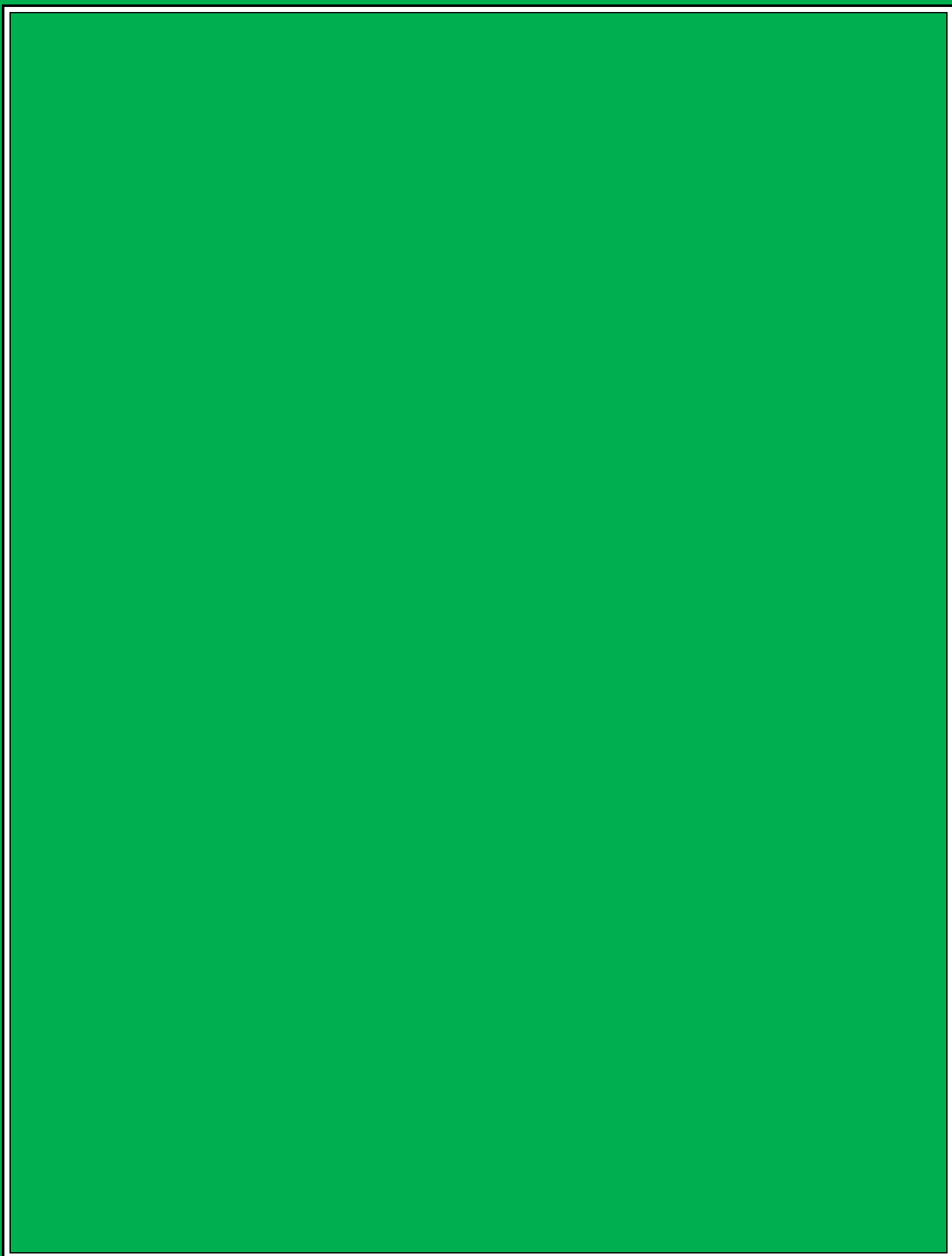


Aberration

Labyrinth:

