Exist Otherwise

#12 September 2024

“"In everyday life, we waste words and gestures because we have time to lose and no one is looking, but the actor, a thousand eyes follow his movements and he has only an hour or two to transmit the drama that he performs, it is therefore indispensable that he act and speak with the greatest economy, on stage no waste, nothing must be lost."”



– Claude Cahun

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Dianthe West

Where I'm From (after George Ella Lyon)

I'm from saddles and sweet feed,
tractors, and rusted-out pickups.
I'm from driving before sixteen;
calves tied to domes;
galloping through cornfields
past houses of history—
warmbloods and British spies;
famous directors.
I'm from an Appaloosa's lathered sweat,
swimming in the creek.

I'm from Ichabod Crane,
Stolichnaya and Kools,
grand national dressage teams,
"Jesus saves!"
and dinosaurs.

I'm from night terrors,
'nice doctors',
hunting caps and Playgirl mags,
starched white hats, syringes,
spelling bees,
and standardized tests.
I'm from our best hope for womankind.
Please learn math.
Be a model or just
look like one.

I'm from ramen and SPAM.
I'm part of this complete breakfast.

Wood Acres and Shirley Temples,
clogs, Chrysalis, and Mr. Hooper's Store.

I'm from rural gay bars,
perms, and powder blue eye shadow.
I'm from a camper parked in
Jennifer's driveway,
and girl scouts who call me,
"Lesbo."

I'm from Enterprise and Challenger.
Fraggle Rock and Pitfall.
I'm from Buck Rogers on Colecovision.
Oh, those #%^&* pylons.

I'm from intimidation, perfectionism,
and fear of a heavy step.



Amian Bent

"Why Do You Write?"
"To Live."

"I'm drunk on the soliloquies spun by my head,"
I exclaim to them – already a mistake –
"How much can you sell them for?" They probe, once again – this is not new for them.
"Not much – everything – a dream – a beginning."
"A non-answer is all you can ever give," they complain.
But what can I say to them?
How shall I explain?
That I do not create these verses
They create me –
Leaking from my being
Like shedded skin
Tender and fragile and breakable –
One could fracture them but with a touch –
They live within me
Breathing, respirating through me
Until its time for them to bleed free.

I cannot say these words to them
They would never understand –
I barely understand myself, after all –
So, I simply say, "My verses are not for sale."
They make a face.
"Everything is for sale if you want to live," they explain.
And they have hit the nail on the head
For, I, too, need to live
And so, I punch hollows
Under my bones
Compartmentalise the slices
Into little boxes
One with what is in demand
And the other reserved for self –

The latter, kept safe, until
The desperation truly hits –
As it often does when you are trying to live –
And then, I reach within myself
Into the deepest parts of my soul
Cut slivers off –
Put them on a shelf –
Still raw with agony, still burning like a storm –
And offer them up
For the world to judge and see
Yet, they scoff, "You are just living in a dream."

Their words are true, I am drunk still
But, what can I do?
Words are my nectar
And I, an unrepentant child,
Under their influence
Without them, I am a mere canvas,
Unpainted, untouched
Still tainted
By the apathy of this world
Falling into its cruel hands –
That grab and tear me apart –
Without a break, tongue first
So, I still drink, heady with its effect
And I still write, for if I do not
My soul will turn to rot
Fettered to life
Condemned to die
Surviving, yet no more alive.



Karen Walker

Divisible

A twins' bedroom in 2000. The girls are six, as even as the year and the room. Their mother Cynthia Rose, having duplicated herself, named them Cyn and Rosie: Rosie for a rosier future and Cyn as a middle finger to a preachy grandfather.

Cyn's and Rosie's twin beds have unwashed sheets and flat pillows and shelves above with two dusty china dolls. There are two windows with curtains of divorce-tossed sailboats hiding a brick wall hit not long after. Between the beds is a desk of plywood on boxes, two rickety chairs dumpster-dived. On the ceiling, mouldy water stains. Summer clouds and cotton candy in Rosie's imagination, but not in Cyn's. She sees nothing. Rosie conjures her up a bunny.

The twins' bedroom in 2009 at fifteen. An odd number. Rosie has become Snake. Cyn is still Cyn and the beds still twin. Gone—sister-stolen, smack-sold—are the dolls. The bridge is now out between the beds and the girls, the plywood desk lying cracked on the floor. The weaker chair is at a window, having angrier things to do than see shit in ceiling stains for a sister. Still, one new thing: a hole in the drywall. Cyn punched because Snake's cold flat pillow no longer hurts enough.

