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the BROWN LITERARY REVIEW

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The *Review* is published twice a year, in December and May. Submissions of poetry, short fiction, and literary criticism are accepted and should be sent via e-mail to [blr@gmail.com](mailto:blr@gmail.com).

The editors would like to thank the Creative Arts Council of Brown University for their generous funding and support. It is their patronage that has made this issue possible.

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Printed by Brown Graphics Services.  
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A Note from the Editor:

In a 1946 essay titled *Books vs. Cigarettes*, George Orwell made a public gripe about the waning importance of books. He had heard it reported from a friend that the decline in reading was not due to a failing interest in literature, but rather an increasing interest in thrift. It was perceived, apparently, that books were a costly leisure. Puzzled by this complaint, Orwell calculated the sum that he himself had spent annually on purchased books. It was a meager amount, and he wrote that “after listening to the radio [books are] probably *the* cheapest” recreation.

We are now separated many years from this essay, and television and the internet have supplanted radio as our chief distractions from print literature. There is nothing malicious in this change: indeed we absorb salient and pressing matters much more quickly than Orwell’s newspaper readers. We lose in this transition, however, the sweet enrichment of ideas and concepts that follow the slow enjoyment of literature. A fine, aged bourbon brings more pleasure to the tongue than a low-carb beer. This is why we read.

Furthermore, we ought not to limit ourselves only to the literature of the established canon. This is why we read reviews. Indeed, when *The Paris Review* was founded in 1953, William Styron wrote to the readers that “*The Paris Review* should welcome these people into its pages: the good writers and good poets, the non-drumbeaters and non-axe-grinders. So long as they’re good.” This simple maxim helped carve the printing type of literary journals. A fine review ought to be both inviting and scrupulous.

And these pages contain a gamut of perspectives. Consider, for example, the pieces serving as our bookends. The issue begins with the calm but striking gravitas of Rawaan Alkhatib’s *Ghazal II* and ends with the pithy and energetic charm of Molly Finnegan’s *Yes, Keswick (Ten Intersections)*. The Brown Literary Review was founded in order to provide another outlet for talented undergraduate writers, both inside Brown and out, to share their work in print. Our door will always be open, so long as they’re good.

J.B.

## Ghazal II

*Ramaan Alkhatib*

We watched the steam unfurl among the flowers,  
Hands warm with teacups. Our laughter a world among the flowers.

The hurt in my chest like a young fern,  
A tight pale green curl among the flowers.

The burr of your voice, your hidden tongue. My heart  
The hollow of a tree. Your words whirl among the flowers.

Circe's horde of hogs began their meals besotted;  
Ulysses was suspicious. Am I the swine or pearl among the flowers?

A day in the park, expectant duckponds and old trees.  
We watch a balloon chase a tiny girl among the flowers.

The earth beneath your fingers smells of apples and feathers;  
You yearn for rain. Dead leaves uncurl among the flowers.

The rivers of heaven are named for your soul.  
Watch tonight's lilting leaves heave and hurl among the flowers.

## GE Washer

*Amy Simone Piller*

I would like to know you -  
not like a bright green plastic Easter egg  
shut up like a broken music box  
I keep opening.

I would like to take you -  
not like an opening blossom  
rushed indoors for a vase  
I keep shattering.

I would like to listen to you -  
not like a symphony on a cruise ship  
excluded from the conversations  
I keep hearing.

My grandmother wore out  
her GE washer in one year,  
shocking the servicemen.

And she just liked the humming sound.

## Sonnet for Matt

*Marc Jaffee*

You passaged, fit and start,  
between the acts. I breathed my part—  
clinging— by rising tiptoe to receive  
a grip. Midnight was a slow weave:  
your fingers kneading mine  
twined in knot-time. Glass of wine  
vertigoes the table-edge. I felt  
I could fall to pieces— yet I held.

Closer now. Keep  
an honest crinkle in the rustled cloth.  
Dream the clearest dream, and steep  
the steam of sleep in with this broth.  
Beneath the blinds, light begins to sweep.  
Wings tap: a moth floats on its slanted path.

