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MASTHEAD

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our fourth issue, a deep dive to the other side of usual. To discover the long past, speak the discourse of the senses, and taste the distance possible in someone else's words is a joy. We have selected work from nineteen writers who create strange, overgrown worlds in clean and controlled ways, making transit through those worlds a rich and realized journey.

From the tight disorder of Dan Gutstein's "I Depreciate That" to the fantastic displays in Susan Frith's "Hollow-Cut" and J. Bowers's "Lady, The Mind-Reading Mare," to Ivan de Monbrison's astonishing little graveyard: here, the mind must travel with its guidebook tightly-clutched.

As always, this journal was designed to be held, bent, folded, touched, and loved. Read a review of two outstanding books, Matthew Siegel's *Blood Work* and Chloe Honum's *The Tulip-Flame*, in our new feature THE GENUINE. And don't miss the latest answers in our 5 QUESTIONS FOR POETS series all the way at the back of the book, with insight from Diana Khoi Nguyen, Kelly Cressio-Moeller, Martha Silano, and Sara Eliza Johnson. 1

- CHRISTINE GOSNAY

Marlys West

Who Came Before

Now that you are dead and trajectories diverge
the way they do even for the living, with luck
I might breathe in one or two carbon

molecules or uncaught burnt salts
or dust from your eight big bones:
femur, tibia, fibula.

Let me pluck you out of nature. I want you
resurrected out of carbon matter. Maybe
when the forest inward folds
2 and a black owl swallows a mouse whose foot

was the back of your throat. Whose tail tip.
Humerus. Ulna.
Whatever flows from you

you are: black bird, old dog, white cat. This
new cup. A worm. Fish fins. Moth wing.
Dull eggs like chalk fists pooled
in a nest in a tree. Radius. Black
widow behind the baking tins.
The dinner could be you. The plate. Its wet.
Dead I seem
to love you better. Marriage was two
minutes of blue fire
then dying flame. What isn't? Fast forward

to the midnight bedside where I put flower
water in your cup. You saw me do it.

Brown silk lining the glass vase
full of old flowers and ferns,
how to put you back in feather? Your lips
two leaves beneath a wren.

Your mesentery new pellets
of fur and bones and bloody broken things;

all that made the creature without its motions
or essential features. Mouse-like
but not mouse.

Come here and curl and uncurl in my hand
in the black flower's bottom of green
fruit. I collect you and press you

into the ground. When will I lean against
the heap of you?
All parts of you? The seventh rib and eighth?
That I found?

The dogs would rather laze inside. They stick a nose into trash and tear the white plastic. Trash and bag down the gullet of the lazy predator who has learned how to poach the can. When man is gone, will the slinking canine revert to wolf? Will the weeds at the border of his taming sprout and spread across the blacktop road and bring him back?

Or will the dog wilt like yards that forgot how to spring seed, who never learned to find the food in rocky soil? Yards too green that grew lush under the haze of chemical spray, monotone carpets that root too soft. Bees, promise of the next generation of seed, prefer the Queen Anne's Lace in the pasture; the clover in our yard. These plants thrive where turf dies. They seed over the brown patch of farmed sod, useless in the wild as a mule's cock.

Dan Gutstein

I DEPRECIATE THAT

The managing partner, Galassi, had summoned the entire support staff—including my assistant, Karen—to the main conference room. A few at a time, secretaries, typists, and receptionists traded tennis shoes for flats, stowed their purses in bottom drawers, and joined the chatty procession wending its way toward the meeting. A few minutes later, I strolled past the floor-to-ceiling windows, ostensibly on some errand, just as Galassi spilled the contents of a cardboard box onto the sonorous wooden table, typing bond fanning out in a jagged white slick.

The gathering had lasted no longer than ten minutes, and the ladies left the conference room in a chalky trance, the quiet column depositing a person every few cubes, until the stragglers veered around the corner, toward the other half of the office. Makeup was not checked and no trips were taken to the coffee dispenser. The various sounds of commerce—tapping of keyboards, greeting of callers, collation in advance of photocopying—filled the skies of Peter Pattersen & Co., eighth floor. Everyone toiled, except Karen, who sat, slumped, an unlit cigarette twinkling between her lips. I say “my assistant,” but Karen split her time between me and her fax machine duties, the sending and the receiving, and did very little for me, although she always knew the latest on catering and gossip.

