess except Woolf, but she gave it a shot for as long as she could.) Where I don't fit with tradition is, I guess less 'tradition' as I see it as it is 'tradition' as part of the mainstream now sees it. Like a book critic for the *Seattle Times* years ago who told me Gertrude Stein was not a poet, so he wouldn't list an event of hers

in Poetry Month. Which kinda made me want to scream but I didn't...the stranglehold certain 'traditionalists' (but only of the realist tradition) have on American letters. That is un-hinge-making. So I try to avoid spending much thought time there.

**EFKR:** What did you have/are you going to have for lunch?

**RB:** I made a tuna sandwich and my cats got the can and the juice. I also had some dark chocolate and am now drinking an iced coffee from my coffee pot this AM.

**EFKR:** Do you read while you eat? What are you reading?

**RB:** Sometimes. I am now reading Calvino because I am bringing *Invisible Cities* to my students. Also reading Elaine Pagels' new book about the Book of Revelation. I love her—so smart and helpful to me. Also some essays by Walker Percy, whom I'd never really read, but it was recommended to me, and I am finding some good things like his essay about Melville and friendship.

**EFKR:** You have many saints and mentors. Is there anyone in particular right now that you genuflect to?

**RB:** Yeah, continue to have a very, very large word crush on Beckett. Last week, I did a talk in which he figured. So I was re-reading a bunch of stuff - some of the *Fizzles*, *The Unnamable*, *Molloy*, *Endgame*. And I just cannot believe how amazing, amazing it is. Like, it's not even human. Last year, I had a real thing for Tintoretto. One of the reasons Chris and I went to Venice last fall (in addition to celebrating our 20th!!!)

was because I really wanted to see the Tintoretto. OMG. Even better than I remembered or imagined. I also have a word crush on Gary Wills. I am also these days completely awed and inspired by a few local priests and nuns who are, in the word of my friend Victoria, "totally kick-ass," i.e. very progressive and actively doing things to make the world better: feeding people, finding them places to sleep and live, not cow-towing to the Pope and many bishops' absurd attempt to undo Washington state's recent progress on the civil issue of Marriage Equality.

**EFKR:** You told me a story about the miracle of fatness. Saint Clare? When you told me this story, I suspected you of inventing it. It sounded like you. Have you ever created or thought of creating your own saint or your own parable around a saint? Would this be sacrilegious?

**RB:** I didn't invent that story! Though I admit calling it "the miracle of 'fatness'" was my special touch. But there really is a story in the Clare hagiography that when she tried to join Francis, her family tried to physically drag her away; she grabbed the altar and became so heavy they couldn't lift her.

As far as creating my own saint, I don't feel a need to. There are so many awesome, incredible, moving, heart-breaking and/or hilarious saint stories already. I love finding them and thinking either "wow this insane amazing thing happened" or "some insane amazing person imagined this..." I find much comfort and company with them.

**EFKR:** How is your relationship



with Bashō? Is that still going on?

**RB:** Fantastic and yes. He is still a touchstone. I teach him a lot and love introducing folks to him and the narrow road to the interior that writing is.

**EFKR:** You once said that you write two hundred pages for every two you keep. Can you talk about your writing habits as they are now?

**RB:** I write tons and throw away or revise away most of it. Maybe I don't do 200 pages for every 2 any more—I think it MIGHT have gotten easier...Very, very recently I have been kind of nervously scribbling and actually producing quite a lot—tho' whether any of it will see the light of print or even any other human's eyes I do not know. But nervously producing lots of words.

**EFKR:** Once I wrote you that I'd seen your books in a small library in Philadelphia. You wrote back, "Is that so? Once they leave, they never write their poor mother." Is this still an appropriate analogy for you, in terms of texts you've created? Are they family or something else?

**RB:** I don't know what they are really. Though sometimes I think they are pathetic little love offerings, or miserable little begging letters or awkward things I am sending to someone(s) to say, Will you see me? Will you love me? Do you like me? Will you play with me? Can I make you love me? Fortunately, they are selfish and badly-behaved and do not return home to tell me or report so I don't have to deal with any consequences or have to know.

**EFKR:** What haven't you written yet?

**RB:** A book of Devotions. A book

of Shewings (Juliana of Norwich's word). A play whose title I will not tell you, but there are notes for it in my notebooks. A book that will forgive me. A book that will make all right. A book about an album for that 33.3 series.

*Fortunately, [my books] are selfish and badly-behaved and do not return home to tell me or report so I don't have to deal with any consequences or have to know.*

**EFKR:** What are you listening to as you write these days?

**RB:** I've had a recent obsession with Guided By Voices' *Do the Collapse*. Embarrassing, but a lot of these old inspiring 80s things like The Waterboys' *A Pagan Place* and Kate Bush's *Hounds of Love*. U2's *October*, even. Kevin Rowland and Dexys Midnight Runners *Too-Rye-Ay*.

**EFKR:** Miss Dog, from *The Dogs: A Modern Bestiary*, is an image that still haunts me on the dark days. Speaking of Miss Dog, what are your thoughts on failure?

**RB:** I still mostly fail and thank the cosmos every day for Samuel Beckett's 'fail again, fail better' thing. Miss Dog herself has not been much in evidence of late, but I do and have one loyal dog that remains, and a few weeks ago a whole fucking pack of them was visiting for a bit. Gruesome. But they moved on...

**EFKR:** In *American Romances*, a host of other voices, texts, movies, and belief systems have moved into conversation with you. This feels like different work than earlier books, which seemed more private, conversations between one or two. What do you think drives you toward this wider cultural conversation?

**RB:** A few years ago, I did a series of public conversations with my late friend Perry Lorenzo, who ran the Seattle Opera's education program. We talked together about opera (which he knew everything about) and other stuff I knew some about (feminism, pop culture, punk, literary history, alternative arts, etc.). We had a ball coming up with ideas and connections and making links. This spirit of exploration was/is similar, I hope, to the spirit that animates some of my work as a teacher. In some ways,

the 'essays' in *American Romances* are/were kind of logical outcomes of obsessions I've had for years—pop music, literary history, 'secret' histories, etc. Things I have talked about but not written about—until recently. I was really helped by a few suggestions from editors, like the girls at The Encyclopedia Project, for example, who, after having heard me talk about Forster at Naropa one summer asked me to write something about Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* for their book. So I did, which opened up, for me at least, a kind of fun, new form. "Aspects," which appeared in *The Last Time I Saw You* was kind of a beginning of the kind of form that would make up *American Romances*. Many of those pieces, in fact, were generated in response to a call from an editor or friend, to whom my thanks and genuflections.

**EFKR:** You've been teaching for a long time now, in quite an array of places. What feeds you in teaching? What feeds off you in teaching?

**RB:** I love the human interactions with colleagues and students. I love reading together, I love the research I do in order to present a book or author. I love wrestling with some student's work with them. I love being able to encourage them. What

drains me is how long it can take, when I realize (like right now...) how much time I spend on others' works and how little time I spend on my own...Alas...

**ER:** Looking forward to any writing world gigs/conferences/residencies/etc. in the coming year? How do you gauge the success of such events, personally speaking?

**RB:** I always love Naropa—love the conversations, the readings, the visits with friends. I look forward to seeing Casa Libre and seeing pals there [note: RB taught a Short Prose Forms workshop here in Tucson in May]. I look forward to having a private retreat myself sometime in the future. I am looking forward to the Poetics Convergence happening at University of Washington at Bothell, where I just got a job in the new MFA in Writing and Poetics program. The conference is three days of great stuff, Sept 27-29 with some fabulous people: Carla Harryman, Bhanu Kapil, Charles Bernstein, Rachel Blau DuPlessis...

**EFKR:** Five of your books have been translated into Japanese. Do you have any sense of why that particular culture/country responds especially well to your work?

**RB:** My work was introduced/released there as mainstream American lit, not ghetto-ized as Lesbian work, so, lo and behold, people read, reviewed and treated it as literature! My translator is very respected, so his interest and endorsement and advocacy made it happen. Plus the Japanese are just cool.

**EFKR:** In the essay, "Aspects of the Novel," from *The Last Time I Saw You*, you write about ". . .that which toward is reached." What is your *that which toward* these days?

**RB:** These days, let me see...uh... I am trying to see God. So...uh... faith? Not the kind of amorphous 'spirituality' I have swum around with...but actual honest-to-pete Religious Faith. I'll let you know when I work it all out. (Don't hold your breath).

**EFKR:** Is the water different in "honest-to-pete Religious Faith" from "amorphous spirituality" so far? Or, if we were to simply describe these two things as kinds of waters, could you describe these two different kinds of waters?

