

# 3: A Taos Press

FROM **COLLECTING LIFE: POETS ON OBJECTS KNOWN AND IMAGINED**

Edited by Madelyn Garner and Andrea Watson

Selected Poem from *Anthology* by Fiona Sze-Lorrain  
from *Water the Moon* (2010), with some lines after Victoria Chang,  
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## **Shoebox Filled with Mao Buttons**

Stubs of sun, deflated saffron orns, scoop up a fistful—  
they chink and clank, megaphones chime The East is Red.

Betrothal gifts à la mode, virgin factory girls gave sex  
to comrades, and pinned their souls to Chairman.

Students bartered them for steamy pork buns,  
a professor swallowed two to commit suicide.

Plexi-glass sunflowers, now italicized mementos.  
Dragon-sons, phoenix daughters! Speculate and trade

your shamed nostalgia for museum fortune, Mao on money,  
his mole is art, postmodern aesthetics, the rust is a lie.

Denounce it? Flip one over, needle enjambéd,  
hook still kniving, yes, there us blood tinning on your thumb.

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FROM **SEVEN** BY SHERYL LUNA

## **The Breaking**

We break and rise as the ocean, moon and stars.  
Silence follows.  
Were we meant to unhinge?  
Low beat of morning.  
We crack like children's bones;  
mending is possible. The letting-go like dawn.  
The piano keys strike  
in time to the light shimmered pines.  
We are plural and singular sadness,  
broken in the high desert when snow refuses to melt.  
Streetlights lull against the darkness.  
Bats shrieking, bellow of strange heaven;  
bats of bendable bones hang  
in their upside-down thrones. Caverns light  
with their darkness. Stalactites shimmer  
with man-made lights.  
Snaps of the mind: circling, turmoil in nets, flight.  
A burst of shade flaps madly by the thousands.  
This is the old dusk, the dark awakening.  
But we break as glorious as whales breach seas,  
as if we too must suddenly  
and spectacularly breathe.

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FROM **THE LUMINOSITY** BY BONNIE ROSE MARCUS

## **When Death Comes**

When death comes growling, gnawing, scratching at my door,  
window, gate, when death comes gigantic, awesome, without  
reason, suddenly slowly, minute by year, when death comes chilly  
to the bone, sweating fire, when death comes to the place, time,  
space of my waking, when death comes bloated, bestial, bantering,  
battering, cajoling, calling, cat on a hot, cat on a cold, catapulting  
my ego off the edge, when death comes tomorrow or the next  
moment, comes suddenly on me like a fever or a bad dream,  
daring, devilish or dressed in white wings, comes cascading, rocky,  
raucous, ravishingly rude or (even beautiful in its fierceness),  
glorious, gluttonous, no clue, no time, when death comes entering,  
breaking, busting down the door, when death comes, I want:

I want to be radiantly ripe, peel scars into petals, joust judgments  
'til they surrender, tattoo fierce faith on every inch of my skin until  
the divine imprint becomes my own face, drown hesitation in an  
ocean of mercy, waves spitting miracles, become emptiness, silence  
shaking my bones, rejoice, relinquish, manifest my teacher, when  
death comes, I want to rip out my heart, offer it to those without,  
remember to remember to bleed suffering into forgiveness, dance  
translucent rain 'til rainbows take me, when death comes, I want  
to know, go graceful, glow, (flow rivers) into heart/breaking  
transformation.

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FROM **TREMBLING IN THE BONES: A COMMEMORATIVE EDITION**  
BY ELEANOR SWANSON

## Charlie Costa Plays a Joke

With a stick, I draw a picture in the dirt  
of a train and make the sound a train makes.  
Woo woo, I call to my bare feet,  
to my toes, wishing I could have  
a real train or any toy.

I kick a rock past our tent, pretending  
I'm playing Kick the Can,  
but it hurts my foot, so I stop in front  
of the Costas' tent where Mr. Costa  
is pretending a circus is going on,  
saying, "Come one, come all,"  
and motioning to the kids nearby  
who like him because he makes us  
laugh, even when we're hungry,  
and tells us to call him Charlie.

He says my name and gives  
me a newspaper rolled up  
like a spyglass.