“Are there bagels?” I said.

“Mmmm-hmmm.” I started toward the conference room, when Karen added, “Joe Reddick looking for you.”

“Reddick?” I said. Reddick, a partner outside our group, only handled oddball engagements. Others at my rung had warned me of him, and his murky terrain. “When?”

“Few minutes ago.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Outside the meeting.” Karen drew on the unlit cigarette, and blew imaginary smoke from her mouth, a fat sigh.

“Did he go in for a bagel?” I said.

“No.”

“Do you think he’s going in now?”

“Denny,” she said.

“Why’s everybody so glum? What the hell happened in there?”

“I seen you walk past.”

“Yeah, when Galassi dumped some papers out of a box. That’s all I got.”

“Well, he say we ain’t working hard enough. The secretaries. Say he got all these resumes from college kids. Say he gonna replace all us little people, we don’t pick it up.” She drew on the cigarette once again, exhaling with more force. “That’s what he threw on the table. Resumes from college kids.”

I avoided Reddick by visiting the coffee dispenser, a neat machine that prepared varieties of drinks. I avoided him by splashing water on my face in the men’s room – a risky gambit, of course, since Reddick, himself, could’ve hopped out of a stall, the Financial Times tucked underneath his arm. After that, I prepared myself a salt bagel with smoked salmon in the abandoned conference room, and ate it, on the Fourth Floor, with a colleague from Mergers & Acquisitions. It had been a nice day, so I strolled across the street to Farragut Square, a busy park where bicycle couriers harassed pretty girls under the sober gaze of chronic homelessness. My watch read one o’clock. Reddick could be anywhere, I reasoned, and as I rode the elevator back to my desk, I determined to soft-shoe it to the library, where I could drop into a distal armchair, and indulge my favorite overhead account: Review of Current Developments, which, in my case, meant Reading of Great Literature. I had just located my diversion—the Standard Industrial Classification Manual—when Joe Reddick popped out of an aisle, the Financial Times tucked underneath his arm. He wore a clipped hedge of sandy hair, a snookered nose, and thin mouth. He was an all right guy.

“I’ve been looking for you,” he said, rapping the Times against my shoulder. “Come over to my office.”

“But I’ve got to work on Stomaku,” I said.

“Stomaku’s dead.”

“It is?”

“For you, it is.”

“Are you sure?” I said.

“Which one is Stomaku?” said Reddick. “Those big stomachs on wheels?”

We sat in Reddick’s office while he thumbed through printouts. The partners liked me, and I’d sat in many of their offices for reasons that, at times, escaped me. A fellow named W. William Wuerff displayed on a bookshelf signed headshots of Nixon, Reagan, and Ford. Galassi, the son of eastern European emigrant Jews, did not sit at a desk, but stood at a draftsman’s table. My direct supervisor, Sargent N. Foster, in reference to the cramped, rumbling city, had once spread out his arms, from one end of K Street to another, and said, “So many people, packed so tightly together. It’s no wonder. It’s no wonder.”

“Oh well,” said Reddick, tossing the printouts, with a wrinkled face, onto his desk. “I can’t find the thing. You’ve done some analysis, haven’t you?”

A group of colleagues—friends and enemies alike—had gathered at my cubicle, a sort of wake for the living. I had been tasked with depreciating all the telephone poles in the United States of America. “Does that include territories—like Guam?” said Emma, one of my fiercest competitors. “There are new poles,” said another observer, “old poles, and ordinary poles.” It was an extreme, a polar, assignment, and while I understood it in theory, I could not devise the spreadsheet, the statistical framework, the mathematics. Reddick had begun, already, before I left his office, to help me with the numbers, but the terrific abstraction of his ‘help’ only served to muddy the muddy assignment, and while I nodded as if I understood his advice, at the same time, my inner voice was commenting that I had no bleeping clue. “Take a representative state,” said another in the gathering, “Maryland, let’s say, or Missouri, and multiply. Or break it down per capita.”