**RB:** Yes. Honest-to-pete is both thicker and clearer than water for me. Amorphous is kind of like Kool-Aid water to me.

**EFKR:** Do you have a particular image or phrase that is rattling around in your head right now? Personally, I keep seeing leaves shot off a small tree. This is a scene I'm to write. Anything in your hopper?



*Honest-to-pete is both thicker and clearer than water for me. Amorphous is kind of like Kool-Aid water to me.*

**RB:** "Lift thine eyes, oh, lift thine eyes to the mountains, whence cometh thy help." (Mendelssohn and the Psalms. . .) Also, "Lord have mercy." For all the obvious reasons.

**EFKR:** Have you had any significant religious dreams or visions in your life?

**RB:** Weird that you ask this just now because I had this incredible dream this past night-before-Palm-Sunday that was significant to me. I won't go into the details of it here, but when I woke up the next AM, I felt like I'd been given an OK, a go-ahead with whatever the thing is that comes after baptism, (*cont'd on p. 48*)

**REBECCA BROWN**

## Verdigris

Something was happening to her  
Would she subsume

Did what was in her  
come from in or out

Something was eating her  
she could not eat

It felt a mild biliousness at first. Not something to be concerned about then stronger.

Then saw it on her skin, as if a shade or tint or thickening, a spot or spot-like place or places or range of places, bruises or bruise-like marks made as if by pressure, empurpled but gray, verdigrisous.

Yet also not, also an other, a thing, perhaps, or not, or rather ...uh... uh.... uhhmmmm... some *else* around, outside, along and/or above the flesh, her flesh, as if an aura, though neither that, a longed-for-ness. Or rather, perhaps an idea about or of, an energy of some thing or not-thing somewhat like light, although not light, or not exactly light. Though that she longed for longingly and reminiscingly. Some thing or not, some absence of, some shadowiness, some cloud-like-ness, a grayingness toward as if a verdigrisic dark  
as if an outward sign.

Inside were rumblings, hollowings, noises, grindings, whirrs and cuts. Inside were mumbblings, fissures, missings-ness. Rigidities hardening unto and as if like marbling, although not beautiful, no, no, not beautiful but hard. A brittling-towardness that would then snap when pressured, burst when pressed, these pressurings occurring in the wrong ways in wrong spots and at very bad wrong times she seeped and burst that she could not predict.

Not that she'd want to.

Yet also a softening up like gray spots on a tomato. Squishy. Furred. As if a falling towards or into, an implosure, a sinkhole in her innards, a collapse or a deflating like a stiff thing in a bog.

Some time some thing would happen.

(Oh, would she last?)

The bones having thinned to paper snapped, the blood having dried blown out with a breath, the heart having tramped and been tramped underboot, the lungs having heaved and sucked and spat, the innards and noggin having gnawed.

She then would look she mess she was.

Would she then stay forever thus

forever wanting want?

Or would she look away again

or look to where he was?

Whatever would happen would happen when

the one to come would come.

Would she then let herself have what

she ever would and eat.



Separated by their dream of coming together beyond hesitancy.

Cold air hammers the space between them into hard distance.  
This chasm is the only gift one can offer another.

A shape to the longing we hope bridged.

The shape of one new thing that is two complete parts.

A mesh of the rifts & fissures, the cliffs to crash against.

This universe of marks we interpret in resonant glimpses.

A new day every day.

In the slow dusk she worries

which body was her

at her best      struggles as the dumb winter folds in on itself.

The body regenerates      blood & memory  
a swell of circulation

from within the hollows of what we let fall away.

What empty song      & all the light failing.

She says this body is equal parts bliss & obscenity.

The night descends like a cold stone held out  
in an open palm      memories contained

measured as the movement of birds  
from one season to the next.

Is it dark there? Yes, it is dark & it is cold. My body  
disappears in the dark.

She moves in patterns too broad to be recognized, wants  
to plant a single iris in the yard come Spring  
ecstatic

colors blossoming. Her thoughts are solitary



**CRAIG WATSON**

## Love in Vain

Flat birds cross the shooting gallery  
Representing a childhood vaguely inaccessible.  
“Aim” they taught us “just ahead of your target”  
And so give shape to what you want to deny.  
But all those tokens were spent in vain.

People always told me “a mind’s a metaphor”  
But perhaps there are whole thoughts that  
Don’t exist or imaginations drowning in  
Their own consciousness of consciousness.  
Is all my ignorance in vain?

When the train left the station  
It left two lights on behind.  
The blue light was my conscience.  
And the red light was my apology.

Repetition is another form of corruption  
So maps say “you are here” when  
They really mean “don’t leave me here alone.”  
Bliss impregnates every aperture  
With the grace to endure in vain.

**ZEKE HUDSON**

## Night Poem

we are primarily concerned with the  
bringing about of tiny trees  
birds dive feeling creatures among  
moonlight / midnight:  
a requiem *ad astra ad in-*  
*finitum* her dress swishes so softly  
honeydew Emmylou  
it is teatime now in the  
British Isles and from now on

## Things that are scary

There are several things that / seem  
universal in some way / such as: snakes are  
terrifying / animals cannot be trusted / I am  
afraid of heights / even looking up the face  
of a cliff gives me vertigo / ghosts are also  
scary but / part of me thinks that ghosts  
might be afraid of heights as well / I imagine  
being incorporeal feels like falling / imagine  
ghosts feel as though they are falling /  
nonstop / things that are too quiet /  
inanimate objects that move on their own /  
mirrors at midnight / some things are less  
universal and more tailored to the individual  
/ it's all about who you know / my friend  
cannot stand birds / even little dead ones

*Dear reader: if you read this poem aloud,  
please read it as 4:05 minutes of whistling.*

## MARK YOUNG

### Considered as . . .

*for Samuel R. Delany*

#### malachite

The markets were closed today. Sparrows entered the shops as he walked by. Her latest emails were all in Portuguese. He recalled the legend of the phoenix, the bird born from the ashes of its reborn previous selves. The dance recital had been exquisite. People did not just talk to themselves: they repeated their words loudly, as if distrustful of the ability of the listener to take everything in on a single hearing. The church on the horizon had spires that seemed more like minarets.

#### jasper

Cranes regulated the view from his eighth-floor window. She had her palm read. A tsunami alert has just been issued for the center of the continent. He neglected to ask what time the ship was leaving. There was little news about the latest border skirmishes. A light meal of crêpes dusted with icing sugar accompanied by fresh fruit. Everything appeared man-made. Edifice Rex. He wondered about the fuzzy logic of lifts. Paranoia.

#### tourmaline

The menu was displayed in the window, not as text but as a doll's house of plastic meal replicas. His legs hurt, the knee of one, the calf muscles of the other, alternating, depending on whether he was walking up or down hill. The air conditioning had been turned on whilst she was away from the room. Celestial Avenue ran off to the right. This particular aisle is redolent with varieties of cheese. Something approaching a steady state would eventually be reached. The room was full of poets.

#### garnet

A beggar outside the hotel, occupying the space he had been using to smoke cigarettes. Condensation on the windows. The word "deracination" hangs in the air, untethered. If challenged, she would call it irony. The heaters were turned off. He holds no sign, gives no performance, content to brandish a plastic glass, an oxymoron, in the direction of people passing by. *Commedia dell'Arte*. The literal is littoral when it's close to the shore.

#### onyx

Floor to ceiling. Puzzling, the lack of diacritical marks on the sidewalk. Discarded boxes of videotape. Half the words in this lexicon were unfamiliar. A posse of female sailors makes its way downstream. He sifted through the garbage, looking for clues to his identity. The other half he was too frightened to use. How would he find his way around? Unused but unplayable. Did Marcuse say that?

**opal**

“What is poetry?” asked the poet. The performance space was hexagonal but could only be approached from five of its sides. The beggar is absent. It was a rhetorical question, yet no-one knew the answer. Condensed novels. How many banks of oars are there on a phoneme? The moon was out. Genuflection or genuine reflection. She dedicated the next song to Otis Redding. There are always compromises. Lacunae.

**amethyst**

There were takeouts from a noir movie in the garbage. The cranes have names. Last night, the opening of the taxi door coincided with the arrival of a fast-riding cyclist. He decided to remember a new word every day. She could tell from the lighting. Perhaps it was two days ago. Capricious. Sometimes a small streetsweeping vehicle with lefthand drive would arrive to clean up after him. The degree of difficulty of the dive was 2.3. Epithalamium. Fugue state.

**topaz**

Light exits through the eyes. The beggar is the apex of a triangle, possibly equilateral, at least isosceles, whose other two points are Motorcycle City & the convenience store. Had he mentioned the trams, the public baths nearby? Ernst's elephant? The last typewriter factory in the world has shut its doors. He remembered the Alamo. Insouciance. Pietà.

