In a land without seasons, I created them out of different kinds of light. Tropics are assumed eternal summers, but I have seen how light unspools differently at 6:22 a.m., and I can tell you that in winter it sighs through its teeth.

There, winter is half-held breath. Newly flinching with sixteen, I drove through the aquarium quiet of morning. It was ritual, incantation: keys, music, seatbelt, the aching ghost of my own self in the passenger seat, her loneliness holding my wrist. Stained glass of tender light and the pauses between CD tracks wrapped around us.

I was first to get my license, shuffled past the bus stops only daring to tease the speed limit. I tried to explain what it’s like in that slowly blossoming day when you are the only one to greet it. On all sides, stillness. Think of the shock of returning from the mainland to our skyline without billboards: picture emptiness, then make it almost hurt.

Winter there has milky bruises in the light at 6:31. In years when there was a gasp of snow on the volcano, we tasted the sky overripe, too-scathingly blue. In the soft purgatory of free period we stretched away from the grass to scavenge pavement warmth.

Among the quiet scuttle of ants, I stitched together a running inventory of sunrise times, tried to correlate them to how hollow the wind felt, what mystery bruises the sky had on its knees.

I tried to mime the foreshortening of light, mirroring how I stretched into myself in those winters, became shell-like into my unwanting body, closer to the pinpoint high of summer. If I know when the sun comes up, I’ll know how long I have until the canopy of hurting bares fangs like first light.
ANY MORNING IN EARLY SPRING
L Greenway

I walk on oak leaves printed on concrete, the stain all that remains of the fall before this spring, of months of rain. It’s raining now. Here, in this place bound by mountains, nothing escapes out from the edges. Sound bounces off the low cloud and the streets and is captured under the umbrella: drumming on taut fabric, tires on wet pavement, the swish-thump of wipers, the gasp of airbrakes in descent. There’s the smell of oil-splashed pavement, diesel, splattered earth, wet grass. Under the canopy of the bus stop I join company with cigarette butts and the restless leaves of day-old newspapers. Above, on the clear sloped roof, the raindrops pool and run down, casting ever-moving shadows in the dawn. I shake my umbrella and become rain on paper and on the memory of leaves, on the concrete made stained glass, colored in greys.

With the quick passing bus, tracks vanish in the rain:
gone, but so am I
ON READING THE LETTERS OF SYLVIA PLATH, VOL. 2

Misty Urban

I weep for a woman who killed herself fifty-five years before this. Oh, Sylvia, Sylvia, leave him. Come to Ireland with me. We will milk cows and knit sweaters and climb wild craggy hills where the wind sucks us clean, and we will bring armloads of heather home to our babies. Ireland would save you, I think. Or Spain, let us go to Spain, to rocky beaches and grey stone castles, to that apricot Mediterranean sun. But no, he brought her there, treading the same paths you wore on your honeymoon, as if he could rewrite you out of his life, a palimpsest of time and skin. Damn him.

Damn them both and come to Italy. Remember how you longed to live in Italy? You spoke of nothing else that last year at Cambridge; it kept you alive during avalanches of papers and hard-eyed classes at Smith. It was your dream, yours, and you gave it up for him. Leave him now, that old shoe—tell him, Daddy, we’re through, we’re through. It was Ted who hated America, wasn’t it? They didn’t adore him here. And you adored him too much, mowing the lawn with a baby on your hip so he could write, guarding his time like the winged lions at the gates of Assyria while your own poems and stories battered to get out. Typing replies to his fan mail, taking part-time jobs, tiptoeing to his study with daffodils on the tray with his tea.

Smash it all like he did, grind your heels in the shards. You called him a hawk—beautiful, ferocious, deadly—you knew he would kill where he wanted, but you thought you held the jesses, that he would stoop to your arm if you brought him fame and quiet and hemmed curtains. He broke the harness, swooped for the kill, ate your heart. And you let him, because you loved him, and you loved it, the laceration that struck through the layers of ordinary, the elation of deep pain. So many bloody colors of splinters, like fragments of stained glass.

Break free of his dream, Sylvia, and find yours again. Come to Rome with me. We will gawp at Daphne in the Villa Borghese, killing herself for escape. Not us! We have our writing, our babies, our wild dreams. We will brood at St. Teresa in rapture, letting her heart be pierced by a violating god. With our tears we will polish the Pietà in St. Peter’s, tucked among the many treasures reckless men have stolen from the world. You will weep for the baby you lost and I for the ones who will lose you. We can sift through the markets for second-hand treasures—you do write incessantly of home furnishings. We will sit at the bus stop, on the bridge, eating mozzarella and rocket on focaccia. We will go to the Spanish Steps and let the babies splash in the Fountain of Trevi. We will stroll the Forum pushing your pram and spout Shakespeare under the pillars of an empire long dead and we will find words, our words, that will
keep a woman alive in this burdened world.

Look up, Sylvia, to the spires, the pigeons soaring, the great gaping mouth of Truth and his staring eyes. We have many faces, you and I, the mothers who must have more than rag rugs and silver cups, who must have the quiet blue study and champagne-tinted air and the reams of paper as still and cool and white as a bed sheet straight from drying. I will find you your pink Smith memorandum sheets, stacks of them, if you will give your dreams to them and not him, not him. Put it here, Sylvia, your devastation, your rage. Put it here, your passion. Live to see Ariel, your Pulitzer. Don’t let him earn it for you like penance.

