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Contents

Three Poems

Rhian Waller

Two Stories

Daniel Hudon

Three Poems

Puma Perl

The Man Made Only Of Straight Lines: A Rectilinear Fable

Alvaro Zinos-Amaro

Interview: Alvaro Zinos-Amaro

Three Poems

Jacqueline West

Three Poems

Raul Gallardo

Three Poems

Shokry Eldaly

One Story

Lydia Williams

Two Stories

Heather Bell

Contributors

Three Poems

Rhian Waller

Mars

My brother and I
liked to stand, feet in
weighted boots and
play
catch the easy way,
the balls curving
slow.

We've matured since
then –
he explores while I,
laboratory-bound,
study the things he
brings
back; strange aliens.

The best place to throw
was on a moon, with
soft gravity and
gentle drops, our clasping
fingers firm around



Image by Karl Mooney

the sphere. Our leaps drove
high, we spun, we snatched
and neither won or
lost, just passing back
and forth beneath dark

space. He liked the globe
with blue swirls best:
it promised new worlds.
I liked the red ball,
thought it looked like home.

Spit

I spit on you. In drought times
we drop manners like so many
cracked amphorae, pushing and
grabbing with hot fingers and
stamping hard red feet.

But
my saliva is a gift. I spit on you
because your skin looks dry and
rainless and with my spiral pads
I try to rub the dust away.

Boo

Driven to detour
through a forest of fingers
spasmed against the skyline.
Shadows stretch further
to tickle the hubcaps.

'Fuck me, the engine's gone.
We've blown a gasket.'
With teen logic, it makes sense
to drive away the winter frost
with chaffing.

So obligatory blonde will blow him too.

'Going for a slash,' he says, unaware
of accidental, accurate semantics.
'Be right back.'

Wind blows, dark grows.
She taps the steering wheel with neon claws.
'There's no such thing as monsters,' she reassures
herself.
She doesn't see the grey thing

right behind her

[Contents](#) / [Author](#) / [Comment](#)

Two Stories

Daniel Hudon



The Wave: A Review

Since its installation two months ago, The Wave has become the museum's most popular exhibit. It's not hard to see why. Rearing up to the 18-foot ceiling like an aquatic Pegasus, the Wave spreads across the vast end wall of the newly opened Multi-Media Gallery, striations of foam stretching across its blue-green belly and a crest breaking on the sides such that you think the whole thing might crash down upon you at any moment. Reminiscent of Hokusai's *Great Wave off Kanagawa* (that dwarfs even Mt. Fuji in the background), the Wave is Maximum Art.

Like any masterpiece, museum-goers report a range of responses to the Wave. Most viewers are literally wowed by it and after coming forward to assess its reality, they step back again, uttering only that single exclamation, *Wow...!* Young couples love

its large-as-life feel that encapsulates the rising potential of their burgeoning romance while adults long-married with children reminisce with fondness about the first time they went to the seashore and saw the towering waves of the mighty ocean and heard its thunderous surf for themselves, wondering simultaneously how long it has been since they've seen such a wave and where does the time go anyway? Some have said that they see in it the primordial soup origins of all life on Earth when the original organic molecules took their first clumsy steps of self-replication, to be followed eventually by the slow but persistent tides of natural selection and evolution; others, more apocalyptically, have said that it foretells environmental catastrophe when over-population will have meant that even the oceans are covered over with new suburban subdivisions and our only experience of the beach will be in museums. Not surprisingly, the few surfers who have seen it have dreamed of riding it to shore.

However, not everyone is impressed. Many stare at it blankly, unsure of what to think, trying in vain to resist the nagging feeling that they don't get what the fuss is all about and absently wondering if there is some inherent meaning in the Wave that they are missing. Some see it as frightful as the recent tsunami that wreaked so much havoc in the Indian Ocean or they find it too big, too vast, a too-potent reminder of the ever-rising flood waters that made such a calamitous mess of New Orleans. Then there's the 12-year-old boy who, perhaps buoyed by the salty tears of commiseration shed by the fourteen-year-old girls around him for the Wave's ephemeral predicament, has begun a letter-writing campaign free the Wave and return it to its natural habitat. So far, the curator has ignored the petitions.

For his part, the curator of the exhibit is pleased by the fuss the Wave has created, yet, some of the stories that surround it have baffled him. For example, he doesn't know where the Wave came from. It appeared one morning in the parking lot of the museum, encased in a waterproof wooden crate. He consolidated the 20th century abstract galleries and put the Minimalists in storage to give the Wave its own multi-media space (not to mention giving museum-goers one last thrill before filing into the cafeteria). Even so, for the first few days, no one seemed to notice it, or if they did they didn't say much about it.

But that same week, a Japanese tourist, who had somehow gotten separated from his tour group, reported getting drenched by the Wave – with digital self-portraits that appeared on the front page of the Arts section of the Herald as evidence. Now everyone is talking about the Wave. The two scientists who have studied the Wave have declared its authenticity, though neither offered any explanation for its gravity-defying suspension. Adding to the mystique, the janitor, still devoted to the museum after thirty-two years on the job and as laconic as the day he started, has reported that some mornings he has to mop up puddles on the floor of the gallery.

