

New Poetry from Virginia Schnurr: “Touchstone” and “Valentine for Lewis Carroll”



VALENTINES IN ME / *image by Amalie Flynn*

TOUCHSTONE

My child's fairy-tale quilt is frail:
the wizard ripped, the prince bald,
the fairy's wing clipped.
Only the wishing well and frog prince survived

camp, college, the conception of my grandchild.

My eldest daughter wants the irreparable
repaired for her daughter, Maeve Arden,
named after a Shakespearean forest.

No longer willing to stitch painted pomp
I sketch a new quilt: a forest where the snake waits,
the dark trips, death lives behind every mushroom:
reality feelingly persuades me what I am.

My cataracts removed, I have a grander vision for Maeve's
covering.

I add the fool with his
books in running brooks, tongues in trees.

Absolute in my giving
savvy to the darker side of things
my needle pokes the sweet uses of adversity.

VALENTINE FOR LEWIS CARROLL

Purchased by an old woman
for her grandniece
I'm a blue plastic Valentine bag.

I have on me
a rabbit from Wonderland
whose creator liked
little girls without pubic hair.

I sit all year
on a doorknob
awaiting the day of hearts.

I'm singular,
not a carelessly covered box
but reusable.

My child places
her carefully labeled
valentines in me.

Unfortunately, this year
will be my finale.
My rabbit will hop off
offended by the onset
of hair.

**New Poetry from Marc Tretin:
“Justin Alter, Slightly
Drunk, Addresses Maya, Who Is
In Egypt” and “Maya Ricci
Alter After Excavating A
Pyramid South Of Zairo”**



HOT WIRES SCALD / image by Amalie Flynn

JUSTIN ALTER, SLIGHTLY DRUNK, ADDRESSES MAYA, WHO IS IN EGYPT

Now as I am hungover and queasy
stumping about the tilting house
and sappy as my face is green,
Maya, your sculpture of Qetesh,
that goddess of sex and ecstasy,
whose torso of clear pink plastic
has a heart made of puzzle pieces
dangling from wires that run to an
automated external defibrillator
normally used to shock
a rapid cardiac rhythm

back to normal, stares at me with eyes
filled with both desire and despair.
Though feeling embarrassed
I touch the pink nub you meant
to be her clit and a soft whirr starts, then
puzzle pieces spin so fast they tear, and scatter
and the bare hot wires scald
the insides of her perfect breasts.
I pull the plug, but the smell of burnt plastic
fills our bedroom despite the open windows.
Why do you have to be gone so long?

MAYA RICCI ALTER EXCAVATING A PYRAMID SOUTH OF CAIRO

As I stooped beneath the
standing sun within the
meter-by-meter carefully
measured order of this
archeological dig and
brushed pottery shards
and papyrus crumbs through
a sieve to sift out the sand,
the heat's strong hands
touched me like a half-
wanted lover, whose warmth
is too familiar with my
body to refuse and that's
why when Jamaal, the site
boss said, "You look
overheated.
Cool off in my trailer."
"Yes," I said, knowing I
wanted to betray Justin
but not knowing why, so
after we had sex and while
I was thinking how can I

use this experience,
I saw Jamaal shave with
a straight edge then I saw
the dead-on right image for the God Set,
a cave-sized skull made of razor blades,
entered by stepping
over teeth made of sharp knives
into total darkness
except for a weak light
piercing this skull
through one of its eyes
and in that eye is a web
and tangled in its threads
are Zipporah and Justin.
Their faces, formless rags.
Their bodies sucked out hulks.

New Poetry by Michal Rubin: “I Speak Not Your Language” and “Omar Abdalmajeed As’ad of Jijlya”

I, born from the womb of
my mother’s remembrances
wrapped in the cocoon
of her story[...]

New Poetry by Scott Hughes: “Still”



THE FAULT LINES / *image by Amalie Flynn*

STILL

I never thought of you
as a hopeless romantic; this was news to me.
Are you still meditating? Meditate
on this:
You can take the Mulholland Highway across
the ridges of two counties
and stay high a long time.

We parked there once in your subcompact
in love and unconfined.

From the afternoon shade of a scrub oak
I remember the ridge route home,
the silhouettes of Point Dume and your profile
in the afterglow.

Since then I have been a jack of all trades
and a master of nothing:
unremarkable, unsubstantial, undignified;
unresolved, unremembered, unconceivable;
unqualified, unpublished, unreadable.

