Art
10 Shadow Play
17 Fly Fishing on the Skykomish
30 Blueprint
35 L’Albatros
39 EFG Scott Lights
57 Migration
66 Serenity: pacific, placid, pursuit
90 SlickNBlue

Fiction
18 The Young Man
30 Blueprint
58 Rain

Nonfiction
10 Shadow Play
17 Fly Fishing on the Skykomish
30 Blueprint
35 L’Albatros
39 EFG Scott Lights
57 Migration
66 Serenity: pacific, placid, pursuit
90 SlickNBlue

Photography
31 Ashore
51 Detritus
68 Childhood Lost
75 Fishermen

Poetry
9 Blueprint
11 Second Thoughts
13 Old Haunts
16 Blue Blackbirds
27 Everyday Delusion
28 Naked Fear
32 Drifting
36 The Hike
38 Ordinary
46 A Man Takes His Father Fishing and Tells About It
49 At the Narrow House
52 Certain Light
53 The House of Our Father
55 On Nature
64 Eli Faces His Face
67 On Forgetting, and Turning Away
69 I Walked With A Man I Knew Not Long
71 Phish Tale
73 Aengus, Afterward
88 Landscape Decrees
91 Tappahannock

Contributors
94 Bios
The astronomer and fisherman are brothers, choosing a solitary life. For both the sky’s a blueprint, where they find direction, dark grid, fathomless and mute as the inside of a bell, where they alone perceive a sound, guiding them to planets circling like seabirds, silver schools of stars. Between bits of brightness, their starved minds conjure ships out of a swell, nebulae where none had been before. The sky feeds from their hands, becomes familiar, almost tame, unless watching late into the night, when phosphorescent motes speckle an endless field; a waking dream might shock imagination from its sleep, the knowledge that the precious charts, coiled safely in the cabinet, are a delusion, that the face glimpsed in the mirror, so reassuring in half-light, masks a swarm of shifting particles.
Marduk laid a reed-work upon the face of the waters. He formed dust and poured it out upon the reed-work... He formed mankind... The beasts of the field and living things in the field he created.

--Bilingual of Creation, Cuneiform Text

What blueprint did the gods follow, tinkering with mud? What did they expect, breathing on earthen limbs and watching them rise? Cuneiform scholars lay bare the delusion of crafting a habitation of one's heart's desire.

Such a thing can only break, the paddock fence struck by lightning, freeing the herd, the fisherman returning to the vacancy of the torn weir. Undaunted, Marduk and Aruru seeded the earth. They waited for shoots, joyous at the first green Spring. But we know how sown beds become a riot. Weed as they might,
the earth got away from them. In the holy house of the gods, jaws dropped at the violence, the base ingratitude.

They worked at containment, sending earthquakes, floods, plagues. A long shot, they hoped something could be saved.

After the art show, though it is cool and I have had enough wine to make the old trek dangerous, I wander down to the shores of the Ohio where I used to go with Jody, Michael, Glenn. Dusk, soft as denim, spreads out like a blueprint of a building made entirely of forgotten dreams. I watch the current bend toward distant trees, smokestacks, church spires, barges laden with grain. Low clouds graze on light itself. Here and there along the bank a grizzled fisherman in jeans and flannel shirt threads a nightcrawler onto a hook and casts his line into the languid flow. He catches nothing but my gaze.

This is where I came when I was young and bent. This is where I came to think and, just as often, not to think. This is where I came to wash away the stink of fear, to see the chased fish jump, to kick up bait cups and send them spiraling toward the Gulf. I hear the tailings of conversations, all the ways we said we had things figured out.
How many bodies has this river taken?
In my lifetime I can think of three: a distant cousin, a lonely classmate, an old man missing for a week. Surely thousands more beyond my ken, swimmers cramping in the shallows, toddlers wandering away from barbecues, revelers brave with beer, those in the boats or on the blankets along the shore egging on, laughing as the feet turned up, faces tight with smiles until those, too, disappeared, with only a ripple to mark the spot.

Their absence sets my face atingle. I see them in the haze off west, that first star I thought I saw but didn’t. The eddy stirs the mind’s soft pirouette, slow drift of horror creeping in, recognition of loss, a dead kid’s parents’ criminations. The past is mostly made of broken glass and fish scales. We love how it catches the light. I touch the pale scars of lost fights and settled scores.

I remember how I almost joined them—like a name that comes to the back of the lips, but slips away. How I thought a dozen times to test myself, or so I said, to strike out for the far shore. I think, _delusion is a thing called youth_, and if we’re lucky we live to see through it. Fever dream, puppy love, the nick of a razor against the wrist. I tried to hold the river in my hands but failed just as the light fails now. The hour is blue as the past, blue as a piece of shale that skips a dozen times before the river takes it, too. The river tells me that I know nothing, but I am here to argue.
I think of the footprints I left in the wet sand that night, almost crawling my way back, a blueprint for what was to come, the months that followed, lost rooms and the front steps where you made your escape. Yes, this begins with you, the fisherman father, and our children casting for Bluefish together off the Newport cliff, the three dots of your flashlights linked like stars that August midnight the waves furled and unfurled, past tilting lifeguard stands and closed-up refreshments stands with lonely spotlights, and the full moon rose and broke in a thousand pearly pieces upon the ocean, and I panicked, so exhausted I could barely make it back. I was afraid but did not want to know why. I wanted that delusion, ignoring the flock of blue blackbirds rotting inside me as you fished on that unlit cliff, squishing sand worms onto barbed hooks, and casting, the three of you silent, sensing the magic of the tide going out. I dug, with a stick, the pictographs of our family but sea foam filled the nightingale tucked upside-down in the hem of a curtain, erased the front door leaving only a knob.
HE lived a delusion, his plans a blueprint for disaster. That’s what his mother said and he sometimes believed it. He could have done anything, been anything—a boxer, a salesman, a lawyer. He could have done IT. He was good with computers. He’d gotten a scholarship to university, but he hadn’t gone.

And what had he chosen? And why? When he told people, they looked at him like he was crazy. And, of course, everyone asked him, as they do when someone is finishing high school, “What are you doing next? Where are you going to college?” When he told them, they’d either tried to talk him out of it or shaken their heads.

That’s just how people were. Afraid of change. Suspicious of adventure.

He liked solitude. But that hadn’t contributed to his decision. He liked vistas, but he couldn’t say that was the reason for his determination any more than because his eyes were blue and blue was his color.

When people looked at him all they saw were his eyes. Thank god, because his nose looked like he had boxed more than two years and his ears were a little heavy lobed, though the Dalai Lama had heavy lobes and he’d read that this was one of the marks of a great man.

Emma Lou had said, when she was still his girl, she’d said, “You can’t see to the end of them.” And that sounded good, though when he really thought about it, he wasn’t sure what the hell she’d meant.

Did eyes have ends? He didn’t think so. He’d googled, because he often googled when there was a question he was massaging. When he googled eye, eye came up. An entire page with the word eye—anatomy, health, images of eyes.

It was weird, because from his extensive experience googling, it was rare that the thing you googled came up as the word you’d put in. Instead the first listings were companies that saw the advantages of using a certain word—like eye, which of course SAW things, eye, that was the window to the world—as part of their name. Why hadn’t they snapped up eye? All those companies searching for catchy names, meaningful names? He didn’t get it. There should have been at least three pages of eye-named companies, but no, page one was anatomy. Eye, an organ in your head.

But his blue eyes—the color of the sea—weren’t why he’d chosen to be a fisherman. It had nothing to do with the color of water, which from his experience was rarely blue. At least not the color of his eyes, which Emma Lou had said were lapis lazuli.

He didn’t agree with her, because that would have made them almost black and they weren’t black, though they did have little lines of gold in them like lapis lazuli. That was probably why she’d
said it, because at the time, she’d been very close and would have seen those little lines of gold. Nose to nose, actually, because she was standing on a higher step than he was on the stairs leading up to the chem lab. She’d been yelling at him, as she charged ahead, turned suddenly and they’d been nose to nose.

His lapis lazuli eyes had worked like electricity—voltage, he thought—and she’d let him get into her pants that night.

He didn’t mind, the sea not being blue, which he’d thought it would be. But it had surprised him when he’d left his midwest home, and arrived at a pea green sea. The sea, he soon discovered, was often murky, almost black, with little crests of color that ranged from blue to green. Though sometimes it was red, just as the old man had said, red from the plankton.

“Why go now?” his father had asked, braced in the doorway to his room, watching him put shirts, pants, the book, into his suitcase. His father hadn’t meant, why go in September, he’d meant why not go to college first and then decide. His father thought the notion would leave his head with time. Which wasn’t true. If the notion is big enough, grand enough, it’s best to do it.

He’d answered, “It’s September and the fish, the big ones, show up in September.”

His father had gotten angry then. He’d held up the book, saying “A book. You’re going to make your life’s decision based on a book? You think reading is the same as life. It isn’t the same as life. Your mother is right. It’s a blueprint for failure, this book.”

He didn’t understand why his father got so angry. It was crazier just having a plan materialize in your head. Why did it bother people so much that he’d gotten his life’s plan from a book?