As The World Falls Down

ISSN: 2179-8805



Bestial Cannon Balls

Robert L. Martin

Invisible ammunition,
bestial cannon balls,
virions of the devil's army
of microscopic proportions,
fired from the battlefields
from unholy
CoronaVirus cannons,
invisible warfare,
breaking the rules of war,
hideous looking globes
of an ashen colored body
that reeks of rotted flesh
with bloody red flowery spikes
on the opposite ends
of the penetrating nibs
that are stuck in the
heart of the devil's oleander,
scattered throughout the
fields of protein lumps,
sucking up the venom inside,
the tongue of the beast
lapping up his diabolic juice,
his deadly ammunition,

the works of the
devil's advocates
sewn on demonic looms
in the house of evil
with rose colored
bushes protruding
like patterned dresses
of the whores,
the unholy angels
who flutter through the
pure air made impure,
the microscopic
cannon balls that land
in the lungs and steal the air
until man's final breath passes
through the mortal gates.

Into the Tavern of Strangers

(upon the Great Northern Café of St. Cloud,
MN)

Benjamin Pierce

Lives of smoke
freely scattered
fading hair
balding shirts
thirteen eyes and seven paths
one flicker of screenlight in the dark.
Do we seek the shades of flickerlight
for quiet within

or

is the cooling steam and scattered peaces
court enough

for one who rules within?

Less Than Naked

Benjamin Pierce

Here I was, less than naked
having nowhere to put anything
I might acquire
balled up
more like an eyeball than a fist
closed off to function
but prone to disappear upon opening
as a fist must do--
an open fist can become a hand
yet so many fists have failed to
I could not have opened as an eye does
to be all an eye ever is
I would stand in the place where light vision object have all gone
for I was less than naked
less than a fist around nothing
and with nothing to strike and how do I explain this
or name this
bereft of even a claim that there ought to be more
for this is not a riddle, where I say:
here I am, an egg
a chicken without a bone
here I am a door that is not a door
for I am ajar
for I did not arrive here from anywhere
I am the part of something thinks
the part that does not think
the material stump that fades into air
the skull, even the part of the brain that is just more solid
which the part that thinks must be out there, within
for thought to point out here I must be the part of thinking that does not think.

Some of My Own

Benjamin Pierce

I would, by a single step, take back an inch of what was taken;
I would declare my shoes the extent of my exile
and yet I must seek a visa or means of entry into my skin:
my sight is my sovereign empire,
and abdicating by a closure of eyes
all the sound around a universal commonwealth:
yet in all of this to step once forward is forbidden
to step forward once, to admit all I cannot enter
to step forward once to reclaim that one inch for that price
to step forward once to claim my inheritance
from myself as I cannot be again,
and so, solitary and sovereign I abide
in the second before, in the waiting.

The Lover

Marc Carver

I hacked off my massive beard
it took a while.
The next day we went to the restaurant in the hotel.
None of the waitresses recognized me and wondered who was sitting with my wife.
Then one of the waiters recognized me and came over.
"What happened to the beard?" He said.
"Oh no I am the lover the husband had to go home but don't tell anybody."
He laughed as he cleared away a few plates.

Bad Poetry

Jerry Robbins

Rain Slashing down the walls
Cup of purple tea
Turns spiraling into metaphor
While over at Somersby
Trembling Mother alive,
And perchance these words
Oh, wait till I breath
Meaning nothingness or
Seattle has a lot
Then welcome
I miss the petulant
Cookies mesenchyme
Modern poetry
And watch out

Praying the Monster Gone

John Bowden

One

They stand planted in a ripe cellar—little light
But on their faces, identical eyes locked
On each other's.
Words like rotting roots underground—
How many will it take?
One does not yet speak—
Strangled by the Words that can't emerge,
Like boils they Cover him, oozing fear.

Revelation is a monster.

Water drips a drop at a time from some corner
And a tapping sound—a rat maybe—
Is the percussion that beats toward
The war that must rise.
From what direction can it come?
One can't say, one can't hear.

Two

A bare yellow bulb hangs a few feet away.
The boy turns his head and closes his eyes,
The bulb's sickly yellow seeps inside his eyelids.
It calms him, and he opens his mouth.
You need to know, he starts, then stops, then says it again,
The rhythm of his words in time with the wall's tapping.
The man stands silent, hands and eyes open, and he waits,
Unsure and confused.