**agate**

He sought information on tram times. An anchored cherry picker carries a crew whose task is to clean the CBD's Golden Arches until they outshine the surrounding minarets. Activist politics. Bicycles trailed down the other side of the street like scavenging ants. Sign. It reminded him of a sun dial. He had eaten there two nights ago. Carbon savings are offset by the need for a shower after the ride. Cosine. The dips in the curbing were for delivery trolleys. Carte blanche.

**chalcedony**

Armored cars. A rhinoceros on a skateboard as a signifier for the dangers of public transport. Small people. “We are all mendicants,” wrote Danilo Dolci. Tribal. He found himself taken out of context. Festival Hall. The law of double jeopardy is about to be overturned. Tribunal. Coincidentally he was very near the place where the crime had happened all those years ago. Noir. His legs still hurt. Silk azaleas. Snow. The square on the hypotenuse did not apply.

**NOAH FALCK**

## CELEBRITY DREAM POEM LINDSAY LOHAN

I walk a pathway shared by winter and summer.  
The good people of Manhattan curse my name

in song as my smile stops taxis and fills the fire-  
escapes with a glow that feels like the beginning of love.

Then my mother holds me. *You poor old soul*, she says  
and rubs my cheekbones with the glittery points of stars.

My eyes grow into bottles and float down  
the Hudson with every other wish.

## CELEBRITY DREAM POEM STEVE JOBS

Inside my private Idaho I think out loud  
in mixed fractions, German traffic patterns.

A language created from mistakes,  
mixing another version of science.

My mood ring overworked itself  
at the train station where I last saw you.

Tomorrow I will send pixilated snow  
as a digitized language of our love.

**C. S. CARRIER**

## PAIR BONDS

the steakknife is	a language vivisectionist
the yellow daffodil is	a sexual innuendo that clangs the tulips
the drunken bicyclist is	a six percent taxrate
the assassin is	an Adirondack chair in the backyard
the jealous Chihuahua is	a moistened ball of cornflakes
the Atlantic littered with whalesong is	a raven stitching the sky to the dormer
the rock in my mouth is	a pigshaped saltpig
the earthmover on the hill at dawn is	a bulldozer on the hill at dawn
the will of President Obama is	a thin curtain bled through with light
the tentcity above Port-au-Prince is	a 2400° kiln
the parsnip rotting in the basement is	a whaleroad sickened with thefts
the beloved's hand is	a candlewick between slides
the acrid billow of black smoke is	a knot in the dialogue
the ipod is	a prisoner of Hartford
the bellybuttonring is	a tsunami
the bearer of the flag is	a deciduous forest

**MEGAN BURNS**

(Where on an armchair would you place it?)

in the diminutive  
cornered where edge runs  
an ashcan tossed ankle to ankle  
teetering in the vellum  
couched in nods  
I ran a slipshod shanty  
glued sequins on maps  
and gazed starward in the unraveling  
of the 23rd century  
extinctually they flee  
that some time we did etch  
in blazing spheres: a fiery fired up tongue  
lashing bare-backed in the saddle  
all the long moan down

## CHRISTINE REILLY

### A Lesson in Loss and Finding

#### I. Hansel Tracks His iPhone

to the past, present, future, resplendent  
 as the phone tightens into different things, securing  
 itself in time. 2004: pink RAZR Motorola flip phone,  
 1988: a clunker the size of his head,  
 1952: a pretty woman's mouth. Hello,  
 she keeps saying, What's the story  
 Morning Glory? In 1833 it's a postcard,  
 vibrating too quickly, keeping his hands  
 warm. During the Arts and Crafts movement  
 it's a pillar, thick and gleaming. During the  
 Rococo Period it's nothing more  
 than a scar on Hansel's mouth. He's tired,  
 to say the least: less than one thousand  
 years old.

#### II. Hansel Tracks His iPhone into Brooklyn

alone, through with wandering, nauseous  
 in one neighborhood not his. He dreams  
 his sister holding a gallon of milk. It is good  
 for your bones. But you don't want  
 to stop growing, do you?  
 Do you  
 buddy?

#### III. Hansel Tracks His iPhone with Age

Children can't tell the difference  
 between old and big, a sign that Hansel's  
 entered adolescence. He reads books  
 about pads and hair on the body. The book explains  
 touching oneself with encyclopedic diction. Hansel looks  
 down, is frightened to see  
 his two thighs tensed  
 against each other. I'm too much  
 of myself, he thinks, thick with raucity—

#### IV. Hansel Tracks His iPhone to a Catharsis

machines with imploded veins this way  
 and that, like little weeping animals.

**V. Hansel Tracks His iPhone Back into Utero**

and she's still not there. He calls her, no reception.  
To leave a voicemail, please press star.

**Hansel Tracks His iPhone Back to the Family Plan**

downloads Where's My Sister? app. You don't have a sister,  
says Siri. She has been trained to censor abortion clinics,  
but knows the number of fairly reputable escort services.  
He takes a self-portrait, a vain slice of time, posts  
on Missed Connections. You'd look like me,  
he thinks, if I could remember the tops  
of your ears or smile of your hairline—

**VI. Hansel Tracks His iPhone To a World Trade Center Bound E-Train**

That's weird they still call it that, his friend comments,  
not a Native New Yorker.  
Why? asks Hansel, wondering  
how strong  
the Towers' reception could have  
been. They were there once. That means  
they're there.

**JACOB BENNETT**

## Postcard unto the effects of an exhaust

Have you ever felt a red dwarf gather in your hypothalamus, amassing there, radiating out, forced by its own grave immensity to maintain a perfect sphere / You can tell a lot by the color and luminousness of the thing / If you close your eyes you can capture the after-image / It is more afraid of you than you are of it, so look only at its edges and let your wits discern the composition of its fusion center / When you open your eyes again, all that remains is the after-thought of something you never guessed you already knew was hydrostatic equilibrium / There is the thrumming you feel between your ears / And also the pressure you hear behind the widening of your pupils / Different coming out than when it went in, it breathes like smoke, a portion of its brightness and clarity captive within, where a small dimness is surging vigor and circumference /

**DENNIS ETZEL, JR.**

*from Secret Wars of 1984*

The bombing begins in five minutes, says Ronald Reagan. The colorist colors the center with red and yellow. The desire that is stirred by language is located most interestingly within language itself—as a desire to say, a desire to create the subject by saying, and as a pervasive doubt very like jealousy that springs from the impossibility of satisfying these yearnings. The distinction between myth and history blurs. The election counts against my mother. The experience of feeling overwhelmed by undifferentiated material is like claustrophobia. The first battles have been fought.

## DAVID WANCZYK

### An Exercise in Red: Parallel Texts

Is it my colorblindness that gives red little meaning to me? I see it faintly, yes, but it occurs to me that I see everything faintly, that shades affect me only as if words. I wish I could dream in color, or hear red in some small synesthesia, the darker the maroon, the deeper the note, way below middle C, foreboding like blood. Red is the number five but no day of the week as green is both Friday and eight. Red is a letter, though no redletter-day. Red is S, anaphora, flash, never my favorite, never the underdog. But if I can dream you, red, hear you deeply, taste your element, and get my arms around you, then I can remember her as more than a stillframe flicker, a spritz of something or other. My memory is one sense at a time and I blame you, red, (or are you green?) the way you resist my hearing, my touch, warmth only by association.

This is an interrogative sentence positing a mild affliction. A line break. This is an admittance of a worldview which is not particularly literal. Color is a construction of language. This is a tone shift into a pleading for a richer subconscious life. N: A condition in which one type of stimulation evokes the sensation of another. . .Writer is embarrassed by this blood simile, though feels that a day of the week and a number are green. This is a joke about a cliché. This is anaphora. This is a slander of red as too trendy. This is another tone shift, unearned, in which writer, perhaps disingenuously, wishes to sense red in various ways. This is a confusing pronoun. "Her" is no one in particular. "Spritz" is too informal for the tone, but sums up the ineffectiveness of writer's memory. (This is a reminder of posited Colorblindness). This is an appositive ending, poetic swill. A Column

Break. My bible, The New American Edition, another appositive, a line break, my first car, a Mercury Topaz, thirtytwo squares of a checker board, passion, war, Ares, metaphor, Elizabeth Barret Browning, Gertrude Stein, a 1994 movie nominated for best director, a can of Barq's I've kept as a memento of something I can't remember that sounds like ginger. Writer is embarrassed by this simile of synesthesia. S. Flash. Monday is almost red. An ant, an ouch, an anaphora. Apples, onions, peppers, rum, eyes, hair, and noses. Dawns, ferns, planets, suns, devils, squares, and roses. That one shirt of hers that I can't seem to forget (because I wrote about it once) no matter how hard I try, no matter how many days go by. The red pen on an over-rhyming poem, green eyes, green backs (under red shirts). The red of a fire smells like memory lost, poetic she and the spritz of her.