He says it costs a penny  
and his wife Cedi yells,  
"Did you buy spyglasses  
when we are starving?"  
We kids yell too, "Let's see."  
When he hands me my telescope,  
I put it to my eye and look around  
wishing I could see stars  
or the moon, right now, in the day.  
I look down the row of tents  
for my mother.  
I want to see her.  
I want her to be pretty.

All of a sudden, everyone is laughing:  
Charlie has put charcoal on our telescopes,  
and we all have black eyes.  
We are all laughing and can't stop.  
Even though we are hungry,  
we can't stop laughing  
at our funny black eyes.

I put the spyglass up to my other eye  
so I will look like a raccoon.  
This time I will see things  
only raccoons can see,  
stars and planets just for raccoons.

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FROM **3 A.M.** BY PHYLLIS HOTCH

## **Crowned With Pale Blue Moonlight**

If you are  
the reluctant oracle  
I am  
the petitioner  
renewing  
forgotten hopes

White wimple  
stark  
above  
tender  
blue oval

Skirt of blackbirds' wings  
spread wide  
holds

sequestered fragments  
streaming diamonds  
fears burning  
dark water

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FROM **EARS OF CORN: LISTEN** BY MAX EARLY

## **Matrilineal Winter**

*Traditionally, at Laguna, the house is given to the oldest daughter  
At Acoma, the house is given to the youngest daughter  
The house belonged to Grandma Marie  
Given to her oldest daughter, Jane  
Soon, Jane gave Sister Clara  
The family home*

Three sisters in their winter  
Share their mother's house  
They are Orion's belt  
Wintry sister stars

Three stars softly fading  
Reminisce festal shadows  
Mom's chili stew cooking  
7-UP in the Frigidaire

Three sisters embrace home  
But not like they used to  
Keep moving around  
More aches flare

What do we do with your house, Mom?  
We feel bad that you're getting old  
We'll help you when we can  
We miss the old you

Serious oldest daughter  
Humorous middle girl  
Cheerful youngest baby  
Wintry sister stars

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FROM *ELEMENTAL* BY BILL BROWN

## **The Light That Follows Rivers**

Like the light that follows rivers in the night,  
a figure hovers ghostlike in my dreams,  
my father or stranger; sometimes the same,  
his blue eyes stained, his thoughts to read.

His gruff hands hover luminous in my dreams,  
above my childhood slumber they touch my head.  
His blue eyes like his hands I wish to read—  
yet I am older than my father when he died.

Above my childhood slumber they touched my head—  
his eyes, his hands, his storied voice, all lullabies.  
Though I am older than my father when he died,  
as men we travel alone, I know that now.

His eyes, his hands, his storied voice, his lullabies,  
my father, my stranger, always the same—  
As men we travel lonely, I know that now,  
like the light that follows rivers in my dreams.

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FROM **ROOTWORK** BY VERONICA GOLOS

*From The Lost Notebook, Mary Day Brown*

**Hastings Street, Springfield, Massachusetts,  
February 1, 1848.**

*on the visit of Mr. Frederick Douglass to our home*

It is late, very late, & I sit by the last of the fire.  
Mr. Douglass visited us tonight. He sleeps  
in the loft upstairs.

When he stood in our narrow doorway, he looked  
to be filled with light; it shone off his shoulders  
behind his head, through his fingers. Then

he entered. At first I thought him to be made  
of cliffs—his cheekbones, his jaw, his thick arms.  
His shirt so white, so very white, against the rock of his face.

Then there was his voice. How it rumbled, a deep roll  
of sound that caught me in my chest. Not only  
his voice, but his words.

What he knew.

The girls served him beans, corn bread  
& a bit of the last of the lamb.  
I stood back, near the stove, in case there was need.

I watched him. His large hand moved in circles along  
our table, as if he would polish the raw, unvarnished wood, would  
make it gleam, as he seemed to gleam. I felt, I suppose, pulled

by that hand, its back & forth motion  
as he & John Brown spoke, argued, leaned to each  
other—my husband full of fury and action;

Mr. Douglass,  
his words. What he knew.



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FROM **FAROLITO** BY KAREN S. CORDOVA

## **Grandmother's Voice on the Telephone**

66 pounds. Dying by ounces.