I have to say this, the boy tries again, paralyzed now,
Only his mouth can move, slow, slower.
The monster makes its move, lumbering toward him,
The boy only feels its movement, like nausea,
Swirling faster to make its escape,
He swallows hard, then says, you have to know,
He finally opens his eyes, and faces the man.

Three

The boy searches for permission to continue,
As the temperature drops inside him.
Now he's cold as a penny at the bottom of a well,
Chilled by the frowns of disappointed walls.
His silent prayer, urgent and misshapen,
Blows like a virus into the air.
The monster watches but does not move.
Now all three are glued to the gray slate floor.

The words won't come, but the monster won't leave,
Suddenly olfactory ghosts invade the cellar:
Gasoline and bacon, rain and coal-fire.
The rat still taps from somewhere in the wall,
The father lumbers up the stairs,
Powered by his loss of patience, his own fear of the monster,
Leaving the son to shut out the light, to begin again.

**Literally Just Throw This File in the Trash
Along with Any Trace of its Author's
Existence from Itself**
Andreas Nussbaumer

Yeah I fuck
yeah I putt
those nuts in that butt
asshole in one
I make merry with marry
pop Cherry's cherry
I give Rhonda anaconda
and sip sherry out of Sherry
I'm a pro creative
I'm a pro procreator
I'm an instant inseminator
ne'er a masturbator
my genes dominate the pool
semen prominent at school
pop quiz 'bout my jizz
all the ladies drool
(all, in a one man polycule)
straight "retarded" on this dick
mouth full of spit
can't speak on this dick
crashin' drivin' stick
I put the man in manual
I'm the man in the manual
I fuck my own grandmother
metaphorical and others
I break barriers like rams
battering and Los Ange
I smother the competition
with a smattering of cum petitions
to impregnate all women
yeah the father of all children
yeah fuck paternal division
I fuck fraternal religions
Flyer than a pigeon
cagists can fuck chickens
I lick the morticians
I prick the statician
I kiss the beautician
Brenda the bootylicious

brownbag them bitches
tolltag the britches
I am the bridges
t'all moral midgets
the glorified and seditious
check the yaw I'm vicious
damn I'm good lookin'
hot damn I'm good cookin'
ham and that bacon
raking in that making
satisfying the atoms
in the world writ stratum
it's a fact, I'm at 'em
the world records, bobbing for apples
the bucket is made to grapple
tape and diamond staples
my smegma is syrup maple
the core is iron fables
the middle ironic tables
tablets on the papal
state propping the label
the heat can't take it
a cool sky saddened by
the dreary drapes of passersby
this plane, unplain, of sexistence,
yeah I put the sex in existence,
for instance, the death of Ishmael
reflects a song I wish I knew—
my dick's moby the DJ—
testicles 2 Live Crew too—
can't conjure the sedated
souls aboard a ship syncing
a ship made of lead and an inkling
of a whirlwind, the effervescent lips
of nightmares equipped with wooly fangs
the trap-jaw of mature resignation
borne out a misery of 11 years
where ossification metes a single leer
from Beatles yesterday, Jim Jones today
and a King tomorrow whom you can't name,
as the stray dog sleeps alone
I call it its name and its name alone
(my dick: The Bone,
this ship is its home).

Sleepless

Caleb LaCross

In your morning haze, anxiety seizes you
It clutches you with an unbreakable grasp
Anxiety is stronger than any force of nature
It is your worries manifested and magnified
Unpaid bills, decaying health, and bad grades
All the misery you keep bottled inside
Invades your head in every single waking moment
From sunup to sundown, it dominates you
You live blissfully unaware as these fears amass
Growing in size and number with haste
You try to escape, but these feelings are insurmountable
Like hills that became mountains
They are impossible for the amateur to climb
Even sleep is not a sanctuary from the problems you evade,
It is just a place for your despair to proliferate

In your morning haze, anxiety seizes you
But this time you rebel
Brushing away your state of panic, you realize you have a choice
Deal with the horrors of your own creation or be consumed by them
Do not be consumed by them.

Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors

Vlad Tumanov

We lived, we feared, we lied, we mattered
Remember us but once.
Today we're an embarrassed murmur.
You'll pass us by without a clue
as you pursue your dreams and fictions,
immortal plans, intrigue and games.

