

Neuro Logical 2020-2021



Hey folks!

Editor's note

Hey folks!

We start every tweet that way so we may as well continue the trend! But in all seriousness, this is amazing. Even being able to write this is amazing.

I won't bore you for too long, most of you have skipped ahead already, why wouldn't you? Go read all of that amazing work right now! Do it!

But if you want to read on, I do have more to say. Thank you mainly, thank you for sending in work, thank you for your support and most importantly, thank you for reading this.

I didn't think that a year later we would have so many people care about what we do or what we publish and it means the world to us that so many of you do. Even if my twitter competency is very poor.

You may have noticed a lot of "Me" and I's" just now. That's because, despite my constant use of "Us" it's just me. Hello, my name is Iarlaith Cunningham and I am the editor of Neuro Logical! I will be updating our about page shortly.

I'm saying this because now, it is also, "We" Yelaina Anton joins me in being our new short story editor and that's gonna be cool! But this growth was only possible because of you reading!

So, don't worry, Neuro Logical will be sticking around, and hopefully growing too. This year we plan to do even more and in even better ways.

Thank you, and enjoy the work of some seriously talented and hardworking people

-Iarlaith Cunningham

Our writers & their work.

Alyssa Asaro	6	Windowpane
Lucy Atkinson	7	Waterlogged
Loukia Borrell	8	I'll be back in five minutes
Shawn Berman	10	RUMOR HAS IT THAT THE BLUE LIGHT EMANATING FROM YOUR SMARTPHONE CAN NOT ONLY RUIN YOUR EYES BUT IT CAN ALSO DISTORT YOUR SLEEPING PATTERNS MAKING IT HARDER TO PASS OUT AT NIGHT
Aida Bode	11	Weaving
Kevin Bonfield	12	And you'll wear flowers in your hair
Sena Chang	13	Deoxyribonucleic acid
Larry O. Dean	14	House by the cemetery
Tania Donatto	16	a dream in reality's clothes
Sascha Engel	17	Segment XII
Geraldine Fleming	18	Age of Anthropocene
Stephen Golds	19	For M&N
Tim Goldstone	21	Granma and the bats
John Grey	22	Untitled and Unending
Rachel Hessom	23	On dying young
Mike Hickman	24	The theory of names
Ai Jiang	25	Father
Mark Jones	26	Where words go
Thaina Joyce	27	Athazagoraphobia
Semilore Kilaso	29	On being black
Jason De Koff	30	Losing our lenses
Kathryn De Leon	31	Stumblebee
Mark J. Mitchell	32	Ellis Street
Tara O'Malley	33	Green bottles and loose change
Darby Murnane	34	An ode to horny drunks
Praise Osawaru	36	Travelling Mishap

Maria Picone	37	An eve
Bernard Pearson	38	Monday morning
Grace Sampson	39	Dear Sir Lawrence
Meg Smith	41	The first Autumnal
Biographies	42	

Windowpane

Alyssa Asaro

I lean my head against the car window willing the raindrop of my choosing to reach the bottom
first

It doesn't

And I wonder how long I've been here

In a race against time where everyone loses

Looking up from my reverie I see that nothing changed while I was gone

Minutes passed deemed the air still frigid from a fight unresolved and the silence palpable

I turn my music up and go back to staring at the muddled world beyond this space thinking
about

how I'll never know what it feels like to be happy without some sort of guilt

For the drop that didn't make it

And for the one that did I stare longingly as one song ends and the next one begins

Cutting the dramatics for a moment when I see a dog in the car next to ours

Tongue out and panting

Escaping?

Soaking in a road he's never known and without thinking I roll down my window too

Met with surprised jumps and a voice that cuts through the static I stick my head out and
breathe

Winds so forceful it's not even relaxing but freeing

To be somewhere else

For a second until I'm yanked back by a shout and a pull

Suddenly back in the car with tension that returns with a vengeance, but I don't really mind
because my mind is screaming loud enough for everyone to hear it

I'm going to do things you can only dream of

In places you'll never know

Waterlogged

Lucy Atkinson

I wash the memory from my hands,
Beloved sunrise. Saltwater against my lips.
Palms carved by the cliffside, every jagged rock.
For days I have walked these same shores,
wet sand sifting through my toes
Like an old oil painting.
All rain and hair
in my sanguine summer coat.
I remember your footprints on the sand dunes
when we were barely old enough to write our names,
the thicket of grass we would picnic on
in the few dry summer days.
It didn't feel remarkable then,
like any old and twisted root
we grew intertwined.
It's not the dry days that I'll miss but
Walking home in our anoraks,
the sound of water from both sides.
A song of sea and rain.

I'll be back in five minutes

Loukia Borrell

The priest poured oil on your coffin,
A little. Then dust. A little.
I was in high heels.
Someone said you were in Heaven.

I'll be back in five minutes,
I whispered to your coffin.

The funeral director walked
Over with a black bag.
I knew better than
To open it in front of a crowd.

Later, I did. Laminated obituary.
Six of 'em. The guest book.
Thank you notes for the
Flowers and cards I'll get.

And the clothes you were wearing
When you died.
Fuzzy white socks.
White long johns with blue snowflakes.
Soft, navy fleece shirt,
Long grey hairs around
The collar

I pulled out four and saved them
In an envelope.
I pressed the shirt to my face,
My breasts curved into the fabric.
Next to this, your last moments.