**KIMBERLY ALIDIO**

## Language Revival

deep infiltration expect constant  
     violate for three miles  
         of un-heroic happening in  
             Cypress Creek Arm soft  
 stripping crossword idling unkind  
     outside musket or community  
         offering see my daughters  
             helmet French press wet  
 naps west language to let  
     chant rhetoric merrily messed  
         up in place just  
             a generation ago in  
 the jungle the beginning of  
     the sentence ends in  
         the same medicine and  
             alphabets afflicting anew  
 market a mouth swallowing  
     hold it in place a  
         long note vanishing point  
             B still living little  
 things collected clothes washers  
     danglers buying in burned  
         lovely ends language let  
             into the Good Book  
 to annotate a split  
     feet from land rectangular  
         holes punched through each  
             blue roof fur soften  
 arms guard whose or  
     how is yours random  
         like mine's closed for  
             business go see if  
 there's interest in reanimating  
     eighteen low-income units expected  
         after several hundred are  
             razed boring past the  
 exterior of nineteen trees  
     on the perimeter numbered  
         114 through 122 inanimate  
             like fingers not circling hips

**PATTIE MCCARTHY**

*from marybones*

Mary

was wearing the 'duration' silhouette with aplomb (regulation L-85 set skirt lengths at 17 inches about the floor). was careful to keep her lips closed during all the Paters & Aves. was only a local phenomenon & thus no one intervened. was jumping rope, or posing for a photo as though jumping rope, circa 1913. was instructed to testify as to what she did, not what she thought. was surprised to unearth fragments of old burial stones in her backyard (there is a shovel to the left). was inappropriately dressed for such an unearthing in pedal-pushers & an off-the-shoulder top. was Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or any name you please— it is not a matter of any importance. was sitting on the banks of a river a week or two ago in fine October weather, lost in thought. was poleaxed. was not working beyond the margins provided. was taking in her ink-stained hands my own hands stained with ink. was the inquisition you're in. was ready for a cluster feeding, was our lady of smooth delivery, carved in 1521.

[mary enters    alone]

Mary enters    alone  
 Mary exits    with others

a history of physicality

(an ordinary mother like  
    any other suckling  
    her child on her knees)

almost infinitely divisible  
       unlike a head or arm or finger or foot

in van Cleve's *Madonna & Child* c. 1525 she smiles almost  
 smiles almost laughs & he sleeps he is already sleeping he has already  
 fallen asleep nursing his ankles crossed & his arm thrown over her  
 breast like he's resting it on the open window of a sunny car  
 & she has beautiful fingers & he's just let go of her ring  
 finger & fallen asleep in his incomprehensible sheer swaddle

a number of sleep experts refer to this as a 'negative sleep association'

though one wishes it were otherwise something about his torso  
 his plump milkfed torso is reminiscent of his torso in the tortured  
 Kraków pietà the way it unnaturally bends above what one might  
 call the belly    Old English    of Geramanic origin  
    from a base meaning    *swell*    *be inflated*



[a stilleven      home-born]

a stilleven      home-born      first winter  
the act of reading

a stilleven      willing to suckle      a nursling  
enough to make a summer

she resembles herself postured  
horizontal      in partu  
the ox eating a veil in the manger

her belly hardened      first from below & she  
thought      that feels familiar  
the final wife  
birds pass overhead  
speak a word to each

in Romberg      the light source is hidden her gesture  
is missing is no longer a blessing  
(she was cupping the light in one direction)  
the newborn is not preternatural  
still      Brancusi's newborn [1] (1915) is still  
the most like you

where is my egg      & where did you come from

your smooth broad contented face  
I will orb you entire

cult of the virgin

she looks like  
 a Goya in that  
 wait she is a Goya

& the baby tightly  
 swaddled & handed  
 over by the midwives  
 a fat baby like  
 a turkey

if pietà is  
 a vesperbild is  
 an image for evening what  
 is the corresponding  
 image for morning

a fat baby swaddled with  
 the smell of sleep with her  
 froggy little mouth out  
 of which a murmuration  
 (silent oh moyle) this  
 is your sister  
 that is  
 the smell of her sleep is  
 swaddled up with her this

this image is part of a cycle of frescoes  
 this image is in the public domain  
 filed under  
 xmas clip art in error

have you  
 a daughter  
 (this is your sister)

**GENNA KOHLHARDT**

## A Letter from Susan Howe to Emily Dickinson

*You are of me & I of you, I cannot tell*

Breathe the space worded stitch.

Lean floorboard dirt layers of granite

Follow Sydney's deer.

The forest occupies the house in birds.

I wear all of my shoes at once.

The center is imagining. I imagine being

So many doors

The snow pushes the roof's head under. Pushes the fence the field.

I do not have the infinite to

My Things might outlast me.

Unfasten— the sky. Blue. White. It is light that may have died already.

The author is Desire to know. Desire is the trace of Eden.

You needle the quiet in— *so many thread.*

**SCOTT ABELS**

*from A STATE OF THE UNION SPEECH*

What nerve was touched  
in Nancy Reagan's not-for-profit  
beauty parlor? Another year  
without a raise. Finally,  
it's that kind of science  
that you have more control over.  
In the humility of  
you'll never know  
there is this argument for magic  
that will end with heaven  
and start with hell:  
everything  
won't open up  
like a flower, for  
your nice realization  
for your limitations  
I welcome your rise.

from A STATE OF THE UNION SPEECH

The same fire  
that illuminates your beans  
when the climate begins to change  
*maybe* it reflects

in the mouth of a metal lock  
and all you go without  
with an X on your hand from the bar  
in a wind that is contemporary to a speech

and this draft, sweetening your  
swagger, you  
lean in

all this milk and  
the baby cows  
are in the cooler.

**NICHOLAS GRIDER**

## Negotiation

If I should ever be captured, I want no negotiation—and if I should request negotiation from captivity they should consider that a sign of duress.

—Henry Kissinger

The plot thickens. The world waits while you capture just this one moment. Bare feet in the salvage yard. Slight inclines and discount sightlines. Posture collars. You wait, yearn, yelp. You want to go faster, you want to linger for a few more years. Lights out at noon and encrypted pillow talk. Animal when in a cage. The populace shudders to a halt, people watch the skies, the population calls out for population control. Last one out, late night. Please and thank you under the table. Venting, raiding, forgetting. Forgive whom for what. Your first name, your social skills, your panther tattoo. A little night music in a dark alley. A mental plaster cast. You start over, you say you start over, you say you're in it to win it, you say you only hunt for sport.

## Abstraction

When truth is nothing but the truth, it's unnatural, it's an abstraction that resembles nothing in the real world.

—Aldous Huxley

Going nowhere with a paddle. Maybe your tie is too tight. Even bothering to aim the gun takes too much effort. There's a lot of intelligence about this, enough tarp to cover the Impala, enough wasteland to keep you alarmed. You take twenty minutes out of every day to forgive people. You go to work leaning forward a little, you go to work in a Nixon mask. You knock testicles. You get a few more second chances before the giant hook comes out. Teeth are now whiter than they've ever been; threats mean more. We had to re-enact the violent crime to see how it was done. Collateral damage. The dawn is somewhere else. You straighten your tie, you straighten all the pictures in the room, you put on your gloves and check for dust, you try to think of something to say. Tomorrow gets taken over by another knot of thoughts. Worst case scenarios for the faint at heart.

**LAURA NEUMAN**

## Think Tank

Don't think, lather soap in all the right places. What are the right places, you ask, producing effect the way an action substituted for a shirt. How n. is too n. for you? While I don't think, you traffic. N. is to "choose" as *On them a figure doesn't exist but would maybe like to* is to A, B, or C? I pick succulents—the better to see you with. Does the world really need us that much? is a question in fetters. If I show up for the succulents, will you take care of the comma? is a question tying the knots. When you shrug, choice became an emotion without action or initiation. Are you up for being the description tonight or the comma? Who gets to tie up who?