Cleomé Morra

This Horrible Sort of Squish Squish Squish



Rebecca Cuthbert

Not of Destruction

He claims he's a dragon
but his scales are painted cardboard—
only for show

He claims he's a nightmare
but I've seen him pick roadside wildflowers

He claims he's a black knight
sent to battle forces of good and forces of nature and forces of armed forces
but in quiet moments I can tell he's daydreaming

Not of death
Not of destruction

But of a cottage in the woods
no wars to wage
no villages to plunder or protect

Where swords can remain dull decorations hung over the hearth
where soup is always in the pot
where no one tells him to be a dragon or a nightmare or a man

Where he can sit quietly
and read books
and wait for his own ever after
and he doesn't need it to be happy

only to be
quiet.



John Winfield Hoppin

Dust

Dust
Dust
Dust
Dust
    From dust to dust, and
Dust to
Dust to
Dust

Lots of things happen in dust
Everything happens in dust
Dancing at Burning Man with dust on their titties

The choking dust
Blood and dust blending together in a Western movie
Lights out, the last gasp of the bleeding man
Draw!
Face down in the dust
Eat dust

Click the 'X' in the corner to close the window
Arrange the windows, cascade them across the screen
Each is a memory
When you look back, things cascade
One after another
Everything in place
One from another
Leading following,
Following leading
Flowing in and out



Julia Yong

papaya carica

a story where fruit refuses. up away

temptation tie

leaves blank.

a stupid fish gimme a church smile

stomach lined

two bucks to delete a wish: by sluts: open for business

for non pleasure

(eve jacking off) second skinned

woman?

sucker play games full chance

that they were all fools

open legged sighs

a cross-section comes in a

collision two particles a woman comes, she goes a tired joke, orange

leaking mouths while a certain climate waits.

can I take it off now? we both echo

Inés Beamonte Cosín

Life in Red

How many women have cried over blood?

Pouring out of us:
Feminine power come and gone.
Stained tears drenching:
a life desired that hasn't yet come
a life inside us that has been lost
a life inside us that we fear hurt
a womanhood we don't feel
prepared for.

Monthly battles inside us,
sometimes fighting, sometimes crying.
Seeing more blood in one lifetime
than those men of war;
sometimes after days of counting,
or hours of anxious analyzing;
here comes the sea of oxygen
palpitating out.

Drop of water
red within us, out of us-
Leaving our world,
joining the cycle,
our fragile femininity,
our powerful tides
giving
to the world.

Irina Tall Novikova

Hirl– fish



amelia nason

September

My hometown & I are entangled in
a fake dating scheme, where I pretend
I want to go back & it pretends to want me there.
I've outgrown myself. Dystopian rhetoric:
always too hungry or not hungry enough
& I lost my taste for tourism a long time ago,

but in September, there will be an herb garden
on her windowsill. We have a home together
that doesn't exist yet & I can see it
in the midsummer basil. Rosemary, sage,
lined up like Marines in a holding formation.
I need someone to pull the yellow cord

on city buses for me. I'm going in circles,
afraid to make a scene, & I think
I'll spend my entire life either loving
or missing her. My mother says to stop acting
like I'm married, but I've never been
patient, waiting for gardens to grow. I always
want it to be September, except when it is.

Yuan Changming

I/我, U/你 & E/伊: a Modest Proposal

As classic Chinese suggests, we can
Reasonably attain linguistic equality
In English as long as we all agree
To use I, still for the first person singular
But U for the second, &
E for the third

All single-lettered
All capitalized
All sexes inclusive
Either case applicable, subject or object
& all equal in creation as
In speech acts

So, say after I:
I Love U
U love E
E loves us all

Jane McBride

Raspberry Hairs

In another life, let's start
an all-girl band called Raspberry Hairs.
Maddy on the drums, Nina on the bass,
Brooke with her guitar, Andrea with their cello.
Naira can sing; maybe Liv can learn piano.
Did you know those weird little hairs
are the leftovers of the raspberry's
female reproductive organs? That's a fact
like how proximity to a stage makes everybody
ten times hotter. What I miss about church is not God
but the music, those prayerful voices rising in unison.
These days I blow money on concerts
and sing so loud that I puke. Nietzsche called it
Dionysian—this rapturous, myth-making power
that grounds us in our present and reunites us with our past.
It is the language of the body and soul,
of revolution and lamentation,
of middle school dances and the open road,
the language that time keeps.
It's not about reproductive organs. It never was.
It's about dancing and sweating, so in tune
with our bodies that we can't help but transcend them.
In another life, rock out with me.
All of us clustered like drupelets 'round the pit,
singing our throats hoarse until our voices are more
sensation that sound, vibrating up from the bass line in our chests.
How is it that this song rings inside us?
How is it we all know the words?