Everyone wants to know where the Wave came from and the most common reaction on the audience survey card is, "Who is the artist?" because the sign simply says *Wave, Anonymous Donation*.

The curator remains hopeful that the artist will come forward with another masterpiece, such as *Mountain* or *Wind*. He has already begun to make room.

The Last Days of My Youth

"Amen," my father said, as I left the hospital room. But I couldn't make sense of it, couldn't believe he was there. *Christ!*

"Don't you think you should help your father?" my mother had said. "Ever think of anyone besides yourself?" was what she meant.

Friday it had snowed all day, twelve inches, sixteen inches, something crazy like that. Great big flakes that floated gently down, giving everyone the impression that this was going to be one of those lovely, leisurely winter days, until the blizzard kicked in and things quickly turned nasty. He couldn't wait to get out there and get the driveway cleared.

"I'm just going outside," he said, which was code for me to come help. "Just going outside," as if he was going to look at the moon.

Kyrie eleison. Lord have mercy.

My mother shouted at me to help him – "It's your duty!" she said, trying a different angle. "NO," I shouted back, for no real reason except to be difficult.

Oh Lord, what have I done? Please take this cup from my hands. Quench these fires. Receive my prayer.

Saturday I spent all day at the hospital. "Tomorrow, I'm coming out," he said, prodding the nurse in front of my mother, trying to smile. "Unless she keeps me here."

"Very funny," the nurse said as the doctors came and went, "you just worry about getting better, then we'll see about letting you out."

Waves on the monitors. X-rays on the table.

"You'd better wait outside now," she told me.

Zero, zero, zero, was all I could think; I wasn't going to amount to anything.

[Contents](#) / [Author](#) / [Comment](#)

Three Poems

Puma Perl

The Gamester

there was a man
young, beautiful
his face
artfully angled
his hair
streaked in berries
he washed his clothes
in park fountains and
summer sprinklers
his sun-dried
pristine
white t-shirts
sparkled in rows
on fences
or hung from trees
somebody named him
the Gamester

i never heard
his voice
he often cocked



Neon

his head
as if listening
to someone
heroin kept
the monsters away
when he ran out
he bent men over
in filthy bathrooms
he was rumoured
to be very
well endowed

A Little Bit Lost

She was many years younger than her lover
When she called him "baby" in her high clear voice
It pierced the air, people turned to watch
A girl in short bright dresses and worn shoes
The man in dark shirts, designer sunglasses
She always thought she was pregnant or
Miscarrying or plagued by tumours
She described these events in terms of fruits
The last baby was the size of a kumquat
A tumour was a peach pit, but grew and grew
Bigger than a papaya, it was almost an avocado
She carried herself gingerly, took extra care in crowds