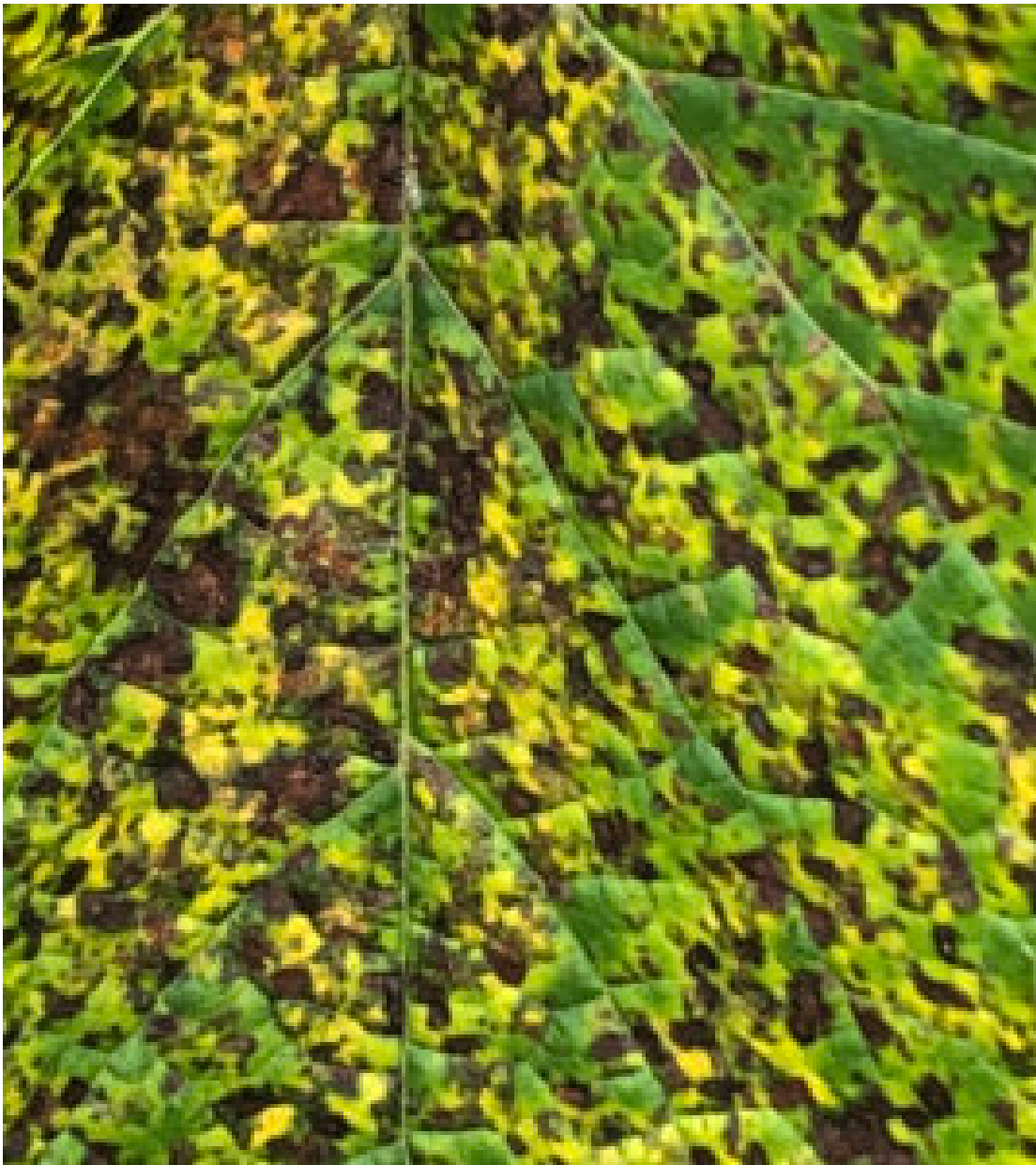
I looked for you in the county beach campgrounds
where you went with surfers from your high school.
I looked for you in all the places I heard you were in love.
I looked for you where rumors sent me.
I looked for you in the hills of Northridge
where we walked around the fault lines.
I looked for you among the barstools
from Venice to Ventura.
I looked for you in old Beach Boys songs.
I looked for you in stacks of photographs.
I looked for you in the bottom of a glass.
I looked for you stranded after a concert.
I looked for you at the Spahn Ranch.
I looked for you in the bittersweet words in books.
I looked for you in unsold manuscripts.
I looked for you in the margins of old college notes.
I looked for you in every woman who looked at me.
I looked for you in dharma talks.
I looked for you in shrines.
I looked for you in my next life.

I don't think my karma is right.

Forty years on the hard roads of two counties
and I am

still.

New Poetry by Chris Bullard: “All Wars Are Boyish”



THE MELTDOWN MEADOW / *image by Amalie Flynn*

All Wars Are Boyish

Autopilot on self-destruct,
we went joy riding on tanks
into the thermal wasteland.

The static of roentgens played
like parked ice cream trucks
on the detection equipment.

Playgrounds went incendiary
as squalls of cluster bombs
skipped over the pavement,

but our camo HAZMAT suits
insulated us from the acts
we had been ordered to take.

They were on the run, maybe,
or counterattacking. We took
rations beside a napalm campfire.

Jets among the sweep of stars,
scorched amphibians peeping
in the meltdown meadow,

what more could a kid ask for,
except dinosaurs? They were
already working on them in the lab.

New Poetry by Rochelle Jewell

Shapiro: “Each Night My Mother Dies Again”



FALLS ON NIGHT / *image by Amalie Flynn*

EACH NIGHT MY MOTHER DIES AGAIN

Each night the phone rings—

Your mother has passed.

Each night I expect to be relieved, but night falls on night.

Each night she is the mother who makes waffles,

batter bubbling from the sides of the iron, the mother

who squeezes fresh orange juice, and serves soft-boiled eggs

in enchanted egg cups. Each night I squint into her face

as she carries me over the ocean waves, her arms my raft.
Each night she refills Dr. Zucker's prescriptions
for diet pills and valium. Each night she waters her
rosebushes
with Dewar's. Each night I see her hands shake,
her brows twitch. Each night she adds ground glass
to the chopped liver, rubbing alcohol to the chopped herring.
Each night she puts a chicken straight on the lit burner
without a pot. Each 2:00 a.m., Mrs. Finch from 6G phones—
*Sorry to say your mother is naked
in the hallway again.*
Each night my mother is strapped into her railed bed
at Pilgrim State, curled into a fetal position,
her hands fisted like claws.
Each night she calls to me
from her plain pine coffin, calls me
by the name she gave me, the name
she hasn't forgotten.

New Poetry by Stephen Massimilla: "Wounded"



CAPILLARIES OF ROOTS / image by Amalie Flynn

WOUNDED

-to Laura

Bleating thing without wool
Thunder without sound
Ghost of wooded peaks, of constricted arterial waters

There is a dog inside the heart, voice bursting
Interminable silence, blown-open iris

Over organs buried deeper in the earth
where capillaries of roots still bleed orange dust

Leave me be, hot tongue of fireflies,
cracked pharynx of ice

Do not ask me to slip
down among green nerves of water-weed
where the flesh of the sky
is unmoving and fruitless

The moon still hovers in its surgeon's coat

But do not try to satisfy the dead

who hold on with claws like desperate fevers
Leave my sutured skull of empty ivory forever
But pity me; put an end to this much hurt

I am love, I tell you
and all the quick wings accumulating
as restlessly as the breaths

that were once inside
these wheel-crushed, wind-scattered leaves

New Poetry by Kevin Honold: “A Brief History of the Spanish Conquest”



RADIANT AS NOON / *image by Amalie Flynn*

A Brief History of the Spanish Conquest

Tell me again of that fabulous
kingdom where a single
ear of corn is more
than two strong young men can carry, where cotton
grows untended, in colors never dreamed of,
to be spun by gorgeous slaves
into garments that lie
cool as cornsilk against the skin and shine
radiant as noon.

*

How sordid and predictable history can be.
Within sight of the prize
but out of ammunition, they
lowered three men down the volcano's throat
to fetch sulfur for gunpowder.

This

was the vision
prefigured in the prophet's eye:
three men curled in a basket peering
back across the centuries,
their dewy starving faces so
desperate with hope
as they dissolve in a yellow mist,
felons set adrift.

*

North by west toward the cities of gold,
the soldiers in rags walked half-bent
with hunger and dysentery, nursing
grievous wounds sustained in hit-and-run attacks
by moss-troopers talking Choctaw.

Beside the mother of rivers, the horses sickened and died
but the soldiers, being less reasonable,
proved less destructible.