We're two-three atoms here and there:
a blade, a leaf, a beak, a hand.
You'll never know our posts and taglines.
Who wants to be a millionaire?
We thought we'd hold the precious oyster
within the cradle of our hands,
but it was just an ancient pebble
that children think will always shine.

All vanished in a sorry second
despite a longing to affect
events and people yet to happen —
delusions of divine import
spread like a virus masked or open.

What have you learned from books and letters
that some of us did leave behind?
Will you and yours embrace the darkness
of futures not within your ken?
Or will you follow our example
erecting palaces and visions
of sheerest glass and bits and bytes?

All swans are black — forget the white ones.
They will adorn a painted view,
but lakes and rivers will not hold them
for whiteness is a soothing story
we tell ourselves before we die.

Inventing time and space and postings,
we thought of us; we thought of you.
We tried to tap your distant shoulder
and you responded with a grin.
But that was false — you were invented
by poets, bloggers and the press.
Unborn, untouched, not yet imagined,
you waited calmly in the wings.

And when you came, you looked and wondered:
could they have done and wrought all that?
What chutzpah, will and inspiration!
We will not make the same mistakes.
Perhaps, perhaps, but then our stumbles
make up the dance that carries on.
The curtain sets but always rises
to give the audience more thrills.

We lived, we feared, we lied, we mattered.
We'll say no more; our part is played.
But when you fall asleep on Wednesday,
and toss and turn and think of taxes
and feel a guilt, an ache, a stirring,
get up to get a drink of water,
as you return to bed all groggy,
remember us but once.

Manic

John Jenks

Make believe your heart hasn't fallen
Tragedy leaves bushy eyes burning in a soulless expression
Run from his touch; shun the angel's callings
Give into his will and accept your depression

Tragedy leaves bushy eyes burning in a soulless expression
But rejoice in her beauty, and dance to her music, Or
give into his will and accept your depression
My mind a toggle between pleasure and bullshit

But rejoice in her beauty, and dance to her music
Once what was love replaced by hatred for her touch
My mind a toggle between pleasure and bullshit
Maybe I'll grab him, and fall down to his love

Once what was love replaced by hatred for her touch
One day I'll find Elise, or perhaps I'll forget
Maybe I'll grab him, and fall down to his love
A wicked mind amongst her, he lives without regret

COVID-19

Lynn Ford

a virus is taking over
and it is false to presume that
the world can recover

fear is the product of isolation
they lie when they say that
we are not alone

there is no savior
so, I would be foolish to tell you
there is a cure to this madness
and that
the suffering will end
the reality is that
we are like drowning children
and I don't believe
we are going to survive

we are like birds
closer to death every day
so, don't believe for a minute that we are
soon to be free
we are slaves

sweetness is just a temporary taste
so, try to remember only the delusional claim
that
the valleys lead to mountains

panic attacks are forever the norm
and I can't possibly understand how
the quarantine will fade into memory

And all this can be true for you unless you
choose to REVERSE it.

Slant Life

Alan Cohen

Just around the corner
Down the lane
Out in left field
Eight miles west
Five minutes late
Twelve dollars short
Wide and to the right
Go directly to jail
Offside, five yards
Do not pass go
Heretic, outlaw, outcast, exile
Lost in space
No, you may not
Seen before
Not enough substance
Interference, that'll be half the distance to the goal
No longer listening
Go to jail
To hell

How we see is never how they
Nor can ever hope to
Reveal, share, collaborate, tell
Domesticate harmony
Must, like cicadas then
Say over
Insist
Say over
No
And
Sorry but
And
Here
And
Today
Until we two
Are husks
At the last, front and center
Gone

Untitled

Sohyla Rahmani

Dear woman on the train,
I hardly noticed you were crying
Barely saw the quick movement of your hand
As it touched your cheek
A tear escaping and killed as it is born

The stops shift in and out
Of the corner of my eye
Stuck in my own monologue I apologize
For my cowardice then
Somewhere in the back of my mind

I asked "are you okay?"
Something simple to say
And yet I didn't
Crying woman on the train

Sitting across from me
I can see now how you tried
To use your phone as a distraction
The tears still fell.