When she speaks, air within her  
crackles like the sweetest dove trying to walk,  
to flit on autumn leaves  
without breaking them, honoring  
those few moments  
before haze shudders and rain completes,  
returns Abuelita to her beloved garden  
feeding roots of ancient plum and apple trees  
that give both life and shade,  
that lean into the *acequia*.

Yes, there will be that silent day  
when leaves disintegrate and cover her, becoming  
her *petate*. No. Not yet—  
Brittle and crisp,  
her voice still shades me  
from harsh knowing she is leaving  
as it crushes English/Spanish  
into sound scented  
paperwhite and fruit of *manzanares*:

*Come. See me now.  
I'm here. Tell everyone good-bye for me.*

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FROM **GODWIT** BY EVA HOOKER

## **Of Soul I Keep Margins**

utterly free, feet shod  
for grievous walking: all

erasable footing, loose sheets of water, white  
letters (your mark) in a black field.

I make preparation for the wake of breathing,  
costly, perfect spillage & stumbling.

What if beauty is only a settling, a practiced  
disruption polished to dangerous gloss?

I set my foot down to keep the index of bruising  
tender to its supple edge. Trace

a wing.

Listen for the long hollow cry of the goose.

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FROM **THE LEDGERBOOK** BY WILLIAM S. BARNES

## Before the Rain

The sand bar gives itself back to the river in scallops.  
The conversation lifts, urges.

Fish rise: white-sided, plump, deeply scaled.  
Side-by-side. The world is copper. Figure-eights touching  
shoulder, rib, hip, thigh.

Bird tracks. A scarlet-backed damsel-fly.  
A single tree, burnt. Black.

The wind is full of children. Cotton rafts in a copper river.  
Southbound. Cloud boats. Full of seed.

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FROM **THE MISTRESS** BY CATHERINE STRISIK

## Morning Glory

May I study you  
by touch? Your

vine periwinkle  
blue circling your slender

torsos? I want to touch  
your centers, deepest where

marriage circles dark waters,  
strokes your sacrificial hands.

Strokes your  
hair and the balance between

each strand. Appearing  
as separate, yet the heat

from your open mouths.  
Only then will I carry

the bowl filled with pomegranate.  
Oh how your bodies suffer beauty.

Wait. Where are you going  
inside my touch? Off to

visit the Queen of Morning  
Glories? I clip. I deadhead.

My fingers stretch the vine.  
Your bodies without the attendant

reminds me  
to hold my breath by its root. I'll hold

I will  
as long as you will

until we are—  
nothing nothing

ever felt this—route  
to the heart—from the cornea.

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FROM **LIBRARY OF SMALL HAPPINESS** BY LESLIE ULLMAN

One of Leslie Ullman's own poems that illustrate her essays and exercises on the craft of poetry:

## **Reading James Wright on Flight 357 from Albuquerque to Chicago**

Sometimes a poem offers a series of  
chance encounters—partial phrases that slip  
into the next seat and lift me before  
I re-engage approved electronic  
devices. Sometimes a poem reads my mind  
in that private space before thought gathers  
itself into subject/verb, cause/effect—  
the shades are down but I can see in  
or the words are clear and the spaces be-  
tween them are shades closing off the whole sky  
of what's been left out—a spare, thrilling diet.  
When my feet touch cracked tarmac again, part  
of me remains behind a high, golden  
window. Sealed off from the thronged neon streets.

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FROM *DAY OF CLEAN BRIGHTNESS* BY JANE LIN

## approximate

as in the words  
for the repetition of a bird waking you  
just as you begin to concentrate  
as in vanish

recall something in the chest  
flexed into hardness  
every time your mother vexed you  
as in water

how it can't move fast enough  
when bodies collide  
rises up when your child needs you  
having always needed you  
from the breast

how yesterday was pancakes  
she asked if there was time and you said yes  
then there wasn't and still you made them  
because you love her and she asked

as in thirst, your mother gone  
as in it could have been song  
now you're late and put out put  
upon it could have been  
song

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FROM **BLOODLINE** BY RADHA MARCUM

## **A Brief History of the West**

Like years, the desert  
has no edges—red dust, red  
dust condensed, busted ash—like years,  
a corrupt uniformity we cut through.