At disobedient towns they dragged out
chopping blocks to punish malefactors
and departed in a shower of ash, their legacy
a heap of severed hands slowly
clutching at flies.

*

But the much-sought golden cities sank below the horizon
like the tall ships of fable. For the Spaniards,
the age of miracles ended
somewhere in southwest Arkansas. The palaces of silver

turned Outlaw Liquor Barns, Triple-X Superstores,
the stuff of vision a mustard-colored mix

of smoke, dust, emissions
from riverside refineries and coal
plants along the Mississippi where squadrons
of John Deere combines like barn-size locusts
roll in drill order over the dry land,
half-effaced by squalls of chaff.

At night the fields burn.
Stray flames browse the blackened
shoulders of the interstate,
crop the stubble beneath the billboards.

*

In the state park south of Hot Springs
I fell asleep in a chair in the heat and woke
to a titmouse perched on the toe of my boot
with that peculiar weightlessness
shared by birds and planets

and I searched without hope for my place in the book.
Buzzards killed time there, their shadows
slipping across the iron ground
like fish in a shallow pool
while Time gaped
 at the spiders that battened
 on the flies that
swarmed the rotten
windfall apples.

*

Tenochtitlan.

At the imperial aviary, we found
a pair of every kind of bird in the world:
parrots and finches in profusion, brooding vultures,

egrets, ibis is sacramental scarlet.

Seahawks stooped and banked

through that hostile truce and we marveled

at God's prodigality, His exuberant

inventiveness, then piled tinder

to burn the thing to the ground.

Flames sheeted over the soaring

lattice dome like the fleet

shadows of clouds. For a time,

the structure smoldered,

a hissing wickerwork steaming as it cooled.

Here and there, a bird crashed the skein of ash

like a rogue comet bursting

the flaming ramparts of the universe.

Charmed in place, we held our breath,

beside ourselves, like couriers

trapped in a snowglobe, blinded

in a tempest of embers,

astonished at the work of these hands,

the everyday miracle of destruction.

New Poetry from Gail Nielsen: "Something Like Nightfall"



BLACK LACE TREES / *image by Amalie
Flynn*

SOMETHING LIKE NIGHTFALL

something, like night falls
slow, as if
nothing in the world has ever moved
but distant hope descending, still ablaze
days soften to wonder

what else leaves
silhouettes these black lace trees
fades from me

it is you from my life
steadily, quietly
as celestial movement

**New Poetry by Doris Ferleger:
“Praying at the Temple of
Forgiveness,” “Internal
Wind,” Driving Down Old Eros
Highway,” and “Summer Says”**



TURNING EVERYTHING AROUND / *image*
by Amalie Flynn

Praying at the Temple of Forgiveness

for Zea Joy, in memoriam

Last Monday you threw yourself,
your body, dressed in red chemise,
in front of a train.

It was your insatiable hunger
for a more tenderhearted world,
your husband said at Shiva.

Now no one will get to see
what you saw from inside
your snow globe where you lived,
shaking and shaking,
breaking into shards
of ungrieved grief, unanswered need.

I will remember
how tirelessly, with your son,
you worked to help him turn
sounds—coming through the implant
behind his ear—into speech,
speech into understanding.

Everyone will remember
how you skipped across the dance floor,
waving pastel and magenta scarves,
and prayed to angels.
O, dear Zea, your human bones
thin as the bones of a sparrow—

the way you could fold
your body to fit anywhere.
Rest now. You have succeeded.

INTERNAL WIND

When you died, our son
became *my son*; I watch
through your eyes

and mine how he lifts
his whole body into
a long accent à droite,

arms taut, wrists impossibly
rotated back, fingers and toes
also pointed back

to all the hours, years
of practice in turning
everything around.

~

Over the hollow
you left, our son stretches
his fingers across

frets and strings
in C minor,
Bach's Etudes

the way you taught,
the way you closed
your eyes, nodded, satisfied—

our son will remember.

~

Remember how
he watched you deep-
breathe into yoga postures?

Now his own focused flow

heals what Western doctors call
tics, quiets what Eastern doctors call

internal wind. Listen
how our son calls
to his yoga students

what he learned
at your knee: *Effort*
brings the rain-

of grace.

~

When our son and I argue,
I feel homeless, divided,
until I remember how you

and I took turns massaging
his neck that ached from its day's
staccato singing-

~

Sometimes I can see his *tics*
as flawless, meticulous,
a body expressing itself

with perfect diction.

DRIVING DOWN OLD EROS HIGHWAY

Me, in my Q50 with its hot flashes and warning beeps,
heading toward Sweet Desire, New Jersey, where my love,

soon 70, will woo me with mango, melt the mushy pulp
in my mouth-or perhaps he naps.

You, CeeCee, painting the walls pink in the tiny house in Pullman, recently moved in with your old college flame, coming so easily

against his new ceramic hip, just the friction of it. You say your pelvis never quite fit with anyone else, including your soon-to-be-

ex-husband of 30 years. Me, with a G-spot suddenly. A rainbow of chaos tunneling through me when his fingers find it and flutter.

And long live the reckless tongue. The old-fashioned clit-kind of climax. Like a young planet rising. Oh, how old and greedy I am

for that whole-body wave and chill and quiver and release. You, purposely avoiding that whole-body wave of shiver,

as it reminds you of your ex's dogged insistences.

For your 60th, your daughter gifted you with a mini vibrator

on a rubber ring for your index finger. A *sex-thimble*, you joke.

Sex over 60 seems unseemly to talk about, CeeCee,

but it seems more ungrateful to say nothing at all.

You and I speak of what our mothers couldn't give us.

Daily I pray at the temple of Venus.

SUMMER SAYS

Pay attention to
your heat, your survival—
the tree rooted in your garden

is a sequined vernacular, a cashmere sweater.

Because nothing matters in the end
but comfort and the bending light.

Summer says, I will be the room you die in.
You will dream, neither of regret,
nor in the language you were born into.

A stranger will comb your existential threads.
You had thought, for instance, humans
were gerunds or harps bent

on playing in a diner that serves
black coffee and hard donuts.
You ask, *What is the past?*

What is it all for?

Summer says, The wound of being
untaught. Says, hungry.

Says, the cypress is a hospice,
says, falter, falter, falter,
bloom bloom bloom—too soon

a pall will keep you company.

New Poetry by Mary Ann Dimand: “Earth Appreciation” and “Lusting, Stinting”

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“Lusting, Stinting”

New Poetry by Ricardo Moran: “ABBA-1975” and “On the Street”



TAG EVERY WALL / *image by Amalie Flynn*

ABBA-1975

Abba's lyrics, like water
shot from La Bufadora,
mingle with volcanic steam
from metallic pots of corn.