We were a group of scientists, dismal scientists, economists, pontificators, in a fast-track firm that ruled its industry. “Wait, wait, wait,” said Eloise, the senior staffer in the ruck. “Are we talking wires, too? And those big nails ... the footholds the repairmen step onto, to scale the poles? Are we talking substations and capacitors?” Karen had joined the party. “They getting ready to put Denny in Peter. They groomin’ Denny for Peter.” And by that, she meant the executive elite. That they’d fly me to their compound in Louisiana, where their corporate trainers would indoctrinate me into the world of the modern day swindle. I’d learn how to make the other guy go to the mat and how to take home the engagement, myself, in order to fatten the pockets of my superiors. One day, maybe I, too, would climb the rungs to the partnership, have a placard erected on my office door, D. Abba Davidson, it would go, first initial, middle name, last.

Other images of Lady Wonder, equine sphinx, remain. Nearly all depict the mare alongside Mrs. Claudia D. Fonda, at various stages of their long career in backyard showbiz. Together they sustained the Fonda fortunes long after Clarence was injured at work, breadwinners in an era when most women weren't allowed to be.

The last few photos of the two, taken for LIFE magazine in the 1950s, depict a puffy Mrs. Fonda and a swaybacked Lady, the woman's riding crop held aloft as the raggedy mare spells Y-E-S on her old typewriter/xylophone. These were taken after Lady Wonder allegedly channeled Leroy Baker, a missing three-year-old boy. When questioned by police, the horse spelled out "P-I-T-T-S-F-I-E-L-D-W-A-T-E-R-W-H-E-E-L." The child's waterlogged body was eventually found in the Field-Wilde quarry, which was a kind of pit with water in it, according to Mrs. Fonda. Later, she refused to let her aged pet name the boy's killer, declaring Lady Wonder retired from detective work.

"You can't use the word of a horse to accuse anybody of a crime," she said, in her last printed statement on Lady Wonder. "Besides, we've never made any claims."

Juan Martinez

MISSED TICKETS (1994)

You are a waitress. You have been a waitress forever, so of course you dreamed of missing tickets. You forgot orders, spilled drinks, dropped trays. You dreamed of apologizing to your tables. You dreamed they left no tips, or too much, that they'd made a mistake. You dreamed you served them curdled milk or a coffee with a caterpillar crawling out of it. You served them a bowl of flowers, and they said That's not what I ordered, miss. That's not what I wanted.

You dreamed the room you'd seen all day, but in the dream you noticed patterns on the corner you'd previously missed, or a small wood door you passed and never noted. A misplaced dumbwaiter, forgotten now.

And forgotten too when you woke up. If you woke up.



You could not wake up. You thought you lived in The Alicia, but you only dreamed of the kitchen and the cafeteria, and you stood in neither.



You moved down a narrow corridor, the corridor as dark as the desert night. You remembered the shape and the heft of the night in your sleep.

You followed a sleepwalker, a girl who told you to leave – you had time, you could. The girl's hand melted into the walls.

You thought of soft cheese. You thought you knew this girl, but the walls swallowed her before you remembered her name.



Gabrielle Campagnano

Nocturne on Race Brook Falls

The water looks clear enough to drink
at this hour.

Against the ridge, shadow breaks
silence. Hear it: an American Elm

cast over itself—cross made
from branches, ghostly and taught
on the brush floor. Mood becomes
measured in ways rendered invisible

80 outside of the moment: shade of algae foam/
big dipper firefly near the body/ moon's
dripping weight.

Here, night comes as if it's the only
language that matters, as if it's
touch therapy.
Tap it, take it on
the tongue—

thick wind, wing against the cheek,
broad, moving stone—

and that near-death feeling, what
else to name it? The soul wants
to be inside the water, half-erosion,
half-small stratum leaning in.

The Genuine

a review

*“Language charged with meaning” suggests that poetry can never be a
matter of “lovely” or “elegant” language but that it must be meaningful;*
Marjorie Perloff, “On Evaluation in Poetry”

Excepting the author, who among us could “live,” for a time, in a poem?
Who would want to? For most readers, the experience extends to just
that - reading. Within the infinite spectrum of responses, we land on a scatter
plot that mostly clusters according to the poet’s skill with words and the
depth of discovery the language reveals. We scatter in more concentrated
ways when the poetry also surprises, or touches a common nerve. Then, we
move away, into other graphs and planes.

