

No,
Dear

No, Dear

Issue 1
Flight

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Henry O. Winn

circled flock of stones

birds scatter across the sky
for over an hourglass,
and under breast
a brick church squatting in the grass.
for over an hourglass
sunday windy sky kicks above
a brick church squatting in the grass,
the windows all stained.
sunday windy sky kicks above
coughs scattered like spilled marbles.
the windows all stained,
strained light hits a wall

like a tricked bird.
something small and brown
quivers on the steeple,
lets go, and rises.
something small and brown
"cleave the wood and i am there"
lets go, and rises.
a stone that got away.

Emily Brandt

Stairwell: Building Three

Three flights with six landings –
that's forty-two steps, six octaves
in the major key. Professor B thought
she could haul her upright
piano right to the top, into her office,
replace her computer. She borrowed
three leather belts from her Uncle,
the miner, and hooked them together,
strapped the cord around her back, around
the instrument's body, and heave ho'ed.
On the first landing, seven steps up, she stopped
to rest and clip a cigar. She fingered an F chord,
struck a match, blew it out, struck another,
breathed in.

Puff. Puff.

The smoke slinked under the strap,
gave her strength for fifteen more steps.

B stubbed the cigar on her heel, mashed it
into the hollow below the damper pedal,
gave up. She thought, "This will do,"
and went off to teach.

On their way
to Statistics, the sisters Alpha Phi Beta
pleased by the novelty, unlaced
their tennis shoes and played Bach
with their toes. B, overhearing from above,
cringed to hear baroque played so flat.
She sidled down the steps.
The aftertaste of staccato sounded
in their responses. "Why Professor,
we were merely typing your notes."

With that, she bellowed a sigh,
scraped her nails on the ivory. The sound
of the scratch rolled up their spines,
erecting a hair for each classroom giggle
each lip gloss stain on a quiz,
and the sisters now quite understood.
Like undertakers, they opened the instrument
and with three leather belts, strapped themselves inside,
eighty-eight strings indenting their skin, and just one
cigar to split between them.

Cristina J. Baptista

The Bird Beneath the Bush

No one knew
where it had come from, that speckled parrot
with closed wings and eyes
huddled in last autumn's anemic leaves
trapped beneath the bush—
the one with red pimentos of berries
the size of round bird eyes
parents always said
"don't eat or you'll get sick and die,
those are poison."
It was dubious the bird
had eaten the berries,
though its body reeked upon discovery,
like trampled rotting fruits.

Perhaps parents are always a tinge
right, like folklore, myth, and old
wives' tales. Perhaps that bush *had* bred
death, but only in an unseen way.
Or maybe it had simply swallowed
what was its originally,
draped its own legend
not in a black cloak, but bright feathers.

Escape route(s)

I. Because nobody gives the spinach
the attention it deserves,
you handle each bunch like it
has just sprouted from your
own fingertips, which makes you think
about dirt and how human it is,
how many people's cells are just
floating around in the silt,
nurturing the tender greens just
long enough to prepare them for
consumption, their bodily re-entry.

So satisfied with this theory,
you almost forget to smile politely and
respond to questions like
what's your name? and *do I know you?*

II. When the sky tilts just for you
in the sweet Brooklyn afternoon
and the child anchors himself
with handfuls of your shirt so that his eyes
can drink the room in unsure draughts,
you know to direct your gaze outwards.
Rock him gently on your hip,
quiet his cries with your sway.

Recognize that this moment is not your own,
your driftwood life suspended and
waiting patiently just beyond the plate glass.

III. Parking your body in this
desk-disguised-as-vehicle
you are prepared to drive long and far
for the kind of expertise that this
classroom has to offer, the breed of knowledge
that reaches out its hands and
wrings every last drop of self-doubt
from your sponge of a brain.

Odd, then, that you trap yourself
in the back row and devote your time
so entirely to imagining the slight resistance
of ball point pen piercing skin,
methodically drilling into the bald head
of the nearest thirsty scholar.

memory

as a teenager in Romania, you were climbing a tree and fell down,
your belly split open, and to this day you carry a scar.

I want to know
what was the weather like then
and could you hear the rush of traffic
miles off
or was it just quiet?

save for cracking all the branches,
and being accidentally weightless
how does a yell sound
in your language?

It is the first memory I have
of your body
in the dark:
a track across your middle
pale, raised skin
a story stitched to you

how your breathing shifted
when I traced my finger
along the line,
asked you
where it came from.