“This is fiction,” his father said.

But wasn’t fiction based on life? And, so, if the man in the book had lived his life as a fisherman, why couldn’t he?

When he’d tried to talk Emma Lou into going with him, she’d been incredulous, “Leave home?” Then she’d been honest. “I love you, but not that much.”

He’d felt her words like a slap. A slug right in the solar plexus. Since he had eyes that had no end, she should have had love that had no end, but apparently the two were distinct in her mind. And so, now, he and Emma Lou were separate. Of course, they had been for years.

He did see her. He always made time to see her when he went back home to visit family, which wasn’t very often.

When he went back home his mother said he smelled like fish. Which wasn’t true. Before he got on the plane, he made sure to wash everything he owned, buy new boots, put on cologne, which he didn’t like, but he put it on anyway, just to please her. Still, she turned up her nose and he thought that it didn’t have to do with fish, it had to do with his leaving and somehow for her, fish = leaving. Fish also equaled delusion, and failure, and were therefore—together with the book—the blueprint for his disastrous life.

His mother’s continuing belief that he’d failed made him realize that by leaving, he’d left his family behind. Not just in another state from the one where he now lived, but behind like something you’d dropped on the ground way back wherever, and you didn’t know where, so you couldn’t go back and pick it up.

That feeling might have been an argument against going back to visit, because if they didn’t want him—and his mother made him strip down and leave everything outside which felt to him like
a violation of himself, like he was being asked to strip away who
he now was—if they didn’t want him, then why did he go? He had
work. He had new friends. It hadn’t been his intention to break
from his family.

Of course, he had to admit that it wasn’t his parents who drew
him back, but Emma Lou. He needed a glimpse of her, just a quick
look. He didn’t need to talk with her. Didn’t need to give her a
hug or a kiss on the cheek. He just needed to see her. He’d tell his
mother he was going to the store, then park down her street, not
his mother’s, Emma Lou’s. And wait.

She was no longer lithe, which wasn’t such a surprise since
she favored her mother. She’d cut her long brown hair and added
bangs. Her clothes were different, but so were his and they were
both older. Plus, she had three kids, twins and a younger one,
which surprised him as she’d always said she wanted two, but
maybe what she’d meant was that she wanted to give birth twice.

He imagined those births. Thought himself into the spot where
Billy Trellin had stood beside her, telling her to breathe. He hadn’t
ever seen anyone give birth, but he knew what you had to do,
because when his mother told him she was pregnant—his mother
regularly called to tell him the town gossip—when she’d called,
he’d gotten a book on childbirth in case Billy died before the birth
and he had to move back to marry her and be father to her child.

There weren’t many children down on the docks, which was
a sadness to him, because he liked children. But it seemed that
he didn’t like children as much as he liked fish, because he lived
by the sea and not back home with Emma Lou. He’d adjusted to
it, not having children, not having a wife, so when Vera came into
his life, he’d found it difficult, saying to himself that she wouldn’t
understand, which didn’t make any sense because she did
understand. She came from a fishing family and knew what it was
to have a man at sea when he should have been home.

She’d asked him why he left home to go to sea. That’s what
she’d said, to go to sea, which was a different way of asking what
the hell he was doing. It made him feel like a swashbuckler, which
was nice, though later, when he’d thought about it, he wondered
if maybe she’d said it that way to make him feel good, and in turn,
inclined to her. She was a smart woman. An IT woman, which was
how he came to study computers.

That was how they spent their evenings, her teaching, him
learning, because once she’d taught him a little, he wanted to
learn more. “You’re like a sponge,” she said. And he pictured
himself at the bottom of the sea, typing away. Lately she’d said
that she didn’t have any more to teach him. Lately she’d started
talking about her biological clock.

It was a turn off, because her thinking herself a clock made
her seem mechanical, tick-tocking away, and though she was sexy,
sometimes sex was a lot of work with that image of her as a clock.
Not a grandfather clock, that was too big and she was small, but
one of those fancy clocks set on a mantel, a clock made of ceramic
and doo-das. Fancy and delicate, with little colored flowers and
gilded hands.

Vera wanted to quit her job, be a consultant, and once,
only once, she’d said “Maybe someday we can go into business
together.” The thought had shocked him, because he was a man
who went to sea and she knew that. She never said it again. She
must have seen his thoughts smeared across his face.

It was May and he was going to visit his family, because May
wasn’t good for fish and he was feeling as things got more serious
with Vera, that he should have one last glimpse of Emma Lou. Vera
had been wearing him down and he suspected that someday soon
she’d announce she was pregnant whether he liked it or not.

He’d see Emma Lou, just to put that behind him, though her
with three kids and a husband should have been enough to put
it behind him years ago and he knew that, but some things, like
the feelings in your heart, you just can’t do anything about. Just
like he hadn’t had a choice once he’d read the book. Hadn’t had a
choice and had gone to sea.

He bought new clothes to please his mother. Stopped on the
way to the airport and bought new clothes, threw out the ratty
ones he’d worn to the store, and didn’t carry a thing with him that
might smell like fish. Well, he took the book, but he always took
the book.

He felt like a criminal, a convict escaping a prison who needed
to get rid of his prison uniform so that he wouldn’t be recognized.
But still his mother sniffed him, turned up her nose, and made him
take off his clothes and put on a shirt and pants of his father’s, the
cuffs riding up over his socks.

She rambled at dinner, as if embarrassed by his presence,
circling topics, so that by the time they reached dessert, he’d
begun to think that there was something she was hiding. Was
certain there was something she was hiding. Was she ill? Was
his father ill? Maybe one of them was dying and they didn’t
want to tell him. He looked to his father for confirmation and his
downturned grey head gave it, way too intent on the rice pudding
that wasn’t his favorite.

When she finally stopped rambling, he said, “So, what is it you
don’t want to tell me?”
He didn’t have regrets. He hadn’t failed, maybe he hadn’t fished, maybe he hadn’t gone far out to sea. He’d come back home with a skill he hadn’t had when he left, not what he’d expected, but the old man had come back with a skeleton, not what he’d expected either. They’d each sought one thing and found another. They weren’t so different.

He’d thought the book was about that alone, the quest, the resolve to accomplish something, a blueprint for adventure. He hadn’t recognized the old man’s loneliness. Hadn’t foreseen the emptiness of life without Emma Lou. Luckily the old man wasn’t alone in the end, so neither was he.

My dog killed a deer today. I heard the bleating in the woods. There was no blood. Tears fogged my vision as the doe kicked the air to get away, flailed and flopped like a fish worn down by the strength of a fisherman’s line, then withered, downed by a creature more fervent and determined — the one that held in his bones a blueprint for this victory. My dog killed a deer today. He knew I would not approve, yet his head swelled with adrenaline and with pride.

My dog killed a deer today. I thought about last night when I kissed his downy crown, tucked him in, told him what a good and gentle boy he is. I thought about how I soothe myself with stories that obscure his nature and mine, believing he wants nothing more than love, and I could never kill for sport.
Sitting in the hot tub
he announced that he’d dug
a hole all the way to China,
the lyrics of his delusion.

Smelling of chlorine, not lithium,
the swirling water, chest high,
couldn’t mask the lack
of balance, couldn’t conceal
his teeter-totter mind,

tortured manic man,
fisherman for Chinese souls
in hot, bubbling water
but bless his crazy for caring.

He was the Son of Man
pushing, prying, preening,
praying, always praying,
always exactly off.

Handing out loaves
and fishes to Supreme
Court justices,
painting a blueprint

in permanent marker,
a shaky, fingerprinted plan
for the blue-eyed
demon that was me.

He insisted I conform, comply
with his non-compliance, so
I hid the knives every
fright-studded night.
Blueprint
Leslie Sullivan

Ashore
Alexa Dearing
Blood is his work,  
the fisherman.  
Hooks in throats.  
Barbs dug past tongues.  
Blood in the boat.  
No blood in the water  
unless he is getting bad  
at his job. Tidy hands,  
sun-dried, peeling skin,  
tanned like hide, leathery  
from the work.  

Lines like gossamer  
invisible to the eye  
unless the sun dips  
in pale sky at exactly  
40 degrees.  

She is his only companion,  
sun. Ocean is too dark,  
too deep, too old  
to be good company.  

Ocean only licks at his  
boat. Leaves salt on his lips.  
Salt cakes the bottom  
of his boots and he tracks it  
through the yellow house.  
Sunflower wallpaper,  
red wagons and chickens  
on the curtains in the kitchen,  
all that’s left of his past life.  

You can feel her when you go  
in the kitchen, the invisible wife,  
the dead wife.  

She left him blueprints  
for a world built of pot roasts  
and babies and herb gardens  
and he still weeps when he  
smells rosemary and she  
tried to convert him.  

Took him to church on Sundays  
but Jesus seemed too much  
like his brother, a man with  
delusions of grandeur.  
A man who assumed  
the world would thank him  
for existing.
He knows the world is thankless.