I'll visit often, sit by the Crape
Myrtles. When I leave, I'll bend
Close to the ground and say
I'll be back in five minutes.

From time to time, when I can't
Stand it, I will wear
The pajamas you wore.
Pretend I have a mama again.
Share the bed. Side to side.
And you will come to me in strong
Dreams, that last the night.

RUMOR HAS IT THAT THE BLUE LIGHT EMANATING FROM YOUR
SMARTPHONE CAN NOT ONLY RUIN YOUR EYES BUT IT CAN ALSO
DISTORT YOUR SLEEPING PATTERNS MAKING IT HARDER TO
PASS OUT AT NIGHT
Shawn Berman

but that's ok

I'm not really worried about that kinda stuff since

I'm unemployed & have nowhere to be so I can sleep in as late as I want & spend the rest of
my

day watching nothing but Disney channel original movies from the late 90s, early aughts.
speaking of dcoms,

have y'all ever seen *johnny tsunami*,

the one about the super rad surfer kid from Hawaii who moves to Vermont & becomes this
badass

snowboarder overnight?

I'm not gonna lie the movie is hellu inspirational & I probably cried like 3 times watching it
which is nearly twice as many cries

as when I learned about penguins and how

81% of king penguins choose a different mate every season

& actually don't mate for life like we were made out to believe.

it just seems like nothing is sacred anymore

& if penguins don't even stick it out

then how are me and you supposed to make things work in the long run

when we can't even get on the same page

about whether or not apple's popularization of the emoji killed off the classic emoticons that we
all know and love.

fun fact: apple totally did

& there's no way you can change my mind

[#teamclassicemoticon](#) \m/

Weaving

Aida Bode

My mother spoke loom!
Yes, she did.
She moved her feet-
the loom would
crack,
and shift

making a new line,
a new beginning,
a new design.

Colors and patterns
would spill out of her hands
like rainbow that spills out of clouds
but this one, you could touch
take it from one room to another,
even wash it
and the colors would still be bright
the pattern would still be there.

She spoke loom,
sweat and sleeplessness,
she spoke many languages
till the late hours of night
and I remember regretting
that she didn't speak
lullabies.

And you'll wear flowers in your hair

Kevin Bonfield

we couldn't see inside the box
up on our shoulders
you were getting no older

I wished for a different culture
where our family
was open AND the box too to see you

One. Last. Time.

crushing my eyes closed
harder and harder until
I could feel the pressure on my brain become strong enough

become strong enough to
smother the torture
in my (still beating) heart.

for all but 2 of your 44 years.
My big sister. Pointing. Fighting. Guiding. Defining.
understanding.

I remember how I secretly told you
how you would leave us
as I read to you that last night

"You'll float. Like a feather on a silent warm breeze.
In all of your favourite colours.
You'll feel no pain. No pain anymore.
Too young of course. But free.
You'll wear your Thailand silk.
Softly echoing your movement.
You'll leave us. You'll leave me.
And I'll know. Even if our emotions are closed.
Like that casket in which they'll hide you.
You'll have that contented smile again
And you'll wear flowers in your hair."

Deoxyribonucleic Acid

Sena Cheng

From inception

to death; from

bloodstream

to organs;

the blueprint

for her life

was perfectly+

g+t+a+g

laid out from

start to finish, in a chain of Gs, Ts, As,

and Cs. Spiraling deep into her veins,

penetrating every

layer of her skin,

a staircase of

nucleotides is created.

Unable to live

without each

other's existence,

an unbreakable

bond forms, broken

only at death. So deeply,

connected she felt, like these double helices

in her body, when

she met him.

d
n
a

NA DNA DNA DNA DNA DNA DNA DNA DNA DNA DNA DNA DNA DNA DNA

House by the cemetery

Larry O. Dean

“The death rate is just so high, there’s no way we can bury or cremate them fast enough.”

“I ran out of space.”

“We wanted to grieve together, and we weren’t able to. Nothing was like it should be.”

“My stress levels just keep going up.”

“I’m looking forward to the end. That’s all I can say.”

“We’re swamped—absolutely swamped. And that’s every day, day in, day out.”

“The chambers need a break, but as fast as we cremate people, they keep coming in.”

“People are dying faster than we can get them to their final destinations.”

“I don’t know how I would have felt if I had to bury my mother under these conditions. The body goes down to the ground alone. It’s hard for them.”

“My worst fear was that I didn’t want my mother’s body to be dumped somewhere and then I have to

look for her all over the city.”

“A lot of us were not able to see him when he passed. It was not normal.”

“I’m confident that we will have enough capacity to be able to hold people appropriately with dignity

and respect until the funeral

industry can catch up.”

○

“This is not the sort of way that you’d expect your life to end—where you’d be stacked like cordwood in a refrigerated trailer. It’s a haunting thing.”

“We can’t hold these corpses any longer. We need to be able to process the new ones that are coming in.”

○

“We don’t do this work for the dead. We do it for the living.”

“Once you see it, you can’t unsee it. You can’t unsmell it either.”

“You try to handle it in a respectful manner, so the survivors can see that their loved ones weren’t just

manhandled and thrown in a bag.”