It shall not wreck us, Sylvia, the slings, the humiliations, the hard fight and the mountains of rejection. They shall not kill us, the eyes that drift somewhere else. They shall not eat us, our babies, with the diapers and the lunches and the need to apply sunblock; they may have our flesh but they cannot have our art. Let your legend be of your own shaping.

Come with me, Syl. I will give you first nights, readings, films, and galleries. Leave him with his barren beautiful women. I will not be your nanny and I will not be your gardener and I will not be your cook because I want those things too, someone else to be the housewife, to fold laundry and scrub grout and have a warm dinner waiting on the table. I will be your lion and you my muse with your hands like arrows, your flaming eyes. Come with me and become a sage, a water woman, growing into your myth like Daphne her laurel tree, letting no man capture and pillory us. I will sit with you under the canopied elm and listen to its deep, knowing root. I will bring you tulips and blackberries. We need only sun and air and
REFLECTION
Sarah EN Kohrs
ARBOREALISM
Julie Thi Underhill
You busted with a fist through the stained-glass window of the chapel; you took a piece of Mary’s red raiment and dipped into your wrist; you were tired of waiting for Christ on your Triple C trips, and how could a man who took nails to the wrist be of help?

I took my own eyeliner blade to my wrist; I was thinking of you at the bus stop, waiting for Matthew on his bike; he would beat you for thinking of Joseph or wearing too many tight bracelets that crowded your scars.

It wasn’t til I fled to the bamboo stalks, to the Swannanoa canopy at Wilson, til I had to be carried from the river uphill; til I double dug garden beds and cried on my little blue cot over what’s his name up in my bunkbed sheets that I knew what it meant to transcend you.

At the bus stop down the street there are flocks of people. They come like unsteady clockwork, trickling in on the staggering secondhand shoes they wear, holes in the soles. Of everyone who passes by, no one pauses for long.

The church in the city I used to live in had long panes of stained glass everywhere you looked, and fragments of saints buried in the cool cement. When everyone filed for bread and wine, I would kneel, my tights catching on the wood, and throw prayers into the sacred air like baseballs at the feet of God.

In the woods, the trees form a canopy of shadow above me. I forget about shoes and baseballs. Someone said,
There is light and dark in all of us, and last night I cried thinking about the darkness, how one person can walk by and kneel and still not know where they fit in best. The people keep waiting and waiting and waiting. God is listening, somehow. I cry a lot, sometimes for no reason. The trees hear me, which is almost the same as God, which is almost the same as the people.
The Thorne’s grocer closed
and with it the southern lattice
of city streets and homes.
People used to wait by that bus stop
with its graffiti etched in dust on the glass,
messages no longer seen, save by men
walking by in sweaters,
eyes toward the ground and hungry.
They search for replacement shopping carts
that now rest empty
beneath the gas station canopy
and in parking spots,
all reflected in the dark windows
and automated doors shut tight.
Inside the shelves are empty, like
Monday morning church pews
graced by dust motes
suspended in stained glass light,
a moment of beauty without its witness,
a crisis unnoticed by all those
who drive by
on the cracked pavement.
WHEN we moved from Ohio to Florida for grad school, we had never had grits, nor ordered sweet tea, nor boiled a peanut. We moved to a neighborhood we could afford, to Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., to a duplex that leaned to the side on its cinderblock foundation that raised it from the sand by a foot or two. It took us three cycles of steam cleaning to remove the black grime from the carpet and several weeks of exterminator visits to get the roaches under control. The other half of the house was an efficiency apartment where a former crack-addict prostitute lived. She had just gotten clean and was working at Krystal selling burgers. She hoped to bring her three kids to live with her in her 450-square-foot space separated from us by only a thin wall.

Early on, my mother flew down to visit. She cried on the plane home because she couldn’t stand to see me live like that. But it wasn’t that bad. We scraped the grease and roaches from the wall next to the stove, scrubbed the grout, tried to patch the windows so the vines wouldn’t grow in. We bartended at night and swept endless sand from the hardwood floors and killed fleas and drank Natural Light and Riunite Lambrusco on the front porch. Across the street was a park where we walked the dogs. It was quiet and felt gothic with its old trees, its canopy of leaves and Spanish moss. When we walked the dogs, the tree cover protected us from light rain. It felt romantic and, well, Southern. We found things to be slower in the South: traffic lights stayed red longer, people ambled across crosswalks. In the North, people put chairs on their front porches for decoration. In the South, people sit in them and wave when you go by. The park’s moss was one more slow thing; it hung, lethargic from the heat, content to droop listlessly.

The first night after unpacking, we were relaxing on the couch eating pizza when we felt a rumble that grew into a roar barreling down on us, and there, screeching to a stop outside the screen door, only feet from our front porch, was a bus. We hadn’t noticed that our front yard was a bus stop when we rented it, and for two years, since we couldn’t often afford to run the window air units, we kept the door open with just the screen closed. The bus would come by loudly, hiss its stop, and squeak its doors to let people out and in. If we were on the phone at the time, we’d have to pause or yell, and we kept the volume on the television up high so we could hear over the engine.

On Sunday mornings, we would sit on the front porch drinking coffee and reading the newspaper. Once in a while, we’d splurge on a *New York Times*. In his shorts and Birkenstocks, Mike would read the news and smoke cigarettes. I would look at the horoscope and do an abysmal job on the crossword puzzle.
One particular Sunday morning, we were sitting on the porch when we heard, “It’s Jesus!” It sounded like one long word: Issjeeesus.