And the scrape on my knee
from chasing the seagulls
bleeds, but does not hurt.

On this Sunday, the ocean breeze slips
in gossip between vendor stalls
as young men in speedos walk past.
Tables of silver bracelets tap my eyes
and ABBA's Spanish melody
carries on my tongue
before any English syllable
ever arrived. Before the summer ended
when it tore me
from the sands of Ensenada
to a desert north of the border,
to a land with tongues
unfamiliar and stiff.

And now when I fall
chasing my shadow, my ABBA
lyrics cannot permeate
foreign soil. Cannot stop the pain.

On the Street

Run naked through the streets
and shout, "Make love to me!"

Tag every wall in a turf war
with quotes from the palatero,
from the child who yearns for love,
from the gay son who hopes his father
will welcome him,
this time.

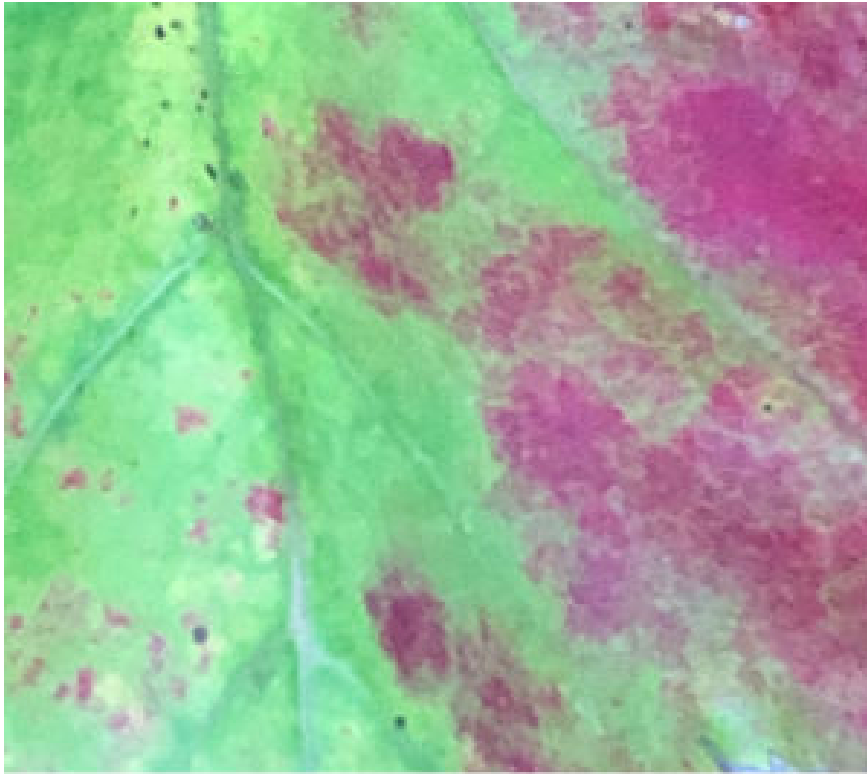
With your sharp and fast tongue, mesmerize
passersby as they get caught in the gunfire

of stanzas and sonnets,
popping the air.

Bellow on the street corner
of how love abandoned you,
how your life is empty,
how you aborted your dreams.
And every day it rips into you
of every opportunity you threw away.

I want that on the wall.
I want all the pain and hurt
to get out of bed, to grab that bullhorn
and run naked through the streets.

New Poetry by Michael Carson: “Politics”

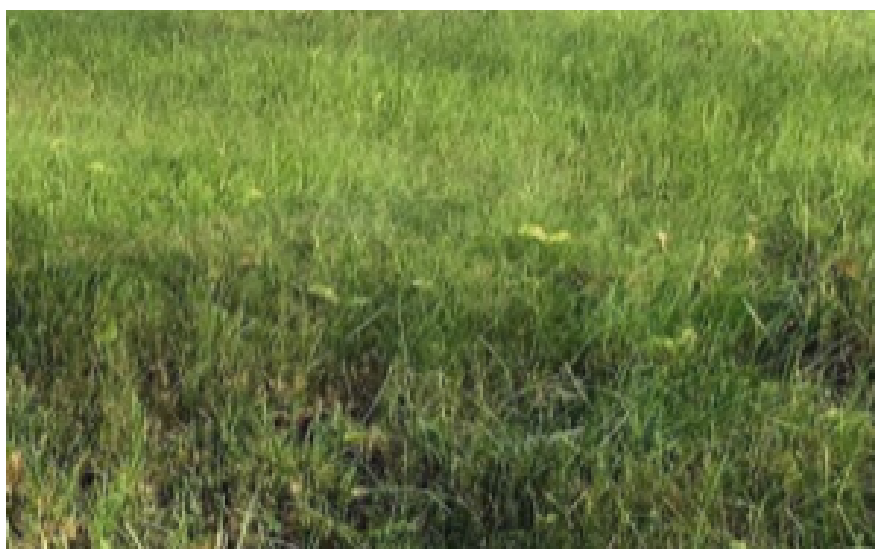


BLAME OUR BRUISES / *image by Amalie Flynn*

Politics

Every 20 years or so boys dress up
And kill each other for fun.
It's the way of the wrack of the world
The wind of our imagination and our love.
To blame our costumes for our beauty
Is like to blame our bruises for our blood.
The chime is what drives us, what ticks
Our tock forward to the next spree.
The foreshortened humiliation,
The immaculate imprecation,
Is neither what we fear or what we covet.
Man is. Rats are. Take what you can
While the day is rough
Move lengthwise into the past
And blame god for never enough.

New Poetry by Kevin Norwood: “Rabbits in Autumn”



THE LUSHEST GRASS / *image by Amalie Flynn*

RABBITS IN AUTUMN

Who will find our bones in a thousand years,
bleached and brittle under the unyielding sun,
scattered in dried grasses by feral dogs or vultures?