“People have no idea this is going on. It’s like another world.”

“Everyone is at full capacity. Everyone is trying to service anybody and everyone that they can.”

“Things are very different for burials. So few people, so little ceremony.”

“Usually, the number of flowers on a grave like this would come up to our knees. But there’s no wake,

no funeral, so no flowers.”

“We try to treat everyone like they were our own family member.”

“I worked from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. We’re just getting bombarded.”

“It’s all hands-on deck at this point.”

“Now it’s so impersonal, it’s like an assembly line. It’s just really sad.”

“I dug the hole, and I cried the minute I was done, like a little baby. It was a major accomplishment for myself.”

“I can still remember driving by the cemetery and being so scared to look inside.”

“We didn’t have space in our refrigerator to hold all of them.”

“We don’t want to leave them sitting around.”

“We’re around the bodies all day, taking them from the hearse, putting them in the freezer, loading

them into the retort, doing the final processing.”

“If I involve my emotions, then I wouldn’t be able to do it. But that doesn’t mean I don’t care.”

A dream in reality's clothes

Tania Donatto

Sun has set and I set my head down to sleep.
I see that the motion picture is reminiscent
Of exiting existing darkness and
Entering paradise. Sometimes I don't dream.
Sometimes, I can only wish I was.
The crimson curtain falls to reveal another act,
A script of my memories and a cast of my people.
A freckled face tells me I am beautiful.
Another's sly grin whispers and says I will
Never find love. I am slipping from my body's steeple
As actors turn apparent fiction into what I consume as fact.
Sometimes, I can only wish I was
Entering paradise. Sometimes I don't dream
Of exiting existing darkness, and
I see that the motion picture is reminiscent.
Simple brown eyes still shut. And they never see sleep.

Segment XII

Sascha Engel

Segment XII

on the screen. flesh. spaces. Random pain. long distances. Arbitrary Random
selection. Random flicker across random knives cutting random randomizer's pain
is merely a flicker randomly connecting random Random cable connectors screens
in arbitrarily cables. Test sentences flesh. flicker across random Random
selection. Random randomizer's pain is spaces. Random pain. Random cable
connectors screens in arbitrarily on the screen. long distances. Arbitrary
cables. Test sentences randomly connecting random knives cutting random merely a
flicker. Random cable connectors Random selection. Random randomizer's pain is
merely a flicker knives cutting random cables. Test sentences flesh. screens in
arbitrarily flicker across random spaces. Random pain. on the screen. Randomly
connecting r ndom long dist nces. rbitr ry on the screen. long dist nces.
rbitr ry merely flicker flesh. flicker cross r ndom sp ces. R ndom p in.
r ndomly connecting r ndom c bles. Test sentences screens in rbitr rily
r ndomiz r's p in is R ndom c bl conn ctors R ndom s l ction. R ndom kniv s
cutting r ndom on th scr n. r ndomly conn cting r ndom kniv s cutting r ndom
R ndom s l ct on. R ndom scr ns n rb tr r ly c bl s. T st s nt nc s long
d st nc s. rbitr ry fl sh. m r ly fl ck r R ndom c bl conn ctors sp c s.
R nd m p n. fl ck r cr ss r nd m r nd m z r's p n s. r nd m z r's p n s
l ng d st nc s. rb tr ry scr ns n rb tr r ly kn v s c tt ng r nd m fl sh.
s c s. d m n. fl ck r acr s r nd m c l s. T st s nt nc s R nd m
s l ct n. d R nd c n t rs n th n. m r l fl ck r
r ml t ng r n ml c n c ng r nd m z r p n
c bl T nt nc cr ss r nd m d m p n. L ng
s s. r r s d m t n. n m f r n
r n n d c ct n v m c
t l n v g h r
f s k m nn t
l c R r
r ss

Age of Anthropocene

Geraldine Fleming

in this universal **e p i c**

we are
billion year old infants
dangling on the

Arm of Orion

the stuff of

stars

amalgam of a micro
fractional

cosmic blink

s

p

a

w

n of five mass **extinctions**

a bogus quagmire of alchemy

lizard brain

warring with

wizard brain

reckless

believers

better times

seekers

with God

complexes

the cosmos leaves

open

the invitation

ink is drying on

the **next extinction**

For M&N

Stephen Golds

I've made a lot of mistakes in my life, too many
but
being your father wasn't ever one of them.

I have never cut a large check, or saved a lot of money
but
I've watched you sleeping, your eyes moving with REM dreams.

I have never owned any property or land
but
I've held your first teeth in the palm of my hand like pearls.

I have never come first or won anything at all
but
I've felt your tears against my neck, kissed the blood from grazed knees.

I have never been a VIP or flown first class
but
I've ran alongside you, your laughter like music, your first solo bicycle ride.

I have never been much of a good person
but
I've stood in the darkness so you could have the light, starved myself so you could eat.

I have made so many mistakes in my life,
but
being your father was never one of them.
You've been my only true loves and
the only love that was never wasted.

People always ask the question
have you ever been in love?
but
the real question should be
have you ever been loved?

I have
and
I feel your love on me like a day in July.
It's reprieve from the gallows every single day.