And when I was seven
you were nine
and when you were fourteen
I was twelve
and when you fell
maybe I heard the branches crack
around the world
right in my backyard

Maybe both our bodies always pulsed, inside
to know that this was coming
to know of night time, and light touch,
and your scar

More Daughters

At the airport sending my father off
to Pakistan. When I tell people they say *why?*
and not like if he was going to France.
Or sometimes they say *is he Pakistani?*
which is maybe more politically correct
because I don't look Pakistani. My white family
and a handful of my father's Pakistani friends
help him unload the excess weight
from his suitcase, rolls of toilet paper
someone told him he'd need.

There is a family come to meet Bobby Khan*
at the airport. This one comes from Virginia,
he says no one is defending them there.
Bobby speaks to the daughters in the parking lot and after,
imparts their typical story—father just disappeared.
No one tells this family anything, where he is
and why, and they can probably get him, send him off
for *immigration* discrepancies like the others.

But that is a loaded word and it killed my uncle
(though I should tell you he was not actually my uncle.)
The hiding was their fault because what choice
did he have—once found he'd be sent off,
unable to return. Needing to return
for the money (his family's survival,
his own roach-infested Brooklyn room.)
So he stayed here, his family in Pakistan.
My ustadji, their father—Durri, Furri, and Samir Abbas.
The daughters said *tell me about him*,
what he was like for 11 years. I tried
over the phone but he was an experience.

Once in the airport they held Bobby Khan and his family
for hours asking the same questions until his daughter,
she was only five, said *Aren't we people too?*
and then they began to remember.

* Asanullah "Bobby" Khan is the director of the Coney Island Avenue Project, an
advocacy group for South Asian immigrants.

The Return

I promise to remember the universe,
the infinite complication of its composition,
the physicality of its push for existence
and how, therefore, this single plane

cannot be of much importance in the great
pulsing energy of galaxies and laws.
Driven by the most basic need to float
and to be light, to lighten up, what is this

one element on a conveyor belt of air
that it should bear some special fate for me,
some place to die or drown in, to burn
and disappear, some immediate hell and heaven?

Purgatory would remain for those who remain
behind seeking my remains. That is
the miracle of remembrance, a tongue-twister
of being that is. I shall stride the heavens once more

and possibly a thousand times more
before intersecting with the fate that seeks me.
I shall say no special prayer nor make
no special call, nor see no special danger.

I am of an age now when experience
takes nothing lightly,
but airplanes still do obey rather than deny
the variables of acceleration.

Alex Cuff

Wreck

Recollection

Bore

Don't mind if I do
He smiles opening the beer.
Don't mind if I do

A brick house stands in a vacant lot.
The light from one of its rooms
cuts dusk in half.
Moths, hungry for an artificial glow,
overwhelm a small pane.

I don't mind
She thinks opening
a brown bottled IPA.
Drinking a dirt road.
Maine. Chanterelles.
Blackberries. Hours away,
the frown of mother,
is palpable.

Sorting the Sea
glass subtly enters
the soft tips of fingers
the smooth skin
of moon wrists

Don't mind me.
A voice in her head apologizes
for the cloud which is her

silence, the whir
of engine, the hope

that the dusty road will end in a cliff so that she
could say something interesting happened.

Contributors

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Originally from Connecticut, Cristina J. Baptista shunned her suburban ways and moved to New York City a few years ago, where she is pursuing a Ph.D. in English Literature at Fordham University and somehow finding time to write poetry. CJBHerdsofWords@yahoo.com

Katie Moeller lives in Brooklyn and currently wears as many hats as she can possibly fit on her head on any given day: poet, teacher, grad student, babysitter, organizer, schemer, dreamer, social justice seeker.
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Marty Northrop thinks, writes, doubts, reads, and loves in Bayside. He will laugh when No, Dear puts him in stitches. mnorthrop@fordham.edu

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Emma Alabaster was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. This May, she graduates from Bard College with a B.A. in Music (bass, composition, and voice). Then she is Brooklyn-(re)bound to shelve her student status and pursue her work as a musician, poet, and educator (and maybe some other jobs that actually pay the rent!). emmalabaster@gmail.com

Hillary Gardner lived in Barcelona for several years and credits Captain Stacey Chance of www.fearofflyinghelp.com with helping her to regain enough aplomb to recross the Atlantic after September 11th.
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