He knows work, his hands, blood, hooks, scales and empty fish eyes, but when sun is at exactly 40 degrees and the invisible is made real he can hear the hymn she sang—

*Come and find a quiet center in the crowded life you lead. Find a place for God to enter. Be at peace and simply be—*

and he hums along.
The sunburnt clouds sift gratitude through dense canopies of vine-choked trees. My boy and I skim shale along the water’s surface, aiming for the wide wall of distant mudbank. Striated and carved by wind and creek, its winsome, root-dangled curve is paean to the delusion of Time’s gentleness. An approaching thunder lows the distance. With clay still moist from recent rains, I show him how to write his name on rocks, how to listen for the plunk of frogs startled by our plashing. Having no success with shirt nets, we fishermen of minnows lob limey walnut globes into deeper parts and choose our steps with care to cross, disappointed in—despite our turning over everything—the dearth of crawfish. So hard to see how much the skies have grayed. A rain speck on my glasses, another. His cheek glistens, his forearms wet. Back to the car, I shout as we run, making a game of it, a race. Re-tracing our path—leafed branches—a susurrus of jeans—the staccato thrum of drops. Behind me his high-pitched mantra of “Leaves of three, let them be”—a thing I’d only just taught him. He dodges all foliage, laughing, seeing the danger everywhere. Up the hill, through the park and baseball fields, we climb the sidewalk’s laddered seams. I pretend I’m winning, winded, staying just ahead until—his shadow overtakes mine, overlays it, spreads like triumph and succession: a blueprint for grief.
White lines on the blueprint
of the house my parents are building,
I trace the arcs that show how doors open.
They agree on three bedrooms, two baths,
a study where he writes books, corrects papers.

On vacation my father becomes a fisherman,
leads us up to high mountain lakes
carrying rod and creel.
He cleans and cooks his small catch.
I fret about the bones.

My settled, ordinary family: delusion
cracked by my father’s departure
as I turn sixteen. He visits
to take me out for driving practice,
talks about doors opening for each of us.
GROWING up in western Kansas, my musical preferences were formed on the defense. My music came always from the $3 bins, and I am pretty sure I was the only person to own a Morrissey tape in my town. (I will admit now that, at the time, I had difficulty getting into it—the melodies stretched out as flatly as the plains before me.) I listened to Erasure and Enya, and I took no pleasure in AC/DC, whatsoever. In the '90s, when Nirvana was loud and angry, my college years and ears were devoted to folk music, entirely. The world was industrial, and I was a fisherman. This is the best excuse I can give you for not liking the Rolling Stones for far too many years. This is hard for me to say. If you love music, and you reveal you once didn’t love the Rolling Stones, it’s like being a dancer and admitting that you don’t really like using your left foot. The really wonderful Rolling Stones albums, for me, *(Aftermath, Sticky Fingers, Beggars’ Banquet)* are big parties, lazy afternoons, and reckless road trips, all in one.

But when I was in high school, the Rolling Stones were “Start Me Up” and “Angie.” They were the songs of pot-bellied men past their prime, of street dances filled with harvest crews intent on more Coors Light and liaisons with unsuspecting high school girls. They were the soundtrack of a life spent in a bar, after a day at a job you didn’t love, of dreams unfollowed or not dreamt at all, the music of regret, delusion. In short, those aging British megastars seemed to belong to the world I did not love, a world, ironically, “American.”

Maybe it’s not ironic, then, but fitting that the Rolling Stones were gifted to me by a man who actually had an American flag up in his bedroom. Non-ironically, he was a Mark Twain American—lover of the country, critical of its government—and his full name conjures up an older America: think old-school country and Bob Dylan album titles. Because old-school America doesn’t like its business made public, I will call him Hank.

Hank is the only man I know who can actually pull off a long, Mick Jagger scarf, and my memories of him wind and rewind like a scarf around my own neck, like a tape spooling and unspooling.

We enter the bar with a larger group. It’s the bar with the good jukebox. We put in all the quarters we have, and we talk about the Midwest, where both of us are from. We talk so long it takes us an hour to realize we are the last ones there. It takes me another hour to realize I have not mentioned I have a boyfriend.

Twelve years later, I will see this as the moment my life turned permanently away from childhood. I was 28. Without sounding grotesque or pathetic, I want to say it was my last moment to fall in love when everyone else did. All around me, people were getting married, as if they were adults. The Boyfriend was nice.
He loved the Beatles, and he even looked like George Harrison, my favorite. I loved the Beatles. I loved George Harrison, and my boyfriend. But I did not know if I was an adult.

It is three weeks later. Hank and I have met for coffee, for drinks, have emailed merely for the sake of seeing the other’s name on a screen, where we can be alone together. I am still with The Boyfriend. This is getting messier, painful, and I know I have a heart to break—I can feel it hit my breastbone when I see Hank. In one email, I ask him, half in shame but half oh-so-in-love, if he believes in soul mates. “No,” Hank writes back, “too abstract. I’m more on the side of Aristotle—a heart is only real because it beats. And baby, you make mine beat.” Somewhere in the background of my heart, there is the sound of slide guitar, like in “No Expectations,” which Hank has put on a tape for me. Somewhere, a slide moves up the neck of a guitar like a hand slides up a thigh under a skirt. The Beatles have nothing to say about this.

We meet at a museum for my birthday and look at the photographs of Shackleton and his men, men who went to the bottom of the world to be alone with what made them feel alive. We sit with our coffee afterwards, and we talk about what we want from our futures. We hold hands, and I realize his eyes are the color of cinnamon sticks, that he smells better than anyone else—the cleanest soap I’ve ever smelled, so pure. Why, then, do I want to hear a song about lust, desire that exceeds boundaries, something more like “Wild Horses,” less like “Something,” my favorite with The Boyfriend?

Hank pauses. He’s been telling me about a letter he wrote to his grandparents, telling them why he wants to be a poet, how poetry is what makes him present in the world, what helps him make sense of it, a blueprint for meaning. I look up; he looks at me. “And that’s why I think I want to marry you.”

My big eyes get bigger.

“You think I’m old enough to get married?”

One night, we get drunk and dance wildly to “Let’s Spend the Night Together.” Another time, he tells me I am “Complicated,” like Mick Jagger’s New York socialite, who schooled him in growing up. In an email shortly before the first of what will be several endings, Hank tells me my indecision is strangling his love, that though he doesn’t mind waiting longer for me to leave The Boyfriend, there will come a point at which this love, flaring up like a roadside emergency before we can swerve, will no longer grow organically without being fed. “Don’t play with me, baby,” the words glow up from the screen at me, Mick swaggering behind the lines, “cause you’re playing with fire.”

When I see him now, years later, we are cordial, even warm. I see him somewhat often; we are both writers, both teachers. But I put out the fire forever because I could not make up my mind. What would I have changed, the older me thinks? How could that fire have been fueled without destroying everything around it? Maybe I could have let friendship simply be enough, still talk with him every day for hours.

But so many other moments would have to go: walking into the Shackleton exhibit and instinctively taking the other’s hand, the list he made me of 50 things he loved about me (I like Coke, I was born in autumn). I want to keep them like dead flowers.

Near the end, we stand in the cold at a bus stop, and I start to
cry, afraid I will be consumed by this love, that Hank will lead me
down a path I am not free enough or strong enough to take, to
live with our art and more volatile emotions, that I will never be a
better person without the Beatles Boyfriend, who seems so much
steadier, yet so unable to move my mind the way I feel I have to
move. Hank takes me by the shoulders as I shake with tears.

“Honey, it’s you—YOU are the person who makes yourself the
person you want to be.”

I grab his hands. “Let’s get married. I’ll work on the break-up.”

I do. Then I don’t.

The moment in which I loved Hank felt infinite, but it was, in fact,
a window of time, and it closed. And not even if I smashed the
glass, like a street-fighting man, was I going to get him back.

I am supposed to say that it was all worth it, that mistakes had
to be made. I am, in fact, now the person I want to be. But there
are still moments when the person I was then makes me shudder:
crazy, heedless, desperate. And I understand those men at the
bars of my childhood now, the ones with dead dreams, the ones
filled with regret. And on those days, I think I would give up those
moments if I could, undo the pain of those three young hearts.

But if it meant giving up those nights that Hank made me love
the Rolling Stones, I would not do it. Never.

I would not change a single thing, un-break their hearts or my
own, and lose “Moonlight Mile,” “I Am Waiting,” “Factory Girl,” all
of Paint It Black.

The Rolling Stones are not just the soundtrack of my lost heart,
not just the traces of Hank inside of me. They were not the gap I
thought existed between me and America: they were the bridge.
I finally heard the longing for connection, not the hopelessness;
the rootsy playfulness, not the arrogance. They were not simple.
They, too, were complicated. They were British men, in love with
the idea that there was more, not less, joy in the world, and that
it was to be found in the Southern rock of another country. They
were, in short, like me: sifting through the music available to them
to find the styles that they could use, even if they wrecked their
bodies and their hearts and those of others to do so.

“Don’t play with me / ’cause you’re playing with fire.” I was, I
did, and I would do it again to bring this music into my life, even
as that man who brought that music into a yearning life stopped
waiting and walked away from me, the girl with the faraway eyes.
A son who fishes
as some men pray,
not asking anything,
who lines his lure
with silk and feathers,
so that what he brings in
can be cast out again.