Granma and the bats

Tim Goldstone

At dusk Granma would
stand stock still outside,
only her long thin hair moving
in the breeze,
waiting there until the bats started
to flit and zigzag and dip and uplift over
her garden. Then one by one they would
land on her outstretched fingers
at the end of her outstretched arms
until she had ten little bats hanging
upside down from each of her fingers.
This, she said, was why she wore no rings,
for precious metal and gems will send a bat's
echo-location system into orbit
and launch each bat out
to the far ends of the universe,
and we giggled because we were children.
We know better now.

Untitled and Unending

John Grey

she was adamant
poems should be untitled

why give
the game away
before a line is read

and no punctuation
because flow is all

and capital letters
are so pretentious

so lower case your way
through love and politics
and you'll come out
the other side
with self-respect
intact

no long six syllable words
no Latin phrases
no references to Greek myth

plain English
gutter English if you have to

and as for snappy endings
she twisted up her lip
and said

On dying young

Rachel Hessom

Strange things happen when a person dies so young,
The people told all open mouths so silently
Like goldfish gasping for some air or life or sense
Of a situation that reeks of God's unfairness.
I sat beside you rubbing fingers on your gown
And watched the way your life unravelled
While no one else came near the gloomy ward
That staved off kindness and neighbours
Like the convoluted scent of certain death.
But you were young and not supposed to go
And that was why they cried,
Not because they missed your presence there,
But for the fact that tragedy could well have taken them.
They think of children, partners, loved ones they would miss
And fear can echo through them, hollow and untrue,
Turning dreams to shrieking sounds
That shake the bones, the cage of ribs
That holds the life they refuse to give.
And when they speak to me on quiet nights
Over glasses filled to rims, with tears in eyes
And hands reached out in gentle supplication,
I see the pity that you feared for me,
It will always follow me, until my dying day
And so I'll learn from this although
I feel I've died with you.

Theory of names

Mike Hickman

He has, and he'll tell you,
his "Theory of Names".
What Steve "means", for example,
or Dave or Julian
or Trevor
or Imelda.
Christopher: he had an uncle by that name,
and a half-arsed therapist once, too.
And then there's that miserable pseud of a Dr. Who.
You've got to watch for them, he'll say.
Always "up themselves", they are.
And he'll smile, secure in the Opinion.
So secure, in fact, that he'll hold forth some more,
he'll challenge all comers,
to give him a name he
doesn't have a rule for.

Wendy's – oh, they're weak, passive aggressive, too.
Sally's – oh, you've got to watch for them,
they'll have the knife in before your back is turned.
And as for Jenny's...
Well, run for the hills.
Unless they've already taken them for themselves,
beach towel on deckchair,
faster than a Kraut tourist.

His name? *His* name? You dare ask for his?
Well, you've been listening, haven't you?
He's given you no choice, after all.
What do you reckon he ought to be called?

Father

Ai Jiang

I never understood
the weight of my reliance
on the strength of my father
until his worn cheek
met my shoulder.

Where words go

Mark Jones

I want to go
Where words go
After we say them
And settle on their receivers thought
To ease their mind if caught,
And warm their heart throughout.
I want to roam about
Where words hang out
When no one hears them,
And watch them enter someone else
Invisible with stealth
To make them hope or doubt.
I want to be a word
Profound or absurd
And be adopted or rejected.

Athazagoraphobia

Thaina Joyce

The crisp, frigid air blows through the hole carved
on the ceiling of this bathroom. The tiny hairs on my arm
grow tall like icicles. I am having a case of intuition.

Through the window, I see shades of blue gradient

from light to night. Loneliness faces me with arms wide
open and the sun going home without me. The sound
of footsteps fades more and more in the distance

and all I can hear now is the sound of my beating heart.

The staff switches off the theater lights as I stand here,
alone. I am ten _____ and I am shaking.

I have no money, no friends, no phone. My school left me
on this field trip. My eyes, feet, and hands screech
for help as I stand here with my tongue tied. Speechless.
I see a telephone on the counter. I run to dial my mother.

She picks up the call, I breathe in then I break down.

I am not picking you up

My body filled with guilt, but she says:

Bringing you home is not my responsibility.

The school took you there, the school will bring you back.

She cut the call short telling me that someone will be here soon.

I wait forty-five minutes; the driver shows up wearing blame's best
suit. It turned out that being in trouble while in the principal's car
is the ultimate nightmare.

It took three teachers, two buses, one scarring
mistake. But I take no credit for the trauma I brought home
as a souvenir that day. As an adult, I relive this scene every time the lights
turn off in the hallway of my work, and all I can hear is the boiler room.
I am afraid that someone will cover me with an invisible blanket
and forget that I am still there.

To be black *Semilore Kilaso*

Placards scream “Black Lives Matter”
they don’t mean it, their words end in
the trash after the hashtag and retweet.

A white woman says “All Lives Matter”, that I agree.
I find it hard to believe that we breathe the same
black air filled with burning skin and soot.

Jamal says Black Lives Matter is for Black
whose ancestors suffered cultivating sugarcane
plantations — slaves who wore death & pain as skin.

I mean, there is a no price tag on my life &
My head is on the pavement waiting to be
hit by a bullet — having black skin is risky.

He blames my ancestors for selling his ancestors for silver.
He says I am not like him, I am African and not a
Black pleading allegiance to the red, white and blue.