We looked up, and there was a man looking at us from across the street. His arms were veiny and thin, his dirty shirt sleeves rolled up to his elbows. Brown work pants drooped from his waist and dragged on the ground so the hems were frayed and black.

“Look!” he pointed and yelled. He looked around, hoping to find someone to share this moment, but there was only us: him, me, and Jesus. “Jesus is right over there on that porch!” He was bouncing up and down on his toes lightly, almost pitching forward off the curb.

He cupped his hands around his mouth and yelled, “Helloooo, Jesus!” And again, “Helloooo, Jesus!”

He stepped off the curb and started toward us. I went back into the house.

Now, to be completely honest, Mike did look like renderings of Jesus. He had blue eyes; long, wavy brown hair and a full beard; and he was wearing sandals. Even sober, it wasn’t a far stretch to see the resemblance.

“I gotta smoke with Jesus,” the man repeated as he stumbled over. “I’m gonna smoke with Jesus, y’all!”

His feet were black, teeth worn to stubs. And there was Mike, holding out a cigarette and a lighter and placing them into the man’s hand. The man sat down on the porch step and lit his cigarette. “Shore am glad to meet ya, bud,” the man said. “You know I heard a lot about you.” He chuckled a bit at his own joke, then inhaled.

I was inside the screen door in the cool shadows and could see their silhouettes through the screen door, smell the smoke that was softly billowing up. They sat quietly, looking out over the park. The light streaming through the trees and moss looked like sun coming through the stained glass during a Sunday service.

I figured that the man would want to stay and talk with Jesus, that Mike was in for a long conversation, but he finished his cigarette, put it out on our step, and stood. “Thanks, man,” he said, putting out his hand. “Ain’t nobody gonna b’lieve I smoked with you, but I know I seen Jesus today.” He tipped his hat even though it wasn’t there, and walked off. If he had been looking for the bus, he’d missed it, but he’d either forgotten or didn’t care. I opened the door and joined Mike on the porch, and we watched the man walk down the street. Every few steps, he’d raise his arms to the sky and shout, “I done smoked with Jesus! Alleluia, y’all! Today is a bless day!”
Just past the darkening canopy of trees along the River Tiber I sit, just married, licking drips of gelato from my wrist at the bus stop, dark chocolate and cherry. It’s cold out and the stone steps cut against the backs of my legs, but I stay leaned against my husband, pondering the having of a husband as we eat flavor after flavor of frozen dessert in January, so many that the man behind the counter in the gelateria began to laugh when we walked in for the third time in a day, handed us a punchcard and said you need it despite our protests that we leave tomorrow. We have feasted these two weeks, plates of bread and oil, heavy pastas, piles of thin charcuterie and cheeses, bottles of wine, each other. I can’t think outside the cracked streets, the panes of stained glass, the feeling that things have gone so achingly wrong in this country and then gone beautiful again and again so maybe mine can too. I can’t think of arriving home as someone a little bit unrecognizable. I turn to press my cold and sticky mouth to his knuckles, wait.
Restored, on tarmac, blunt nose, twin barrels erect—a squat, ponderous bird in California sun.

Stooped old men waver into line, peer up into her bay as if at legend, in stained glass.
Aboard, they balance & crouch, mull dark interiors.

Oppressive night, with cramps, climb to buckle in radial thunder, blood-red lights, throttled fire, taxi into wet wind.

They thread about the old bird, a docile brood, touch her skin again. They tune inwardly to chirruped frequencies.
Blood-spray over yellow tanks, breeches’ rain, plink of casings.
For some, flak torments air, the wings.
Some know shrieks, pissed thighs, blue ice whistling by.

An old wife proffers decaled cups under the canopy of a wing.
T-shirts emblazoned Liberator.
Liberator watercolors in shiny slip-covers.
Liberator wares spread on a folding table with stale cookies.

No one buys. A wizened captain sits at the gate, waiting, as if at a bus stop.
He’s there for the toll still asked of those tired of paying.
THE BUS NEVER STOPS AT THE NURSING HOME

Kirsten Morgan

Neighbors often see her there,
sitting on a bench at the bus stop,
waiting,
smiling a bit
as she imagines the trip
back home

where they’ll be waiting to catch her
in hugs and wonder
why it took so long.
She’ll explain
that she’s been watched too closely,
catched too often,
that every time she slips away,
someone comes to bring her back.

Under the canopy, invisible,
she waits for rescue,
waits the water-stained
glass world break,
fling into pieces, then slide
together again
and again. She must remember
to tell them
how beautiful the light is
outside the place where she’s staying,
just for a while,
until the bus comes.
THE scrapbook pages stick together, like you and she used to. Like you and she, though, with enough force, they could be ripped apart. You perform the necessary surgery, a clinical split; a rip punctures the stale silence of your apartment. Shredded fibers are fuzzy on the area you tore: battle scars.

You run a finger along the cracked spine, feel the dents and wear of age. Your own spine twinges. You’re not the girl who pressed flowers from Grandma’s lush garden in your scrapbook, not anymore. Now, you feel sorry for the dried flowers, for the burden of memories that compresses them until they shrivel.