:

Where miniature houses sail out  
over shelves thrust up, where air breaks  
down on rock, on conglomerate  
that defines a sky.

:

Or dream dry salt seeps  
from pores in your calves.

:

In one settlement, a headless  
fire truck rusting by a shed, plastic  
cowboys. In another, rancid  
frozen confection.

:

One year, the lakes were too white  
when we went by.

:

Where we go trailing  
our own wake of glass, like years  
we enter, enter again, stop seldom, and rest  
in our own dust impressions.

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FROM *HUM OF OUR BLOOD* BY MADELYN GARNER

## **Surgical Mask in the Time of Plague**

Half my face erased, only eyes  
above horizon—unmoored  
from a crooked nose,  
muffled mouth.

The nurses insist I wear a mask—  
white as blisters,  
as bone, as mausoleum marble.

Snow fort.

What have other mothers done  
in times like these:

Hide in their homes?

Come swaddled  
in gown and booties, blue-gloved?

Or do some of them attend, defiant—  
faces bare?

For days I have kissed my son  
through paper—  
sail billowing with each exhale.

Now watching him again turn away  
from me as if a stranger,  
I choose.



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FROM **DARK LADIES & OTHER AVATARS** BY JOAN ROBERTA RYAN

## Sequel

Dear Husband and King,  
I'm writing to you because I'm afraid  
someone is rewriting our story.

Lately, your mother has been  
licking her lips and eyeing  
the kids rather strangely,  
and knowing her ogre-ish  
lineage, I fear she admires  
Daisy's round arms and Dawn's  
dimpled knees with other  
than grandmotherly affection.

I know how important your war must be,  
but I'm worn out trying to make  
my lamb printanier and blanquette de veau  
tender enough to please her. Unless  
you return to the castle with haste,  
we're in imminent danger of losing,  
my dear, our happily ever after.

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FROM **THE DOCTOR OF FLOWERS** BY RACHEL BLUM

Who would have come  
if the angel had not come

*Was there something  
you wanted to tell me*

A river flowed  
through my house

*so there is nothing  
you cannot say to me*

Water that  
begins in the stairs  
carries a velvet dress

like plaster  
when my legs  
are failing

and salt like snow  
so suddenly  
your laughter

and the sound  
is a boat and the  
boat is my hands

and I remember you best  
with my hands

there it is always  
the same day

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FROM **BIRD FORGIVENESS** BY MELINDA PALACIO

## **The Praying Tree**

Ten years of driving the same highway, past the same tree, the picture is at last complete. The eucalyptus tree and narrow birds above a blessed steel sea with no thoughts of yesterday, today, or tomorrow.

Black cormorants on bare branches spread their wings as if in prayer. A sunny day in Summerland, and the tree, visible only from the highway, hides its penitent perch from cars racing by too fast.

Four wheels swerve to avoid a sheer cliff, southbound on the 101. The fat sun slides its yolk into the glass ocean. Slow down. See an empty nest of woven round sticks in the praying tree.

Birds soak in rays without fear of cancer or the nature of forgiveness. Slick imperfections, wet wings open and close in Morse code for good-bye.

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FROM **TURQUOISE DOOR** BY LAUREN CAMP

## **Letter to Mabel—From a Door Turning Inward**

I drove through the old blinking light to the ranch you gave Lawrence.

As if the road could take me through reasonable perspective. The road with its spindly bushes and dust. The sky, combed and curling.

The Ranch is bending down. The body of land baked in sun. Beside his door stands a pity of trees. Even Georgia's pine has suffered and suffered again, and is now without fragrance, needles whipped from the heat.

Despite sudden afflicted weeds and shamble, the needy arrive for opinions. Yet the house has shed its unsteady hand. Every breach, each final line, the pace of his sentences. Walls in the cottage crack.

We want his spelling of sorrow, all the trembling. Have we asked too much?

Up the slight hill, where he holds to his revolutions, yellow lumps indulge in a pattern. I nearly kneeled in its persistence, or I should say, reeled as it billowed.

The dark grew rough, and I left. Time was again to its pauses. I saw two horizons: one when I looked back, hunted by hawks.