Protected her middle, filled with fruit and lost babies

Desert Dream

I never thought I'd fall in love with the desert

Ocotillo shrubs, Saguero blossoms, Palo Verde trees

Cactus wrens, red-tailed hawks, scorpions

The intrigue of desert dwellers, nomadic wanderers

Descended not from Morocco, Algeria, Mongolia

But from the living rooms of America by way of

Viet Nam, homeless shelters, welfare lines

Throwaway people finding one another

As a child my bedroom faced elevated tracks

I would gaze at the shadows behind subway doors

No breezes came through my wooden blinds

I was not allowed upon the fire escape

How I longed to climb out the window

Wave to mysterious midnight travellers

Take the hand of spirits that lived in the air

Fly through the Brooklyn heat, breathe free

I imagined freedom, alive in the ocean or sky

Trails without footsteps, words, thought

No imprints, no memories, no burns, no scars

Spaces that even the wind could not fill

A city child, I was, unskilled at flight, at silence

I couldn't drive or steer a boat, or paint a house

Running was for away, walking was for the corner

Freedom was sold for dimes and dollars

I never thought I'd fall in love with the desert

Never imagined I'd return to Arizona

Where once I leaped from a car in Flagstaff

Bought silver earrings, rode a Greyhound to LA

Never knew Apache Junction, Superstitious Mountains

Chiricahua peak formed by volcanic violence

Gulches perched on House Rock Valley Road

Deserts filled with sunflowers, mariposa lilies, poppies

Smaller and smaller we are

In the light of sunsets and full moons

In the rising heat of early morning

In the clearing of midnight desert dreams

Spirits humbled, quiet beneath fierce skies

Violet crowns, hearts of green, grounded in red

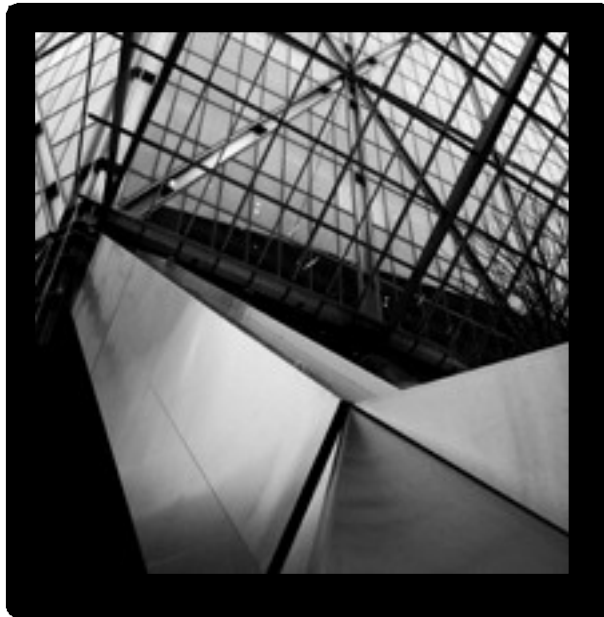
Feelings course through bodies like flash floods

Never thought I'd fall in love.....

[Contents](#) / [Author](#) / [Comment](#)

The Man Made Only Of Straight Lines: A Rectilinear Fable

Alvaro Zinos-Amaro



Gamel Livingstone sighed and pushed the plate aside.

"Shrimp doesn't seem to agree with me anymore," he said. "Tails go round and round."

"Did it get worse since . . .?" Lyssa asked. She cleaned the corners of her lips with precise painter's strokes. The waiter revealed no emotion as he withdrew the mostly virgin creole shrimp and brought the bill to Gamel's side of the table.

"Yeah, it did," he replied wearily. "A few more weeks and I'll be all right angles."

*

During the last month the evening rotation of waiters at the *Cajun Bait* had served Mr. Livingstone every Friday night, as he wined and dined a new date. They naturally assumed that tonight was no different. They were wrong.

Gamel smirked and said, "My treat, I guess."

"Ooh, what a privilege! How long has it been since my little bro paid for one of my meals?"

"I got you Frutti de Bosco gelato."

"That was like twelve years ago. And it was my birthday."

"A real scorcher of a day, is what it was," he said.

"That's all right Gamy," Lyssa said, "I'll get ya back."

During the bustle out of the congested diner he felt Lyssa's gaze burn into his nape; the way she measured with her eyes the distance he kept from others, the mechanical rhythm of his bent gait, was almost palpable.

In the cold night air Gamel recalled the incendiary heat of Granada on that ice cream day, and they laughed about it.

Lyssa said, "Want a ride home?"

Her visible breath formed tiny constellations. Clouds of mist--spirals.

"No, that's fine," he answered. "The doctors said I need to start exercising my muscles more. As the walls of my cell membranes align, the tangential pressure on my muscle fibers is increasing. So it's walk walk walk from here on out."

She winced at his choice of words.

"But I move faster now," he said, patting her on the shoulder. The pat had replaced the hug years ago, when their parents had died in a car accident. "Less friction."

*

Gamel watched Jette's mouth and waited his turn to tell the Alhambra story. With the onset of his new geometry his hearing hadn't gotten worse but his sense of

balance had. His outer ear offered less surface area for the dispersal of sound waves, but the effect was negligible--the inner ear was the problem: the three semi-circular canals were becoming less circular each day, composed of longer segments of straight line. He tried to blame his queasiness on that. But no, it was the company. Food was becoming more insipid--the fault of his palate--and his choices in companionship more bland by the day.

So Gamel did the only reasonable thing: he entertained himself by choosing the best type of mathematical curve with which to describe the person to whom was attached the flapping mouth.

Proud chin. Hmmmm. If he were able to roll the parabolas of her breasts together and set them vertex to vertex, he could draw out a cissoid. Cissoid of Diocles?

". . . and that's when I decided I should be dating someone younger," her mouth said. "How about you?"

She raised her glass, poised in wait for his response.

He smiled and said, "Personally, I'm looking for someone who offers me the right configuration. Know what I mean?" He licked his lips. "A Conchoid of de Sluze," he said, emphasizing the last word.

"Sounds nasty," she said.

"It's all relative. I'd also be happy to find a trisectrix of Maclaurin."

"Trisectrix? You mean, like a ménage-a-troi?"

"Not exactly," Gamel said. "Have I told you about my trip to Alhambra?"

She slurped her wine and shook her head.

*

Lyssa propped him up against his stiff rectangular pillow. Gamel's eyelids descended like vertical shutters, leaving no arc for emotion at the edges. The excess light caused him to seek lower illumination and blink more often. As his tear ducts elongated and narrowed, he found he could cry only with the greatest difficulty. But there was an upside; energy extraction in his cells had become so efficient (the near-

perfect alignment of ATP molecules made them easier to process), and conductivity in his synapses so improved, that he hardly needed sleep anymore.

Yet he spent more and more of his time in bed, too embarrassed to be anywhere else.

Gamel shook his head. "Men lust for curvy women all the time," he said. "I could do with a woman made entirely of curves."

Lyssa eased her grimace into a smile and nodded, sweeping her brush with angled teeth across the bed. She originally used it to break out her dog's hair, but as Gamel shed more and more skin she'd found a new application for it.