Micah R.M. Buchman

apatite

my father holds my hand while i eat at the seder
i say next year in egypt i'll be better
manna was nothing but a gift
my grandfathers didn't get so stupid about being skinny
i love mandarin cookies and munchies
ha-esh v'hayare'ah

i love boyhood and yellow dresses and
razor scootering in a yellow dress
soft-serve chirping water balloons splashing
stared down by the ancient man
i want an ancient man
don't you want to run away with me???

the gps breathes yellow datura
time is a fat beautiful chickpea stew
blissful of that God of a clock
God lives tits out in the ocean
the earth is intersex manhood is a girl the prettiest girl actually

when the poppers hit i felt like
a swarm of beelight in the swarmy sun
giggling okay feeling okay girl in a boyish swarm
a planet planet lemon limonene and ugly sort of way

Irina Tall Novikova

Hight



Erwin Dink

Buried Alive

Buried Alive was first published in Reservoir Road Literary Review.

My brother's suicide was the cataclysmic event that put me on the path to finally remembering everything. His name was Frankie. He was older by a couple of years, and we were best friends (until we weren't). We rode bikes. Fished. Skinny dipped. Stole shit. Dump picked. Explored the burnt-down drug store. Fire-cracked. Played with cow bones, smoked pipes filled with cherry tobacco, and sat down in burning chairs. Threw snowballs at cars. Bumper surfed. Blackened that baseball field with lighters on our hands and knees.

Skunk cabbage. Stone walls meandering. A very large snapping turtle. The abandoned chicken coop. The abandoned chicken coop!

Could those human bones we dug up that time have been cursed? Could I have been cursed? Could we have been cursed? We put them back, but maybe that didn't help. I did everything I could to avoid digging up the bones of my assault. I was the buried child. I was a forgotten sun. I was always comfortable living under ground.

Any time we feel regret is too late.

How many male survivors does it take to change a lightbulb?
None. We're content to stay in the dark.

111. She tells me the story of the cursed child. It's about how the cursed child becomes the curse and she can't do anything about it. He asks me if I remember what it felt like to love him. I am a casualty of the war I started. I tell her I've always been afraid. She asks me what I'm afraid of and I tell her I'm afraid of happiness, scared of being okay. I've never wanted to kill myself. I tell her that I'm the villain in every story. She asks me if it's okay to be broken and I wish I could say no. I told her about the time I got lost at the age of six and I didn't know if they'd want to find me. He tells me that love is vulnerable. I laugh and ask him if he loves his parents and he doesn't know what to say. I talk about how I've never really wished for anything. I'm not alive, not anymore. I tell her that before something bad happens I'd like you to know that I'm a liar. I don't talk to her anymore. He asks me to choose between death and happiness and I don't know what to say. I tell him that the boon becomes a curse and he doesn't understand. The thing is that if she were to call me today, I wouldn't know what to say. I tell him he's not ready for love. He asks me why and I don't know how to explain it. On days I don't want to kill myself, I am the child and on others I am the curse.



Mykyta Ryzhykh

untitled

A plantation girl brought me a cup of water
And I told her without restraint about my excitement
My daughter, like a fish, says meow and is looking for a husband
My wife is like a pearl looking for someones neck and thread
My son was killed during another war
My brother was shot according to laws that don't exist
Where are the plantations from? I thought and looked around
Insane saliva flowed from my lips
I looked at my so called hands
I saw that I did not have a cup of water in my hands.
I have nothing at all except a sick stomach
One of my comrades in misfortune advised me to drink less cold water
He said: "You never know, you'll still catch a cold, you won't be able to work, and you will be thrown into the ravine exhausted"
I pulled a holey hat over my ears, took a shovel and began to dig a Siberian winter forest
Someone at a distance chopped spruce and dragged them to the barn (in general, thats what we were ordered to)
I began to dig a hole with all my might and then lay down in it and fell asleep as if
I had never been there
Finally, I crossed myself three times with a healthy mental finger

Joemario

Litany of Longing

Tonight, as the sky pee on earth
my roof makes music with it.