As for the holy ghost,
he doesn’t appear in this scenario
unless he is the delusion
slipping or slipped away.

And the rain. Let the rain
be mercy, for there’s a certain
fishy sanctity about the son,
have I made that clear,
who uses the fish
for his own pleasure,
who pulls the salmon in one by one
and then dismisses them.

I have known priests
to do the same.

Not too long ago
a pope flew to Turin
to see the shroud
which as early as 1355
the local bishop
called a forgery.
But no denying
the agony—
the faded face
on the cloth can’t be Christ,
but something terrible
happened, seems to be happening.

At the Narrow House

Dan Murphy

No driveway, no septic, no gravel path
to the slim front door—there is no front door.
When you arrive at first you think
there’s been a mistake, this place
too small to entertain, or be entertained.
Where’s the porch? you ask. A stove? Some windows?

Try to hang one of your paintings on nails
that sink quick and crumble the walls.
Splash your face with water and search your eyes
in the mirror you cannot find. This is not what you were
promised. Fisherman’s block & tackle squeaks over you.
The bank won’t take your calls. The realtor is a delusion.

There’s no dial tone, or phone. Nobody knows
if plans were ever drafted here. Looking up
through a roof of fog, imagine beyond:
a contractor napping beneath his hat,
blueprints curled behind the seat of his dusty truck
among hinges and switches, shims and strike plates.
Try and ask him why there’s no yard to trowel and seed with lilies and moonshine. No place to plant an Adirondack, relax the back, a book in one hand, a lager in the other. By the street that isn’t paved, there’s no mailbox, flag, or fieldstone wall. No lamp is lit by the creaking gate. No gate swings in this nothing wind.
You look up and above you is cerulean so true
you want to love again.

A quick trumpet of wind across the dock
and the small flock of terns rises from the sea —
hungry white exclamations suddenly winged;
they soar — you watch them soar — and dip

and dive and soak in this delightful dying sky.
Is delight a delusion infused by the failing light?

A fisherman passes, nods. He stinks and limps,
happy enough, seemingly, to be the architect of his living.

Uncertainty always travels with you, dropping hints.
But this light, a kind of blueprint of possibility,

you just want to give into it. Someone
is swimming away from shore with steady strokes.

A white dove watches from the fishing shack roof,
its delicate throat cooing whispers of blue.

Most Sunday mornings, he was so hungover
the car reeked of alcohol when he drove us
to church. We said nothing, knowing if we stayed
quiet, meek, as the reverend said we should,

our father might stand at the makeshift drawing board
that night & instead of reaching for the whiskey

unroll the pearly blueprint from its perilous place
near his overflowing ashtray, & draw another design
to finish our unfinished house. He dropped us off
& drove back home while we went inside to draw

saints & angels fleeing the devil or to rise in a clamor
from our small chairs to sing as loudly as we could

*I will make you fishers of men* while the image
of being a fisherman & catching a man at the end
of a fishing pole kept threatening to make us burst
into laughter. But we coughed instead, or pretended
to choke or sneeze. Back at home, we sang it again,
our voices full of the mockery we knew our father
would approve, he who told us it was all malarkey—
a delusion some had concocted to impose order
on the masses, what a Commie named Marx called
*the opium of the people*—so we sang, we sang,
hoping he would love us for our complicity, word
we didn’t know but understood implicitly, love us
beyond malarkey, beyond delusion, & finish
for his fishers of men a house to live in ever after.

Each dawn, and then again just before sundown, we climbed
into the stadium seats of the Toyota truck purposed for tourists
in the national park. A man named Silas was tasked
with hauling us—all strangers—twelve miles off-road to see
the Big Five in their habitats: elephant, buffalo, rhino, leopard, lion.
Patient as a fisherman, Silas found each one during four
days with nothing like the blueprint of a cellphone map, with only a
handheld compass and a walkie-talkie.
From an acacia limb, a leopard, with his
half-eaten gazelle haunch hung in the tree crotch, gazed down at us,
aware but unfazed by an encroaching hyena.
The pair of cheetah cubs (siblings, Silas said) who strolled
out of the ditch weeds, and lay down in the road in front of the truck,
watching us, flicking and twitching their tails like indolent tabbies.
We marveled at the peace of the animals at large,
the long stretches of sleepy calm between spurts of the hunt’s
necessary violence. And saddled with the weight Westerners
lug into the unfamiliar, we eventually laid down
our zoom-lens cameras and high-powered binoculars, giving in
to something like a sigh, the exaltation of half-remembered awe.
How surprising this pleasure of recognition, of the heart
knowing itself in a new way, of putting together what
our lives dismember and disown as childhood’s delusions. It’s not, after all, the human and the non-human, but the ensemble, as a poet famously proclaimed about the universe. And this belief in the power of our yearning, which in many ways is the need of the child that you and I carry into adulthood, making bearable our conscious time on earth: without mystery, there is no life. So you dream the desert, or the ocean beyond vertebral mountains, the far-off peninsula drenched in blue, estuaries pillared with cloud. Because the eye must paint on the mind’s canvas. Even later, when the body unravels, eye or hand, and all you want is for the pain to stop, you still turn to the wind, bending to it, listening to where it has been, where it is going.
I.

IT is morning. Or so I believe. In the monsoon it is sometimes difficult to discern dawn from dusk, shapes in the mist.

I have been sleeping. I am awake now, roused by sounds like riverstone flung in handfuls against the steel roof of my tired bungalow.

I rise. Strands of fresh breath from the long, open window weave in through the plush of the stagnant, musty air of my room.

I move toward the window, hazy, mind slow in torpor.

I light my pipe. I cast about, seeking.

I search in the corners of this untidy room and beyond, outside the window, in the rain and mists, for a memory. It is of a girl.

A girl. A slight, long-limbed girl, wet, revealed beneath a light linen smock and wearing a fedora, its brim sodden and flopping around her sullen face. A girl with a black braid.

From across the gray, pock-marked avenue the girl watches me. I watch her watch me as I move past the window to the closed door.

I read from a slim volume:

*Spring scents,*  
*lavender breath,*  
*float in the open air.*  
*Behind the old oaken gate hides*  
*the bloom.*

The door, closed. I hesitate before the door. My heart pulses a spring river through my body.

II.

“Why do you always feed me fish soup?” she says.

“Because you eat it.”

“I don’t like it. On the other side I eat pomegranates and peaches. I eat venison in rich sauce. And biscuits and jam. And desserts.” She tries to smirk, but her plain beauty won’t permit it.

“Make me a biscuit. I want raspberry jam.”

“I am a fisherman. I cook what I catch.”

“You should clean up this place.”

“It is clean. It is untidy but it is clean.” I watch her survey the cluttered room, the stove in the corner still warming her soup, a threadbare easy chair, wrought iron floor lamp, and the two-shelved cabinet holding the few volumes, my mother’s poetry, I still keep. In the center of the room, the divan where she sleeps. A small table with a mirror and her brush, silver, tarnished.

“Then you should move out some of the junk,” she says.

“There is not much. What would you have me move?”

“That ratty divan.”

“Then where would you sleep?”

The soup steams. I stand at the stove and ladle a large portion
into a wooden bowl. I take the bowl and set it before her.

“On the other side. Over there when I sit for a meal it is in a grand hall, on soft velvet chairs. I eat from fine china and silver. There are proper beds in the chambers, there.” Her eyes close as she recalls the blueprint of the house she says she comes from.

I’ve not been to the other side of the river, at least not beyond the wharf where I sell my catch. I’ve not been up her banks, on the promenade among the fancy women and starched men, preening and meandering, unconcerned; nor further still, onto the bustling boulevards lined, Mother said, with marble houses and golden gutters.

Mother wrote of vapid women and of gilded men.

But I’ve not been there, to the other side. It’s not my place. I am a fisherman, not a gentlemen.

“This is no way to live. Like a pauper.”

(I am a fisherman)

“Do you think it is any way to live?”

(It is the way that I live)

“Is this all you want?”

(This is what I have)

“Why do you come here, then, to this side of the river? To my room. To eat my soup,” I say.

“Because you want me.”

Through the open window I can see beyond the avenue to the river, surging in flood, pressing hard against the bulwarks, engorged and muddied rising inside me. A flush.

III.

She sits on the edge of her bed holding her brush in her lap. She is naked. I wash her bowl, remove the soup from the stove. I can feel her eyes on me, but I will not look at her. I must go to the docks and tend to my nets.

She breaks a long silence. “Perhaps I will not come back tomorrow. Perhaps I’ll stay over there.”

I think of my mother.

“Are you listening? Perhaps I won’t come back.”

I say nothing. I don’t believe her. She has always returned. And she has brought pomegranates with her this time, and a basket to put them in.

I dress and leave to go to the docks. I close the door behind me. When I look back in through the open window she is there, curled on her divan asleep, still holding her tarnished silver brush.

IV.

She would come in the morning. To my bungalow. My room. To eat my fish soup. Each morning, for five weeks, she came. To spend the day here, in my room.

Each day she came back. She came back to me.

Until a week ago. It was one week ago she brought pomegranates in a basket and told me she would never come back.