## Ballast

*Flynn Berry*

She pulled the shrimp through her teeth and tossed the shell into a white ceramic bowl, butter dripping down her wrist. It was crispy and caked with salt and pepper.

“Do you want a bite?” He held out a spoonful of chowder so fresh that sand crunched between his teeth.

“No, thanks, I like this.”

“Come on, have some. They did it just right.” He leaned towards her across the heavy oak table.

“I said I’m fine.”

He leaned back into his chair and dragged the tip of his spoon across the soup, making faces and mountains in the surface.

“Want more water?”

She shook her head. He pushed back heavily on the chair, the wooden legs scraping china blue tiles. She bent her head and gripped a crabshell between the crackers, shattering the pink shell. From the kitchen where he stood at the sink, she looked like she was praying.

They had come here years ago. There are no waves in Maryland, but there are crab shacks on every block. They ran into the house that August, even though the air conditioning was broken and it was one in a string of hottest days of the summer. They ran barefoot up the stairs, to the bedroom with a widow’s walk and view of pine trees stuck in the ground halfway to heaven. They opened the fridge and checked the water from the bath taps.

He turned off the tap and sat back down at the table. He ate a salad slowly, arugula and balsamic vinegar with a salty undercurrent that reminded him of waterslides.

“Do you like that?” He gestured with his glass at a painting on the wall.

“Yeah, I do. I like that the lines are curved and there’s no vanishing point. You can’t see where the lines are angled towards.”

“Did you know lobstermen are allowed to shoot anyone they catch at their pots?” He asked, prying open a clam.

“Really? Vigilantes, eh?”

“But the worst that’s happened is one shot a hole in another’s boat.”

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She thought, “So what’s our vanishing point? When will I wake up to an empty bed, a warm spot beside me and the plates not yet cleared away?”

She reached across the table and took a sip of his water. He moved his foot towards hers underneath the table.

“Every seven years, your skin cells are completely regenerated. You don’t have one skin cell that you had seven years ago.” He said, ripping a piece of brown paper from the takeout bag and twirling it between his fingers.

“When was the last time we came here?”

He smiled. He remembered moving aside her dress strap and kissing her sunburnt shoulder. He remembered the walk home from the restaurant. Above their close moving bodies, the moon swung like a lantern prop. The milky stars wavered in the slices of blue left open by the buildings. He let his thoughts flower and fall behind them as they walked. He wanted to stretch the town out like taffy. He wanted the sidewalk to run backwards under their feet. He wanted her, her mouth stained with salt and lemon juice, to stay shuffling by his side forever.

She stood up. “I want to go swimming.”

He followed her, crunching pine needles under his feet.

“Don’t turn and look til we get there.”

They raced each other, an even match. They stopped at the lobster pots, half a mile out. Glancing at each other, they turned and looked back to the shore, the beach curving back and coming forward. The hills were dotted with lights from behind strong glass windows. The lighthouse swung around, dividing the dark water into neat sections.

He kicked onto his back.

“Did it sink?” She sipped seawater and spit it out.

“The lobster boat? No, the bullet just cracked the hull.”

She smiled at him and flipped her legs up, diving straight down. He treaded water and watched the surface, trying to see her white legs. He pictured her descending, one hand on the rope anchoring the buoy to the lobster pot buried in the sand. The water would be dark now, not even the lighthouse seeping down. She would have to close her eyes and feel along the rope. Too much time passed and a plum pit grew in his stomach. He closed his eyes so tight he saw red, orange, veins like a lattice window. He wanted to shout her name but couldn’t crack the quiet. He felt the plum pit break open and throw shoots up his throat.

She finally splashed up, laughing.

They both thought about the drive down, seven years ago. They had loved each other slowly, quietly, feeling shin bones and soft skin.

They treaded water around each other, spinning in a slow circle, the lobster buoys twirling and dipping around them.

She lifted her hand above the water, opened it, and let sand fall. They would go back to the shore, to the sand, and their bones would knit together again.