Two girls smile out from the first creamy page. One has skin like molten gold, the other like ivory, but with the same gap-toothed grin and sun-squinted eyes, they are a mirror image. The redhead—you—stands sheepish, arms folded over her skinny chest. The brunette, proud-postured, showcases the garden of scrapes and bruises that blooms on her shins. Floppy dandelions
are woven into their hair, pops of sun on the faded photo. The plucky brunette once said dandelions were proof it didn’t matter how people labelled you. Weed or flower, you could still be beautiful.

The blazing red of your hair has since quieted to auburn embers; you run your fingers through the frayed waves. You always keep the air conditioning cranked until your apartment is a freezer, to protect against the summer swelter you hate. But a strange warmth ripples through you, like something is reigniting in your chest. Stroke her mischievous grin; wish you could see that feral smile again.

On the next page, a smeared charcoal portrait of her, doodled ten years ago in math class. One year into high school and four periods into the day, neither of you could pay attention to the beady-eyed teacher’s drawl about the Pythagorean theorem. You, because you didn’t understand math; her, because she understood math too well.

The torn sketchbook paper has yellowed where her fingers once grazed the page. She had gushed praise about your art skills, but the drawing is pressed in your scrapbook, miles away from her, so she couldn’t have liked it that much. You had tried to capture her spirit, but the twinkle in her eye couldn’t be rooted down with a pencil. Try as you might to cup your hands, grasp the floods of memories you shared with her, they trickle between your fingers.

Nestled against the portrait, a ticket stub from the Poison Pills concert you’d gone to in the summer of junior year. You run the heel of your palm over it, to smooth it out from having been crumpled in the back pocket of the denim cutoffs your dad hated.

The two of you had brushed off your parents’ offers to chaperone, had met halfway at the bus stop between your houses. Knowing her, she’d probably used the Pythagorean theorem to calculate a shortcut through the park.

Once you got to the concert venue, the colors of the setting sun spotlighted the apples of her cheeks. As the set list began to drift through the evening air, she offered you a joint and a coy grin. She set you up for so many firsts. You weren’t sure if the tingle warming your belly was from the drugs, or the thrill of youthful rebellion, or the manic way her eyes consumed every part of you. Now, you spend every day chasing that feeling, and she is the missing piece of the equation.

Her parents blamed you when she came home heavy-lidded and reeking of pot. You were a bad influence, they said. But she never let you come over to her place anyway, so what they thought was irrelevant. Or at least, that’s what you told yourself.

Your eyes skim the next page, and your stomach swoops acrobatic. A picture of her, double fisting red Solo cups with the crazy straws she joked were a pervasively childish way to consume an adult beverage. Her eyes gleam red with flash and vodka. Mary Manapoulos’ party, senior year. She had begged you to go, promised that she would help you study for your Calc final in return. You probably would have gone anyway, but the promise of a better grade—and more time alone with her—was a welcome bribe.

It wasn’t your fault that it happened the way it did. The two of you were vodka-pickled on empty stomachs, too young to know your limits. It wasn’t your fault that you both tornadoed into
Mary’s room, collapsed into a giggling heap on her bed. Colorful fairy lights filtered through the gauzy canopy like stained glass; they beckoned you there. It wasn’t your fault that you kissed each other until your bodies melded into one. Booze was known for lowering people’s inhibitions, for making them do things they wouldn’t otherwise.

It wasn’t your fault when her parents forbade you from seeing her again, called you nasty slurs that prickled beneath your skin like glass. They were ignorant; the only kind of love they accepted fit neatly into their sanctimonious mold. It wasn’t your fault that this was the only time she actually listened to her parents’ rigid rules. When she passed you in the halls, she gave you a tight-lipped smile; her eyes skittered away like beetles. She was so distant in the last months of senior year that it barely made a difference when she packed her bags and moved miles away for university.

The taste of her peppermint chapstick still feels fresh on your lips, the ghost of her kiss your only company in the confines of your studio apartment. Her parents had hissed “lesbian” at you, like it was a curse word, but you don’t even know if that’s what you are. Since her, there have been others. Girls, boys, and everything in between.

The only thing any of your partners shared was that minty smell. The girl you dated for two months in art school had been chewing mint gum when she approached you at a bar. Sure, she helped your technique, in the studio and in the bedroom. But her calloused, paint-splattered hands didn’t compare to your old friend’s warm, baby-soft ones. Her spiky undercut couldn’t compete with a long dark tangle of hair. After her came several short-lived flings: an accountant sucking on a breath mint, a music tutor who’d just brushed her teeth, several nameless gum chewers.

When you scored your current job, storyboarding for an animation start-up, your supervisor enticed you with his minty aftershave. Eight months and a shared apartment, it was your most serious relationship, but the passion had faded. Is there a word for someone who’s only attracted to one person?

Your nerves buzz when you see the card on the next page. Last Christmas, amidst bills and fast food flyers and junk mail in your mailbox, you had found an envelope. When you picked it up, your fingertips burned, like it was as red-hot as its color. You sawed it open with the end of your cleanest paintbrush, heart battering against your sweater. Inside, a card: a picture of her, nuzzled against a tall, ebony-skinned man. Between them, a chubby toddler with the same mischievous grin as her mother, and a thatch of dark curls.

The stubborn baby fat in your friend’s cheeks had carved away to reveal sculpted cheekbones; her jaw had hardened. But her eyes still gleamed, and her smile was incandescent. Tears fell on the card, splattered against her smiling face. Inside, in her loopy scrawl: I remember all the good times. Love you always. It wasn’t her fault that she couldn’t love you the same way you love her.