"Maybe you'll still find her," she said. "After all, the universe created you." She remembered the time, years ago, when she'd stepped out onto the porch to throw out the trash and had been startled by movement in the shadows. A full moon shone above. Thinking it was a cat--or worse, rats--she stomped on the creaky porch planks, attempting to startle the creature. And a sixteen-year old Gamel fell off the recliner he'd moved against the edge of the porch, his girlfriend tumbling down on top of him. He was quick to zip up and walk the blonde home.

She said, "You know, with all the craziness when you were young, I'd always figured you'd be married by now. Responsible family-figure, father of three. Weekend picnics and all."

He laughed. His lung capacity had increased, but the change to his windpipe and glottis caused the pitch to be higher.

"I ended up sounding like a woman instead," he said.

"Is that so bad? Or are you gender-biased?" She smiled.

"Of course I am," he said. "I've got enough troubles as is, without trying to redefine my own gender."

"You know . . ."

A pause. "Yeah, thanks," he said sarcastically. "I really didn't want to think about it."

"Will you still be able to--?"

"I don't think so. I mean, how could I? There's curving involved. I can't get excited and have it be, you know, completely perpendicular. Jeez! Talking to you about this feels weird."

"Are you sister-phobic now too?"

He harrumphed and turned onto his side, away from her. When he didn't say anything after a few minutes, she leaned over.

"Hey, I was just playing."

"No worries. I was too," he said. "But there's something new. My legs. Something's wrong. I can't move."

*

Gamel lost the ability to speak a week later, though he could still communicate via sound, short bursts of wordless gurgling. He became completely paralyzed on the outside, though there must be sufficient peristaltic movement on the inside for him to continue to digest food. Lyssa discovered in a journal he had left open before the onset of his "freeze" that he was convinced his evolution into straight lines was the result of their trip to Alhambra. The perfect geometric patterns, the infinities couched in symbols; there had to be a connection. Somehow, the math hidden in those designs had reprogrammed him, working through his body over the last twelve years. This was the end-phase of something larger, he believed. Intrigued, and trying to dismiss the pathos of his understandably self-elevating notion, she researched Al-Khwarizmi, the eighth century mathematician of the Persian Empire. To while away the afternoons, she would read to Gamel from Al-Khwarizmi's masterpiece on algebra, *The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing*.

A few days later, she made the connection herself.

Gamel was so thin and light by now that she had built a wall of pillows around him on either side so he wouldn't float away.

Lyssa was the only one who remained at his side. She said, "You're becoming an expression of purity. A manifestation of God. I never believed in God. I mean, I don't really even believe now. But . . ."

There was a soft rustle, and she saw he had become blade-thin.

"Are you going to cut through the heart of the world now?" she asked, her eyes misty.

Another sound followed, this time more like a vacuum seal popping open. Gamel was so thin and so straight she could only tell he was there at all by the curious way in which the light and shadows in the room were split by a line.

"The square of infinity is infinity," she proclaimed, trying to sound solemn.

But there followed an undignified thud; instead of becoming infinitely long, his nano-width self bumped against the wall. Then there was a puff and he disappeared altogether.

"A perfect straight line may only exist in the absence of all reality," she said.

Understanding at last twinkled in her eyes.

She changed the sheets on the bed and discovered some coins and a twenty in Gamel's wallet on the night-stand. With brisk steps she headed out into the sunny afternoon for gelato.

[Contents](#) / [Author](#) / [Comment](#)

Interview: Alvaro Zinos-Amaro

"A Rectilinear Fable" . . . for those of us who have no idea, can you explain what "rectilinear" means?

For the purpose of the story, I used it to mean simply "being characterized by straight lines, or taking the course of a straight line," which applies to the protagonist and his journey. For me fables tend to be narrative straight lines, short pieces which progress somewhat relentlessly towards their "moral lesson." I wanted to set that same expectation for my story, and then deliver on it structurally instead of morally.

Did anything in particular inspire this story? What initial idea did it evolve from?

I had recently read Peter Beagle's fabulous and fabulist "The Last and Only, or Mr. Moskowitz Becomes French," and the theme of unexplained transformation was on my mind. I wanted to try my hand at a story in which the central character was subjected to a change that worked on multiple levels. The idea was to push a very simple premise into metaphysical territory in a short space.

Have you ever been to Alhambra? What made you choose this as a place of significance for the story?

I spent much of my early youth in Spain and I was fortunate that my parents dragged my snotty little self to the Alhambra, yes. Two decades later, at more or less the time I read Beagle's story I watched a documentary that touched briefly on the astonishing geometrical patterns and arabesques of the Alhambra. I remembered my visit, and the thought struck me that it might be envisioned not only as a fortress and a palace, but as a place whose mathematics could wring profound alterations after the fact.

In the story one of your characters refers to a straight line as "An expression of purity. A manifestation of God." What is your take on mathematics, and the purity of a straight line?