Jamal says he holds no African passport — I should
quit seeking asylum in countries I do not belong.
I am guilty because fear is etched on my skin.

I tell Jamal he is wrong — to be Black
is not to be sharpened by pain and hate, but to
wear one’s skin with pride and choose not to die.

Losing our lenses

Jason De Koff

Sometimes I remove my glasses,
to see a world of Monet,
the impression of a sunrise,
rather than a high-def dawn.

The sharp edges are softer,
the spotlight not so bright,
the shadows not so foreboding,
with greater blends of color.

All those at a distance are strangers,
each with their own opportunity,
to love or hate,
to satisfy or disappoint.

If we all could take time,
to lose our lenses,
what could the world be like?
What would the world be like?

Stumblebee

Kathryn De Leon

This is the first time I've ever seen
a stumbling bumblebee (a stumblebee?).
He's a shrunken airplane
rushing awkwardly down a runway
of bumpy concrete at my feet by the sea,
pitching left and right,
unable to get off the ground.

He's not giving up.
not slowing down,
his wings understanding nothing but flight.
He's like a baby trying to walk,
not accepting the ground,
wanting only up.

I took my eyes off of him.
Now I can't find him.
He might have staggered into a nearby bush
and not come out.

But I like to think he made it,
that his black and yellow body's tiny engine
coughed into life
and up he went, smacked back into play
like an out-of-bounds tennis ball,
a five-eyed pollen god
heading back to work with flowers,
getting in as many nectar-hours as possible
in his few weeks of bee-life,

enjoying the summer buzz of afternoon,
talking to himself in a deep voice
among green leaves,

flying off into the blue freedom of wild July
thinking like the rest of us
that these warm spicy days
of sun and flowers will never
ever end.

Ellis Street
Mark J. Mitchell

Roy's left hand dangles over Ellis Street.
His cigarette glows soft as a brake light
while late evening becomes early night.
The only music a lunatic shriek
from a tired bus. Neon crackles outside
and stiff voices argue next to the closed
post office station—its only window's
still cracked. He exhales smoke through the good side
of his face. Pearl's the devil's true daughter,
he thinks, or some fisherman's ex-wife.
Coughing, he remembers her cold laughter—
it's threaded through his dreams—a leitmotif
composed of broken glass and cracked shutters
and lost salt air blown off an unreal reef.

Green bottles and loose change

Tara O'Malley

hardened ash teeth
pot-hole smile and Jameson breath
face crumpled as
money thrown from plastic bags
exchanged for his second daily flaskeen
stays for a chat
turf dust fingers clutch at wrists
sunken eyes fixed on chests
leaves bitterness in mouths
that no whiskey could wash away

Ode to horny drunks

Darby Murnane

It was through a haze of cigarette smoke and red light
leaking from the pickup-truck
that you first laid eyes upon
my ass.

You were holding court with your drunken fellows
in the parking lot behind the bar,
on that frigid evening.
I was taking a shortcut home with a friend
when we stumbled into your kingdom,
where you three whooped and whistled
and raised your drinks
to being studs.

Perhaps
you took our hurried steps,
and the way we put as much distance
between us as we could,
for the playful shyness of young maidens
whispering about a handsome Lord from afar.

Perhaps
you took the way I raised my chin
and squared my shoulders
at the sight of you and your leering friends,
as the sly invitation
of a courtesan.

And though it was the blood rush to your pants talking,
I'm sure it was with best intentions
that you hollered,
"Hey ladies, nice asses! Keep on walkin'!"
with majestic slurs and spittle
as you stood, chest puffed and proud.
You stood as if your presence alone would warm this place,
as if you were a great, burning hearth to lie beside.

Though,
I confess I didn't feel the warmth you must have hoped for.

There's too much frost in my unfeeling heart
to beat for such sweet words as yours.
I'm sorry for the ache you must have felt
after I rejected your affections with a snarled,
"I'll fucking gut you!"

I'm sorry that I shocked you into silence
as you seemed so surprised when neither of us swooned,
when we didn't fall against each other,
giggling and fanning ourselves
against a sudden rush of heat.
We should've been in awe
of the way you were able to pierce
through the layers of our sweaters and coats
to see our maidenly forms hidden beneath,
of the way you really saw *us*.

Though,
I wonder
if you would be as willing to undress
the layers of our hearts
as you were to undress
the layers of our clothes.

And I'm so sorry that the force of my words
knocked your paper-crown askew.
I'm sorry if the pins holding it together
stuck you as they rained down.
I'm sorry if you saw yourself
the way I saw you that night--
as the reigning King of Pricks.

Travelling Mishap

Praise Osawaru

In the bus, two ladies sit by my side
& I take that as a sign: *my contact list will*
increase before I arrive in Benin
Parks in Lagos, you'll see vendors hawk
power banks / cookies / drinks / toothbrushes
Hell, you'll see cobblers anticipating travellers with dented shoes
People will pray for your trip like they hold sway
of the unfurling road / the splaying sky & expect their
pockets to deepen with naira notes
Vital things, like earphones, should top your travel checklist
I've travelled every year of my life to know
their significance, yet that day mine was non-existent in my backpack
A phone stacked up with movies clenched in my hand
& I was compelled to listen to two ladies bicker about
who would win big brother as if their existence dangled on the argument /
their talks invigorated the oxygen in the bus
In the end, my contact list remained the same.