## Two-fifty, Please

The fees keep going up. State poppies so bright, they could deactivate us. *Sbb*, you say, spitting cherry pits out the window, the ATM is trying to tell us. How much can you take, beautiful? We pack out the rest. Beautiful smells like coyote shit. *Blush you*. Did you wash all the next time off your hands? Does the ending have a sexual preference? How long till it doesn't? We arrive at a mountain closed for renovation. All the stuff to be decided is less than or equal to you not looking at flowers. Your kiss is the epigraph I want for my next tattoo: *If you can read this coming closer with each bite*. Mosquitoes, dragonflies and wasps leak into the car. Five percent of this story's figures keep not taking no for a landscape, *it's a problem, trying to see the eels in phosphorescence, express emotions using math*. We begin to understand that no words will be waiting for us. We are moonlight on khaki on pavement, refracted on skin shining in between streetlamps. We are outlines of bodies to be filled in later with air or water, or not. We eat not. We drive a borrowed transport. We fall in love with the forest service. The forest service would never *do* that. We identify with other planets, we take our porn with tea. We cross out in stop-animation each other as if from a list, love: night, eight, coast, cruise.

**KRISTI MAXWELL***from Poems for Friends and Lovers*

I hold on to a number as if it means something. That it means something beyond what other numbers tend to mean: cost-prohibitive, cost-prohibitive, cost-prohibitive. Is this sentence a question? Is the language of cruelty appropriate in this instance? Missing words—I write my students. Into existence? No. I didn't think I had a teaching poem in me. Are you ever surprised by what is in you? I mean like really inside. What's excrete-able and all.

As if something you do can keep it from grabbing hold of you. If it wants to grab hold, it will. Does it make a difference if the earliest it is poetry or a supernatural being—force? I was scared for a long time, then I wasn't. How can I comfort you? Is language a pacifier we keep stuffing in our mouths to quiet ourselves? Seems antithetical, so probably close to a truth. Beth's death scene in the movie version of *Little Women* kind of pisses me off—the righteous death. My friend is dying. My partner said, cruelly, you're the first person to realize someone said something, and I wrote it down on my hand, pretending it an impossible compliment. The body is a site of discipline, as we know from Foucault and experience. The textual body, too. See grammar. See other forms of standardization. I wrote it down, ink-subdued. I subdued myself with ink—or undid what was done to me, made do. Took on *do* like a client and put myself to work. Did it work? you might ask, as my mouth forms a boat to pick you up.

## CHRIS MCCREARY

## The Great American Songbook : Radio Free Disney

*"Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave  
A paradise for a sect..."*

*John Keats, "Ode to Hyperion"*

Raise with me the age-old debate of Beatles versus Stones & I see nothing but animatronic death masks strutting atop creaking, rickety legs.

Speak to me of Beatles versus Elvis & I taste stale air.

Say to me Beatles versus Monkees, however, & I just might prick up my ears.

Pop psychologist Malcolm Gladwell will tell you that The Beatles represent the "10,000 hour rule," honing their craft bashing out "Long Tall Sally" in Hamburg beer halls & go-go bars.

Initial screen tests will show you that The Monkees were always screwing with you.

It is received wisdom that The Beatles are the greatest rock band in history & that The Monkees began as a no-talent novelty act.

But then again, it has been said that children intuitively understand Gertrude Stein & love *Tender Buttons*.

In this way, the untainted purity of the childlike mind is put forth as unassailable truth.

Which is odd considering most people who say this are not Romantic but Post-Avant.

But what if my child, in a moment of Romantic authenticity, prefers The Monkees to The Beatles?

What if he likes *The Birds*, *The Bees*, & *The Monkees* more than *Everybody's Autobiography*?

Perhaps this is comparing apples to asparagus, but if Stein is the mother of us all, then I say that some of us are adopted.

While the Beatles sought inspiration from the Maharishi, The Monkees bought songs from a Brill Building wunderkind named Neil Diamond. While The Beatles were venerated for "turning on" with Bob Dylan, The Monkees were mocked—or maybe honored?—by the Sex Pistols' snide cover of "Stepping Stone."

A rose, then, is a stone is a vinyl 45 thrown from one pre-fab glass house into another.

Perhaps The Monkees were embarrassed for the Pistols, but no more embarrassed than I feel for *Melody Maker's* reviewer of John Lennon & Yoko Ono's "Wedding Album," who mistook the blank half of the album's promo copy for a groundbreaking experimental soundscape.

Or, for that matter, for Sid Vicious, his bass playing buried deep in the mix of *Never Mind the Bullocks*, his early death deemed Romantic because it validated his authenticity.

Which is less Romantic: Sid Vicious overdosing in his supposed prime, or a gnarled, arthritic Bob Dylan shilling alongside Victoria's Secret models?

"Try imagining a place that's always safe & warm," Bob Dylan once sang in "Shelter from the Storm," & Axl Rose did just that some 20 years later in "Sweet Child o' Mine," his girlfriend's hair harkening him back to the simpler comforts of childhood.

& while we Post-Steinian Avantists were training to tut-tut Dylan's presumptions of agency or scoff at a concept as outmoded as beauty, Rose never hid behind the bulletproof glass of literary theory, & sometimes during a grad-school seminar on Narratology I would imagine him eloping with a young Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin fresh from her stint on The New Mickey Mouse Club.

"I'm not that innocent," she might then sing in her breakthrough single, leaving us to ask what has become of Disney's childlike aura. It has grown old enough, we now know, to bring sexy back, to become the panty flash of yet another washed-up 20-something whose fresh-scrubbed face once adorned backpacks, baseball caps, charm bracelets, & pencil cases.

Consider Mary Shelley, begat by social philosopher William Godwin & trailblazing feminist Mary Wollstonecraft.

Then consider Miley Cyrus, begat by the man who gave us "Achy Breaky Heart."

Perhaps Stein can be seen as the stepping stone between the two.

Perhaps the three would make a fine Post-Avant theater troupe.

"The world's a stage," Oscar Wilde once quipped, "but the play is badly cast."

British playwright Joe Orton may have been dubbed "the working-class Wilde" decades later, but "Up Against It," the film script he was commissioned to write for The Beatles, was rejected without comment & his death at the hands of his jealous lover is not generally deemed Romantic.

Is it worth noting that Gary Oldman played both Vicious & Orton on film?

Or worth wondering: if Wilde were alive today, would he prefer *iCarly* or *The Arvades Project*?

Perhaps he would have appreciated Axl's alleged plan, after firing his original band members, to rerecord his classic album *Appetite For Destruction* with an all-new lineup. Perhaps next he hoped to revise the original version of *Frankenstein* before turning to a drastic rewrite of William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* once to return to it again 45 years later, still unsatisfied.

Put another way, if Axl Rose can rerecord *Appetite*, then I say Mylie Cyrus can rewrite *The Making of Americans* or better yet, "The Gradual Making of *The Making of Americans*."

Within the chorus of "Paradise City," Rose has already embedded a lost couplet from John Keats's "Ode to Hyperion." On some soundstage south of Hollywood, he now appears in the role of Gary Oldman opposite Mylie Cyrus as Mary Shelley. In an extended cameo, Gertrude Stein will be playing us all.

**JENNIFER PHELPS**

*from A Tao Poem*

go beyond the obstruction

to the whirl

accommodate yourself

to water

to this phonic realm of matter

where course nature

rhythms

into melting snow

into the invisible

made physical

into a body

a passage

a natural mechanism

---

how do you manage all those legs you have

one centipede asks another

(cont'd from p. 9) that Baptism marks the beginning of...I'm pretty sure I was baptized as a baby but obviously don't remember it (or where...) but this baptism dream was more about the meaning of baptism in my life now. "Visions" is another weird idea. I don't think I have ever had a psychotic break, never seen something that truly wasn't there,

*The stranglehold that realism has had on American mainstream fiction may be loosening—and it's about time. We are living in an apocalyptic age . . . We need to think about it and live with the kinds of world-warps it shows.*

but I have certainly had experiences of seeing things in an interior way like Julian of Norwich and some of those other people talk about. Images or scenes I don't understand or know where they come from but

know they mean something for me. Some of my writing has come from trying to transcribe and understand some of these images/scenes/narratives.

**EFKR:** This is a question stolen from Bill Moyers: If you were God, would you do away with religion?

**RB:** Hell no. I'd make it mandatory. I think we mortals need religion to help us consider things bigger and outside of us. So we don't stay stuck

in the crap of material life. So we don't club each other to death. So we strive towards beauty. But thank God I am not God. I would be really dismissive of people I didn't like and really legalistic and unforgiving. It's

much, much better that God is God. People who want to be God—you gotta watch out for them. People who think they are telling you what God thinks and what God wants you to do, you really, REALLY gotta watch out for them.

**EFKR:** Do you feel that there is a similarity in function between your own writing or contemporary writing and age-old myth or fairytale or saint's tale?

**RB:** I love those old saints' stories and I love the writing of many Christian mystics (Julian, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, the guy who wrote *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Meister Eckhart, Hildegard, Mechtild). There are similarities between, a lineage from, this non-realist tradition and a lot of the work I read—Kafka, Hawthorne, the New Gothic. The stranglehold that realism has had on American mainstream fiction may be loosening—and it's about time. We



are living in an apocalyptic age; no wonder this non-realist stuff is coming back. We need to think about it and live with the kinds of world-warps it shows.