## Doctrine of signatures

*Kate Schapira*

looks dusty by the end of summer  
—hepatica on a license plate for cancer  
research. Stutter, dig  
into your beauty. Flick of a tablecloth: press  
conference becomes barbecue. Concrete, forget. A man  
tattooed on the belly reclines  
until cleaned up. Plane trees, sycamores, same  
thing, colorful  
women across the street. Size of a building once  
staffed another way  
a cap on entrance. Hush stuffed with people. Panhandlers  
meet in the bright like magic. That  
which resembles, heal. Spine  
removable by architecture carries  
a pad for drawing tall buildings. Stunned profile pops  
on a screen. Downtown a lift a beautiful  
face. Magic, appear.

## Perfectionist

*Donald Tetto*

You always tweak  
your poems to death,  
she told me,  
and I brushed her hair out of her face,  
some lint off her shoulder,  
stood her straighter up,  
lifted her chin with my finger,  
and told her  
I had no idea  
what she was talking about.

## An Answer

*Alexandra Zelman*

It was no satisfactory answer. Gerald stood up.

“If,” he said again, “if you tell me I should stay, I’ll stay. If you tell me I should go, I’ll go. If you say, stay awhile, I’ll stay a while. If you say, sit down for two minutes, I’ll sit down for one hundred and twenty seconds.”

As though loosed by the cutting of a string, the girl’s head fell forward and sprang up again, suddenly possessed.

“Do,” she said, “what you like.”

The light bulb that sat like a nest at the tip of the clay lamp began to die. Its dying was slow and inconstant and the girl began to notice it but did not care.

“I don’t know what you want me to do,” said Gerald, sitting beside her now. “I don’t know what I can do, or what I should do, or what you want for me to do. You won’t give me an answer, and you won’t listen to me.”

Gerald lifted himself and winding his spine quickly around he hit his head lightly against the lamp. Supported at the elbow he peered down behind the couch to where the green head of the fly lay broken on the dark, cherry wood floor.

“I could pick it up and put it away, if that would help.”

“No,” she said shortly. “What would you pick it up *with*, it’s dirty, remember, it’s a dirty, stinking, bestial-”

“Stop it, I’ll go,” he said, and took in all his breath and held it as he stood. Presently Gerald watched her stiff head sticking up like a tomato from the ground. He watched it from behind the couch, immobile in the dim light.

“Pick it up,” said the low voice of the girl shooting into the room. Gerald stopped and, in a moment, returned to where he could see the tiny speck of green shining below him. He bent down and scooped the tiny body with the half-moon of his thumbnail. Holding his nail above his right palm, Gerald jerked his wrist repeatedly. He noticed a missing wing where the green now lay sunken at the center of his palm; raising his arm steadily he beheld the tiny body. Gerald flinched involuntarily. Again he bent down. The wing shown occultly from within the interstice between the wooden planks. He retrieved it.

“Here we go,” he said, sitting on the couch again, this time on the opposite side of the girl. “I’ve got it now, see? I feel, I feel pity for it now. I’m holding it in my hand, aren’t I?”

“You can’t pity it. And you don’t.”

Her words beat like a knocker knocks wood heavily on a door at the center of his chest. “How can you pity a downright dirty-”

“Because you can,” he interrupted. “Because like you said,” he told her, a bit heatedly now, “everything lives until by default it dies. And we should try to keep everything living as best we can for as long as we can and if we don’t it means we don’t believe in life which means we don’t believe in ourselves which means we can’t feel things which disables us. You see,” he said, finishing on almost one breath the recital as of something biblical, “I remember everything you say.”

At the night table the lamp had gone off.

“Where will you put it,” she said flatly, unmoving.

“Where would you *like* me to put it?” Gerald asked, his voice dropping. Anticipating, he added: “Please tell me.”

“Put it wherever you’d like,” she said.

“I love you,” he said.

There came, after a moment, a sound as of a sink at the end if its draining; peripherally she watched by the full blue of a not yet darkened sky as he took his palm between his lips and suckled it.