# 3: A Taos Press

FROM **THE CAIRNS: NEW and SELECTED POEMS** BY BILL BROWN

## The Cairns

They're stacked beside the creek  
on a hidden gravel road—patience  
and craft, the artful searching,

seeing, chipping, shaping. Mostly  
limestone, each rock—millions of years  
forming, fossilized, story-filled—itself a cairn.

The hours spent in rugged contemplation,  
water burble, wind in leaves, the forest's sway—  
a present for those who pass as the earth

crumbles in time what human hands have made.  
I stack words to remember what words alone  
can't say. *The tongue is an eye*, a poet wrote,

not just a choking muscle, fumbling with age.  
The earth a grave of lost words, stones  
and children's bones; a cairn, itself, crude and holey.

*The gift is in the labor*, mother taught—  
scraped palms, broken nails, tired backs,  
the ordered wonder of shape.

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FROM **WE ARE MEANT TO CARRY WATER**

BY TINA CARLSON, STELLA REED, & KATHERINE DIBELLA SELUJA

## **We Are Meant To Carry Water**

like buckets on rope  
haul us up and be quenched.  
Like clay vessels,  
like aquariums, like troughs,  
you can lead horses to us.  
Built to carry each other  
between islands  
from drowning continent  
to drowning continent,  
lungs reconstituting holy springs,  
each time a breath  
of accordion pleats  
little fist of sound escaping.  
We are water heavy,  
collapsing wells,  
thick water pumps  
through chest holes,  
skiffs slip down spackled  
rivers churning silt,  
lake-eyed child, her rod  
in the depths wishing.

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FROM *THE UNBUTTONED EYE* BY ROBERT CARR

## **The Boat That Takes Me**

Blanket my body  
in the hull of red canoe

Lay its heavy head  
on a needled pillow of pine

Suck the cold knob  
of Adam's apple –

Say goodbye  
Misting foot against

a bone boat  
adrift in memory

A hand clutches  
the trim of a gun

metal dock  
Silent trigger

not so hard to push  
off after all –

# 3: A Taos Press

FROM *THE UNBUTTONED EYE* BY ROBERT CARR

FROM *THE BURNINGS* BY GARY WORTH MOODY

## **See And Be Astonished By Whatever Will Occur**

Before the black water withdraws to scale the lake's shore with brine like skin  
incandescent after love  
before the black room's green  
night-heron's eye becomes the mirror revealing myriad criminal stars, thinned relentlessly  
into foreign  
constellations unremembered  
tarnished by the shrunken unkindled arbor of vacant memory and men riding antlered  
deer under the horizon into the valley plaqued  
with burn before the burning whirlwind or boiling pool no matter how shrunken the gyri  
or jiggling fibered tangles before the white ones  
leave their floating wooden mountains no matter how many still thrumming hearts we lift  
from opened breasts of those pinned  
to an altar for burning we will all be only variant syllables joined and spun through  
the aqueduct's opened mouth into the river's sacrificial throat  
like cries against wind in dream



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FROM **GIRL** BY VERONICA GOLOS

## Ten Miniature Gods Swirl Inside the Room

How old are you?

*Ten.*

Do you know our names?

*No.*

How long do we have?

*Mother will sleep. See? Her bottle is empty.*

Do you dream of us?

*Sometimes.*

When?

*When I'm under water. In the bathtub. I go under water and I open my eyes, and there are so many floating sparkles.*

Will you come with us?

*Where?*

Where do you wish?

*To the sea?*

You will become

Mermaid.

*Oh yes, please.*

*Yes, pearls in my hair, silver tail, my nails*

*purple as cyclamens.*

# 3: A Taos Press

FROM **QUIVIRA** BY KAREN KEVORKIAN

## **Seem to Be Inscribing Some Sort of Language in the Air**

You are walking on a side street  
in a small western mountain town  
opposite a muddy field where two horses  
pasture you've walked past the horses before  
today they are solemn not a wagging-tail day  
their eyes on pocks in the mud their hooves made  
and you wanting the long lashes  
of acknowledgment

a small cold wind  
blows and a tree of brown leaves shakes  
it is talking and the brown  
rains down another gust  
again that talking sound  
the leaves give

like starlings, small black birds  
of gold eyes that with one mind rise  
from buildings or trees a tornado  
to block light then fan and turn  
a pointillist demotic