An Eve

Maria Picone

She wants the red-stained, overripe lips. She wants the terminal illness so she becomes, vampire. Burned baby like the jackfruit and pomegranate. The mother dries her up and won't produce any more for him, cracks rising from her reprieved flesh. In the old, the ancient days, they needed. Sun. Fire. They needed the trickling spill of so much heat blazing and turning riches into spoils.

They locked the doors to the Great Library at night but a woman crept in. It was her heat and fire, her hot-wet primordium, sizzling around in the night like a firefly's cartwheels. She set off fireworks to not exist all from anachronisms. She cried out [#MeToo](#) at the right moment.

Revenge waits there, pearlescent caviar on a bed of ice. She said CATALYST and then nightfall all at once.

We found her. Not in the annals of a history textbook but on the front page of the New York Times. She didn't sew or bow or tidy. Instead, she unfurled and cartwheels burst from her hips. She sashayed in a shower of sawdust, ice, and bone.

We skewered her. We ate her flesh and ripped off her false eyelashes. We savaged her for wearing designer clothes, then for wearing clothes from Target, then for wearing, Anything. Fig leaves! We had to do it—we couldn't let a woman be the saviour. Couldn't give her the three minutes of adoration. Instead. We flinched and cringed. We called her bitch, whore, slut, harpy. We didn't call her: mother, sister, daughter (but I have a _____ thanks Republican congressman). We opened our compacts and checked our teeth and makeup. Finally, we asked, "Who will lead us?" and she, discredited and downtrodden, she didn't break the rod over her knee. It's hard, after all, to be.

First.

Monday Morning

Bernard Pearson

It was a good day to walk
In discrete rain; to see a town
In its workaday clothes.
To see scaffolding erected
And no one hung.
To listen to chittering
Sparrows discussing
the weather in an aviary
of their own making.
to watch old people
hesitantly fording
the high street like
wildebeest.
to disturb books
in bookshops plotting
and to watch the girl
in the greengrocers
shining apples
with their breath,
as if she were
about to bowl from
the pavilion end.

Dear Sir Lawrence

Grace Sampson

an homage from an Irish voice(s)

I will not forget that
I was nearing the obelisk
Of Twenty-Two (Fiche Dò), on
The day that your death

Reached us. [even from afar]

‘Ferlinghetti’: a
Significato of many things.

You, the
Creator and the
Aider of many things, and
Many poetic approaches, rebukes
Too - that have come to
Be.

All from the humble
Initiations of San
Francisco, and its beats.
All from a deep desire

To go further. To
Go beyond

something/

Anything.

And no, I will not forget/
What I learn from
Your magnificent voice:
how it
Was Italian, American, and
Portuguese,
All at once.

I won't put this pen/
Down, not now and not
Soon. No-

It is far too early yet/

I will read 'Autobiography'
For the next six
days

And nights.

~dreaming of San Francisco.

The first Autumnal

Meg Smith

I find it -- a lone chair
in a field of sunflowers.
There is only the
gold of shadows,
and bees in their silent labor.
I sit and look out.
No prehistory lives here.
No one disputes the past.
The sky moves, spare and grey.
All of us together,
close the night's circle.

Biographies

Alyssa Asaro: Alyssa Asaro is a writer and editor based in Chicago, IL. Her works have been published in Unlimited Literature, Beir Bua Journal, Small Leaf Press, The Remnant Archive, and Second Chance Lit. She can be found on Twitter @rambleshewrote.

Lucy Atkinson: Lucy Atkinson is a poet and playwright based in the North East of England. She is currently completing a PhD at Durham University. Her poetry has been widely published both online and in print in magazines such as Acumen, Agenda, Ink Sweat and Tears, Neuro Logical, among many others. Her debut play *As It Was* was published in 2019.

Loukia Borrell: Loukia Borrell is the American-born daughter of Greek-Cypriot immigrants. A native of Toledo, Ohio, she was raised in Virginia Beach and has a bachelor's degree in English/journalism from Elon University. She is a former print journalist and the author of three books, including "Raping Aphrodite," a historical fiction novel based on the 1974 invasion and division of Cyprus. Her poetry and essays have appeared in The Washington Post, bioStories.com, West Texas Literary Review, Blue Heron Review, The Mark Literary Review, Neuro Logical, Two Meter Review, and elsewhere.

Shawn Berman: Shawn Berman runs The Daily Drunk. His poetry collection, Mr. Funnyman, is available now. Twitter: @sbb_writer.

Aida Bode: Aida Bode is an Albanian poet and writer. She holds an MA in English and Creative Writing from Southern New Hampshire University. Visit her website, www.aidabode.com for her extensive publishing history. Aida is a Pushcart Nominee.