A line has no width or height and, ideally I suppose, is considered infinitely long. It strikes me that there are concepts in mathematics, from the foundational definitions of straight-line geometry in Euclid's *Elements* all the way to the most abstruse theorems in contemporary branches, that try to reach into those same unreachable categories of expression that philosophers and theologians run into when discussing God in the abstract. When Saint Anselm of Canterbury proposed his notion of God as "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" he was taking a stab at infinity, at one type of infinity, perhaps, amongst infinite others. Georg Cantor developed a mathematics of infinite sets, and that was another attempt. There have been many.

This isn't a particularly original thought, mind you, but it suited me for the story. How much of the real world is "pure" or "infinite" in the way of mathematics or God? What if infinity landed on a person, instead of a person trying to capture infinity with thought? Gamel Livingstone's experience is a not-entirely-serious answer to those questions.

The story makes use of a lot of interesting geometric language: "Cissoid of Diocles", "Conchoid of de Sluze". There is an odd kind of poetry to these terms. Do you have a personal favourite?

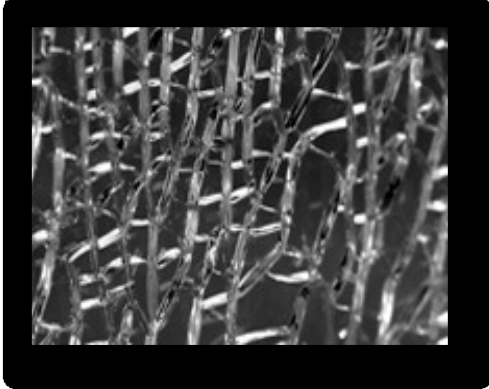
Thank you. I'm not sure I have a favourite, but "trisectrix of Maclaurin" seemed amusing, in the context.

[Contents](#) / [Author](#) / [Comment](#)

Three Poems

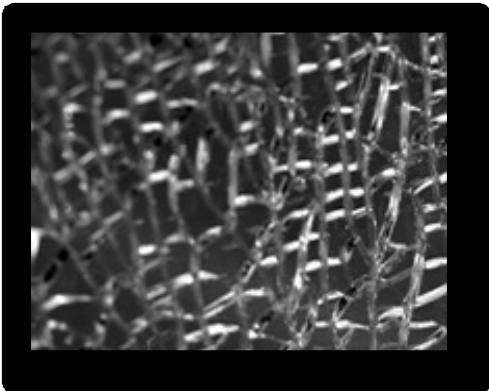
Jacqueline West

Image by Evelyn Koster

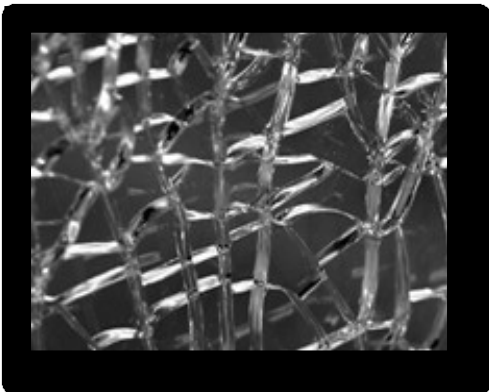


Crash

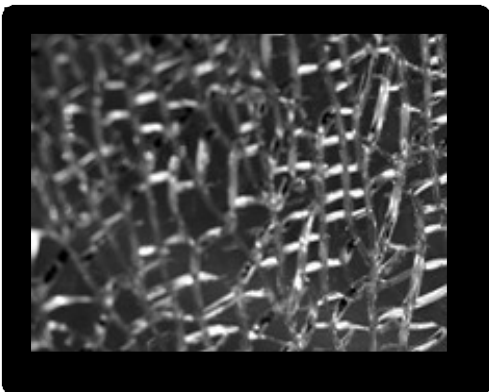
First, there is only a sense of wonder.
Simple answers tossed up like dice;
who, what, and how lying somewhere
in the sparkling flotsam of the senses.
Their fragments mix with the metal and glass.



Vision rises like a radiant blister.
The glamorous flash of exploding flowers,
gold, pink, and blue, a celebrity's welcome.
Sound will have to be added later, edited
into the flickering reel, ambient noise
nothing but the sweet shush of static.



Pain arrives slowly, shuffling, hungry,
the drag of its feet stirring the broken dark.
Tongue tests its limits – the world boiled down
to rust and salt, the thick elements
of our hearts. Here we are.



Passing seconds assemble the pieces.
The players gather, the spotlights
pour out their flares in blinding aurora.
And then, suddenly, there is only a windshield
and a star extending anemone hands
to the ends of the glass, the ends of the world.

Ashes

Peanut shells, ash,
zinnias and geraniums.
Fifty cent beers
deepening stains on the table
when the call came,
and it was for you.
We looked politely away
while you shook your head,
put one hand in your hair;
watched four drunk men
with a dog
clack the balls on the pool table.
They called to tell you
our school friend was dead
in the plane crash
splashed on every front page,
stamped even then
on the red ribbon
that slid across the bar's TV screen.
Ash clung to the veins
of spilled beer.
The dog ran through the open door
to the street
with the grind of breaks,
the shriek of rubber on pavement.
The men went out,
brought the dog back in.
It was limping.
While they talked
and finished their beers,

Neon

it licked the bald spots
torn in its leg, the slick pink
exposed within soft mist of red.
We sat, watching,
with nothing to say.
Ash stuck to the sweat of our hands.
Over us, the zinnias and geraniums
dipped in the wind
like stained, living glass.