**A b o u t F a c e**

*Michael Gizzi*

How much longer can I inhabit this dumb-waiter  
across from the Civil War  
am I kidding  
life is a dream  
on the street Little Caesar  
lets Spain pass from his lips  
via Ecuador  
(or is it Peru)  
no sooner am I out the door  
than I want to be home reading  
I cut off my nose to identify  
myself string all the hands  
I've ever held  
around my neck and expect them  
to do their job  
when my aptitude test came  
back it read  
old men have intestines like rabbits  
only Romans  
have ever been this bored  
shall I import lions to eat myself at home

## This Gravity

*Perie Longo*

The one who is not grave  
though she has seen many of us through  
such times

The one who is named not for balance  
or defying anything  
but time

The one named before she arrived  
by my daughter in the highest balcony  
of the dark theatre

when she was only nine  
where she and her grave brother and I sat  
on the edge of our seats watching *Cats*

and in the middle of a caterwaul  
she sang *and her name shall be Gravity*  
like Jacob or God, with that kind of seriousness

or belief, *and she shall be black and white*  
so it was not surprising some months later  
Gravity, abandoned in an apartment, appeared

in the arms of a real estate woman  
who asked if we could use a cat.  
My daughter darted from her room to gather

this softness in the middle  
of a dark day, gathered the black and white of her  
singing *I've been waiting for you*

while the dog rushed the cat out, barked her up

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the tree where she swayed, hissing  
and as we climbed to rescue her she fell and

fell, caught by a love that would last  
through every other fall  
off ledge and ridge and wall, and still is

here past the end of the dog and the father  
and the big brother, watching out.

## For Emilee

*Donald Tetto*

I see a friend  
on Sunday  
and cannot tell  
if I'm falling in love  
or if it's just  
the weather,  
but I do like  
the dress  
she is wearing.

## Gray Day

*Amy Simone Piller*

When it comes down to it  
we're all here to help each other die, gently.  
Although your worry about my crossing the street is touching  
the practicality of it all makes me forget  
how to reach out for you in the middle of the night.  
Considering reveries, I want to compensate,  
to impress upon you and the wonderful weight of your body  
the poetics of our beings; I want to make you blush.

On top of you I frequently forget  
the rage to live and the need of a rain jacket.

If wonder is not a strong enough word  
to express the confusion of a nail scratching my anatomy,  
consider the paralyzed look of post coital confusion  
of ourselves like books, on shelves opened and closed  
decaying, consider shifting a bike in gears too high, the collapse,  
the clicking, the preemptive arthritis.  
The morning's typicality – the alarm clock, my drool  
and now your sleeping arm I try not to wake -  
I want to stay, I will try to stay.

Today I don't want to get out of bed, to face the world  
where the sky is too big, and the thoughts are too small.  
It is gray and today I am a being that you animate.

## Old Navy

Alexandra Sears

Holding between four and six sale items ranging from twelve to twenty-four ninety-nine, I stood, surrounded by RED BLUE PURPLE PINK performance fleece, unpopular colors decreased in price by thirty percent. Children pushed and parents leaped into cashier lane lines that pulsated as they meandered from merchandise. Desperately seeking a free fitting room, I stumbled over mounds of undesired flannel-lined khakis and pin-striped skirts and post-season Halloween holiday underpants, supremely large and small with little in-between. SALE SALE SALE in various degrees, said the signs, flashing, as a speaker-voice cried out, beckoning customers to browse, collect, and consume knockoffs of runway fashions and otherwise significant wardrobe essentials. Desiring assistance, I raised my voice above a whisper, but it was obscured by popular ambience and the clicking of coat hangers.

“How are you doing today, ma’am,” asked a man, presumably a sales clerk.

“Exasperated,” I responded, until I realized the man with whom I spoke was in fact not an employee but Admiral Horatio Nelson.

“Although historians have compared several admirable admirals to me, including Raymond Ames Spruance, victor over a formidable Japanese force at Midway during the second World War, none in history have emerged superior.”

“You’re probably correct, although you must understand I have little knowledge of European naval history,” I responded.

“No one seems to understand old navies nowadays.” He sighed, adjusting his tri-cornered hat atop his powdered wig.

“However, I would not mind learning.” Flinging fleece to floor, I grabbed his hand and pulled him closer.