Maybe someday you will have a family of your own, and they will give you the strength to rip the scrapbook into shreds, use the paper fibers as compost to grow a garden. Your grandchildren could weave flower chains, press the petals into their own scrapbooks. But now, you are still too weak, and so alone.

Rise to your feet, the smell of paint thinner antiseptic in the
air. Wobble over to your paint-splattered bookcase, scrapbook wedged under your arm. Tuck it back into its spot on the top shelf. Sketchbooks line the other shelves. They overflow with sketches of her, but you will never capture her essence.
STROKE
Mary McCarthy

These late calamities
struck without warning
like bombs planted
in the dark
neglected corners
of the body,
in places we thought
safe from rude
invasions,
sanctuaries
that like cathedrals
under fire,
collapsed,
their glorious stained glass
falling broken and dangerous
all around us,
leaving us wounded,
homeless,
alone and cold,
waiting for rescue
at an abandoned bus stop
under the indifferent
canopy of night
where we watch the stars
wink out
one by one
above us
GENTRIFICATION
Suzy Harris

It was always there, just behind the bus stop in Ruby’s shop window, amid a jumble of movie posters and old fruit crate signs with their gleaming oranges and tender peaches—

my magnificent stained-glass window of a young girl walking a pig on a leash under a leafy canopy, like the colored plates in an old book of nursery rhymes I read as a child.

My girl-with-a-pig window was far too big to bring home, but seeing it there I always thought: This is my happy childhood.

And then one day, Ruby’s was gone. No girl. No pig. No canopy of trees. No blue sky. No overstuffed sofas gathering dust. No more lace doilies pinned together on a hanger. No more mahogany sideboards or silver-plated serving trays.

Just regret, tasting like burnt toast. I could have made room for it. I could have kept my happy childhood forever.
I call my grandmother from the Ellis bus stop so she can hear me and she tells me what it is like to grow up with ghosts, which are a lot like chickens except that they can see in the dark better and they are a little bit smarter than most chickens, but not my great-uncle’s chickens, who are bred to fight and are cunning and agile, with tangerine feathers that glisten like sun-stained glass and if you are lucky you can grab a feather from the ground without one of the chickens biting you, because they are vicious creatures, just like the ghosts in my grandmother’s childhood garden who dance and throw rocks at night because being dead is boring and there isn’t a whole lot to do except scream and freckle the darkness with yellow light and my grandmother calls it “Vietnamese television” because ghost-watching was something to do at night when it was hot and the air held your neck and the black leaf canopy let all the heat hang down while the world waited for rain.
WAITING FOR ACHRIMSDALE
Stanley Horowitz
It’s not the sort of place you would expect to find a bus stop. In all four directions the brown of the short grass prairie stretches flat or rolls in gentle moraines. There is no road, not even a rutted track. If it’s a prank, it’s not a recent one; the bus stop is solid in the soil and the grass has grown tight around it.

You don’t get here by car. Horseback maybe, but today I’ve walked the 10 miles from the road along the county line. People don’t come here. What’s the point? It’s all gravel left by the last glaciers, scarcely any soil, and so little rain the grass is only green, at most, two weeks in early spring.

But there’s a bus stop. And the horizon.

If you’re not from the prairie, you don’t understand that the landscape is hardly land at all. It is mostly sky, most days an ice-blue canopy, and nights a black blanket crowded with stars overlapping and blurring together. Want to feel small? Lie flat on your back and look up at a prairie night.

There are no trees, so you notice the bus stop.

The sun sets like flame, but the light lingers like it’s unwilling to surrender. That’s when I hear the throaty growl of a diesel motor, and I think I see a speck coming out of the west, and a cloud of dust rising. Given the seemingly infinite distance it has to travel, the time it takes for the speck to transform to a bus is surprisingly short. It slows as it nears and stops with the whoosh of air brakes and a swirl of dust that lingers in the breezeless night.

Just an ordinary Brill bus, circa 1963, cream top and dark green lower panels. It has no destination sign, and the windows are dark, opaque. The door opens and the light that spills out breaks into a thousand colors, like sunlight falling through stained glass to the cathedral floor. I hesitate a moment, then decide.

“No thanks,” I say. “I’ll wait for the next one.”

The door closes, and the brakes release with a slight squeak. The dust settles as the taillights fade into the east, and I’m sure I can hear the faint buzzing of the crowded stars.
I carry my bones everywhere, heavy, in a paper bag, and when it rains I tuck them inside my coat. I carry them when I run to catch the bus, stop for flowers, sit on a bench and have a cigarette. I can’t let them go, or who would I be. The small bone in the second toe on the right foot has a hairline fracture, and I have learned to be so careful with it. The skull is my canopy, my hat, my white wig. I love to take out all these pieces and look at them, the small arthritic finger joints, the graying lengths of the leg bones, the stained-glass glint in the sun of the cartilage knobs on the joints. I carry my bones with me. They know me, and when they are lonely and we are together I sing to them.
This morning’s red and orange, a stained-glass wound across the sky, awakens the pavement, the bus stop with blossoms of color, butterflies lured from sleep. Patched shadows flicker, soar into nothingness. Even the canopy of trees, that wilderness of green, brightens in summer sun. Crows shout, something harsh like a hurricane, a prairie fire growling. Spiders coil their silk then stroke filaments that branch into corners unseen, between brambles. But beetles rooting at rose-hearts are disturbed by the hummingbirds’ buzz and chuckle as they dart and dip. The grass whispers its secrets, shows thyme in the garden how to spear then sprout. Though wasps and snakes burrow in darkness, so, too, does the seed that splits its own skin to grow and heal.
It was slow and heavy, and it turned a blue world glimmering. A canopy of silk and ribbon, ruffling stuff, of bead and human hair. Made the surface a stained glass window to the human side.