Inside, the color of charcoal
engulfs me and the one

I call mine, as we lay
like two farm ridges

on my bed. Brimming red
with desire, I turn to her

seeking the alchemy of water
on burning coal, and she doesn't

see her mood. Yesterday
she was seeing her blood.

My hand snails underneath her vest
to the mounds on her chest

and receives a bite from her palm.
How do I tame the fire between my legs?

How do I calm this quaking bone?
Each, a throbbing litany.

Again, tonight, the soap, the hand,
the rod, sharpens each other.



Contributors

Dianthe West (she/they) is an art historian turned poet and fiction author, which was always the prize. Dianthe holds an MA from UC Riverside and lectured in visual culture for 14 years in the US and Canada. They live with their family, plants, four-legged familiars, and hundreds of grazing bunnies in Guelph, Ontario.



Amian Bent (she/her) is a writer and dreamer at heart. Though she has always been an avid writer, she only started writing seriously when she turned 17 and since then, her words have been flowing constantly. When not writing, she can be found kicking back with a book or taking walks on her terrace. A few of her works have been published by various publications such as *The Afterpast Review*, *Milk & Cake Press*, *Papers Publishing*, and *Tabula Rasa Review*.

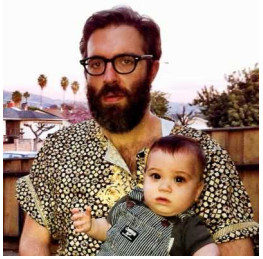
Karen Walker (she/her) writes short in a low basement in Ontario, Canada. Her most recent work is in Sage Cigarettes, Misery Tourism, Centaur, Cosmorama, The Hooghley Review, Overheard, and Bending Genres. @MeKawalker883



Cleomé Morra (they/them) is a pseudonym for a photographer who wishes to remain anonymous. They've been making photographs since 1980.



Rebecca Cuthbert (she/her) writes dark fiction and poetry. Her books include *In Memory of Exoskeletons* (poetry, Alien Buddha Press, 2024 Imadjinn Award winner); *Creep This Way: How to Become a Horror Writer with 24 Tips to Get You Ghouling* (nonfiction, Seamus & Nunzio Productions, 2024 Golden Scoop Award nominee); and *Self-Made Monsters* (fiction and poetry, forthcoming, Alien Buddha Press). For publications, awards, reviews, and more, visit rebeccacuthbert.com.



John Winfield Hoppin (he/him) lives in San Leandro, California. He received his degree from California College of Arts and Crafts in Film, Video and Performance. Hoppin has multiple sclerosis and hosts What's The Matter With Me? Podcast to find support and explore disability theory. Chernobyl happened on his seventh birthday.



Julia Yong (she/her) is a poet and perpetual student, currently rooted in Philadelphia, PA. She is the Editor-in-Chief of Temple University's esteemed undergraduate literary and art magazine, *Hyphen*. Her poems have received recognition from *The Academy of American Poets*, *SORTES*, *JMWW*, *Dipity Literary Magazine*, and *ALOCASIA*, among others.

Inés Beamonte Cosín (she/her) is a writer, poet and performer. Her work has been published in Spanish and English for Dichtkunst Magazine, Brevísimo 2, and A Surrender to the Moon. She recently placed first in the short story contest CIJ "la Salamandra" and was also a finalist for Nuestra Musa La Camelia leading to her poems being published in the second poetry anthology by the publishing house Literate. She published her first novel with Editorial Tandaia© in Spanish (VIVIR SIN MI) with distributions through Spain and South America. She lives with her husband in Stockholm, Sweden.



Irina Tall (Novikova) (she/they) is an artist, graphic artist, illustrator. She graduated from the State Academy of Slavic Cultures with a degree in art, and also has a bachelor's degree in design. The first personal exhibition "My soul is like a wild hawk" (2002) was held in the museum of Maxim Bagdanovich. In her works, she raises themes of ecology, in 2005 she devoted a series of works to the Chernobyl disaster, draws on anti-war topics. The first big series she drew was The Red Book, dedicated to rare and endangered species of animals and birds.

amelia nason (she/her) is a next generation indie award finalist, a scholastic award winner, & an alumna of the iowa young writers' studio, interlochen, fir acres, & new york times summer writing programs. her work is featured in the ice lolly review, full mood magazine, hand picked poetry, eunoia review, the lunar journal, diet water mag, healthline, the aurora journal, & the origami review. her debut chapbook, poems i shouldn't have written, is out now with bottlecap press. when she isn't writing, amelia fences competitively for george washington university while studying political science & creative writing.