On the table, beside the mirror, her brush. In the cabinet, my mother’s poems.

V.

I ate a pomegranate on the third day. On the third day the rain gave way to mist and drizzle. I lit my pipe to smoke on the third day.

On that day I went after her. In the drizzle and mist. To the bridge to find the girl. The bridge beneath which I pass daily and...
on which I’d not stood since my mother left. To go over it, to find her. To bring her home.

From the cobbled top of the arch, I call out through the drizzle and my haze to a memory.
“Where are you going, Ma?”
“Over the bridge, little one. Run home.”
“Why, Ma?”
“I must see someone, little one.”
“Papa?”

My mother stiffens; the slap of the gale turns her face from mine. Rain wets my face.
“Can I come, Ma?”
“It’s not your place.”

At the top of the arch I stop. It is not my place. From the cobbled top of the arch I call out for the girl desperately, seeking, but the mists and drizzle swallow my cries.

VI.

It is evening. It could be morning. It is hard to know. The monsoon. Mist and smoke. Haze. Torpor. Despair. I light my pipe. I cast about.

In my mother’s careful script:

Pulverized, drifting
as droplets of cold, gray mist--
remnants of a heart.

I move past the closed door to the open window. The rain has slowed again. On the avenue beleaguered women scurry, heads down in the gloom. A businessman in a white suit and with an umbrella has strayed across the river from the other side. Sullied, his cuffs muddied. A pair of boatsmen brave the riverbank, the wharves to see what the flood has swept away.

What the flood has swept away.

I cast about, seeking. In the mist I search for the girl—memory? A delusion?—but in my fog I cannot discern what I seek among the forms that drift in and out of the drizzle, the mist. Sullied women in white dresses and beleaguered businessmen. I cannot make out what comes or what goes.

I smoke from my pipe. The mist gathers about the street lamps on the avenue in rings. Aureoles.

Before the closed door I hesitate, linger. Listen. I listen for a knock. But there is nothing but the beat of rain on the steel roof.

VII.

The girl is here, before me. Her face is clear but pale, with dark eyes big and round beneath pinched lids, and a small, thin mouth turned down in an expectant pout. A braid, black as coal, snakes from beneath a fedora, gathering rain in droplets like diamonds.

She enters, wordless, steps close, pressing against me her wet smock, breasts to chest (rain like riverstone beats, heart and head pulse), steps back, removes the fedora and lifts her smock, dripping, over her head. Deliberately, she sets her hat on the divan, loosens her braid, shakes free her hair, and turns away.

I take the silver brush from the table, step closer (breathe her lavender and musk and mist), and stroke from beneath her hair, gently against her neck, smooth down her fine, dark cascade of hair, to the small of her back, one hundred times one hundred strokes, til the rain has stopped and the mist has cleared.
My son – Eli – is 2.
Everybody says
his side-eyes write novels in one glance.

My face is the stencil book
Eli uses to sketch his feelings.

I am 25 & know better but
my face doesn’t know how to
keep the eyebrow low—
the mouth shut
hold the smile like a lie
either. My face is a bad blueprint—
a misleading map spilling
What the fuck?
over every conversation my cheekbones visit.

I feel like a 2-year-old,
like
He so cute...

Eli Faces His Face
Justin Rogers

’til you ask him to do something.
’til he wants to change the subject &
I become
Fake!
What’s wrong with him?
Why he do his face like that??

At 25 Eli will begin to feel
how one end of his mouth becomes a
fisherman’s hook piercing every word
it doesn’t agree with. His smiles
an inherited delusion where every
conversation is bait. His jaw a question
marking his face rouge.
Untrustworthy...
Never saying what’s on his mind...
So shady...
He must not check the mirror...
No home training...
What will his children do...
with faces so quick to reveal the tongue
before it’s ready to slice?
The last fisherman has retired to a landlocked village. His hands curl around a cane carved by boys who never believed in leviathans. Boys who nevertheless whisper to each other about marriages to mermaids. The townsfolk mock the old salt’s yarns of islands swallowed by typhoons. Debunk his siren saga as a delusion. They insist on a blueprint future based on roller derby trophies and slaughterhouses. The old man brags of having crossed the equator accompanied by a killer whale’s mating song. Of having stopped time. When he recalls tentacled gods escaping from captivity, fathers and mothers shoo their children into bedrooms where the remaining monsters have been tamed.
bud light cans bright like fish scales scatter across my Floridian shore walking my feet aren’t dashed lines on blue print maps pointing toward horizons or toward cars with black carpets turning shedded sand into messy constellations

my map leads downward to cigarette butted shells not to the ghost baby running into the wake clacking a pail slapping slicked topped oily waves I’m no hero I call to her feet digging gently like a nest of unfertile turtle eggs

father would tell me ghost stories on our beach holding hands we’d draw crucifixes with our big toes in sand he’d point to where the tide took me once how his hands turned into a fisherman’s rod catching Q-tips and mosquitoes

he’d drop my hand to say I was never found once he said a ten-foot witch scooped me in her palms full of sea twisted me into a tiny peninsula baby delusion told me to go he said siren he called me and then we’d keep walking
I bury my toes in sand pointing downwards
baby ghost slips in
the slit between crust and wave
rustling coke bottles
that clap her along our crucifixes
washed away but I still bury my toes hoping
I hit a grave for confirmation.

Canny phishermen in rows of cubicles and
ergonomic chairs, fast fingers dancing,
pick at their shelled pistachios and deceive
while their namesakes wade out into cold,
white-shouldered waves up to their waists
to get that crucial (or so, in their atavistic
faith, they believe) seven feet closer:
the flick, the arc, the humble splash, the careful
lodging of the pole into the damp giving sand
as the horizon draws in the last half of a moon
and the stars and motels afford the only
light. Then the settling into the beach chair,
the lighting of the cigar, the quick hard twist of
the first nip’s cap, and the night of the fisherman’s
salty love affair with the sea begins. While,
back at offices from Pakistan to Cincinnati,
or Mom’s basement, Dad’s nighttime study,
devious celibates design not even the most
feeble blueprint of a gust of briny air, the harsh
descent of a gulp of Bushmills, the miraculous
moment when one hooks and the others desert
their posts to witness in ochre sand and torch light. To assert that these tech “pioneers,” these “new adventurers,” are suffering a virtual delusion and not an actual one would be madness; their artificial joy, unutterable fluorescent sadness.

Aengus, Afterward
Frederick Lord

His second tragedy is finding her again, a thousand mistaken roads later, long after time has transfigured them, two trees twisting up from separated graves, reaching over a religious wall to touch, the wrong legend entirely.

She is always the golden-haired changeling he brought home from the sea and asked to change, the creature who vanished the moment she’d taken his name and so had power over him.

So much for magic.

Now in a crumbling cabin at the edge of a burned forest, hardly the castle built to the blueprint that emerged year after year on the backs of that solitary fisherman’s hands,
the witch he worshipped, storm and calm, 
welcomes him with a smile collapsed like a star, 
hazel sticks for arms, and eyes two gray barn spiders stirring deep in their troubled webs.

She offers him a draught of the potent delusion that old love reborn will make old lovers young.

But gold has a way of going white, he sees, scales returning.
Wise as you’ve become, and full of experience, 
You will have understood what Ithacas mean 
—C. P. Cavafy

I was born with nostalgia in my blood. Immigrants of all parts of the world tell stories of their old country’s perfection, but Diaspora Greeks hold onto their homeland with a special tenacity. You can’t live very long in Greece without hearing songs of the bitter bread and hard, cold beds of ξενιτιά (xenitia), which means exile, being far away from Greece. When I had learned enough Greek to understand these songs, I wondered at the pleasure Greeks seemed to take in singing about exile’s pain. Like the bite of retsina in their wine, like the moan of bagpipes in their music, longing for an Ithaca from the distance of Calypso’s island still moves the Greeks to sing. And while Odysseus, archetype and father of all homeward wanderers, finally got home and stayed, most Greek émigrés take up residence abroad, make xenitia, and distance from Ithaca, their fate. For Greece is poor, its soils are barren and its industry unable to turn a profit. The Greek immigrants in Greece chink glasses of whiskey and of ouzo, and remember mother Greece, the sun-soaked land surrounded by the sparkling Aegean, Mediterranean, Adriatic, and Ionian seas.

I was born into the Greek community of New York City, and went to the parochial school attached to St. Nicholas church. Greek lessons were daily, history on Tuesdays, religion on Fridays, language on the other days. Even though I’d been born right there in Queens, my mother in Brooklyn, and her mother in Manhattan, I was taught that I didn’t come from my birthplace, but from a place across the ocean. By second or third grade, I knew that my father’s island was called Cyprus, and on it was a village that was my particular homeland.

The restaurant owners whose profits kept our St. Nicholas day school open spent summers with their children, my classmates, in their Greek towns of origin, where they swam in the morning, slept through the sultry afternoons, and reveled in the breezy nights with music and good wine. Then they went back to America and told everyone that Greece was paradise, that they would live there if only they could. For the years I attended St. Nicholas, from pre-K until we left at last after I had finished fourth grade, mine was the only hand that didn’t rise when teachers asked who’d be going to Greece in summer. My parents taught high school and couldn’t afford yearly trips. But my father had asked my mother, before they married, if she would go to Cyprus with him one day and she’d said yes. We will live in a place too beautiful to describe, he promised. There will never be any clouds in the sky. They were saving up for what my father, unlike all his family and friends, was determined, against their advice, to achieve: permanent return to
his own island, Cyprus, his Ithaca.