And she floated. She floated until all of us were breeding within her folds and layers, laying egg by egg on her fringes, embellishing her dress with a different kind of bead.

When she began to sink, we waited from below for her body’s arrival, a pale and bloated vessel that would carry us down from the skeletal bus stop we had made with our dead’s bones to a polluted extinction.

**WHEN** she emerges from her costume change, we gush over her form-fitting sequined gown that billows like a canopy of solar flares mid-thigh. We scrabble at her when she reaches for us across the lip of the stage. We ache for a momentary meeting with her eyes. When it comes to the lyrics, we know every syllable before it drifts past those velvet lips. We have sung them into our mirrors as we held wooden spoons or fuzzy-ended pencils to our chins. In the privacy of our cars and, for the more daring among us, in public at karaoke night. Lyrics of eternal devotion to an unnamed presence, a gap we have filled with parents who succumbed to cancer, God, that high school crush we never dared talked to, and for some of us, a coded love letter from her. Those of us who have followed the tour, online or piled into a rental van, can even ape the backup dancers’ steps or the dreadlocked bassist’s head bob.

But now comes the moment not a single one of us can hope to emulate. The spotlights amass over her into a dome of brilliance.
Her sequins fire up into a tight confluence of stars, as though she were a gravity well forming in the center of this stadium. We wait in hushed anticipation. The gifts we’ve passed forward during the show (flowers from the less imaginative of us, framed portraits attempting in vain to capture her resplendence, homemade stained glass, letters thanking her for curing us of our heartbreak, a skewered voodoo doll of the bozo who publicly cheated on her, a guitar almost as voluptuous as she) lay at her feet. She gathers her breath, starts with a low note, and crescendos into a divine pitch no letter of the alphabet could justly describe.

Some of us weep at audiencing such divinity; others gape at her range. The internet abounds with rumors, of course—that she lip syncs to a singer cordoned offstage, that a panel of crusty middle-aged record execs pens all her lyrics. But in her presence, as she cups her ear and holds this remarkable note, we erupt into non-skeptical praise. At long last, she takes a breath.

In the expanse of one note, her dome of light fades to a green hue, and we break out our glowsticks, for this is the moment we can best show our devotion. If she is a gravity well, we will be her galaxy. We would break open these glowsticks and gulp down the bright solution inside, if she asked it of us. Happily, greedily, without hesitation. She tells us how much she loves us, each and every one of us. We howl back in a cacophony, as though we fear being reverted to individuals.

And why shouldn’t we? Separate, we are jigsaw pieces from at least a dozen different boxes. We are the pretty girls who commandeer the most visible lunchroom table so we can spit on others from our self-imposed height and spit up our lunches in the recesses of bathroom stalls. But we are also those who have been spit upon and have thus concluded our lives are of no consequence. We are the boys who in our hearts desire other boys or desire boys and girls alike or no longer identify as boys but keep these desires buried. Those who blast her music with the car windows sealed and post anonymously on fansites. Who cry in the rain at bus stops but, unlike the perfect world in her songs, don’t learn our true loves’ names from the rumbles of the storm. Who cut ourselves to release the pain we feel any time we are bereft of her music. We are the dads who stand in the back, who were once just smirking chaperones but by the fifth concert have discovered embers of the inner tweenies whom our traditional childhoods repressed.

And an hour from now, maybe two, we will revert to those disjointed pieces.

But in this moment, we are thousands of sparkles coalescing into an accretion disk, an event horizon. As a whole we are so bright she has to shade her eyes as she tells us how much she loves us, all of us this time, as a whole, and we gush with adoration once again.
BANYAN SHADE OR WORSHIP, WELCOMES ALL TRAVELERS
Tara Cronin

CANOPY
Susan Trofimow

Time circles the bus stop
where I wait, the cold gathering
in some distant way, leaves
falling in their uncertain patterns.

It’s like this with age—
one day the canopy thins.

Faces pressed close to sky
are seared by light, framed
by stained glass set in stone.
The eternal weight built bone by bone.
it is finished. but the smell of cordite and fear linger long after their anger rent the night’s sky. 3 of 42: birds roosting deep within his warmth, resting his head. he was sitting at the bus stop, finishing a simple meal, while fitting the ubiquitous description. betrayed by his Blackness, like so many pieces of silver. see this holy tableaux: arms outstretched, head bent at awkward angles. empty eyes track his spirit through the plastic dome—it’s sides punctured by the other 39 and ricochets from chipped concrete. a canopy of stars cloistered in stained glass, back-splashed by blood.
BUS STOP HOLLIES
Christopher Hutchins
DIVINE
Carol Barrett