Meeting my intruding stare
The train halts to a stop and you leave
The putrid air mixed with sadness.

Awaited

Sushmita Chaudhary

You came into my life
'Slow and steady'.
Our eyes met but
We decided to stay strangers.
We liked each other's presence
Yet we felt shy to speak to each other.
The first time we spoke was
When I was asked to make tea.
You told me, "Pinch of sugar
In my cup of tea."
Since then we started
The journey of love-----
A journey which was
Never meant to be fulfilled.

There was a time
When my heart loved
The lyrics of your favourite song.
There was a time
When your letters
Used to be the reason for my smile.
There was a time
When your smell
Was something I was addicted to.
There was a time
When your hands
Were something I never wanted to leave
There was a time
When your shoulders
Used to be my comfort zone.
There was a time
When your touch
Was something all that I needed
To make my day.

Maybe,
It was not your fault.
The time, perhaps, used you
As its agent to hit me hard.
Maybe,

The time was, perhaps,
In a bit hurry
To take you away from me.
Or maybe,
You were too high
On your nextdoor chick
To leave my eyes a bit more teary.

Now that the time
Has made me alone and lonely,
I can't help but wait for you
With hopes in a
Little corner of my heart.
I still believe that someday
We will start our journey again.
You will come to me and say,
"Pinch of sugar
In my cup of tea."

When Dusk Meets Dawn

David Litwack

No thing finer
Than the thrill of lovers at peace.

Bodies in splendor and delight
Slick and luminescent
When dusk meets dawn.

When rhythm meets rhythm
And lips meet lips, like roses,
Or bodies wrap like vines in the night
Creeping to their destiny.

This way to delight.

Hold death at the door
Like the tide in the blue gray dusk.
Hold memory and regret and loss at the door.

This way to ecstasy,
To the holy of holies.
Rhythm of the moon,
Joy of the sun,
And promise against the tide of
remembrance.

No thing finer

Than speech without voice
Mute, to claim truth as our own.
In the aftermath of illusion
Where dusk meets dawn.

Grasp it then,
Enfold it then.

Without illusion
Without tortured remembrances,
As a promise against the tide.

The tide of remembrance,
The tide of regret

Cannibal at My Door

Noah Brous

There's a cannibal at my door
With a whisk and a frying pan
He wants me for supper
With gravy and eggs
And a nice side of honey baked ham
He ate on my father last week
Said "I'll call you Tuna Fish!"
He boiled him
Battered him
Skinned him alive
And he hummed as he made his dish
He then tried to snack on my sister
'Cause he liked her curly blonde hair
But he tried to eat her the wrong time of month
Spit her out and said "I hate my meat rare!"

Saint Cuddle

Adam Church

She is Saint Cuddle.
Diocese of babies
injected with addiction.

She descends and lifts
them out of the thorns.

Grasps their new bodies
and calms their shakes.

A prayer of peace:

I hope you find a
beautiful family.

I hope you get well
so you can play.

I hope you go to
college someday.

But study anything
other the liberal arts.

I hope you learn
perfect punctuation.

May your life after
my restraining arms
allow you to fly...

Higher than from where I came...

Aubade: Barracks and Burgundy

Tim Tomlinson

Another dawn in the French Quarter and
the greasy flow of the night turns stiff.
A kitten with eye-pus cowers inside

a go-cup, and roaches the size of
Churchill cigars don't even bother to hide.
No one making groceries in the Li'l General

can remember what the fuck they went in
for, and at 710 Royal a guy
in a coma wears a t-shirt that says

"This Face Seats Five—Comfortably." Something half-
digested crusts on his soul patch and his
liver squeaks out from his ribs like a bubble

in the seam of an old football. Inside
the Abbey the women have black eyes and
cigarette packs rolled up in the sleeves

of Lynyrd Skynyrd t-shirts. On Decatur,
bats so stuffed with termites practically
crawl home, and the lampposts turned off

their halos. A rattle of Mardi Gras
beads from a balcony on Barracks
where a ceiling fan spins in a room

with an ancient Garrard, its tone-arm
digging grooves into a record by Fats Domino.
Beneath a banana tree near Bienville

an on-duty cop plops his cock into
a face hidden inside the window of a
Dodge Dart, while a Jackson Square tour guide

empties the pockets of tourists passed-out
in the buggy of his mule-drawn carriage.
And over at the Rebel Arms

a teenager sleeps with his face
on a Wurlitzer playing "Ruby"
by Ray Charles over and over and not

even the bartender thinks he's had enough.