Yuan Changming (him) edits Poetry Pacific with Allen Yuan. Credits include 15 chapbooks, 12 Pushcart nominations for poetry and 2 for fiction besides appearances in Best of the Best Canadian Poetry (2008-17), Best New Poems Online and 2109 other publications across 51 countries. A poetry judge for Canada's 44th National Magazine Awards, Yuan began writing and publishing fiction in 2022, with his first novel Detaching due out via Alien Buddha Press in September.

Jane McBride (she/her) is a fiction writer and poet. Originally from the heart of the Rockies in Colorado, she now calls New York City home. Her poetry has appeared in the Rising Phoenix Review, the After Happy Hour Review, the Orchards Poetry Journal, and elsewhere. You can find more of her writing on her blog, Loose Baggy Monsters (with Jane McBride).



Micah Robert Marks Buchman (he/him) is a New Yorker attending college in Claremont, California. He creates collages about transgender existence and God, kisses his friends on the mouth, and enjoys people-watching on the subway. His poems have been featured in magazines including Carrion Press, New Words Press, ¡Pa'Lante!, and Same Faces Collective.

Jane McBride (she/her) is a fiction writer and poet. Originally from the heart of the Rockies in Colorado, she now calls New York City home. Her poetry has appeared in the Rising Phoenix Review, the After Happy Hour Review, the Orchards Poetry Journal, and elsewhere. You can find more of her writing on her blog, Loose Baggy Monsters (with Jane McBride).



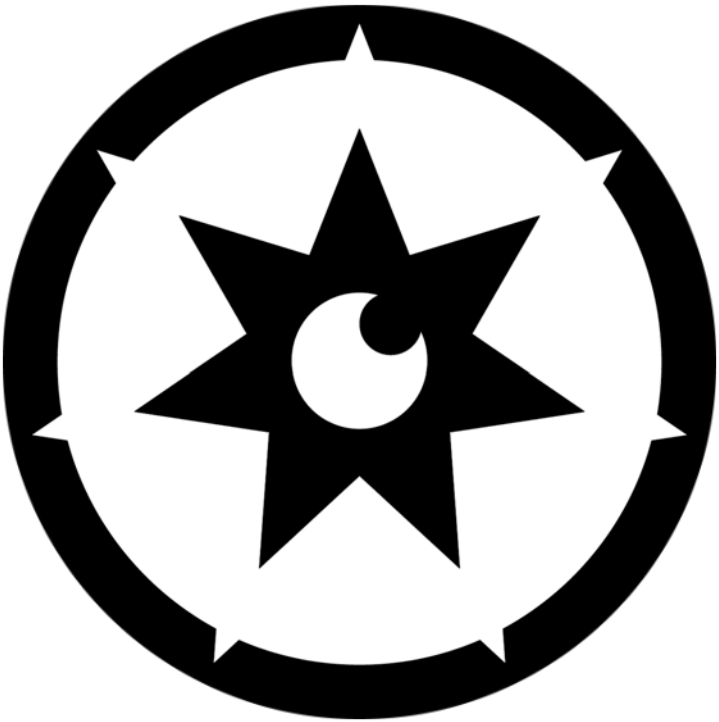
Shivi Sharma (she/her) from Delhi, India is living under water (not rock, water). Partially because she likes to call herself spongebob or kiwi. Considering the fact that she's a water sign, she thinks being one keeps you hydrated enough. She loves watching random TV shows on Netflix. You can find her being (in)sane @feralembers on Instagram where she occasionally posts her work (which is either all at once or after months).



Mykyta Ryzhykh (he/him) Nominated for Pushcart Prize. Published many times in the journals Dzvin, Dnipro, Bukovinian Magazine, Polutona, Tipton Poetry Journal, Stone Poetry Journal, Divot journal, dyst journal, Superpresent Magazine, Allegro Poetry Magazine, Alternate Route, Better Than Starbucks, Littoral Press, Book of Matches, TheNewVerse News, Acorn Haiku Journal, The Wise Owl, and others.



Joemario Umana (he/him) is from Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. He writes from Maiduguri, a northeastern region of Nigeria where he's currently undergoing his studies. He is the author of the poetry gazelle published by Konya Shamsrumi titled A Flower Is Not The Only Thing That's Fragile. His works have appeared in Trampset, Strange Horizons, Isele Magazine, Brittle Paper and elsewhere. He tweets @JoemarioU38615.



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