Hypatia-in-the-Woods, June 2018
To write from Holly House is to divine from inside the canopy of broad-leaf maple, alder, cedar, perched in a loft over a steep slope tumbling down a bank of Oregon grape and salal to saltwater inlets. I meander outside. Salmon berries offer tart treats among tree trunks draped with deer moss. Robins nest in rafters, squawk as I saunter under the eaves, the only discernible sound in this green emporium. I know I have come home to myself by the chiseled slants of stained glass at the door, beckoning: go further inside the first reflection, allow the call of those who came to fathom mystery, who tarried into huckleberry, side-stepped Devil’s Club, its thorny underbelly. To stay awhile, the heart an abandoned bus stop. I go quietly somewhere unknown, the universe softly descending at dusk.
CONTRIBUTORS

Hugh Anderson prefers Island life to the vastness of the mainland—even if the island is the 43rd largest in the world. Recent publications include 3Elements Review, PRAXIS Magazine, and Grain, with work upcoming in Vallum. He has one Pushcart Prize nomination.

KB Ballentine’s fifth collection, Almost Everything, Almost Nothing, was published in 2017 by Middle Creek Publishing. Published in Crab Orchard Review and Haight-Ashbury Literary Journal, among others, her work also appears in anthologies, including In Plein Air (2017) and Carrying the Branch: Poets in Search of Peace (2017).

Carol Barrett holds doctorates in both clinical psychology and creative writing. She coordinates the Creative Writing Certificate Program at Union Institute & University. Her books include Calling in the Bones, which won the Snyder Prize from Ashland Poetry Press, Drawing Lessons from Finishing Line Press, and Pansies, a work of creative nonfiction, forthcoming from Sonder Press. Her poems have appeared in JAMA, Poetry International, Poetry Northwest, The Women’s Review of Books, and many other venues. A former NEA Fellow in Poetry, she lives in Bend, Oregon.
Hannah Blaser has degrees in Creative Writing and Communication from St. Ambrose University in Iowa. She currently lives and works in Madison, Wisconsin. Her poems and creative nonfiction pieces have appeared in the 2015, '16, '17, and '18 editions of Quercus. She spends her free time writing, hiking, and playing board games while drinking Moscow Mules.

Karen Boissonneault-Gauthier is an internationally published writer and visual artist. She has been a 'Wild Musette', 'Existere Journal of Art and Literature', 'Vine Leaves Literary Journal', 'Gigantic Sequins', 'Stonecrop Magazine' and 'Gateway Review' cover artist and featured in New York's 'Calliope Magazine' and 'WebSafe2k16', Toronto's 'The Scarborough Big Arts Book', New South Wales' 'Long Exposure Magazine', Los Angeles 'The Lunch Ticket' and Dek Unu. Recently she contributed images to Ottawa's 'A Caged Mind'. She also designs for San Francisco's VIDA, supporting 'Literacy for Life'.

Roger Camp is the author of three photography books, including the award-winning Butterflies in Flight (Thames & Hudson, 2002) and Heat (Charta, Milano, 2008). His work has appeared in numerous journals, including The New England Review, New York Quarterly, North American Review, and Southwest Review. His documentary photography has been recognized by Europe's prestigious Leica Medal of Excellence.

Tara Cronin is an artist working in various mediums, focusing on photography, installation, and book arts. She received her MFA from the ICP-Bard Program in New York. She received her BA in Writing at New School University. While Tara battled hospitalizations and mental illness during her undergraduate work, her healing process veered her toward combining photography, writing, and artmaking in response.


Rebecca Ellis lives in southern Illinois. Her poems can be found in Bellevue Literary Review, The American Journal of Poetry, Naugatuck River Review, Sugar Mule, Sweet, Prairie Schooner, Natural Bridge, Adanna, RHINO, and Crab Creek Review. She edited Cherry Pie Press, publishing nine poetry chapbooks by Midwestern women poets, and is a supporter of the St. Louis Poetry Center. She is a Master Naturalist through the University of Illinois Extension Service.

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**Christopher Hutchins** is a filmmaker, writer, photographer, and inventor.

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Mary McCarthy has always been a writer, but has spent most of her working life as a registered nurse. Lately she is enjoying the vibrant poetry communities on the internet. She has had work published in many online and print journals, including PRAXIS, Evening Street Review, Verse Virtual, Califragile, and Third Wednesday. She has an electronic chapbook, Things I Was Told Not to Think About, available as a free download from PRAXIS Magazine.

Enya Mayne is a psychology student with a passion for creating. A dedicated daydreamer, stories are her sustenance. When she’s not writing, you can find her painting, telling lame jokes, Googling questionable things, and reading anything she can get her hands on.

Laura Mayron is a graduate of Wellesley College and was born and raised in Maui, Hawaii. A queer poet, she is pursuing a PhD in queer, surrealist Spanish literature at Boston University. While at Wellesley College, she worked for three years as the poetry editor for The Wellesley Review. She has won Honorable Mention in Gival Press’s Oscar Wilde Award and Wellesley College’s Florence Annette Wing Prize for Poetry. Laura has been previously published in Gravel, Glass Kite Anthology, ArLiJo (Arlington Literary Journal), Rising Phoenix Review, and The New Haven Review, among others. If she could go back in time, she’d have a drink with Spanish surrealists.