At St. Nicholas in Flushing, two flags, one American and one Greek, stood at each end of the stage in the school’s lunchroom-gym-auditorium-ballroom (for school assemblies, basketball apparatus was removed, and big round lunch tables snapped flat and tucked behind giant drapes). In the school plays that helped mark March 25th independence celebrations, the tallest boys got to be Ottoman pashas and emissaries of the sultan. Lavishly turbaned, fake-bearded, with plastic sabers in their red satin belts, they would swagger onto stage to deliver their threats to the Greeks. The Greeks, in turn, were played by the kids who’d learned Greek best, and who dressed up as nineteenth century soldiers and symbols of Greek authority-resisting pride. The name for these particular freedom fighters is tsoli, τσολιά. Shod in red wooden clogs with a large pom-pom on each pointed toe, and sporting thick, off-white, woolly tights, they climbed imaginary mountains in their bright white skirts (picture a kilt, only shorter, fluffier, almost a masculine tutu). Over buttonless, flowing white shirts, they wore royal blue vests embroidered with gold braids, with long rectangles of matching fabric attached loosely at the shoulder to make swinging, oblong wings. These were the Greek heroes, the mountain rebels, who on every holiday said no to the foreigners, who told the turbaned Turks that they could not have Greek land, could not have Greek women—the females a symbol for home, for Greece itself, for the sacred earth to which we trace our lives.

The scene I remember best was the re-enactment of a time when it seems the no of the τσολιάδες had failed to protect Greek women from the hands of the Turks, so that they had to protect themselves. And so they did, we learned, when in mid-

December 1803, the enemy began to close in on the place where a group of women hid with their infants, and those women took their children in their arms and ran towards a bluff. Before their pursuers could catch and “dishonor” them (we never asked our teachers what this meant), the women tightened their kerchiefs, straightened their dresses, and broke into song, dancing in loops toward the cliff. Tracing complicated footwork over the snow, dead grass, and rock, they took their last steps—still free, still honorable, still Greek—and one by one they jumped, singing still, "Farewell to you, oh poor, suffering world. Farewell to you, sweet life." The music was at once woeful and triumphant, terrible in its sweetness, a keening that is as broken as it is proud.

Our teachers, of course, never explained that the women’s joy came from having managed, just barely, to escape their enemies’ raging lusts by choosing suicide. They simply ordered us to bring dolls from home, and hold them as we jumped off the stage onto the heap of mats prepared for the play. It was fun, jumping from the stage in long dresses and headscarves decorated with fake gold coins. Although we didn’t understand much about what we were doing, I think we did get the sense that this mysterious dance, like the strange costumes and the language that was so hard to speak without mistakes, told us something about where we came from, what made us distinct from the kids who went to public school, who played on our streets.
One day, I was in our backyard making burgers out of mud, and my brother Dino was playing with an inflatable toddler-ball on our thick lawn. Our Dad worked in a little vegetable patch where he grew tomatoes big enough to win prizes. He told me to look at the sky.

“You see what kind of a day it is today, Joanna? No clouds. In Cyprus it’s like this every day of the year.” He described yet again the house his friend was building us, with verandas where we’d sit each morning to enjoy the breeze.

“In Cyprus it never gets too cold to sit outside,” he said. Although my father says that I’ve imagined this next part, I remember him adding “or too hot.” One day, a big envelope from his best friend Andros arrived, and I sat on his lap with big blue sheets of paper. He explained that Andros, his best high school friend, had become an architect and these were the blueprints of the house Andros had designed for us. He pointed and said, “See here? This is your room. This is your veranda.”

Every June, I warned my teachers and classmates I might not see them in September. I would be a cross between Laura Ingalls Wilder and Heidi, and our house would perch on the crest of a mountain, from which I’d roll down a grassy hillside towards school. My father promised me a goat of my own (I would even get to milk it) and we’d have chickens for fresh eggs.

My father believed in Cyprus as a land without a flaw, and as long as he was in America, he couldn’t admit that paradise was a delusion—that Cyprus is a furnace from May to late September. Even when we lived there, winter would erase his memory of heat, and he would plant American grass, as though diligent watering would make it grow as thick as it did in New York. It never took.

I was ten years old when he got my mother and brother and me to Asgata at last. I remember the day well: I remember the wind, the look of the fields. We parked on a dirt road just above a large plot of land belonging to my grandfather. I took off on my own and walked up and down the hills for more than an hour alone. I’d never seen so much raw earth before; my suburban birthplace was buried under asphalt and grass. I returned to my parents holding strange leaves, and my father named them: the roundish carob, slim almond, and little gray-green olive. I begged for a few more minutes and scrambled back up the hillside where the pinkish earth slid beneath my feet. Veins ran through the rocks, white like quartz and dark red, like clay. My fingers grew sticky from the twigs I broke to watch them ooze their viscous milk. Unlike New York’s maple and oak, the trunks of carob trees separated at a point so low I could climb them with my short-for-a-ten-year-old limbs. Dry stalks of asphodel broke in my hands with a satisfying crack as I collected the pieces to make a miniature raft. The underbrush ran downhill as far as I could see. Even the smell—thyme and sage and dust—hinted of a wildness that was new and yet familiar, as if all my life I had been searching for this place.

More than twenty years after that day, I look back now and consider the way, at ten, I felt I was arriving home to a place I had never seen—as if my father’s home had lurked in some inherited recesses of my imagination. For years before, I’d been trying and failing to make a tree house in our yard in Queens. I couldn’t climb our oak or carve a home among the needles of our spruce. In Asgata, my brother and I made fortresses in low-branched almond and carob trees and I made a hollow space within a terebinth with a few hours’ work. This place had been in me always; it was my
origin and the setting of my story.

Not long after our gleeful arrival, however, my father’s happiness waned. We had trouble adjusting, of course, to new schools and jobs, but my mother, who had promised my father before they married that she’d support a move to Cyprus one day, cheered us up, promised I’d make new friends soon. My father didn’t seem to notice our troubles, as though too wrapped up in his own—in the shock of finding Cyprus so very different from his dreams.

The first disappointment cut deep, though I didn’t understand what had happened until I grew up. My parents rented a hotel apartment first, and the next day drove thirty minutes up into the Troodos mountains, where Andros was building our house. On the lot where the nearly-finished house should have stood, we found only the cement foundations in the square shape of rooms, with four rusty steel rods poking out at each corner. A few yards down the mountain from the squares, there rose a long wall, also of cement, also with rusty rods poking out.

“It’s a retaining wall, and costs a lot,” my father explained to my mother when she asked where all our money had gone. Dino and I threw pine cones at each other and scampered up the slope and lay back on the ground, soft with its blanket of pine needles. Twenty years later, Andros was in court, declaring bankruptcy. He stole from others much more than the twenty or so thousand he took from my father, and my father told my mother we had no hope of recovering anything. In the end, my parents found a way to buy a small house nearby. After years of a long, dizzying ride to and from school, my parents built on some of my grandfather’s land in Asgata, much closer to town than Troodos. To my father, this was a defeat. “I never thought I’d end up back in Asgata,” he’d say as we prepared to move away from the mountains.

“But you’re in Cyprus,” my mother argued.

I could not see, then, that the half-modernized half-backward Asgata of the nineties was a mockery of the paradise the first, desiring nostalgia had created in his mind. I didn’t understand then that he had idealized the mountains because he had gone there on Boy Scout trips, and moving us there was his attempt to recover the excitement of childhood sleepovers with his friends.

Nostalgia comes from two Greek words: “nostos,” homecoming, and “algos,” which means pain. The word nostalgia usually refers to the traveler’s longing for home—that familiar strain. The traveler’s sweet homeward urge is, however, just one of two distinct kinds of pain that the word nostalgia can express. We mourn the loneliness of waiting to get home, but say nothing of what happens if nostos is achieved. After we find ourselves home, we expect a sudden bliss. But real places disappoint. Upon arrival, we feel not bliss but algos once again, and this a different ache, an ache that isn’t sung.

It is because of this other algos, this nostos-induced pain, that for my family, the excited joy of reaching a Greek land was short-lived. People who went back for vacations kept up with the ways Greece and Cyprus were rapidly changing, and what is more, those changes matter little to someone just on break from real life. My father, however, had to find work, build a house, and make friends in a place which, when he’d left thirty years before, had neither phones nor electricity. He remembered honest people who spoke simply, but he found shrewd businessmen and a people who’d been through so much violence they were suspicious, guarded. He planted fruit trees, cucumbers and tomatoes like in New York, but
always said “next year” about the chickens and goat—too messy, too much work. Because everyone else had at least one relative with a coop, the local grocery store never sold eggs. To get them, we had to knock on our neighbors’ doors or drive to the city.