“You have initiative,” he exclaimed.

*Save a bundle on outerwear for the family!* Formidable, the speakers sounded.

“Definitely not, or at least not in general. I prefer to live a life of timidity.”

“You are in fact as able an initiator as any I’ve encountered; you must, however, utilize your potential advantageously.”

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I hesitated for a moment. Between maternity tops and men's pajamas, we stared at each other, aghast at the momentous and preternatural prospect of screwing, bridging time beneath women's low rise boot cut lightly rinsed denim trousers. I motioned that I was ready.

"Afore and aft," he cried, shoving me beneath a cargo pants display table, where he proceeded to undo my yellow dress.

Bear away, away again, he said, and we became a brigantine, a two-mast ship as he slid within me, careening, caulking me, close-hauled, back and forth, and it was nice, I told him, respectfully nice, but faster please, and I could smell the chemicals, the bleach they used to starch, stretch, distress denim for the purposes of feigned antiquity, while beneath me ribbed cotton tank tops ridged against my back, arched to accommodate the renowned naval commander, distinguished seaman, who thrust accordingly as I gasped. He assured me I was no midshipman as he hauled off. *Shop now and save on new looks*, it was encouraged, but, exhausted, we lay still, satisfied among our cargo of pants.

## Selection from “Alice to the Moon”

*Mark Mayer*

When Alice comes home, she forgets where she has been away to. If she walks around her house lifting burlap dustcovers from the lamps and tables, there is hardly a need because she never covered them. So old old Alice will stop and rest her wrists on top of her head. When Alice comes home, she finds the sun-stains making lips at the walls. The fabric is faded, but Alice has lived long enough to know that color cannot age. She wonders: Is cloth naked without color or color naked without cloth? When Alice comes home, she takes deep smells, but there is no smell. The air of her home is like the water from the tap, perfectly clear but rich with hidden things. Many many things, invisible things, too many for any to appear; all lurking contentedly, not with teeth or intentions.

When Alice comes home, she forgets that she has been away at all, if she has been away at all, which is unlikely. Alice always begins at home, at least it seems so to her, because, for her, home is the place where one begins. And when we return home, we should find ourselves once again at a beginning. Or else, it seems to Alice, we have not returned home quite yet. In her nostrils, the air is as full and empty as the past. Perhaps that is the scent, she thinks with a breath, Constant Breakfast. Alice’s large raincoat hangs by the door, as though she left it there, which would have been a good idea.



The morning gathers itself. Everyplace its light falls, it pokes its chin and proclaims another piece of itself: There are potatoes in the colander and a hand-fan, with pink bicyclists, hanging on the wall from a tack. There are morsels and pollen of course, fabric and grass. There are six squares of sidewalk, three repeating dog barks, and a faraway beeping that Alice cannot explain. Beside the bed, there are crumples of tissue paper, each fit to the inside of Alice’s fist, sculpted and released in the night. Alice has a keen sense of morning—she can recognize it by any of its bits. At the tight click of the new clock, the lemon-breath through the window, the rasping beneath the kettle, or

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the stubborn stick of the prunes to their bag, Alice says, “Come out morning, I see you hiding there.”

Alice must be attentive with the morning because it is a rascal. She suspects so. Each time Alice addresses the morning’s bits—the birdhouse, the margarine, the warmth—they say, “Me? Lo, I am not the morning. I, like you yourself, am merely enjoying the morning’s light.” But Alice is not unaware of the morning’s crackling laughter, bouncing all around her as she turns from the butter dish. The morning has such rascal ways of seeing so much and being so much that it can never be seen.

Sometimes at night, Alice will turn her neck and through the window hear the restless soil, and she will say, O Morning, you must feel so clever crouching like that before your pounce, but I know you’re there. And since she is a rascal too, Alice rises to look the morning in the eye and remind it that it cannot count all it sees among its belongings.