Dream the Night Before I Return to Therapy

Tim Tomlinson

The teenage Tony Soprano finds his daughter
face-down naked in a meadow.
He turns her over, spreads her cheeks—
how immaculate, he thinks, her pussy.
The meadow is brilliant with daisies.
At its edge, a woman in briefs
does splits in yoga headstand.

Self-Reconstruction

Mphae Charmaine Mashifane

She breathed in nicotine to check if her lungs still breathe
She cut her wrists to check if there's still blood in her veins
With all the death she felt, she had to double check for life
She never intended to cause herself damage
Yet if pain is what it took for her to feel that her skin is hers
Then willingly she would
Take steps of faith and hope her bones and muscle, her heart and her lungs are hers
That she can break them if she wants to
And pull them back together again
A sense of control over what she was told she owns
A hold over what's her own
And we failed to see life shouting its glory through her
We failed to see that life was grasping for its breath in the middle of an ocean wide
And she was only learning how to swim
How to ride on life's back
How to hold on enough not to fall off
How to let go enough to enjoy the breeze

E-mail Thirty Years Later from a Girlfriend in Mississippi

Tim Tomlinson

Hey, found you through google—
hope that's OK—looks like
you're doing good although
you can't really trust the shit
you read online, can you?

I mean the way people appear
on their Facebook page
or their Instagram posts
sailing and hiking and eating
banquets in some European capital

like they've never even seen
the inside of a hospital, a courtroom,
a county jail. Which reminds me,
remember that time I pulled your bail
at New Orleans central lock-up?

Don't worry—I'm not asking
for it back, although your google shit
makes it look like you could pay
and then some. Why isn't that
on google? "Aging cad owes money

to like a hundred girlfriends
he pretended to love." Don't
mean to sound harsh, I got nothing
but kind thoughts—hell, all things
considered, you turned me on

to Gram Parsons, but this home
don't have no record player
and e-mail's sort of tone deaf,
innit? Let's see—what else?
You ever fill in that fuck map

you were working on back when
we ran and I was your first
Mississippi? After me
you ticked off damn near every state
south of the Mason-Dixon

except West Virginia.
Fear of hillbillies or something.
I bet you still haven't done
North Dakota. You never could
stand the cold. Anyway, just saying

how do, and if you ever get down
this way, give me a holler.
They got me parked in some home
in Natchez. You can wheel me
a couple a blocks to this great view

of the river. Amazing
the kind of shit that floats by
even on a good day. Yeah, I did say
wheel me. I busted the floor
right out of my pelvis

in some car crash they tell me
I was in. I don't argue. The evidence
supports their claim, and truth told,
argument's been like fucked
out of me, OK?

Y'all take care (yes, you can
use it in the singular, take it
from the Mouth of the South,
as you used to call me). And oh,
just in case, I include a mailing address

below if you ever wanted
to return that bail money.
Something like \$700, give or take.
Make it round. No worries
about the interest.

Take a Deep Breath

Corinne Anderson

Who are we, if not the reflections
of those who raised us?
The shadows of their expectations?
Are we just breathing in their poisoned air
letting corruption find us?
No, we are drowning in disinfectant,
hoping something will purify us of these demons—
pointing fingers, casting blame,
while their skin
boils and bubbles.

They have lived too long
in their own filth
and I fear it has driven
them mad.

See their horns, their open
festering
wounds.
See how they parade around
boasting of their trials with pride
while our own wounds
are too pretty, too petty
for them to care.

Instead, this cancerous place
eats away at soft tissues.
The air is noxious,
but why should I care?
I won't have lungs soon anyway.

Thanks for reading. Come back in the Spring for more
Aberration.

©Aberration Labyrinth 2020