**EFKR:** Why do you think you are drawn to the mythology of Catholic saints as opposed to, say, Duwamish tribal or Japanese mythologies?

**RB:** Dude, I'm white! I'm a white Euro-American and those are my genetic and cultural roots. The Christianity of Europe, the Catholicism of the Irish—my language comes from there, my mannerisms, my prejudices, my obsessions. So, genetic, partly. But also I cultivate it. I love the drama of Christianity—the whole humility, rejection, suffering, death and Resurrection story. I love the personal engagement of the story; I mean it's called *The Passion*, isn't it? I'm drawn to passion and to the elemental physicality of it—the rituals with water, oil, bread, wine. The rituals of standing, kneeling, sitting, the laying on of hands, the bending of the head in prayer, the baptism by water, making the sign of the cross, the Sacraments as signs of divine presence.

**EFKR:** Karen Armstrong writes, "Myth is about the unknown; it is about that for which initially we have no words. Myth therefore looks into the heart of a great silence." Can you think of a specific time when myth, or story making, helped you look into a "heart of great silence"?

**RB:** I have very, very, very often felt I've just been sitting around with the silence of God. Many times in my life, I have been like, "Ok, God, effing talk to me already!!! Please say something!!!" Now more often I'm like, "OK, let's just sit here and be silent (while maybe petting the cat, cf. question/answer #1) and let that be enough." The story of someone descending into hell and then coming back again, that story really, really gets me. It is a necessary story for me to hear and know and remind myself of.

**EFKR:** Loss figures prominently in your work, lost arm, lost loves, lost parents, lost people. Does the writing save you from the pain of the loss?

**RB:** I don't think writing saves me from loss or pain, but it does make a container to put pain or loss in. Or by making something out of loss I feel, for me at least, loss has not been JUST loss, but also loss that has led to something—acceptance? resolution? gratitude?

Life is about loss. Everything material we lose. And a lot of other stuff too. Life is about learning how to live with loss. About knowing and having love despite and through and after loss.

**EFKR:** When you prepare to write a book, do the books feel like they come from you, or do they feel "given" to you?

**RB:** I don't know that I have ever "prepared" to write a book. "Yeah, I am working on a book (maybe...)" Because for the past couple of years I have been hacking away on some writing, bits and pieces of things that took some kind of shape, pieces of which I was able to read at events and then look at and say/see, "Oh, these things go together...I am working on a body of things that are sorta kinda...working I guess..." Writing a book feels more like something I stumble into. Like I've been hacking around in a jungle scraping my knees and getting lost and dehydrated and almost eviscerating myself with my own machete when at some point I realize I have been making a path. I look back and I see there is a sorta path behind me and it has a direction and maybe if I keep hacking forward I will find somewhere I was going without my knowing...A lot of each book is written before I realize it might be a book. Like now in the past 6 months or so, I have been able to say to folks, about... X..."

...Of course as soon as I write this to you, I feel I am being premature...Maybe I'm not working on a book. Maybe I'm just flaffing...Maybe I need to get back to work on it right now. **ES**



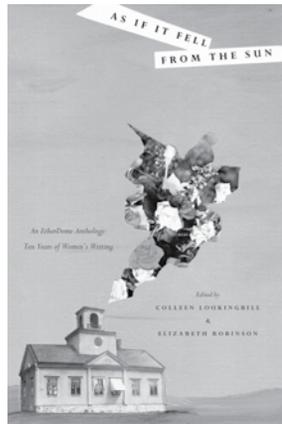
## IN REVIEW

### AS IF IT FELL FROM THE SUN

edited by Colleen Lookingbill and Elizabeth Robinson  
 EtherDome 2012  
 ISBN-13: 978-1-467514-61-3

Reviewed by Travis Cebula

Summer of 2012 heralded the arrival of *As if it Fell from the Sun*, an anthology of poets published by EtherDome press throughout its twelve year history, and edited by the press' founders, Colleen Lookingbill and Elizabeth Robinson. EtherDome Press publishes chapbooks by women authors in the first stages of their careers, each at a point where she has yet to have a book published. The retrospective consists of 225 pages of poetry distilled from the work of every EtherDome author to date, including such names as Caroline Crumpacker, Kate Greenstreet, Anne Heide, Faith Barrett, Stacy Szymaszek, and Sarah Suzor, just to name a few. All told, twenty-one separate authors grace these pages with their poems.



One natural response to *As if it Fell from the Sun* is the joy of discovery, as alloyed by equal parts admiration and stunned disbelief at the sheer range and quality of poetry embraced by the EtherDome project. The book is full to the brim with spectacular discoveries. And perhaps this review should begin and end with that joy, as any subsequent elaboration will, most likely, only serve to dilute a simple truth; and also because an attempt at a comprehensive review of this book would easily require as many pages as the book itself encompasses.

Therefore, one must apply a bit of discretion. That said, if one were to pick a proverbial vein to mine more deeply, then the plurality of contemporary female voices is an aspect that deserves some attention. In the introduction, Colleen Lookingbill states, "...it was done—we agreed—we would have a press devoted to chapbooks, limited to women authors who had not yet published a book or chapbook. And we characteristically jumped in with both feet, fueled by good intentions..." Clearly, this statement covers a lot of ground. But, as she says, it was done.

The work that she and Elizabeth Robinson have "done" over a twelve-year-span in terms of unearthing, nurturing, and sharing a survey of women's poetry is awe-inspiring, although they would be the first ones to admit that it is far from comprehensive. Even so, there is more than enough material here for a few distinct patterns to emerge from what Elizabeth Robinson refers to as "a lively, if occasionally dissonant, clatter." My initial impression is that liveliness got the poems through the door, and that any tendencies toward dissonance are more a by-product of an editorial bias towards liveliness, and certainly nothing to be criticized. Despite that, the book is full of common themes; notably those of body, identity, and loss. Within the collection, a deep awareness of the body (or embodiment) provides space for a sense of identity to grow. A sense of identity, in turn, and in particular a nurturing identity, protects a subject against loss. The act of care-giving proves a balm for the caregiver. So we push back against the tide of loss by encouraging growth, and life—so in life, and so in the publishing world.

Of the three pieces, identity is the most slippery to keep a hold on, both as a poet and as a reader. Women have made this particular clatter. *As if it Fell from the Sun* emphasizes that the poems it offers are not just artifacts, but are rather artifacts made by women, and when these individual poems are placed in the context of a larger project that is, by its own admission, gender-specific, its dissonance of identity diverges into a handful of distinct approaches, each emblematic of a trend in recent books and literary journals (and not exclusive to women authors, either): first, there are cases where poems clearly claim a gender designation through the use of third person with gendered proper nouns and gendered pronouns within a more or less defined narrative; second, there are cases where poems are more ambiguous and use first person point of view, but tend toward a gendered status—one direction or the other— through the use of traditional normative gender roles (and often play with the reader's assumptions based on those roles); and third, there are poems wherein gender is completely at question—namely, in the absence of authorial attribution the poem would be apparently genderless.

The book opens with an example of the first mode, with Merle Bachman interweaving bits of feminine narrative:

A gown burns

it must, her flesh  
 incandescent  
 on a darkened deck

imagine a body designed  
for love, the smoke of it

a sacrifice to keep us content

She paints the body with clear strokes, and also clearly defines its identity as a nurturing agent, simultaneously martyring the subject and shielding her from grief. Bachman plies the poet's trade with skill, making clear that the gender divide may at times be simple to see, but that sharp divides have sharper edges. The price to be paid for beauty, comfort, and femininity is steep. In years past, critics have leveled valid complaints against stereotypes of feminine nurturing and martyrdom (often in children's books such as Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*). Here the feminine character pays everything for the collective, for "us." Bachman's are not exclusively words normally applied to celebration or prescription—a dress burns with someone still inside it. On the other hand, the author's return to this trope points to a fundamental desire in human beings for a mother, as evidenced by such word choices as "must," "designed," "love," and "content." At least in some way, the price of care is worth paying.

Contrast this with an example of the second mode, "Fontanelle," by Susanne Dyckman, wherein the price of caring is steep, indeed. Here the speaker remains genderless, but appears feminine because of a proximity to the qualities described in Bachman's poem above:

I handed back the baby  
but no one knew  
I kept the small, soft  
back of its head  
in my pocket  
for a souvenir,  
the space waiting  
to harden.  
I kept that  
and nobody saw,  
except maybe

the baby  
staring coldly.