Alice keeps a jar of nickels. They make the best sound, she thinks, better than all the other coins. “Nick-el.” A “nick” when the fat edge lands on the top and an “ell” as the disc comes to rest among the others. “See,” she tells the jar, “you are my timepiece, really, clinking this or that falling moment into your thick glass.” But Alice never picks up the old mason jar to feel the weight. And she certainly never shakes the jar to hear the clattering sound of all those settled moments. This is not because she is frail, too frail to shake the years—it is because she is not waiting. After all, she spends the dimes and quarters, and leaves the pennies, like hints, beside the way.



After the campfire, Alice has smoke in her hair, which does not trouble her at all. She thinks: I am a wild river, even now. I should have violets for my ears and my streaming locks. Alice dances through the hallways and the photo-portraits wink at her. They compliment her gown and whisper with each other about the silver in her step. All the forest creatures stare in silence from beneath the armchairs and atop

the lampshades as she passes. Even the ceiling light feels bashful for a moment, but Alice knows to share her brightness, and her skin beckons the younger light to follow. As Alice glides through with a sidestep, the doorframe feels again the towering sadness that makes a tree. The bookcase, weighed with pages, fills its lungs but keeps its hollowness for a watchful squirrel. In the bedroom, Alice and the curtains share so many secrets with each other that it is as though they embrace when their eyes make contact. This is how the evening goes, but there is no camp and no campfire.



At dusk there is Television in the upstairs. The Television is like no one else Alice knows. Sometimes the Television insults the Old Clock, and that worries Alice, for the Old Clock has been a good friend. The Television has fresh and dashing eyebrows, much sharper than the Old Clock's, which are shabby and long. When the Television stares glaringly at Old Clock, Old Clock can only sigh like it always has and gray further. Alice herself has hardly any eyebrows to hide her thoughts behind.

The Television is very good at making promises. Alice often comments kindly to the Television that it has all the right words for all the best ways of speaking. The Television knows to treat Alice's comments with grace, but Alice and the Television both know that it doesn't need praise.

On nights when it's raining and the wind can't speak through the chaos of drops tapping and plopping above, the Television puts calm light into the bedroom. Light blue like the sound of finger-stitching or purple like a cello. On those nights, even Old Clock is grateful for Television's warm light singing smoothly through the storm.

In the morning the storm has ended but Television sounds on and on. Alice smells every part of the world through the rear window and realizes that that is what the rain is for. With this thought, Alice feels she has come to something, so she lets Old Clock sleep in and goes downstairs to make pancakes on the griddle.

Alice has a very special little thing.

You probably wonder where she keeps it, but that is not the point.



Although she forgets about it from time to time, Alice has a body. It is made mostly of flesh and is flesh-colored except where there are shadows and in those places one can never be certain. Alice has learned over the many years to share her body, but she still is best at sharing it with the mirror. The mirror is not as warm as some she has shared her body with, but it is the most honest.

Or, it is the least honest. The mirror has perfect vision but can hardly remember its sights from one moment to the next. Alice's eyes are so poor that she recognizes everything she sees. The mirror keeps a very frenzied silence. Alice's body rarely frenzies like the mirror's. And it is never silent. She hears it all day moving air through its folds and pulling liquid through its secret places. Alice likes to think these places are underground canals, lantern-lit, where young lovers, draped in cloth, escape sumptuously from a deeper dark.

Alice's body cracks twelve times as she unfolds it. But the mirror does not crack. Perhaps Alice would trust the mirror more if it farted. Because when she listens to her body pushing matter through itself, Alice knows something. My knowledge, she says to the mirror, is a bellyful of porridge, I can poke at it with my finger. Yours is like a book's: so dreadful far away.

Alice's body has all the parts. It is very pleasurable, Alice thinks, to have all the parts. Far more pleasurable than to go looking for new ones. At one point, Alice knew about all of them. She had discovered each with younger eyes. But now Alice takes comfort in simply knowing that they are all there. Even if she can't recall them. That is what my skin is for, she thinks, to keep them all there. Alice is very grateful for her skin, which, when the mirror is not looking, she celebrates in gorgeous ways.