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FROM *godspine* BY TERRI MUUSS

## **Alternate Names for Rape Survivors**

1. held breath in the half-light of red-eyed dawn
2. muscle tension before the brick is thrown
3. forgotten bodies piled on a dorm-room floor
4. someone's daughter
5. shade from a leaf gone once the sun moves in the sky
6. life-destroyer of the hometown football star
7. huddled masses yearning to breathe breathe breathe br
8. twisted knot, a hive of cuts on thighs
9. disembodied soul and the cat's 10th life
10. your teacher, bus driver, dental hygienist, the girl who sits  
stone-faced at church
11. (me)
12. every third woman reading this
13. a reinvention of reinvention
14. the millisecond before the razor or the noose

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FROM *ANYONE'S SON* BY DAVID MEISCHEN

## The Words Inside

Night rustles in the hackberry leaves.  
A gate hinge complains, nudged  
by restless yearning. Henhouse mutterings

from wherever dreams have transported  
these heavy, flightless creatures.  
From the house behind him only

silence, no sign from the others. Father,  
mother, sister, brothers. Awake they look  
past him, eyes empty as grommets.

Tonight—the dark, the stars, the cool  
against his skin—he burns to know  
if somewhere there are others fed

by hungers that cannot be  
quenched: out of deepest dark  
beneath the nearest hackberry,

a white plume cresting, a tail  
held sassily aloft. The boy on one  
side, this unknowable creature

on the other, his impertinent sashay,  
as if winking at the boy, his longing,  
the meager rooms behind him, doors

opening so easily out to a sky  
like this. Confetti incandescing.  
The boy takes in as much

starlight as he can hold. Sleep  
opens in him, its delicate petals,  
a voice without words, singing him away.

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FROM *VANISHES* BY D E ZUCCONE

## The 6s & 9s

That first trick, like telling a bedtime story relies on your face  
being able to appear to invent details of what doesn't exist

as happiness. Pleasure's such a surprise we kiss it goodbye  
before it arrives. Cotton candy, satin sheets, menus, chocolate

truffles, our favorite confusions diffuse our desires. I'm going  
to show you two cards; they don't matter. Imagine you don't

know what to bring from your cave of disappeared. The Soldier  
or the Tinder Box, a lost cat, a shame you hide beneath jewelry,

memories constantly sauntering off as you sleep...you have lost  
too many, so much disappears, I see that you're distracted. Here

look, aren't these your 9s & 6s leaping into my hand? Does it matter  
how I managed this? What's in your left hand, another itch?

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FROM *ABYSS & BRIDGE* BY RENÉE GREGORIO

## The Grace of Now

sometimes seasons change in a whirl of wind  
then smoke into being.  
sometimes we turn a corner  
only to meet ourselves face-to-face.

if there's trembling to be had, have it,  
if falling is the only way to touch the ground,  
surrender to what's startling and right—

fierce light rising over dense mountain  
the sound of water falling on stone,  
and this body (always this body)  
with its back of grief and front of desire.

what would it be like  
to stay with yourself  
(not ahead as if running for a bus  
not behind as if left on the platform by departing train)  
just here, just now  
in this warm, still air,  
earth moistened by yesterday's brief rain?

know that.  
claim what is good.  
then get up:  
take your place in this world.

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FROM *MANIFOLD* BY E R LUTKEN

## **Ars Parabola**

*Luc Bat for Horace and MacLeish*

Can't say what a poem is or not  
but graph it and the plot  
might trace that perfect spot for one  
whose vertex taps the sun:  
abscissa makes a run from rhyme  
to none and metric time  
devolves from frozen symmetry.  
Equal distance of free  
line and focal point defines sure  
sense, logic's stare obscured  
as symbols play in pure sound's bright  
flare. White-hot words ignite  
a sharp savor, the bite, the risk,  
an ordinate of bliss.

# 3: A Taos Press

FROM **M** BY DALE M. KUSHNER

## **The Handless Maiden**

The leaves are alive with the fire of dying.  
Dried blood for the roses. Marsh hay  
for wintering corms. Travail of  
of tiger lily and dwarf iris. Travail  
of ruby rugosas. Tale of death and renewal.  
Of the handless maiden, her calculating father,  
and the devil, that loneliness, craving her beauty.  
And the king who fashions  
a pair of silver hands. Amputation  
is not always annihilation, a blunt  
but important fact. Remember,  
there is often a garden. Globes of potent fruit.  
And angels, sometimes in the form of a snake.  
I am not lying about any of this. Not just in fairy tales  
the hands grow back.