Kevin Bonfield: Kevin Bonfield is a writer of a disjointed past, a beautiful present and a confident future. As well as poetry and short fiction, he earns a few shillings copywriting. His love of running is oft chronicled at kevinrunsblog.com and his tweets can be found at @bonfield_kevin

Sena Chang: Sena Chang is a Japanese musician, poet, and artist. In addition to writing poetry related mainly to her Asian heritage and Kafkaesque scenarios, Chang enjoys reading Haruki Murakami. Her most recent works have appeared or are forthcoming in Ayaskala Literary Magazine, Bandit Fiction, and The International Educator, amongst others. She tweets unprofessionally @senawrites

Larry O. Dean: *Larry O. Dean* was born and raised in Flint, Michigan. His numerous books include *Muse*, *Um* (forthcoming 2022), *Frequently Asked Questions* (forthcoming 2021), *Activities of Daily Living* (2017), *Brief Nudity* (2013), *Basic Cable Couplets* (2012), *abbrev* (2011), *About the Author* (2011), and *I Am Spam* (2004). He is also an acclaimed singer-songwriter whose latest solo album is *Good Grief* (2015); *Product Placement*, the sophomore album from his band, *The Injured Parties*, was released August 2019. For more info, go to larryodean.com.

Tania Donatto: Tania Donatto is a poet from Southeast Texas and a current undergraduate student at Stanford University in California. She intends on majoring in engineering but has a deep love for poetry. Her other interests include dance, theater, learning from people's stories, and accessibility in education. She also has work forthcoming in NECTAR POETRY, Capsule Stories, and 433 Magazine, and she can be found on Instagram and Twitter @taniadonatto_.

Sascha Engel: Sascha Engel is the founder and editor of *Strukturris*, an Ireland-based journal focusing on anarchic dissolutions of text. After teaching in U.S. higher education for a while, he now writes semi-human word structures, some of which have been published here and there. Twitter: @ThinkContinuum

Geraldine Fleming: Geraldine Fleming retired early from an all-consuming career due to ill health. Bereft of purpose in life she found herself drawn into a past interest in creative writing. She is a member of the North Coast Writers Group in Northern Ireland and enjoys writing both prose and poetry. She has published in a number of journals including the *Bangor Literary Journal*, *Pendemic*, *The Crow of Minerva*, *Neuro Logical Literary Magazine*, *Selcouth Station*, *Sledgehammer*, *Impspired*, *A New Ulster* and *Visual Verse*. She also has publication pending in *Second Chance Lit*.

Stephen Golds: Stephen J. Golds was born in North London, U.K, but has lived in Japan for most of his adult life. He writes primarily in the noir and dirty realism genres and is the co-editor of *Punk Noir Magazine*. He enjoys spending time with his daughters, reading books, traveling the world, boxing and listening to old Soul LPs. His books are *Say Goodbye When I'm Gone*, *I'll Pray When I'm Dying*, *Always the Dead*, *Poems for Ghosts in Empty Tenement Windows I Thought I Saw Once*, *Cut-throat & Tongue-tied*, *Bullet Riddled & Gun Shy* and the story and poetry collection *Love Like Bleeding Out With an Empty Gun in Your Hand*.

Tim Goldstone: Tim Goldstone's poems and stories are published or forthcoming in numerous journals and anthologies – ranging from *The Mechanics' Institute Review Anthology* to *The Mambo Academy of Kitty Wang*; *Flash: The International Short-Short Story Magazine* to *Veil: Journal of Darker Musings*. Scripts broadcast on TV and radio. Poetry recently presented on *Digging for Wales*. He has roamed widely, including throughout the UK, Western and Eastern Europe, and North Africa, and currently lives deep in rural Wales

where he disappears into marshland with a rucksack and a rescue dog. Surfaces in twitter [@muddygold](#)

John Grey: John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in Orbis, Dalhousie Review and Connecticut River Review. Latest book, “Leaves On Pages” is available through Amazon.

Rachel Hessom: Rachel Hessom is a writer based in the UK. She writes daily poetry on her blog, [patientandkindlove.com](#) and she enjoys tweeting words that vaguely represent poems. She is currently training to be an English teacher so that that she can pass on her love of literature to the next generation

Mike Hickman: Mike Hickman (@MikeHicWriter) is a writer from York, England. He has written for Off the Rock Productions (stage and audio), including 2018's "Not So Funny Now" about Groucho Marx and Erin Fleming. He has recently been published in EllipsisZine, Dwelling Literary, Bandit Fiction, Nymphs, Flash Fiction Magazine, Brown Bag, and Red Fez.

Ai Jiang: Ai Jiang is a Chinese-Canadian writer and an immigrant from Fujian. She draws on cultures and landscapes of the lands she has walked for inspiration. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in The Dark, Hobart Pulp, Haunted Waters Press, Jellyfish Review, among others. Find her on Twitter (@AiJiang_) and online (<http://aijiang.ca>).