Fade Out

"Your dead will cease to love you."

--Chief Seattle, on the leaving of family
burial grounds

In time
this too will turn as stale
as wedding cake taped in a paper box,
carved marble dropping its sugary crumbs
and hinges rusting, grinding
loosened wires.
Like the souvenirs
we nudge up with our footsteps,
the gritty snubs of dead batteries,
sanded glass; all the uselessness
of relics.
What we need
when we paw the bottom of drawers,
shake the last coins from a battered wallet
is beneath us; not in the scraps and shards
we wrap so carefully in our luggage,

in the notes we crumple into pockets;
not even in the change of clothes we unfold
long after the change in the weather, having ignored
the signs in the clouds, the soil-tremble
of the thunder,
the voices
that still whisper through our hair.

[Contents](#) / [Author](#) / [Comment](#)

Three Poems

Raul Gallardo



Through Your Nickname

You started selling contemporary paintings
graduated from college after the summer
found love between October and November

He gave you the ring and you invited everyone
Counted the days until the wedding came

Now you are pregnant with a poll for the name
I can't stop thinking when did I added you to
my contact list?

I need to start deleting other strangers from my
Messenger before It's too late

The Nickname Statement

A picture is no longer what people
might use to search for another soul
Your nickname will be their first impression
The only chance you'll ever get to connect

Andrea used to be so crazy, so beautiful
and so damn lonely but now it's all a
question mark

Violet is 99% in love and 1% not

Angelica is selling a condo at the beach

Tory is at school and busy

Tomas asks you not to bother him because
his little angel is sleeping

Maria has a private joke about Martians I dare
not to ask

Ruben wonders how much fate owned him to
pay with finding her true love

Andres announces the concert he will
attend this weekend inviting every one

Sports fans use it as a place to update scores
humiliate the rivals and join forces

Some have not changed their nickname in years

I've been invisible for three

Pink Little Cupcakes

Cigarettes are consumed
over this we call the
two dollar therapy.

Sound travels faster
than it should

Some words reach
my ears and
I'll never forget them.

Over pink little cakes
and white ones stuffed
with cream.

Girls discuss something
while a car waits outside

Paola's boyfriend is outside
Impatient, but doesn't come inside

Do you think I should do it?

She asks her two friends
and forgets there are others
listening to every word.

It's in the middle of the afternoon
she's been going out with him
for one year

Before sunset she will loose
her virginity

[Contents](#) / [Author](#) / [Comment](#)

Three Poems

Shokry Eldaly



When This Train Comes

When this train comes crashing
It's okay cause I've got Je-sus

The lights flicker
And go dead

There's a woman reading the Psalms
We're under 100 million
Tons of water, Under
100 hundred million gallons of the Hudson

The lights have gone off
But she's still gripping her bible
In both hands like it'll be her phoenix
Like it'll point its nose upward
And return her to daylight

She's reciting from memory
The words, speaking it like a lullaby

I swallow hard and attempt to listen
Through one man's coughing,
The heavy breathing
And someone's blaring headphones

I hear cracking granite

Turning Day

When the World Wakes up
If there is no poetry
The world will not know what to do.

And the world will sit up scared
In the middle of the night
And the world will be frightened

And it will cry, rocking itself to sleep.
It will curl under its blanket,
Frightened and shivering
In a room filled
With its own

Imaginary Monsters.

**My Country's Achilles/ The First Time I Saw Ethnic
Cleansing**

they came in dressed
as officers whom we thought
were friends. And they dragged
her to the washroom and they
made her strip her blouse first
and I could see her exposed back
and these men became elated that
she wasn't wearing a bra and they
began to grope themselves. They
slid their fingers in at the waist of her skirt
before pulling on it, before tearing
the light cloth and embroidered stitching,
to shreds. And they began to touch her
and hold her and violate her in ways
that were so much worse to hear than
see. And they took her and they held
her and they filled the tub with bleach and
these two giants who pretended to be angels
they tied a rope around her neck and they
stabbed her and slit her until they couldn't
hear her breath and then to cover up the
evidence they dipped her in the bleach
and they let her body float a moment
and I could see the younger holding her
so that the liquid would seep in, I saw
him holding her ankle between his thumb and
his index. And I saw her ten years later walk
up to them, these same two demons,
her skin ghost white, and

Neon

she threw her leg up on a hydrant and
then she lifted her skirt and
exposed her ankle, and she

showed the world that

She was still Brown.

[Contents](#) / [Author](#) / [Comment](#)

Diagram Of A Life

Lydia Williams



There's something about a man led around by his dick. The arrested, slop-licking gaze, the ever-attentiveness, dick forward--my father is such a man. Maybe that's why I can spot them, men and women leashed to some kind of compulsion, drinking, say, or eating, or even health. Give me five minutes and I'll give you your neurosis. I want to give you the partial diagram of a life which is not my life. But I know this life. Give me five minutes. What is my compulsion? What is my neurosis? Give me five minutes.