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FROM *AGOREOGRAPHY* BY JON RICCIO

## **My Handwashing Explained**

If life gives you lemons, render into cleanser.  
Leeches, boil the vanity. Lynxes, reformat  
your zoo. If sepsis gives you purpose, work  
for the CDC. My twenties were bravura:

duets for fixation and support group,  
contagions that frazzled like SETI anaphora.  
Unproven, they Fahrenheited my derma.  
What damage the nerve flimflam?

Pathogens, a steam fugue. If the brain  
gives you leopards, atrophy with faucet.  
Looking for a leeway, I burrowed through

the citric while my disorder courted sink-  
magma. I'm surprised my hands held,  
the scald imperatives they received.

# 3: A Taos Press

FROM SECTION I OF **BLOOD SECRETS** BY ANITA RODRIGUEZ, JOAN RYAN, & ANDREA WATSON

FROM **M** BY DALE M. KUSHNER

## **Amadio**

I trailed a ribbon, and you found a ribbon,  
as I walked about the marketplace, stopping there  
or there, and when you stood above me and twined it  
around my head, no words. I remember your eyes  
were the cloak of cold heaven and your hair raw-  
threaded indigo. Even with the din of morning,  
I felt a thinness of sound, an easing in of you.  
I gathered myself to ask your name: *Amadio*:  
as in *beloved*: Perhaps an un-frayed wanting.  
You asked mine, as return: *Rena*: I answered.  
*Only one thing is more beautiful than prayer.*  
You paused in telling. *I would like to call it Song.*  
Your smile was a tapestry, half cendal, half satin.  
I wanted to take your heart, stitch it onto mine.

# 3: A Taos Press

FROM *100 DAYS* BY JAMES NAVÉ

## **Day 61 Who I Am Now**

Every day the memory of my surgery recedes like the Taos sunsets. The recent irritation at the bottom of my scar has receded along with the fear that I might never be myself again. Of course, I'll never be thirty-two, kicked-back on a festival blanket, watching jugglers and dancers whoop and swirl up and down, round and round. Who I was then is not who I am now, nor who I will be tomorrow, or later this summer when I'll stroll around Prospect Park, or cross 14th Street to catch a train, watch pigeons, or talk with my friends over coffee in an all-night diner on First Avenue.

# 3: A Taos Press

FROM *THE HEAVY OF HUMAN CLOUDS* BY ROBERT CARR

## **I've Split the Ash, and Now I Read Anne Sexton**

I spent the morning splitting ash  
and now could sit, all day,

in the mouth of my woodstove.  
Its maw, slightly open, hoping

to burn my tongue.  
The sofa's soft denim, braided

rugs pooling all over the room.  
The windchime, clanging

in curl at the backdoor.  
Whitecapped lake.

Is this the end I want? Backdoor  
bells? This inanimate book of deadened

songs that cover the second voice  
in my head? The phone on mute?

I stand at an unscreened window.  
Gray-stained water moves beneath

the gray-stained wind. Pine needles  
cling – wet lashes between my breath

and the saddest gale. The house  
is heating up. I must put on my shoes,

get out, kick the fallen mice,  
the acorns in the drive.

# 3: A Taos Press

FROM *LITTLE SOUL AND THE SELVES* BY LESLIE ULLMAN

## Little Soul Begins a Series of Field Notes

First, it attempts to deconstruct  
little. Not as in child. More like  
background noise, backup singer on a stage  
crowded with selves, girl-child  
in a brace of boys, bookish, maybe  
timid, maybe muffled, maybe  
content to be left alone  
until ambushed and brought to its knees  
by craving. For spotlight. For the world.

Impish? Sometimes. Voice of tickle  
or mischief, lone firefly lacing the dusk.  
Or still small voice, whisper in someone else's ear  
as counsel, old-soul wise, even as Little Soul  
was put to bed too early  
and was afraid of the dark.