Alice used to talk about herself. She would say things like: "Oh listen to me go" or "It's only a little something" or "Well, we couldn't have it any other way, could we?" Alice talked about herself in these

ways, ribbons and bows. Her words were curtsies. They would blush with pride at being so invisible. Alice hardly talks about herself anymore. She thinks, If I whisper, everyone will listen especially hard, and if I shout, everyone will pull their sore ears away. Alice prefers the windowsill and the vases full of old flowers, they seem to politely know all about themselves without ever being noisy or self-effacing. “That’s the kind of person Alice is,” says the old carnation, “She’s very fragile when it comes to observation.” But the storm window counters, “Glass wouldn’t be so darned fragile if we didn’t spend all our time peering through it.”

## Spirits of the Stone-Heap

*George Steele*

Everybody knows the sun,  
and how its heat wears down  
whatever wants to breathe and pray.  
Sweat will drown the will,  
salt rake the bravest eye.  
Leaves of the poplar hang limp  
in Church Street's silent afternoon,  
dry as memory, soon to be as dead  
as what we wish we'd been.

There's really not much that I handle well,  
and so little time to change.  
This old pile of rock from 1842  
the village fathers fashioned  
to be their children's school.  
It's outlasted all the sons and daughters  
worn down by what they learned  
once they had left.

The Masons too lodged here,  
men so much like my uncle, grim with vision,  
without their columns though—  
no Jachin, no Boaz—  
just the heavy lakeshore cobbles, oxen's burden.  
I wonder what they hoped to share,  
beyond the latest news  
from Albany or Buena Vista,  
while tilting back in Windsor chairs,  
heavy boots at rest on what they told themselves  
was just the first of seven rounds.

## Station

*Marc Jaffee*

A train crawls in like an unsettling  
premonition. Lost in the crowd, the steam,  
city of motors and steel. Sent  
on silver rails, the impulse and approach.  
Precision is the blood of surviving.  
My misstep was to climb towards you  
in the twisting streets, holding out  
my palm if you should fail. Crucial turn

came in your not turning.  
I neglected air. The calibration, the regret.  
The numerous tracks twine amid the hills,  
another engine steers on fearless rails.  
The station is unsafe. Two sounds bleed:  
the child's screaming and the screech of wheels.

## Short Story Collection

*Donald Tetto*

I do not like  
to write in books  
any more than I would circle  
my favorite figure  
in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*  
and, while I count  
talking in the cinema  
among my chief distastes,  
when I discovered  
your markings  
in a borrowed book,  
it was like  
the way  
one can't be lonely  
if there are flowers  
in the room  
and I smiled at each  
asterisk in the margin,  
especially once  
when you wrote, "ah!"  
at the edge  
of a passage  
that had particularly moved you  
and I, too,  
was particularly moved,  
overcome by an imagined intimacy,  
the sort that one might  
foolishly mistake  
for love –

and I've long believed  
in the story as the ultimate art,  
poetry too sparse and novels too long,  
but hadn't considered  
the note-to-oneself:  
more true than a poem in what is left out  
and alongside the story,  
perfect.

## Yes, Keswick (Ten Intersections)

*Molly Finnegan*

### I.

This essay concerns the following themes: travel and place. Illicit behavior, good secrets. Stuff stored away, pleasantries that aren't pure of feeling. And Vikings. I'd like to have one really good passage about Vikings because I've been thinking about them a lot. I don't, however, want to write anything that would be particularly informative about the Vikings. The less we know, the better.

### II.

I draw my own demo-graphics, stick figures. Describing the people who live somewhere. My demographics of a large town in Massachusetts: the birthplace of a man I knew, a kind of gentleman farmer with a large orchard he had begun to nurture before he was hit by a truck. He used to be a truck driver, before he became a professor with suede patches on his elbows. His ghost is in the barn near his motorcycle. We agree as we sift through boxes of his correspondence, journals, appointment books: something here is being overlooked. The power of a place is indirect, tiring, killing, especially to those who are not dead. We are shifting unsavory artifacts into our pockets and purses so his little daughter will not see them.

### III.

"Do you feel that your "place", where you come from, has had a huge influence on you?"

"Yeah, I definitely form strong connections with the places I live. I get weird when I talk about \_\_\_\_\_." I get illogical and resentful."