My father remembered rich, clean earth, but weeds had covered his parents’ untilled fields. In the absence of poison, rodents ate into the hearts of all the carob trees. After years of reflection, I’ve come to suspect that once he’d made the move, and we had arrived in the longed-for land, the land nostalgia had rendered perfect in imagination, he stopped longing, and he stopped hoping, and for this reason has had very little joy ever since.

Not long after they had arrived, my parents gave up on Cyprus. The teaching jobs my father’s friend, a principal, had promised for both my parents did not exist. They stuck it out for one winter, with my mother finding work in a souvenir shop and my father walking around the block, growing more bitter with each lap, and as soon as I completed fifth grade, they packed the house up, put us back into American schools, but soon got disillusioned with America again. They picked up and left over and over because of problems with jobs, problems raising us kids, problems living too far from the family, and problems living too close.

Ex-pats can complain about the stupid Cypriot bureaucracy and remember fondly the efficiency of their homelands. Native Greeks and Cypriots use the name επαναπατριζόμενοι, “repatriates,” to refer to émigrés who return. I, however, prefer to call us “de-ex-pats” because we left the homeland for a new land, and then left that one behind too—a double exile.

My parents went to Cyprus “for good” together four times, each time going back to America. Before his final move to Cyprus, my father whispered to me that if my mother was too fed up with moving, he would build himself a little house and live alone.

I nodded yes—and hid what I know about nostalgia, what Cavafy knows about what Ithacas mean. In “Ithaki,” Cavafy admonishes readers to demand nothing of their destination. Ithaki has given you the beautiful journey. The Laestrygonians made you wise. The pain has become your teacher. When you reach home, you must expect nothing, having already received the gift, the gift of desire. Having reached its shores, Ithaca has nothing more to give you now.

And so you go—put out to sea again. In Athens, Cyprus, and the immigrant parts of New York City, old men haunt the watersides. In fishermen’s caps, long mustaches, and glasses, they clutch newspapers rolled up like telescopes. They walk up and down and look at the boats, beyond the boats at the waves, and up at the sky. My father also wanders, alone, towards the shore. And I, too, am always looking for water, large bodies of it, and the horizon.

I went to college in Ithaca—not the Ionian island, the city in upstate New York. The unending precipitation and relentless cloud cover, low, grey, and ugly, hid even that dull slate-colored strip of Cayuga Lake that, on clear days, served me for a glimpse of water to soothe the absence of my Mediterranean. All the Cornell Greeks used to gather on the weekends and complain. Besotted with yearning for return, at a place a little deeper than romance, the Greeks drank too much and danced together and complained about the absence of light and about this grey prison-city Ithaca, its people so cheerful and its hills so low. We complained beautifully, ending the nights at three or four in the morning with the notes of nostalgia on a guitar. The old songs, the rebetika of refugees from Asia Minor, brought together undergrads, grads, and
professors, who all desired their own beautiful Greece.

The Greeks sang of the sea and the moonlight, of their country’s continuing fall from glory. Give the Greek an empty chair, a tumbler full of alcohol or air, and he will dance the zeimbekiko, the solitary dance of the Byzantine border-lords. The group makes a circle round the man and he dances, tumbling into each next step, tripping, bending, falling, rising just before he hits the floor. Around him in a circle, we clap and bend our necks not in worship but in love, and the dancer swings his leg circles over a stranger’s neck.

In the summer of 2010, I had just been admitted to a five-year graduate program that would be sending me to Greece each summer. “I’ll have the best of both worlds,” I told my Cypriot friends and family. “A salary from America and four months to come here and write on the beach.” It’s a compromise that leaves me where my father spent his life, on the edge of two worlds. In one of my favorite songs, songwriter Manolis Rasoulis observes, “The sweetest homeland is the heart,” and its land is made of pain and joy.

The heart may be the sweetest homeland, and Greece, as Rasoulis writes, may have taught us to breathe and to die wherever we are, but the Cyprus of carob, terebinth, and cyclamen yet pulls me. I feel that I know who I am through this yearning—for the churning of seas, the light of the sun, the slope of a rock, the lift of a wave. I love to run in the heat of an American day and watch sunlight sparkle on water that makes me ache even harder for Cyprus—where I cannot stay. While I run, sweat runs down my face as it does when I run in the sun-parched hills close to my home. I love to smell ocean; even in America, I always find water to run beside, to smell the salt and the dying fish as I remember mountains sloping into the sea. I live the new Greek poetry and the old, old stories—I live my myth and my story—as I run by the shore of an Atlantic inlet that smells to me like the wide Mediterranean Sea.
Landscape Decrees
Rikki Santer

after Kobo Abe’s *The Woman in the Dunes*

From rock to stone to sand we learn
to stagger breathing as we skim
across singing dunes improvising
maps like fishermen the shadows
of crows the moonlight that
licks patterns of our days
jeweled insects commune
with our knees, shins.

We crawl along the rocky
precipice just wide enough
for bellies the blueprint
of our snags and tears
the drop below is deep
we don’t look down
our skin’s parchment
may seal on its own.

Granules will be
our last witness
Delusion our
escort—plummet
or slow sink—
vision will take
us as light
subtracts first
from edges
horizontal
then
vertical
the law
of sand
& sentence.
Now you are here, walking through tall stalks of corn, fingering a rat skull in your pocket like a lucky penny you picked up along the way. Now imagine the claw that felled her or the blade, ants entering the eyehole, hawk who finished her off, your shawl stripped like corn silk and husk. Red fox darting across the path, no other human, just rushes, cattails, marsh grass, reeds where the swamp used to be, where there once was lily pad, frogs croaking their throat song into the night. Now it is quiet, swollen wall of yellow-green after the calm, after the storm, after the delusion of storm, deluge. In your hand, a gift, a swarm of angry bees, a reason to go on. Don’t carry the burden of tomorrow. Don’t carry the burden of any hour. Carry the bird in the tool shed out again. Carry the bluebird out with the wind, blueprint of wind: tulle, satin, silk, husk, all as before, the rust-red fox at dusk.
Now you are gone. Outside the camera’s frame, tanned hands of a fisherman bending down to net the day’s catch. Now you are full,

lulled to the sill, cellophane, cello playing, selling the dream of tomorrow dangling

on the end of a string. Now you are young again. Now you are not afraid to die.

Now let the wind carry you home.
Contributors


Enid Smith Becker is a painter living and working in the Pacific Northwest. Her art explores the natural world and human interaction with space and place. The Seattle Art Museum Sales Gallery carries a selection of her most recent work—abstracted landscapes with collaged fibers.

Aman Bhargava is a sixteen-year-old photographer from India. He loves to read, and writes poetry about the pictures he takes. He is currently working on an urban anthropology photo-essay on the lives of people working in the local wharfs and markets.

Chris Boyko is an Atlanta-based artist known for his surrealist style. In 2014, he graduated from Kennesaw State University, receiving his B.F.A in Visual Art. He has participated in multiple exhibitions, including INSANITY at Jackson Junge Gallery in Chicago and Codes of Faith at Laura I. Gallery in London.

Michael Brockley is a sixty-eight-year-old retired school psychologist who still works part-time in rural northeast Indiana schools. Recent poems have appeared in *Atticus Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Third Wednesday*, and *Jokes Review*.

Michael Brosnan lives in Exeter, New Hampshire. He is the author of *Against the Current*, a book on inner-city education, and he serves as the senior editor for Teaching While White. His poetry has appeared in various literary journals, including *Confrontation*, *Borderlands*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Barrow Street*, *New Letters*, *The Moth*, and *Rattle*. He also has a collection of poems due out in Fall 2017 from Harbor Mountain Press.

Cathy Cook writes news articles, columns, poems, creative nonfiction, grocery lists, and fiction. Her work has been published in *The Daily Lobo*, *Conceptions Southwest*, and *The Chaffey Review*. Her poetry is inspired by the body of the land and by the landscape of her body.

Alexa Dearing is a twenty-two-year-old photographer. She aspires to inspire others through the use of her creative eye and camera lens.

Joanna Eleftheriou earned degrees in English from Cornell, Old Dominion, and The University of Missouri. She has published translations, poems, and essays in such journals as *Arts and Letters*, *Apalachee Review*, and *Crab Orchard Review*.

Beverly Fesharaki is a member of Inscape Poets Tacoma and Sundays with Van Goth in Seattle. Her work has been published in *Wrist Magazine*, *Poets on the Coast* 2014 and 2017 (Museum of Northwest Art), and *Women Writing: On the Edge of Dark and Light*. She lives in Mukilteo, Washington.
Brent Fisk is a writer from Bowling Green, Kentucky with over 300 poems, essays, and short stories published so far, including work in Rattle, Prairie Schooner, Cincinnati Review, and Southeast Review. He has an B.A. in English Literature, and an M.A. in Creative Writing from Western Kentucky University.

John Paul Gardner is an internationally exhibited, award-winning artist currently living and working in New York and Nebraska. His works range from immense installations to intimate works with paper. Gardner is currently an Assistant Professor of Visual Arts and Gallery Director at Peru State College.