Is it young? Has it been male  
in other lifetimes? In this life, it has  
no clue how to seek and hold dominion  
(no wish, either) or what rape  
has to do with desire—no trace  
of ancestral testosterone, warrior  
anger, singular focus, life-risking prowess....

Has it ever been mother? In this life  
it has kept its body to itself—  
inclined towards unpeopled spaces,  
plants that seed themselves  
when tended, river stones  
sun-warmed in the palm, shy  
hooved and furred creatures.

# 3: A Taos Press

FROM *TWELVE DAYS FROM TRANSFER* BY ELEANOR KEDNEY

## Women Pruning Pear Trees

When someone in the grief group shared,  
*Some mornings, I don't get out of bed,  
or I hate my body; I wonder if my husband  
will leave me; I don't know my purpose in life;*

I listened. Both hands in my lap, left  
on top of right, palms up. I read aloud  
newly written poems about autumn rain,  
apple pie, walking my dog, Shana.

At the end of the eight-week session,  
Jan invited us to her house to prune  
pear trees. It was February, snow possible,  
the weather perfect for cultivating hardiness.

She laid the tools on the ground: secateurs, loppers,  
saws, pole pruners. We thinned out weak-crossing  
branches, keeping the ones with the least angle at their origins.  
Avoided cutting fruit spurs, removed water spores.

We took the dead and damaged limbs,  
knowing the unsung trees might not fruit that year,  
but with our work they might the next. Inside,  
there was lentil soup and warm bread, a long table.

We hung our coats and sat down, joking  
about who worked the hardest. I rubbed my cold hands  
together. On my wrist, a small scratch flared.  
My arms ached from reaching toward the canopy.

# 3: A Taos Press

FROM *LIFE AFTERLIFE / A BOOK OF THE HOURS*  
BY KATHERINE DURHAM OLDMIXON GARZA

## Earth Sign

And in the dream, you come to me as a mountain lion,  
and say, not simply life as the animation of the senses

or flow of blood or chlorophyll, but as what lights  
the crystal quartz and flows from the black obsidian,

life that rises from the dead (for which there is no word  
in our language), and gives the luminosity of the dark;

life that is the mystery of the mayfly and the mountain—  
muffled rain song, naked branches of the apricot tree,

life gazing at the horizon from the rail of a rocking ferry  
or at moonlit stones in the bed of a moving stream—

Spirits of Orpheus, the mourning doves sing to light  
the morning. It was spring then, too.

# 3: A Taos Press

FROM *MAGICHOLIA* BY JENNY GRASSL

## **Snow White In The Dolomite Mountains**

I fall new/ fever ruby into the mine of a hungry mountain/ sacrificed virgin swallowed by the Queen of Dolomite/ my cheeks slurred in her cliffs capture of sunset nightly/ rock trapping life ancient and sea/ I see the tracks back fossils/ every shadow requires favor// in my grave cave the Fire Salamander whitens and grows dragon-high/ why did he sway me into an asphyxiate-blue waltz/ our steps in the airless// miners find me dead/ smitten they preserve my body/ a glass coffin far above the tree line/ I lie like a moth de-fluttered closure sewn by a prince/ whipstitched eyelash and wing/ he hauls me to his castle/ keeps my child corpse close to him for many drenches of sun exhumed by moon// once I cough waking/ undoing his love spell/ he hurries me back to cloud/ does he know if I live again I will one day weather overcast// snow mortal as bone alone I open the pearl-dusk lid/ eclipse of white grit/ blackening the peaks/ my crow crow hair ravenous/ gone avalanche gray.



# 3: A Taos Press

FROM **OUR LOVELIEST BRUISES** BY ROBERT OKAJI

## **Ensō: Pleasure in Absence of Ending**

Thoughtful, proposing not end, but process.

In this noon's grayness I disclose my need.

Which is a lotus floating in your pond, a belligerence of zeros  
blooming in moonlight. Last night's missing sleep.

An ending, by definition, concludes.

But what occurs in a circle's body, or infinity's border?

Imprecision acknowledged, I sip wine and gauge distance.

Take comfort in the disorderly.

Starting at the top, the brush moves down and right,  
clockwise, then rising in opposition, halts.

Some leave a gap; others do not.

Aching, incomplete, I step away.