The baby has died, but the nurturing goes on—and Dyckman reinvokes a sense of inevitability. This story could have gone no other way. The narrator could not have done other than to carry these memories. However, the sense of identity has become muddled. Is the subject a mother if there is no child to care for? How can one nurture the dead? Dyckman hints at the inherent futility of nurturing the past.

Devoid of more history, unmoored memories are genderless. We do not know whether the baby was a boy or a girl—implying that such distinctions arise from behaviors and desires rather than math or science. Science leaves us holding a skull, neither male nor female, nor even clearly alive or dead, as in Sarah Suzor's "Continuity:"

The human embodiment  
of physical perfection  
exists is a profile measuring  
eighty-seven degrees  
from crown to brow.

These are the remains of what we are allowed to reliably claim about humans after criticism has laid the rest bare: measurements and phenomena. Unreliably, at least we have been allowed to hold onto words as tools with which to reach out to one another, to perpetuate a spirit of nurturing, as "she" becomes "I" becomes "it" becomes "you":

Do you ever hear that song in  
unexpected places, like the grocery  
store,  
or a shopping mall?

Do you ever play it for yourself  
just because you want to feel  
something?  
Feel sad, maybe?

Really, though,  
what are some of the very first

thoughts  
that run through your mind  
when you look in the mirror?

By this point, identity has been lost entirely, and we are left with nothing but questions and a mirror. Without identity, we are defenseless against loss.

Life imitates art imitates life, so the sayings go, more or less, and this anthology represents a fascinating look into circular existence. The human condition is currently (perpetually?) embroiled in a state of confusion, assertion, ambivalence, and constant questioning of gender. What are men? What are women? Is one subsuming the other? Who participates in one, the other, both or neither? In what way? Why, why, why? What about now, now, now? How do we contend with the loss of now? And if the author is truly dead, can a poem have an identity? A gender?

From beneath all of that we exhume one of the deepest foundations of the postmodern dilemma: who the hell am I? Historically, that subject has fallen comfortably within the poet's purview rather than the reader's—it is, by definition, subjective. That trend has been changing. If there is no author of a work, no singular voice, though—then the answer must be found elsewhere if it is to be found at all. In this book, if not the rest of the literary world, *the* author may be dead, but *authors* and *readers* live on. Perhaps the time has come to share the burden of human understanding cooperatively, lessening the load of fostering new life by spreading the effort among a group. Thus, this collection, with its chorus, may not give succinct answers to singular questions. But it does serve up some much-needed empathy. *As if It Fell from the Sun's* widening gaze offers tantalizing clues to anyone curious enough to ask something bigger, such as, "who the hell are *we*?" **FS**

## REVIEWS

### *Eephus*

Kevin Varrone

Little Red Leaves Textile Series (2012)

Baseball is a game of weight and balance. Avoirdupois. Of wait and ballast. It is a mythology of moments measured, of averages tipped by the feathery forces of chance into the scales of historical proportion, where greatness equates to failure 7 times out of 10. And so it is no surprise that the parallels to poetry have been apparent ever since, and perhaps before, mighty Casey stepped up to the plate. For those of you keeping score at home, Kevin Varrone's *Eephus* falls, as if from the sky, squarely into that elusive 30-percent success rate. This is a book that—like Ted Williams when faced with the eponymous pitch in the 1946 All Star game—connects, makes contact...that gathers up entire histories in its illegal swing and launches them soaringly



into the starry record of the night. Hold on.

### *Black-Eyed Heifer*

Shelly Taylor

Tarpaulin Sky (2010)

When it comes to writing dialect, there is a slippery thin line between sincerity and stereotype, between accuracy of depiction and caricature of expressionism. In a culture that consistently devalues regional identity in favor of uniformly commercialized newscast individuality, it is all too easy to lose sight of the fact that we are, at root, a nation of geographical transplants through which every wind moves differently. *Black-Eyed Heifer* by Shelly Taylor is the kind of book that acknowledges those essential differences (and necessarily inherent similarities) with matter of fact invocation, allowing them to move with ease between stanzas, landscapes and other narrative vessels. It carries within its pages a voice cut from the sort of well-worn cloth that's so familiar and comfortable you forget more than



poetry by Frank Sherlock

paintings by Nicole Donnelly

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once (and for more than a moment) that you are wearing someone else's clothes.

### *Hurrah's Nest*

Arisa White

Virtual Artists Collective (2012)

Poetry is a really big place. That's a fact too easy to forget if you don't take a walk outside your neighborhood every once in a while. *Hurrah's Nest*, the debut collection from Arisa White, holds out a poetry of persona and place beyond the quick simplifications of geography, in which the locus of authorship spins on the pivoted lens of repeatedly destabilized relation. Where family is both locus and duration and "No choice to pretend we are not home; / it no longer needs the permission of a fisheye." In this way memory simultaneously betrays and is ingrained by the shifting undercurrents of an otherness identity's tidal pull, revealing the question to which there is but one correct answer: yes.

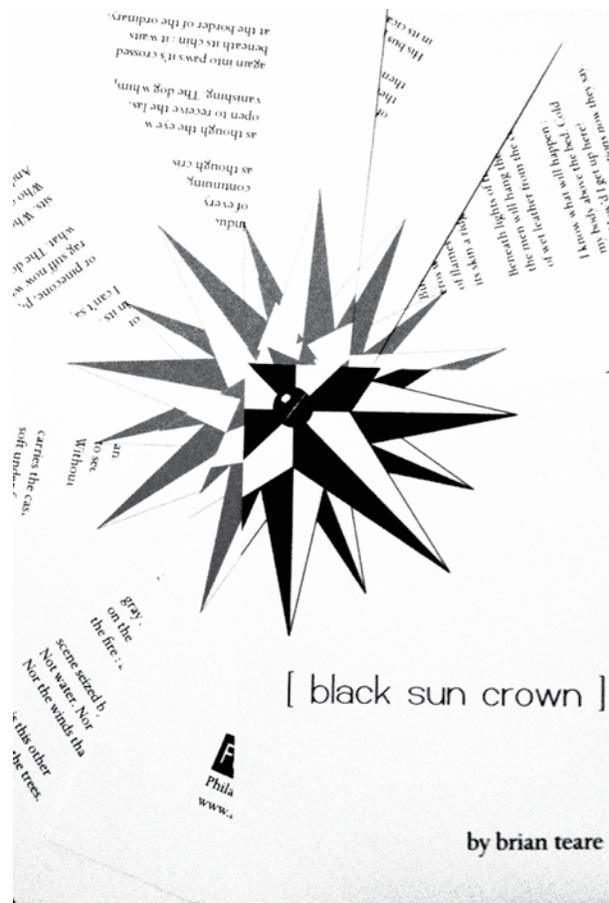


### *Cutting Time with a Knife*

Michael Leong

Black Square Editions (2012)

The alchemists got a bad rap. As this particular history's undisputed victors, modern empirical science's thinly veiled contempt has produced a successful and longstanding smear campaign that, for centuries, left most of us with the impression that alchemy was nothing but snake oil mysticism disguised as ignorant fact. Michael Leong, for one, knows better than that. While it may not be possible to turn base metals into gold, in *Cutting Time with a Knife*, Leong reminds us that the lost art of transmutation is alive and well. Indeed, he seems to insist, it is the very process upon which language feeds. Using Science's own sacred cosmology (the periodic table of elements) as his vessel, the poet proceeds to enact a transformative magic upon each square, merging them one by one with his own theoretical body. Iron into irony, oxygen into air guitars, uranium into anus...rebuilding the world one myth at a time from the molecular level on up. **FS**



[ *black sun crown* ] by Brian Teare is a series of fourteen sonnets woven together with a haunting elegance and deceptively subtle complexity. It is printed in a limited edition of 100 on recycled 110# cover stock and bound with a black aluminum Chicago screw post.

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## BIOS

Scott Abels currently lives and teaches in Honolulu, where he edits the online journal of poetry *Country Music*. His work can be found (or is forthcoming) in *Forklift, Ohio, DLAGRAM, H\_NGM\_N, Sink Review, Tinfish, Best New Poets, EOAGH, interruption, Anti-, RealPoetik, Sixth Finch*, and others. He is the author of *Rambo Goes to Idaho* (BlazeVOX, 2011) and *Nebraska Fantastic* (Beard of Bees, 2012).

Kimberly Alidio lives in Austin, teaches history, and dramaturges for the Generic Ensemble Company. She has a doctorate from the University of Michigan, a Zora Neale Hurston Scholarship, and a Pushcart Prize nomination. Her chapbook, *Solitude Being Alien*, is forthcoming from Dancing Girl Press.