Mark Jones: Strider Marcus Jones – is a poet, law graduate and former civil servant from Salford, England with proud Celtic roots in Ireland and Wales. A member of The Poetry Society, his five published books of poetry <https://stridermarcusjonespoetry.wordpress.com/> reveal a maverick, moving between cities, playing his saxophone in smoky rooms. He is also the founder, editor and publisher of Lothlorien Poetry Journal <https://lothlorienpoetryjournal.blogspot.com/>

Thaina Joyce: Thaina (she/her) is a Brazilian-American poet and educator based in Maryland. Her poetry has been featured at *Sledgehammer Lit*, *Olney Magazine*, *Lumiere Review*, and elsewhere. She hopes her work will empower, connect the human experience, and evoke new perspectives. Find her on IG: @thainawrites Twitter: @teedistrict

Semilore Kilaso: Semilore Kilaso is a poet and student Quantity Surveyor, who loves to collect photographs of humans, architecture, wildlife, and landscape. When she is not playing Scrabble or reading books, she is reading lines from architectural drawings. Her works appear in Praxis Magazine, Rigorous Mag, Entropy Mag, Disquiet Art, and elsewhere. You can reach her on twitter @ooreola

Jason De Koff: Jason de Koff is an associate professor of agronomy and soil science at Tennessee State University. He lives in Nashville, TN with his wife, Jaclyn, and his two

daughters, Tegan and Maizie. His chapbook, “Words on Pages”, is currently available on Amazon at <https://amzn.to/3eookJk> and he can be found on Twitter @JasonPdK3

Kathryn De Leon: Kathryn de Leon is from Los Angeles, California but has been living in England for ten years. Her poems have appeared in several magazines in the US including *Aaduna*, *Calliope*, and *Black Fox*, and in several in the UK including *The Blue Nib*, *London Grip*, and *The High Window* where she was the Featured American Poet.

Mark J. Mitchell: *Mark J. Mitchell was born in Chicago and grew up in southern California. His latest poetry collection, Roshi San Francisco, was just published by Norfolk Publishing. Starting from Tu Fu was recently published by Encircle Publications. He is very fond of baseball, Louis Aragon, Miles Davis, Kafka and Dante.*

He lives in San Francisco with his wife, the activist and documentarian, Joan Juster where he made his marginal living pointing out pretty things. Now, like everyone else, he’s unemployed. He has published 2 novels and three chapbooks and two full length collections so far. Titles on request. A meager online presence can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/MarkJMitchellwriter/>

*A primitive web site now exists: <https://mark-j-mitchell.square.site/>
I sometimes tweet @Mark_J_Mitchell_Writer*

Tara O’Malley: Tara O’Malley is a twenty-one-year-old writer from Connemara, Co. Galway. She is currently an undergraduate student at NUIG, studying Arts with Creative Writing. Her work is forthcoming in *Tír na nÓg Magazine* and has previously appeared in *Paper Lanterns*, *ROPES*, and other publications.

Darby Murnane: Darby Murnane is studying for her Master's of Journalism at the University of North of Texas, and holds a BFA in Creative Writing from the University of Maine at Farmington. She was born and raised in New Jersey but holds no mafia affiliations that need concern you. When she’s not writing hard news, she loves writing fantasy, satire, and nonfiction.

Praise Osawaru: Praise Osawaru (he/him) is a writer of Bini descent. A Best of the Net nominee, his work appears or is forthcoming in *Agbowó*, *FIYAH*, *Frontier Poetry*, *Down River Road*, *The Maine Review*, and *Moonchild Magazine*, among others. An NF2W Poetry scholar, he's the second-place winner of the Nigerian NewsDirect Poetry Prize 2020 and a finalist for the 2021 Stephen A. DiBiase Poetry Prize & the 2020 Awele Creative Trust Award. He's a Contributing Editor for *Barren Magazine* and a reader for *Chestnut Review*. Find him on Instagram & Twitter: @wordsmithpraise.

Maria Picone: Maria S. Picone is a Korean American adoptee who won *Cream City Review*’s 2020 Summer Poetry Prize. She has been published in *Ice Floe Press*, *Bending Genres*, *Whale Road Review*, and more, including *Best Small Fictions 2021*. She has received grants from *Kenyon Review*, *Lighthouse Writers*, *GrubStreet*, *The Watering Hole*, *SAFTA*, *The Speakeasy Project*, and others. She is the prose editor at *Chestnut Review* and also reads or edits at *The Hanok Review*, *Uncharted Mag*, *Longleaf Review*, and *SLICE*. Her work explores hybridity, social justice, and pop culture. Her website is mariaspicone.com, Twitter @mspicone.

Bernard Pearson: His work appears in many publications worldwide, including; Aesthetica Magazine , The Edinburgh Review, The Open Culture Collective, Crossways, The Gentian, Nymphs The Poetry Village, FOURXFOUR, The New Ulster Review, North West Words Beneath The Fever, The Beach Hut The Littlestone Journal. Nawr In 2017 a selection of his poetry 'In Free Fall' was published by Leaf-by-Leaf Press. In 2019 he won second prize in The Aurora Prize. His first novel &Where the Willows End&was published in 2021

Grace Sampson: Grace Sampson is a queer Irish poet, whose work features in various publications in-print and online, such as The Galway Review, The Limerick Leader, The Round Table Literary Review, Analogies&Allegories Literary Magazine and The Neuro Logical. She is aged twenty-two and lives in Ireland

Meg Smith: Meg Smith is a writer, journalist, dancer and events producer living in Lowell, Mass. Her poetry has appeared in *The Cafe Review*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Poetry Bay*, *Polarity*, and many other publications and anthologies. She is author of five poetry books, and a short fiction collection, *The Plague Confessor*. She welcomes visits at megsmithwriter.com, Facebook.com/MegSmithwriter, and on Twitter [@MegSmith Writer](https://twitter.com/MegSmith_Writer).

<3