Marissa McNamara teaches English composition and creative writing at Georgia State University and in local Atlanta prisons. She is also a contributing poetry editor for The Chattahoochee Review. Her work has appeared in several publications, including the anthologies On Our Own and My Body My Words, and the journals Rattle, Assisi, Melancholy Hyperbole, StorySouth, Future Cycle, The Cortland Review, and Amsterdam Quarterly. She lives in Atlanta with three crazy dogs, one very patient boyfriend, and a flock of pink plastic flamingos.

Kirsten Morgan is a graduate of Denver Lighthouse Writers Poetry Book Project. She recently completed her first poetry manuscript, although she’s written poetry for decades. She’s taught poetry to kids of all ages in a private school, at a day shelter for homeless women, and for a lifelong learning program through the University of Denver. Poetry has long been her guide, passion, delight, and life companion.

Martha Nance is a physician in Minnesota whose camera likes to capture small things, like the light and colors captured by the wing of the dragonfly on a late summer morning.

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**Julie Thi Underhill** is an interdisciplinary artist, scholar, and activist. She has published her visual work in *Troubling Borders: An Anthology of Art and Literature by Southeast Asian Women in the Diaspora*, *positions: asia critique, TrenchArt Monographs, ColorLines, Newspace Center for Photography Exhibitions 2002-2011*, and *Asian American Literary Review*. She has exhibited photography in the US and Spain. Julie holds degrees from The Evergreen State College and UC Berkeley. She lives in Berkeley and lectures at California College of the Arts.

**Misty Urban** has had short stories published in several journals and anthologies, most recently *Talking River, Fiction Attic, District Lit, The Ceruove*, and *DOMESTIC* (Willow Press, 2017). Her debut collection of stories won the Serena McDonald Kennedy Award for fiction and was published by Snake Nation Press. A second collection, *The Necessaries*, is forthcoming from Paradisiac Publishing. She is a medieval scholar, writing teacher, and founding editor of *femmeliterate*, a website devoted to feminism, literature, and women in and of books.

3Elements:
Gristle, Bolt, Kitchen Table

Due October 31, 2018

Submission due dates are October 31, January 31, April 30, and July 31, for issues forthcoming January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1, respectively, unless otherwise noted on our website.

There is no minimum word count, but please keep your fiction and nonfiction submissions under 3,500 words. Poems must be under two typed pages.

It is equally important that all three elements given for the specific submission period be included within your story or poem. Artists and photographers are only required to represent one out of the three elements.

For multiple submissions, fiction is capped at no more than two stories per submission period. Poems are limited to five per submission period. In the event your material is accepted in another publication, we request that you withdraw your submission from 3Elements Review should you decide to publish your piece elsewhere.

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Staff - 3Elements Review

Mikaela Shea received her MFA in Fiction Writing from Columbia College Chicago. She was a writer-in-residence at Ragdale Foundation and has published stories in Midwestern Gothic, Copperfield Review, Chicago Literati, Hypertext Magazine, and others. Mikaela won the Editor's Choice Award for Fiction at Waypoints Magazine and Superstition Review’s First Page Contest. Mikaela is currently looking for a home for her novel and lives in Des Moines, Iowa with her husband and three kids. @mikelashea.

Megan Collins received an MFA in Creative Writing from Boston University. She currently teaches creative writing at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts. A Pushcart Prize and two-time Best of the Net nominee, her work has appeared in many journals, including Compose, Linebreak, Off the Coast, Spillway, and Rattle. Her debut novel, The Winter Sister, will be published in February 2019 by Touchstone/Simon & Schuster. Check out Megan’s work on her website, megan-collins.com.

Katherine Ann Davis's work has been published by Passages North, Nat. Brut, The Pinch, Gigantic Sequins, Sycamore Review, and other journals. She has an MFA in fiction from the University of Maryland and a PhD from the University of Tennessee. Recently, she completed her first novel and is now revising a collection of short stories. A small flock of cockatiels lives with her in Wisconsin. For more about her work and background, please visit: KatherineAnnDavis.com.
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Jane Andrews has a BA in Creative Writing and a minor in Attic Greek from NC State University. Andrews teaches writing and poetry courses through Duke Continuing Education, and is currently Head Writing Coach at Central Carolina Community College. She is Nonfiction Editor at *The Main Street Rag* and *Glint Literary Journal*. In January of 2017, Andrews joined the editorial staff of *3Elements Literary Review*. She has earned awards in memoir, personal essay and poetry. Andrews’ fiction, essays, memoir and poetry have appeared in *Prime Number Magazine*, *Lunch Ticket*, *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, *Verdad Magazine*, *Kindred*, *The News and Observer*, and other publications. She is a past board member of Carolina Wren Press and the NC Poetry Society. Andrews is a freelance writing instructor, workshop facilitator, and book editor. Jane Andrews lives in Raleigh, North Carolina with her husband, four cats, a dog, and a special needs turtle named Jim. Her adult children live nearby. She enjoys striking up conversations with strangers and watching British mysteries.

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Katy Hershberger holds an MFA in Nonfiction Writing from The New School, and her work has appeared in *Catapult*, *TinHouse.com*, *The Rumpus*, *Bustle*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, and elsewhere. She lives in New York with her husband and their dog, Gary.

Marlon Fowler is a full-time web developer for a Fortune 100 company, while also working on *3Elements Literary Review* on the side. Marlon received his bachelor’s degree in journalism with a major in advertising from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. Marlon enjoys all things technology, making websites “do things,” running, reading, and good movies & TV shows. He currently lives in Des Moines, IA with his wife and three children.
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