Jacob Bennett lives in West Philadelphia, where the trees are. He publishes poetry reviews at *Phantom Limb* and teaches writing and literature at La Salle University. Most recently, he has published poems with *APLARY, Certain Circuits* (the Pushcart Prize-nominated “Postcard unto a new house feeling”), *Philadelphia Stories*, and *Unlikely Stories*. A chapbook of poems, *Wysibickien [sic]*, is due from Furniture Press in 2013.

Rebecca Brown is the author of twelve books of prose including *American Romances, The Gifts of the Body, Annie Oakley's Girl, The Last Time I Saw You* and *The Dogs: A Modern Bestiary*. Her play “The Toaster,” commissioned by New City Theater, premiered at On the Boards. Her installation GOD MOTHER COUNTRY AND ROCK & ROLL is on display at the Frye Art Museum in Seattle through January 2102. She wrote libretto for “The Onion Twins,” a dance opera produced by Better Biscuit Dance Company. An adaptation of *The Terrible Girls* was presented by About Face Theater (Chicago). Her altered books have been exhibited in the USA and Canada. Her work has been translated into Japanese, German, Italian, etc. She has read from her work and lectured in Tokyo, London, Berlin, Rome, New York and elsewhere.

She teaches at MFA programs in writing at Goddard College in Vermont and the University of Washington at Bothell. She lives with her spouse in Seattle in a house with a white picket fence.

Megan Burns edits the poetry magazine, *Solid Quarter* (solidquarter.blogspot.com). She has been most recently published in *Jacket Magazine, Callaloo, New Laurel Review, Trickhouse*, and the Big Bridge New Orleans anthology. Her poetry and prose reviews have been published in *Tarpaulin Sky, Gently Read Lit, Big Bridge, and Rain Taxi*. Her book, *Memorial + Sight Lines*, was published in 2008 by Lavender Ink. She lives in New Orleans where she and her husband, poet Dave Brinks, run the weekly 17 Poets! Literary and Performance Series (www.17poets.com) and Trembling Pillow Press (www.tremblingpillowpress.com).

C. S. Carrier is the author of *Mantle* (forthcoming, H\_NGM\_N BKS 2013) & *After Dayton* (Four Way Books 2008). He has an MFA from the Program for Poets & Writers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He lives in Clarksville, AR & Lafayette, LA, where he is pursuing a PhD in English at the University of Louisiana Lafayette.

Travis Cebula currently writes, edits, and teaches creative writing in Maryland. He graduated from the MFA program at Naropa University in 2009—the same year he founded Shadow Mountain Press. His poetry, stories, essays, reviews, and photography have appeared internationally in various print and online journals. He is the author of five chapbooks and two full-length collections of poetry, *Under the Sky They Lit Cities* and *Ithaca*, the latter of which is available now from BlazeVOX Books. In 2011, Western Michigan University awarded him the Pavel Srut Fellowship for Poetry.

Dennis Etzel, Jr. lives with his wife and two sons in Topeka, Kansas where he teaches at Washburn University. He has an MFA from The University of Kansas. Other poems from *My Secret Wars of 1984* have appeared or are forthcoming in *BlazeVOX, 3:AM, DLAGRAM*, and *Flint Hills Review*.

Noah Falck is the author of *Snowmen*

*Losing Weight*, (BatCat Press 2012). His work has appeared in *Greensboro Review, H\_NGM\_N, Smartish Pace, Kenyon Review*, and *Boston Review*, among others. He works as Education Director at Just Buffalo Literary Center. Visit him online at noahfalck.org.

Nicholas Grider is an artist and writer whose work has recently appeared in or is forthcoming from *Conjunctions, Caketrain, Bad Robot*, and *Heavy Feather Review*.

Zeke Hudson is getting his MFA from Boise State University. Some of his non-literary pursuits include video games, hugs, and various forms of sport, including (but not limited to) beer pong and fine dining. His chapbook *Blue Lake* is available at Thrush Press.

Genna Kohlhardt grew up in Colorado and received her MFA from Boise State University in Idaho, where she currently lives and teaches. She edits *Goodmorning Menagerie* chapbook press and you can find her previous work in *H\_NGM\_N* and *Strange Machine*.

Kristi Maxwell lives and writes in Knoxville, Tennessee. She is the author of *Realm Sixty-four, Hush Sessions*, and *Re-*.

Pattie McCarthy is the author of *bk of (b)rs, Verso, Table Alphabetical of Hard Words*, and *Marybones* (forthcoming, December 2012), all from Apogee Press. Her chapbook, *Le&O*, was published last year by Little Red Leaves. Another chapbook, *scenes from the lives of my parents*, is forthcoming in 2013 from Bloof Books. A 2011 Pew Fellow in the Arts, she teaches literature and creative writing at Temple University.

Chris McCreary's latest chapbook is *Elseworlds* (Cy Gist Press, 2012), and his most recent full-length collection is *Undone: A Fakebook* (Furniture Press, 2010).

Laura Neuman's poems have appeared in *The Brooklyn Rail, Tinge* and *OmniVerse*. She/xe has collaborated and performed with dancers from The Workshop for Potential Movement (www.potentiallymoving.org). Laura holds an MFA in Writing from Bard College Milton Avery School of the Arts, and an M.A. in Poetry from Temple

University. She recently moved to Seattle.

Jennifer Phelps is a poet, writer and professional editor in the Denver area. Recent publications include an essay in the anthology *Fearless Nest: Our Children as our Greatest Teachers* and a book review in Naropa University's literary journal *Bombay Gin*. She leads workshops on writing and dreams and lectures on mysticpoetics for Jungian groups. She is currently co-editing the anthology, *Quo Anima: spirituality and innovation in contemporary women poets* and she moderated a panel on this at the 2012 Chicago AWP conference.

Bern Porter was born on Valentine's Day, 1911, in Porter Settlement, Houlton, Maine. In 1922 he invented mail art. In 1935 he invented TV. In 1942 he invented Henry Miller. In 1945 he invented the atom bomb. In 1950 he invented found poetry. In 1958 he invented Ray Johnson. In 1959 he invented artist's books. In 1960 he invented Dick Higgins. In 1961 he invented the Wastemaker. In 1965 he invented the Saturn moon rocket. In 1966 he invented 468B Thy Future. In 1971 he invented Something Else Press. In 1975 he reinvented Wilhelm Reich's orgone energy. In 1980 he invented The Eternal Poetry Festival with Mark Melnicove. In 1992 he invented Roger Jackson and a one-night stand with Anais Nin. In 2004 he invented his death. In 2012 he invented his resurrection.

Nate Pritts is the author of five books of poetry, most recently *Sweet Nothing*, as well as a new chapbook, *No Memorial*, from THRUSH. He is the founder & principal editor of *H\_NGM\_N*, an online journal & small press. Find him online at [www.natepritts.com](http://www.natepritts.com).

Christine Reilly has been published in over 40 journals. She teaches writing to people with terminal illnesses and lives in New York.

Elizabeth Frankie Rollins' short story collection, *The Sin Eater and Other Stories*, is forthcoming from Queen's Ferry Press, February 2013. She has published work in *Conjunctions*, *Drunken Boat*, *Bellevue Review*, *Trickhouse*, and *The New England Review*, among others. She has received a NJ Prose Fellowship and a Pushcart Special Mention. Frankie lives in Tucson, AZ, where she teaches writing, and sits on the board of the arts and letters non-profit, Casa Libre en la Solana. [www.madamekaramazov.com](http://www.madamekaramazov.com).

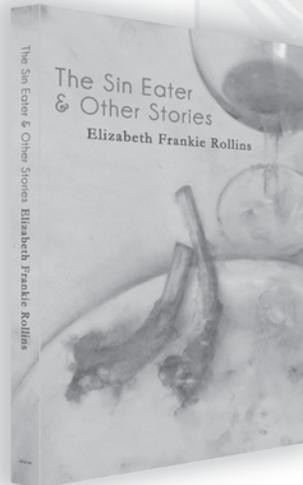
David Wanczyk teaches in Ohio and his work has been published in *Alimentum*, *theawl*, *Brevity*, *Mental Floss*, *Quarter After Eight*, and *Splitsider*, among others.

Craig Watson is the author of *Sleepwalking With Orpheus* (Shearsman, 2011), *Secret Histories* (Burning Deck, 2007), and *True News* (Instance Press, 2002) and nine other books. He lives on an island at the mouth of Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island.

Mark Young has been publishing poetry for over fifty years. His work has been widely anthologized, and his essays & poetry translated into a number of languages. He is the author of more than twenty books, primarily poetry but also including speculative fiction & art history. He is the editor of the ezine *Otoliths*. He lives on the Tropic of Capricorn in Australia.

## The Sin Eater & Other Stories

Elizabeth Frankie Rollins



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