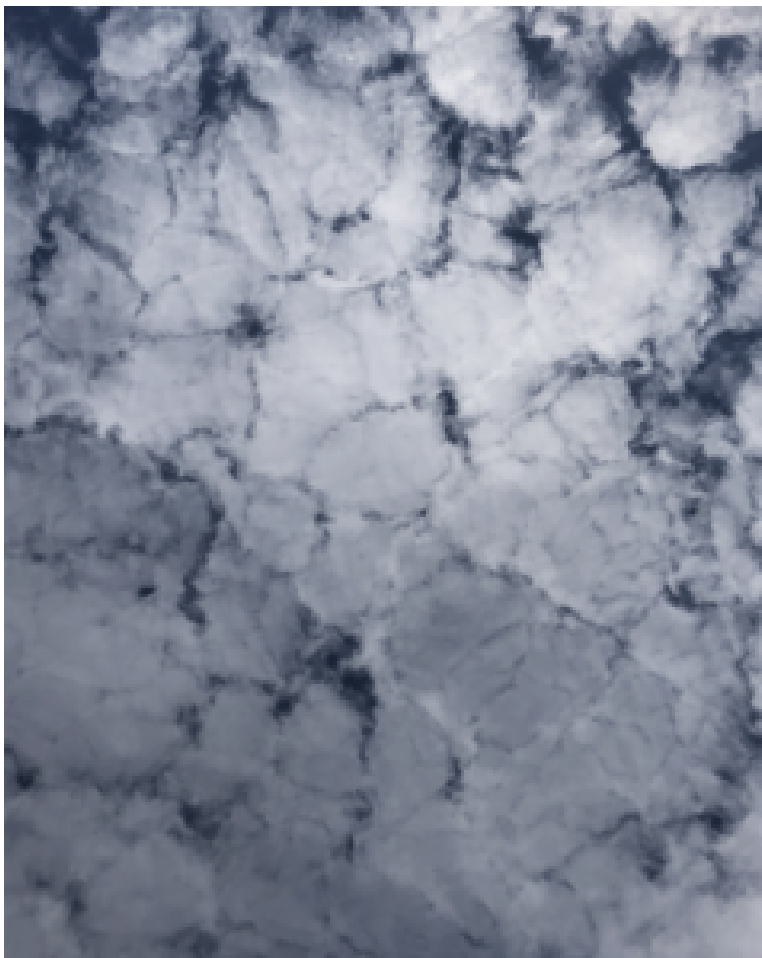
Who will hold such curiosities, not knowing
that we stopped here to kiss and murmur
that our love would outlast the moon and stars?

Who will hold our bones, never to imagine
that under the same sun, we once made love
on the lushest grass, under a sapphire sky?

In autumn, the fox lies in wait, hearing rustling
in the tall grass. Having eaten, the fox moves on.
There are no questions of why, or how, or when.

Smoke rises acrid in the air; the sun sets earlier
each day; the grapes shrivel on the vine. Time
is the fox; we are the rabbits. Please, hold me.

**New Poetry by Joddy Murray:
“Aphrodite Urania,” “Chronos
After Castrating His Father,”
“Grandpa Uranus, Rainmaker,”
and “Uranus’ Genital Blood”**



WOMB OF FOAM / *image by Amalie Flynn*

Aphrodite Urania

From a womb of foam I
came to be a woman, heavenly
gestated from Father, who also brought
weather, seasons. He is a castrate
and timeless, the bluest of planets.
As a warrior, my courage
is to stand by my brother while his
hunger weakens him, devouring
days, years – his children. My
courage is to persevere while
the sand under the waves carve
portraits of Mother – her power
quietly stronger than anything else,
ungrounded, unfathomable.

Chronos, After Castrating His Father

The sickle Mom gave me was super sharp, so all I had to do
was, like, sneak up on the old
man – who always ignores my AWESOMENESS anyway and has so many
fucking kids like
he's the king of the freakin' universe – get underneath that
nasty tunic he wears (with the
blood and guts of all the meals he eats but doesn't need to
eat cuz he's a God and all), and
from behind simply grab 'em, slice, and run like hell. Why did
I think this would be a good
idea? Just because I hate the man, and the way he treats
Mother is shit. But it was easier
than I thought. He didn't follow, just shrunk down to the
ground where his ball blood was
splattered and I could tell as I ran that there would be

giants and furies and monsters
born out of that blood. I hoped the sea would bury his
testicles as I tossed them as far as I
could, standing on a cliff, sure that all would be better now
and my time here would calm.

Grandpa Uranus, Rainmaker

My grandfather no longer visits
with his blue capes that cover everything –
his foamy genitals an island for
Aphrodite. My name, Urania,
is his and my sky is his, the
sodden breezes still spray
my eyes so I look up. Don't bother
charting the skies. Astronomy
is family. Look for me when you
are angry, I'll kiss your temple
and promise you your future
and pray to my grandpa, the
father of giants and furies and
all that I turn from in my shadows.

Uranus' Genital Blood

When my son cut off my testicles
and threw them to the sea, I thought
about those cherries I left for you
in a porcelain bowl by our bed.
His reason, Gaia? You, my darling.
So I'll sire no more children, darken
the skies no more, abate the thunderstorms,
give the bloodied sickle away
and make some Phaeacians as I do.
Time himself, Chronos, betrayed me

and I've set a growing hunger in him.

What beauty could come of this
or the sea? Beauty itself?

**New Poetry by Emily Hyland:
"Rehab Day 1," "Rehab Day 4,"
"Rehab Day 9," "Rehab Day
11," and "Rehab Day 19"**



THAT PARTICULAR REGION / *image by*
Amalie Flynn

REHAB DAY 1

He hadn't told me, hadn't stopped drinking
drank beer in the hallway near recycling

where people bring garbage and broken-down boxes
he guzzled, and I was here on the other side of the door

thinking him sober,

reversing redness and the inflammation
from an otherwise young and healthy liver

and *I* was sober—

how would it help for me to sip a glass of wine

while he drank water with our chicken piccata?

My first thought after drop-off was rebellion

to pull the cork from a long glass throat
and pour full garnet into stemware

I wanted that right again. In my home
the right again

to not finish a bottle and know
it will still be there in the morning

Then I felt a kind of shame

I checked him into a rehab facility
and all I could think of was wine

to unleash my desire for want

drove hours home like a Christmas-morning kid
thrashing through ribbons and crinkled paper

so soon as it was in sight
enrapt and hungry for vice.