It is the rare book, then, that demands more than reading: this book, this cu-
rio, requires a living, breathing response. Matthew Siegel’s *Blood Work* is such
a book. In a devotional sung by a genuine human voice attuned as much to its
own industry as to the empty possibilities that surround it, in the threaten-
ing way that so characterizes an understood world, Siegel has created a truly
asymptotic projection: the realized self.

Skill at unwinding surprising lines and the gift of a voice that rings suspi-
ciously familiar, like the work of one’s own mind at the secret task of contem-
plation, are the twin backbones of this surprising collection. Far from schema
or a conceit, *Blood Work* relies on its topic - an unusual path for the Poet,
lately - and succeeds brilliantly: the blood, the body, pain and illness.

Eight quarts
of blood

run laps inside
my body

arrive, leave

BANDY

BOWERS

CAMPAGNANO

DOMINA

FRITH

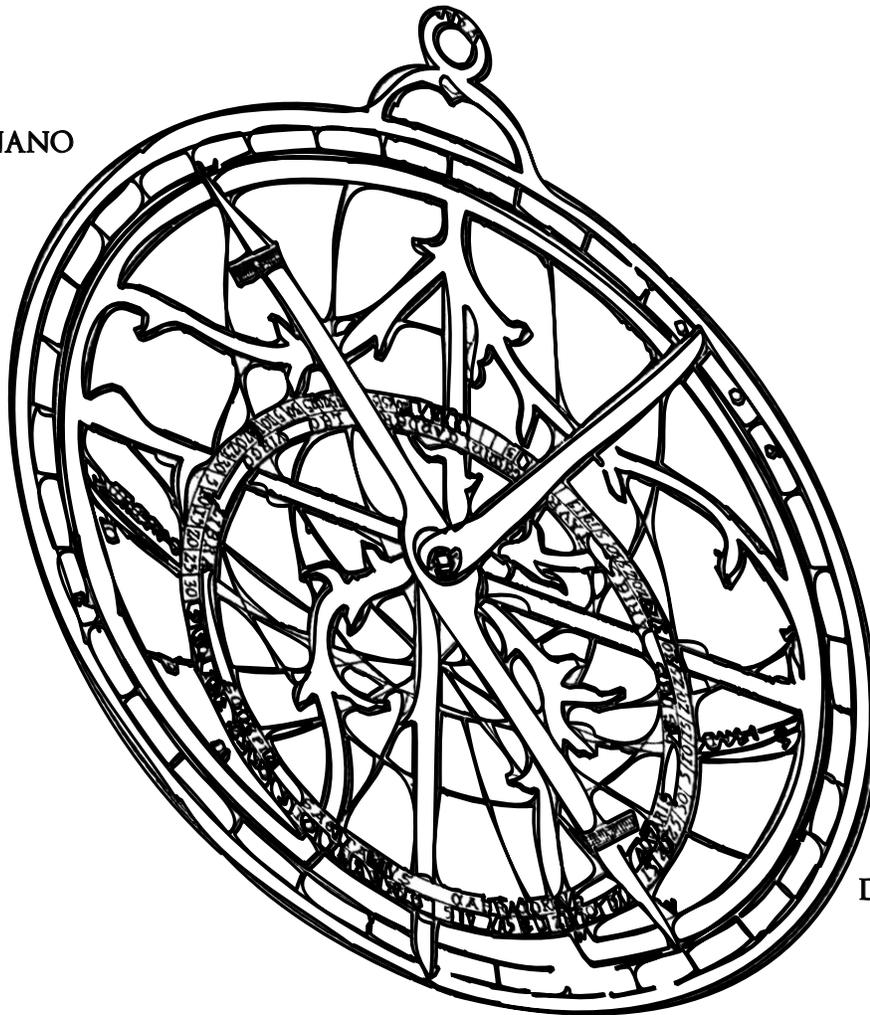
GUTSTEIN

HUMMER

JENSEN

JORDAN

KLEN



LA FEMINA

LORSUNG

MARTINEZ

DE MONBRISON

MONTLACK

OEDING

POCH

TRACEY

WEST