Nicole Gelinas grew up in a small agricultural town in Idaho, and later moved to Washington to earn a B.F.A in Visual Communication. She attended Northwest College of Art, double majoring in fine art and graphic design where she graduated top of her class in 2009. Gelinas works in a variety of mediums, including, but not limited to, oil, graphite, charcoal, film, and digital and alternative photographic processes. She is inspired by abstraction and minimalism, but focuses primarily on the process, experimentation, and implementation of art-making.

Bryn Gribben received her Master’s degree in cultural studies from Kansas State University in 1998 and her Ph.D. in Victorian literature from the University of Washington in 2005. She is an instructor of English at Seattle University, teaching literature, composition, and creative non-fiction. Gribben has also taught at the Richard Hugo House and volunteered for 826 Seattle.

Lois Marie Harrod is the author of several poetry collections and chapbooks, including Fragments from the Biography of Nemesis (Cherry Grove Press) and How Marlene Mae Longs for Truth (Dancing Girl Press). Her work has appeared in literary journals and online e-zines from American Poetry Review to Zone 3. She teaches Creative Writing at The College of New Jersey.

Kim Harvey lives in Alameda, California. She holds a B.F.A. from Virginia Commonwealth University and is an alumna of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers. Her work has previously been published and is forthcoming in The Comstock Review. She was awarded 2nd Prize in the 2017 Muriel Craft Bailey Poetry Contest judged by Ellen Bass.

Lynne Knight has published five full-length poetry collections, four chapbooks, and a translation, with the author, of Ito Naga’s Je sais. Her sixth collection will be published by Sixteen Rivers Press in 2018. Among her awards and honors are a PSA Award, an NEA grant, and a Rattle Poetry Prize.

Elizabeth Landrum is a retired clinical psychologist living on an island in the Pacific Northwest. Her poems have appeared in Cirque, Shark Reef, Southern Women’s Review, Grey Sparrow, Touch, and Soundings Review.

Frederick Lord lives in Bow, New Hampshire with his wife and step-cat. He teaches English at Southern New Hampshire University.

Bryan Miller is a Middle and Upper School English teacher at a small private school in Powell, Ohio. Having earned his M.A. in English from the University of Kentucky in 2002 and his B.A. in Creative Writing and Poetry from Murray State University in 1995, he has had poems and short stories published in 3Elements Literary Review, Blinders Journal, Extracts: Poetry and Short Story Anthology, Z-Composition, and The Independent.

Dan Murphy grew up in Lowell, Massachusetts and lives nearby with his two daughters, wife, and black lab. He earned his M.F.A. from Boston University and teaches writing in Boston. His work has been published in Sugar House Review, The Adirondack Review, Panhandler Magazine, Blue Collar Review, and elsewhere.
Maureen O’Brien has work that was short-listed for the 2016 Fish Flash Fiction Prize in Ireland, and has most recently appeared in Rhino, Blink-ink and The Prompt Lit Mag. In June 2016, she was in residency for two weeks at Arte Studio Ginestrella in Assisi, Italy, working on Memories are Birds, her memoir-in-progress.

J. Ray Paradiso is a recovering academic in the process of refreshing himself as an experimental writer and a street photographer.

Justin Rogers is a poet, educator, coach, and venue-owner from the city of Detroit, Michigan. Rogers is an advocate for literacy among inner-city youth, and the amplification of Black voices. Still performing around the Mid-West and teaching poetry with InsideOut Literary Arts, Rogers actively shares poems surrounding living and growing as a Black man in America. He also acts as an editor with Wusgood.black magazine – a magazine specifically published for urban artists of color. Rogers most recently has work published or forthcoming in GRAMMA Poetry, Mobius Magazine, Radius Poetry, and Tinderbox Poetry Journal.

Maria Rouphail is the author of the chapbook Apertures, a 2012 finalist in Finishing Line Press’s New Women’s Voices competition. Second Skin, her second collection of poems, was published in the Fall of 2015 by Main Street Rag. Her poem “Crater at Popocatepetl” won Honorable Mention in the 2016 Randall Jarrell Poetry Competition. Her poem “It’s OK to Say These Things” has been anthologized in Red Sky (Sable Books 2016). The North Carolina Poetry Society and the Poet Laureate of North Carolina have judged her poem “Annunciation” a finalist in the NCPS Poet Laureate Competition for 2017. Her work has appeared in the proceedings of the Nazim Hikmet Poetry festival, as well as in Pine Song, Main Street Rag, International Poetry Review, and Wild Goose Poetry Review. She is currently at work on her third poetry collection.

Rikki Santer has had work appear in numerous publications, including Ms. Magazine, Poetry East, Margie, Crab Orchard Review, Grimm, Slipstream, and The Main Street Rag. Two of her published poetry collections have explored place: Front Nine (the Hopewell earthworks of Newark, Ohio) and Kahiki Redux (the late Kahiki Supper Club of Columbus, Ohio). Clothesline Logic was released by Pudding House as a finalist in their national chapbook competition, Fishing for Rabbits was published by Kattywompus Press, and her newest collection Make Me That Happy is forthcoming from NightBallet Press.

Brian Schulz lives in north-central Massachusetts where, when not riding or walking its country roads and trails, he consults with young entrepreneurs and writes fiction and poetry.

Guido Siporin was born in Logan, Utah and raised in Portugal, Italy, Oregon, and North Carolina. He was first inspired artistically during the year he spent abroad in Italy. He began by sketching and painting, as well as developing his photography skills during his travels. Later on, he joined Special Forces and served for three years as an active combat soldier. Afterwards he received his degree in Government and Counter-Terrorism, and works mainly as a freelance security consultant today. Art always has and will have a large place in his life and heart, and he continues to sketch, paint, and photograph daily.
Alec Solomita has had fiction published in several journals, including The Mississippi Review, Southwest Review, and The Adirondack Review. He has published poetry in Literary Orphans, MockingHeart Review, 3Elements Literary Review, and elsewhere. His poetry chapbook DO NOT FORSAKE ME was published by Finishing Line Press in early October 2017, and his story “The Return” was recently chosen by Winning Writers as an honorary finalist. He lives in Somerville, Massachusetts.

George L. Stein is a writer and photographer living in Northwest Indiana. George works in both film and digital formats in the urban decay, architecture, fetish, and street photography genres. His emphasis is on composition. George has been published in Midwestern Gothic, After Hours, and Darkside Magazine.

Leslie Sullivan is a linguaphile, writer, marketer, and collage artist living in Hamtramck, Michigan.

Nanc Tingley is a curator and independent scholar of South and Southeast Asian art. While she’s written fiction in the closet for years, she’s recently come out. Her first book A Head in Cambodia was published in 2017 by Swallow Press/Ohio University Press. The next in this mystery series, A Death in Bali, is forthcoming. Her mornings are dedicated to writing, her afternoons to the pleasure of the potter’s wheel. She lives in northern California on a hill.

J. Marcus Weekley has writing forthcoming (or newly published) in Across the Margin, bottle rockets, and Chrysanthemum, among others. Marcus has a collection of ekphrastic prose poems, Singing in the Merman Cemetery, forthcoming in 2018 from CW Books (preorders for fifteen bucks). He also paints, photographs, and writes screenplays. See his work at www.flickr.com/photos/whynottryitagain2.


McKenzie Zalopany is a creative writing student at the University of South Florida. She was the Spring 2017 winner of the Estelle J. Zbar Award for her poem “Cat Call.” Later this year she will be published at The Odet and Badpony Magazine. She currently is a freelance illustrator at The Webster and a market intern for a writers residency called Keep St. Pete Lit.
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.
Mikaela Shea is in her thesis hours of her MFA at Columbia College Chicago and was recently a writer-in-residence at Ragdale Foundation. She has published stories in *Midwestern Gothic*, *Copperfield Review*, *Waypoints Magazine*, *Foliate Oak*, *Hypertext Magazine*, *Paragraph Planet*, *Vagina: The Zine*, Columbia College's annual *Story Week Reader*, as well as a children’s book at the State Historical Society of Iowa. Mikaela is currently writing a novel and is Editor-in-Chief of *3Elements Review*. @mikaelashea.

Megan Collins received an MFA in Creative Writing from Boston University. She teaches creative writing at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts, as well as literature at Central Connecticut State University. 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, *Persephone’s Sister*, will be published in Spring 2019 by Touchstone. Check out Megan’s work on her website, megan-collins.com.

Katherine Davis earned an MFA in fiction from the University of Maryland and a PhD from the University of Tennessee. Her most recent work appears in *Gravel* and in *Broad River Review*, and she won Gigantic Sequins’ 2014 Flash Fiction Contest. Currently, she is living in Wisconsin with a small flock of cockatiels and is completing her first novel.

Sarah Wylder Deshpande has published fiction and poetry in *The Dunes Review*, *Tammy Journal*, *3Elements Review*, *Gravel Magazine*, and *Fire Tetrahedron*. She holds an MFA from the University of Maryland. She lives in Oregon with her husband, son, and border collie.

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.
Marlon Fowler is a Des Moines–based designer and web developer for 3Elements Review, as well as a web developer for a Fortune 100 company. 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, YouTube, sports, movies & TV shows, video games, and Chicago food. Marlon would really like to learn more about PHP, and see more of the world.