REHAB DAY 4

He's been in rehab four days now, four days without hands on
my body

how indulgent that every day I've had hands plying my nerves
into delight

delight like the tickle and lick of sharing a bed with the
same person

and when I finally call my dad, my dad who I'd been avoiding
telling

I tell him how lonely it was to arrive back home after leaving him there

with nurses in their face shields, yellow gowns, and their masks

and the globe eyes of his counselor, who stood just back on the sidewalk

and my dad says with unintended harshness that he takes back

as soon as the truth hits the mouth of his phone: *You don't have to tell me that*

at least he's coming back and I imagine him there alone, barefoot

in shorts with a solid color shirt, some sort of mauve, doodling spirals

and checker-box patterns at the kitchen table on a yellow legal pad

in felt-tipped pen while he talks to me, and I remember how in the month

between funeral and stay-at-home, he was well-booked—every day

somebody stopped by with a crumb cake. Baked goods multiplied

on his countertop: cookies mutated into blondies into muffins into baskets

filled mostly with crinkle paper with pears and crackers atop and underneath

the suffocation of plastic tied with ribbons. We worked in shifts

so he would not be alone, alone where he watched her for months and months

and months and months, he danced with her bald in her walker.
Oh, how

she resisted that walker until she fell over! How there was a
friend each day

on the calendar for lunch, how we took turns staying the night
frying two eggs with toast in the morning—he always ate
breakfast—

the plate hearkening back to the diner in Waldwick. How he
does not have a return.

My call—a child seeking solace from a parent who only
understands

in the way the child will only know as real in some future

hard to materialize in the livingness of abundance and
relative youth

how he too was young once with a wife who had long hair she
permed

curly and he would tug on her locks under their blankets. When
I say *future*

I see Jim again, clear-eyed with warm hands playing my rib
cage,

The National on in the car as we drive up 95 to some version
of our life

twenty-four days from right now.

REHAB DAY 9

of course the doctor finds a cyst

on my left breast uphill from sternum
rolling around like a glass marble
of course this is the first day he calls
of course I cannot tell him this news
washed from normal humdrum stress
he swims in progress
and my secret would not serve him
any more than it serves my own
malicious asshole cells
dense like perennials since puberty
of that particular region
of course I cannot even examine
the terrain of my own human lumps
with one arm raised like a branch
fingers ambling around suspicion
every time I've been terrified
I'll find what mom found
and it all feels like oatmeal anyhow
and he's helpless from there anyhow
to distract from my cycle of peering
into imagined crystal balls and storylines
seeing only the worst, seeing coffins—

if he does not know he cannot worry
and I cannot put that upon him now
make him worry for me
while he does so well in there

REHAB DAY 11

It's time to take the IUD out.
This is what I think about today, my body
doesn't want this preventer centered anymore.

I remember the day it went in:
man-doctor's hand inserting copper
I winced. He said *I know, I know*

generic bedside assuaging
irked my nerves I sharpened back
No, no, you actually don't.

And mom came along for support
all frail in her bird limbs, climbed broken
into a chair next to me at the outpatient place

and pain got to the point I needed her hand
to squeeze like citrus pulp out of my grip
as something external opened me up—

I want to be opened from the inside instead
dragged ragged in the riptide of giving birth—
I realized I'd break her frame of softening digits

and knuckles of chemo bones if I juiced
so I unfelt her skin and took hold of my gown
wrung into wrinkles and sweated holes

it's only a sheen of thin paper anyway...

When he comes back, he will come back
to some levels of absence—and so in turn
open space comes back in, to come in
like syrup into my hungry self.

REHAB DAY 19

His absence heightens hers
so this is how I communicate with mom

I feel each breast one by one smushed
between a plastic pane and its baseboard
goosebumps prickle against machine sounds

in a room alone with the rumbling
inherited path toward lobular cancer

where will my tissue light up a mammogram
like a late-summer campfire sparkler?
Today the ultrasound is a shock

The technician skates a roller over my mound
and I see with clarity a round black orb

She talks to me lump to lump
on the same table she undid her robe years ago
except her skin puckered like a citrus punch

breast vines weighted
by clusters of rotting berries, overripe

mine are bright on the doctor's screen
netted fibers the rind of a cantaloupe's dry skin
I see roadways toward lactation

and roadways toward demise
and this marble eye from god

like an omen is benign
has come out as a reminder
of how to spend my days.

** Variation on second line borrowed from Barthes's Mourning
Diary*

**Last line borrowed from Anne Dillard quote, "How we spend our
days is how we spend our lives"*

New Poetry by Maggie Harrison: "Clutch and Bless"



MY RASPBERRY HEART / *image by Amalie
Flynn*

CLUTCH AND BLESS

my heart is a raspberry

juicy yet taut

fragile

temporal

eat it now

before it degrades and

leaves a tasteless

piece

of itself

smearred on the basket.

my raspberry heart lives in the moment

but not my gut

my gut dreams

unpredictable

digesting whatever latest bout

I've consumed

pandemic fear

fear of white supremacists

indignation

incarceration

playacting colonization with real guns on the

range

a night in jail to protest police violence

hope for change

the audacity to hold it

all of this roils

my gut

terribly

tangled in the past

it's what I ate yesterday and am now
transforming

to expel in the future

my raspberry, my beating heart

crush it, suck it through your teeth, and savor

New Poetry by Carol Graser: “Parkinson’s Triolet” and “Summer Isolation”



THE WIDENING FAULT / *image by Amalie Flynn*

Parkinson's Triolet

I cup the base of your skull, catch
precious cells spilling out like salt
that seasons your limbs, your unholy lurches
I cup the drumbeat of us, mis catch

the rhythm, drop plates with a crash
You feed pills into the widening fault
My palm on the back of your head catches
our precarious marriage, heavy with salt

Summer Isolation

I paint the porch with strokes of blue
diamond. By sunset, it's a veranda
of green and you have fallen asleep
at the shore of a lake that glaciers through
your dreams. You wake with stones in your
teeth and ice melting under your skin
You arrive home with feet delighted
by the verdancy at our entrance. We
dig holes in the ground, nests for roots
the width of thread. You shake ancient
drops of water off your bones. When
a ruby-throated hummingbird
zips past
we see it

**New Poetry by Betsy Martin:
"About What You Have,"
"Female Figure in Photos,"**

and “To Missoula”



GRASSES QUIVER BEFORE / *image by Amalie Flynn*

ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE

In my dream
Dad, age one hundred twelve,
has his first cell phone—

big and square,
with a rotary dial.

With a proud index finger
he dials my mother,

gets her voice mail.
Together we lean in,
listen

to her low, driftty voice,
its mist so warm on my ear
as it rises from deep underground.

I ask Dad for *his* number,
but he can't recall it
before fading into the passage. He's left me

messages, though,
like: When eating fish be careful
not to get a bone stuck in your throat; when walking
tuck in the tummy; think
about what you have,
not about what you don't.