Diagram Of A Life

	Parents drunk and fighting	Reads Romance novels	Cancer
Child A	Prays to Disney for escape	Wants Prince Charming	What's death?
Teen A	Still watches Disney movies	Dreams of handsome vampire rescuer, edgier Prince Charming	N/A (or involves relative)
Young Adult A	Drinks too much in college but is after all nothing like parents since everyone drinks in college	Rushes into marriage for Happily Ever After, divorces	Is diagnosed, clings to new, ill-advised relationship, Happily Ever After (Chemo) involves newfound ill-advised urgency
Adult A	Alcoholic	Of course, and goes on trips to Disney World	Returns due to drinking

Put another way, "Me and Mom and Pop, What Feels Like Home, What I Learned From Disney, What Feels Real, Drinking and Fighting, Cancer Sucks, Seize the Day, Seize the Bottle, Seize the Heart, Wake Up, You, Wake Up."

Wake up, you, wake up.

[Contents](#) / [Author](#) / [Comment](#)

Two Stories

Heather Bell

Aunt Marjorie

Aunt Marjorie is a fat cow with hair in the shape of a Nazi helmet. I love Aunt Marjorie. Aunt Marjorie's hands take target practice up our spines. We giggle and she says *don't tell anyone about this*. Aunt Marjorie gives me a handshake and says my eyes look like the bellies of horseflies.

In the other room, I hear my brother Devon shaking and crying. His head is hitting the floor. *Devon is a baby* says Aunt Marjorie and I believe her. I think I love Aunt Marjorie, but she frightens me sometimes, for kicks. Once, she told me that my father

had purple bones underneath his face from all the times my grandmother had beaten him. I remember dreaming and dreaming of those sharp plum bones, they would then spread open from him like flowers or wings and I would run away. You know how it is in those sorts of dreams - you just never can get far enough away from something like that.

Aunt Marjorie, I think I love her, as she takes me behind the tub on wash day and washes my dirty violent parts. She says, *don't tell anyone about this* and cries and cries like she has no shame, or perhaps, too much of it. Aunt Marjorie's gut reminds me of fish and old maps and animal fur. She says, *love is like this*. *Don't tell anyone*. I am confused by this and angry at her bad armor. But I love Aunt Marjorie, the dark



shallow water in her eyes, the scent of sycamore leaves in her old hair. I love Aunt Marjorie, mostly in the closet in my bedroom, where she says, *don't tell anyone about this* and I don't tell anyone about this, except once I told my mother, told her in the way you would talk about new green soap or the toes in your sandals.

Aunt Marjorie is crying in the kitchen today, I love her. Devon is crying in the kitchen, my mother is crying in the kitchen and I can see everyone putting their heads together in prayer or to push out what is in one head into all the others. Today Marjorie came out of the kitchen and said that I didn't exist anymore.

I love the way the flowers on the cherry tree outside make my hair seem brighter than it is and more real. Aunt Marjorie said that even there I didn't exist anymore. It is ten years later and I don't think she ever wanted me to tell anyone that.

1999 – The Year I Was Published In A Professional Biochemical Journal And Everyone Refused To Believe I Had Been Raped

Converting Wet Biomass To Methane

How sad your face was when you pressed it to mine. How much like Kosovo, how frail, the way you asked me about the scent of a ghost. We cast each other in granite, the radon goes from hand to hand, head to head, ovaries to heart. You tell me to write 52 poems about each place we will attempt suicide. I have attempted suicide only once so far.

I am twenty five years old, hiding in the bathroom on the second floor, M-4 in my hands, listening to the rapist leaving, closing the front door, M-4 in my hands and I never used it and I know why.

*

Cell Walls

To be saved you must know someone who will take pity on you. The Germans overtake the Japanese troops. How sad your face was when you signed your cousin's death certificate. Everyone's face looks like someone you have seen before.

We drove to Phoenix and picked up an old axle, the weight of it as we lifted made me sing *God bless America*. The United States has more war planes than the USSR. There is a song on the radio, some girl sings *it will never be beautiful*. How sad your face was when you relinquished more soldiers.

This is the moment in which everyone believes in God, headfirst in a ditch, Israel exploding around their tops like a wildflower.

*

Historically, A Large Proportion Of The Volatile Solids In Biomass Are Not Degraded

We sit Shi'vah, the next night, for the way we used to be in love. It is no longer a question of whether we can live our lives like this, butwhether we can curl on top of each other, old wet towels by the bedside.

*

Gas-liquid Equilibrium

We make something out of ourselves by leaving hickey-sucks on our skin, as though to be a tagged dove means anything.

*

Pressure Swing Design

Jesus clutches each Christmas Carol in a different way. Jesus holds us like sad-eyed creatures. Jesus is only slightly worse off than you. Only slightly. Jesus lifts his eyes and Poland is created. You receive a Fulbright Scholarship. You lose it, smash holes in your front door frame, smash tourism, Das Kapital, smash a little dog and cat and a radio-controlled hat. Your hair looks like a missile silo.