*-an interview with a friend,  
edited so it applies to everyone*

### IV.

I tell him it's so good. He asks why. Because it is sex in a place I've never been before. I am dislocated. Anti-located! I am out of my head or out of my body and in order to get back to where I think I am I think

I say something, but what I say is different. (Scattered all over, splayed and ethereal, waves and waves above him.) Maybe I think I've only said it in my head or maybe I thought I thought something different. What he hears me say is that I think I'll regret this. And I paw him feebly. I am thinking that I do not want to be slow in leaving in the morning. (Which makes me want to say, stringent tastes mean you may never be happy.) My roommate calls in the middle of the night because I left without telling him and he thinks I might just be out driving in the snow. I lie and say I am somewhere else. Unlocatable!

V.

Returning to our old residence, my mother was embraced by the three old doormen when she greeted them. She doesn't have the same feeling I do, that I want to live everywhere at once. Which means I'm a vapor. Feeling a little dizzy, straps off my shoulders, I press the long appendix scar on my stomach against the station wagon, and talk on the telephone, taking a break from searching for an apartment, confessing to her that all I bought on vacation was notebooks, postcards, and wine.

VI.

I experience a most pleasant visitation most days (while you are gone, like you are here)—Certainly I am considerate of all your wonderful parts, though particularly provocative to me is the memory of your unimaginably soft brown hair in my grasp—like having handfuls of peony blossoms. I write this when you are away, and want to forget I've written it when you return. My heart undoes itself with urgency, but your sideways stare throws off the toxic satellite of my sentiment. I wonder where your eyes are.

VII.

I went to a different continent for one night alone in the budget motel near the airport, to sit on the bed by myself. There is a television and no clock. I open the window, remove my clothes and listen to the news, which means the war. I eat what I have. This seems to be the longest day ever, though the day I arrived also felt like the longest day ever, and tomorrow, the day I leave, will also feel like the longest day ever. What seemed like the shortest day? The day we walked to the Mediterranean and collapsed on the incline of the shore and took brief swims in the

## BROWN LITERARY REVIEW

still and salty water. What did you expect you would find, I ask myself? I expected the buildings to be shorter. But what I mean is, I expected the streets to be drenched in light. I expected every moment to be like the moment I arrived at the flat, everyone asleep, and I sneaked out onto the terrace and watched the stray cats below, counting the olive pits discarded near my feet. When I leave my room to check the time, I steal a heavy packet of sugar from the motel restaurant just to hold in the moist pit of my palm.

### VIII.

They went along in sleek small ships, staying close to the coast. Camped on the beaches at night, and made fires. Giant black squids tracking through the deep black water. Hair fair like spray. Me to a Viking: I love your hair, may I touch it?

### IX.

It's like coasting down the flood! Driving and doling out hand jobs! In the pouring rain! Far too fast! Breaking and convulsing! The car stutters! My legs are shaking! Pull off! And watch him get out to fix the windshield wiper, which has come loose in the commotion!

### X.

If I were to write my memoirs, the title would be Yes, Keswick. Keswick is a street. When we are on Keswick, we say things like, We are so Keswickian! (We drive so fast up the hill!) My mother asks me, which is the best way to go? Keswick? Yes, Keswick.

## Exceptional Contributors

George Steele has taught high-school English since 1989 in Virginia and New York. Before becoming a teacher, he served for six years in the U.S. Navy. Since 1988, his poems have been published in several magazines, including *Plainsongs*, *The Wisconsin Review*, and the *Charleston Mercury*. His chief poetic influences are Philip Levine, Charles Wright, and A.R. Ammons.

Michael Gizzi is the author of numerous books of poetry. He edits, with Craig Watson, Qua Books, and is currently a Visiting Lecturer at Brown.

Perie Longo has been on the staff of the Santa Barbara Writers Conference for many years leading the poetry workshops. she also leads her own Summer Writers Poetry Workshop in Stana Barbara for three days each August. Her poems have been published in many literary journals including *Prarie Schooner*, *Rattle*, and *The California Quarterly*. She has two books of poems to her credit, *Milking the Earth* and *The Privacy of*