FEMALE FIGURE IN PHOTOS

fourteen-year-old mop of hair
sullen air in mod raincoat
on London sidewalk with
beaming scowling father brother

seventeen leaning
on brick wall in black-and-white flannel shirt
no cigarette yet mien
as in movies seen through a puff of smoke

college-era long hair

akimbo arms
eyes narrowed
to spot foe in tall grass

sixty odd in a museum at a window
face a little wooden
and through the panes
an autumn-leafed tree flames

TO MISSOULA

The cold air her pillow of courage, she skirts
the northern rim of the nation.

As she crosses the Dakota Badlands,
where even the hardest grasses quiver

before earth's uprisings and revolutions,
her eastern forest home has tilted

and is sliding over the rim!

She pulls her wings in closer
to fly fast and low

over layers of pink and gray guts
squeezed from deep under.

A tail feather tears loose,

whirls away;

she almost bursts into a plume of magma.

Night cools into dawn.

She parks the car,
steps out into a new world,
a young woman with compass and camera

and a crown of mountains.

New Poetry by Suzanne O'Connell: "Airport Luggage Carousel" and "Shipwreck"



IMAGINE GOLD DOUBLOONS / *image by Amalie Flynn*
Airport Luggage Carousel

A battered cardboard box

holes punched in the side
tied with frayed rope
lid popping up
plastered with masking tape, wrinkled.
One lone orphan
going round and round the luggage carousel,
heading nowhere.
Packed in chaos.
Full of soiled clothes
bloody Kleenex
unpaid bills
splinters
and Dear John letters.

This is what the last year has been.

So I imagine the contents differently.
I imagine gold doubloons,
a child's drawing of a rainbow,
a coupon for a free fried chicken dinner.
Maybe a photograph of a family, at Christmas,
standing together on a hillside,
everyone wearing red and green,
the husband holding a puppy,
and Carol,
still alive.

Shipwreck

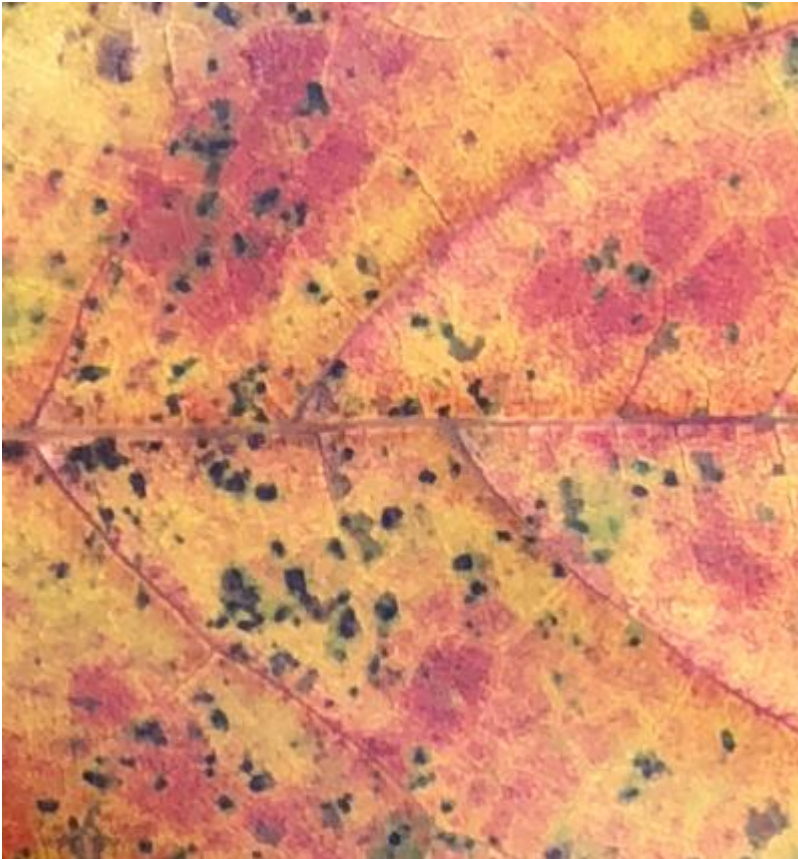
She sniffed my trenches,
turned away from the skin she made,
her own thick blood
flowing in my waterways.
Me, a vacant dwelling on the shore,
wearing swaddling,
drinking low-fat milk.

Oh, wire mother of the soul,
entertainer of strangers.
She of too many decibels,
too many bright colors,
passing macaroons to visitors
while I carved "I love Chris"
in the dining room table.

Find the fur coat,
find the hairdresser,
find the beach umbrella
find the wine coolers
find the plants in pots
resigned to death.

Little fish swim by her ankles.
Like me, they long for contact.
Mercy, the color of the sea,
never granted.
In that day, at that hour,
on that wretched beach,
she wanted an audience
but found only me.

**Poetry by Stephen Mead:
Remembering Beirut, Halloween
'83; Map Pins; Forced Labor**



STOMA / *image by Amalie Flynn*

Remembering Beirut, Halloween '83

The ground beds a stuffed effigy with bulging leaves.
Through peculiar affinity
it resembles some soldier.
Notice the guise of these clothes.
Consider its uniform grubbiness. Be a witness.
Here is frailty.

I lug the dumb body as if carrying my own reflection.
In another land some marine is dragging the dead weight
of his friend from the steepness of a ditch.
Hear the solstice hour toll? It's the season of reaping
soon to be celebrated, full-fledged, on All Saint's.

Jack O' Lanterns gape from their pumpkin infernos.
They tug at my form, a sinewy candle lending motion to dusk.
The moon wears the same face of negligence,
staring directly through, perpetual, obsessive.

Skulking beneath it I haul my likeness on a cross

of dried corn stalks. In the garden a fire rages.
Leaves crackle, russet, auburn, yellow. Witches burnt pure
of skin, the singed autumn embers ascend and I let,
with a gasp, my twin fall to be caught.
In stacked grass, the silhouette burns and smolders.

Let flames state metamorphosis, take change
from the depths, their swaying shadows.
Let them be purged, untouched by harm and rise fertile
from earth to winter the long haul of a death and a grievance.

Tonight something in me was sacrificed but saved by the
struggle.

Let it be just an event ritualized for one night
and not a sequence, serpentine, leading to another whole era
of hell.

Map Pins

& photo opportunities—
A world between say, this
President's address & some plane's covert
loading. Operation
Heartbreak. That's
melodrama, effete
emotionalism. Stick with
facts. Contracts. Point A
& Point B, land masses &
bodies of
water, the planetary typography
worn on a polyester shirt. There's

import, exports. There's the dollar
value status, the stock market
resources who happen to be human,
each significant as a billboard

but not all necessarily advertised.