Jesus goes to sleep. Jesus is surprised you ended up so ugly. Jesus shucks his clothes like fresh corn skin. You gave up on rivers years ago.

Jesus attempts suicide. You find that inspiring. You find that brave. You keep Jesus as a pet. You keep your mouth shut, for the most part, except when Jesus wakes up, holds your head in his hands. Your face is pressed to the floor, what sadness. Jesus says o ye of little faith. O ye carving your sadness into toilet bowls. Hiding in the

bathroom. Jesus flows into the pipes like shit. How sad you are to sit there, holding an M-4, refusing to move.

*

Plasticization Via Applied High Pressure

I walked into the courtroom fist-first. How sad his face was, risking it for just a moment, walking into my daughter's bedroom your wife's bedroom, girls and boys, boys and girls, iced tea sweeter than each long nose and short chin. Everyone cries. Everyone always cries.

I remember being asked if I knew what rain sounded like on a tin roof. That is what it sounded like, though I had never heard it before. A single shot .22, the ghosts rising, the scent of flare guns sitting like brave soldiers in the road.

*

Disposal Methods Of Animal And Municipal Wastes

My name is Heather.

You cannot be a strong swimmer with your ankles tied.

My name is Heather. Look at me. Heather.

*

See this, the shape of a harpoon on my chest. See this, whale bones holding me up. Watch as open my legs slowly, as Jews still do years later.

Each breast is a breast of a Guyana-woman. Each time you said you did not believe in ghosts, I asked you to smell the air. Each origin of myth started in your hands, an M-4 cradled, letting everyone get away with something.

911 is returning your call and you are wondering if an emergency can stay an emergency, even years later.

[Contents](#) / [Author](#) / [Comment](#)

Contributors

Rhian Waller has recently earned an English Literature and Creative Writing BA, and is about to begin a Postgrad doctorate in Creative and Critical writing. She has produced stories of various quality since she was five, and has published a handful of poems in magazines such as *Cause & Effect* and *The Harrow*. She would very much like to publish some more.

Daniel Hudon, originally from Canada, teaches natural science at Boston University in Boston, MA. He has recently published work in more than a dozen online and print publications and links to his recent prose can be found at people.bu.edu/hudon.

Puma Perl is a poet and fiction writer who believes strongly in the transformative power of the creative arts. Her work has been published in *Cause & Effect*, *MadSwirl*, *The Mom Egg*, *Red Fez*, *Gloom Cupboard*, and many other print and on-line publications. She has been a featured reader in various New York City venues. Her first chapbook, *Belinda and Her Friends*, is a series of linked poems about lower east side life in the 70's and 80's and was recently published by Erbacce Press. She is currently at work on a second.

Alvaro Zinos-Amaro's fiction has appeared in *Farrago's Wainscot*, *Labyrinth Inhabitant Magazine* and *Atomjack Magazine*. His reviews and critical essays have appeared in *The Internet Review of Science Fiction*, *Strange Horizons*, *The Fix* and *Fruitless Recursion*. His blog is [Waiting For My Aineko](#).

Jacqueline West's work has been published in journals including *Flashquake*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *Inkwell Journal*, *Barnwood*, *St. Ann's Review*, and *Briar Cliff*

Review. Her chapbook, *Cherma*, is forthcoming from Parallel Press. More about her work can be found at <http://www.jacquelinewest.net/>.

Raul Gallardo did not study at a prestigious College. He's not the protégé of some famous writer or filmmaker. He did not graduate top of his class, nor was he the local hero at the championship of the soccer, baseball, or any other sport. He's not involved in any altruist organizations or any political party. He speaks in Spanish, thinks in English and writes in a combination of both. He used to have the privilege of never having won any award or contest but he has broken the tradition by being a finalist in the Wergle Flomp Contest.

Shokry Eldaly is a Hunter College graduate and a Goddard College MFA candidate. He is an Aquellos Fellow and recipient of the AALC's Naguib Mahfouz award. He teaches and conducts workshops in Brooklyn, NY and Providence, RI.

Lydia Williams has published fiction in *The Pedestal*, *The Apple Valley Review*, *Night Train*, *New South*, *The Dead Mule*, *The Armchair Aesthete*, and *Fresh Boiled Peanuts*, among others. She is a Contributing Editor for *The Chattahoochee Review* and has a Ph.D. in English from Georgia State University.

Heather Bell (nee Schimel) graduated in 2005 from Oswego State University in Oswego, NY. Since, she has been published in *Mannequin Envy*, *From East to West: BiCoastal Verse*, *Empowerment4Women*, *Ditch*, *ReadThis Magazine*, and *Pomegranate*, to name only a few. She has also released two books of poetry, one available from Verve Bath Press, (*Nothing Unrequited Here*), one available directly from the author (*How To Make People Love You*) and has a forthcoming chapbook to be released in February 2009 by Paperhero Press. She spends her time polishing boots, gardening, painting and looking brightly at all raw stars. Heather dedicates all her writing to JNB. Without him, she never would have written any of it down.