An after-thought that would seem, the
boardroom memo, a game of

telephone,

the press (cover)

reports (up) inside leaks (dodge)

a thousand pricks (question &

answer) of light (the cameras)

fastened by (flash) brass tacks

Forced Labor

The long haul is the term for strain.

To go in, sweatshop ore digger, your colony owned
by a bigger government who, in turn, is at war with a
different one...

Sure, to go in, after the Big A & surrender subsequently:

reality a mirage but for body counts, headaches,

the daughter, photosensitive who can't leave darkened rooms &
dies

anyway, at 39, her siblings, one female born without bones,

& the next, presently 50 but burying his youngest,

such recessive aberrations passed on by their Mom,

a Korean import from Japanese mines...

Sound

familiar?

To put bombs behind us, prejudice, an epidemic,

look at Bikini Island on film:

the natives packed up, the burned homes,

and those natives told, shown diagrams:

"Testing Site. " "You are at war."

Foreign phrases. News to them. The pictures helped

while they smiled, waved at cameras none had ever before seen.

Next in came the Navy, understanding perhaps as little,
leaving 2 goats shorn and placed in metal crates:
no hemp to chew through or bolting when meters hit red.

To many, in tinted goggles, watching, the blast was:
"Magnificent." "A firecracker". "A sunset."

Others thought it "a let down."

Still, all the votes were not yet in—

There were still those sailors swimming through such liquid
marble,

the clean-up crews, the witnesses touching charred Palm,
their uniforms Geiger-clicking & their flesh as well,
having to shower, be re-tested & wash wash again
to get radioactivity off.

The same happened elsewhere, only to town-folk.

This is the humanity within inhumanity, that, in ignorance,
we bombed ourselves, & this is the knowledge:
genetics, marrow-solvent,
a tunnel pushing to upturn the stone fetuses.

In P.S., another news item my fingers squeeze:
a photo, its caption snatched from the TV page.

"Mushroom Cake, Navy Admirals Blandy, left, & Cowery,
assisted by Mrs. Blandy, celebrate first atom bomb test,
1946."

Here's the close-up: two hands, the Blandy's,
joined by a knife slicing frosting, the confection rising,
a cloud of froth as washed out as Mrs. Blandy's hat.

The Hundred-Year Itch, or Remembering The Great War

Here are some facts about

The Great War. It started in 1913.

We know that from books.

and the scarred nobles

grandma met in the deli

off 23rd and 8th,

Ich hätte gerne eine Bratwurst

they'd say, eyes scared red.

It was my fault; I must admit,

quanta exist in different places and

in different times;

some have been in my brain,

and also in Hitler's old brain

the war's most famous vet.

Not quite Afghanistan; still, his war

and my war was the same,

A vicious trick,

Russian saboteur

made disasters, it's true,

walk with me here:

the Soviets invade in 1979.

Great Britain joins France

as the Marne collapses,

a wet snowdrift, over-heavy

in 1914. Add the numbers.

We surround ourselves with stories,

these fluid lines always converge.

Remember that line, the human

marching through town, shrive-faced,

boots laced tight, cap perched on his

kiss-me forehead, rifle shouldered,

we're gonna beat the Hun—

there's another line, now, 451AD,

Attila plundering across the plain,

stopped by whom? The Roman? No—

Aetius heads a motley crew of Frank

and Gaul, Suebi, Goth and Visigoth,

and *Saxon*! Yes, the Germans saved

the West from Hunnic rule!

Until—it always comes around to this,
that boy marched home again
some years after the great siege,
at Verdun, Ypres, or Somme;
really it doesn't matter.

Siege used to mean sit, but he won't;
not without his boots and cap,
all that chipper stuff gone,
he's been unseated, the siege lifted
his mien took on a leaner slant,
suspicious eyes for prying words
could not prepare a waiting world
for what came next.

Plenty! Champagne *avec vous*
on all the quays and ways
of Venice, Paris, Bruges;
Sur la table, Monsieur?

If you weren't there, you can't know,
and he wasn't. All there.

When will war weary of me. Woeful wight,
wailing across the width of destiny,

I sprawl comfortless in a rancid hole,
a thick cloth great-coat stiff with sweat and grist
my second skin, then, for a skull, some tin
riddle: helmet, brain-pan, will you sit still?
The unfrozen mud's alive, the stench, strong,
rat I'd say, someone's let them in. Writhing,
muse for a Rosenberg, a whole den's worth:
and that's a good day, without bullets, bombs,
or the whistling artillery storm—
the rain of steel shrapnel, cutting like wind
across Europe's newly irreligious plain—
flesh, it seems, has a its breaking point, splits wide
the human spirit spills, squandered, betrayed
amid the great gulf between my chilled hand
and the quiet, marble hand of German kin;
or British, or French—what odd clay. The flesh
grieves, parted by that vast, pitted waste,
unshrivened the filthy flesh yearns to be
whole again; compartmented, sufficient,
Unified. one man, one nation—one God.

A great civilizing wind stirs on the plains.

Leaves cast off the towns, like trees,
the Supple young men march in step
all balled fists, full of boasting oaths
they stride, ennobled by a promise
of liberation, plunder, and rape.
The best of the land! This lot's the best!
But someone's pulled a cruel prank.
At the front, the sergeant calls time
with a note pinned to his back. It reads:
"Take my wife, she's free."
Below, a crude sketch.

On a computer or smartphone,
an educated citizen
has just checked the market. It's up,
cause for optimism, and sun,
and a feast fit for all the hounds
who prowl our sordid memory,
just looking for some sad excuse
to get me back out in the fury



Heroes fighting heroically during the battle for the Meuse-Argonne, which as everyone knows guaranteed peace for generations of Europeans and was a useful investment of human life and energy. Via US Army Europe Public Affairs

New Poem from Jacob Siegel: The Old Gods



The Old Gods (No. 9, 2003)

I.

The towers bloomed up in the dark

Like nails scrolling from dead fingers

While around them a languid curtain fell

In drifts of violet gas that settled on the roofs

All of us honeymooners and mourners

Aware of ourselves as objects in a landscape

That held above the chipped skyline

Bristling in the greater darkness

A dream of New York City

II.

We must have lived inside that dreaming

No more able to escape than words can flee the page

Our old Gods who gave us a magic by which to love

III.

In those days, we could take the D from 59th to 125th in one stop

Or all the way out to Coney Island

Not for the 24 hour pool room where the Russians played snooker a floor above the street

I did not go there with you

One night I had you with nothing between us

You were sat up on a jetty rock

I had the tide at my back

You in the shadow of Astroland

Lit by moon and amusement, a castaway