



Poet Tree

edited by JONATHAN APREA



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There will be six issues of *Poet Tree*.

When a poet is published in *Poet Tree*, they will be asked to invite two poets to contribute to the next issue.

The number of poets in each issue of *Poet Tree* will be double the number in the previous issue.

This is the *second* issue.

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It's not even tomorrow yet

in the bathroom where I lived
as a kid, the mirrors face each other
forming infinite tunnels

between which a fly darts
back and forth, trying
to escape — its hard

body smacking the glass
at each attempt
fucked over

and over by the light
my grandmother smiles
like a baby when she sees me

and I'm learning that each time
she forgets you have to
forgive her right then

or you end up losing
the ability to
altogether. I think

Shenzi and Molly have
missed their chance
to be normal

dogs — they shit and run
where they please, my mom
following close behind with

plastic bags stretched beneath
their asses, catching
whatever comes. I'm happy

to have found that
the three chihuahuas are still
at the temple, plumper than ever

and the monks that feed them
the same food we offer
our ancestors lie

on the bench out front
between prayers
the mist rolls over

the mountain like
your spit down
my cheek

Alexis Aceves Garcia

I GROW A SECOND VOICE BOX

born in a pile of dead leaves
while the orb-weaver spiders
consume the web of their day,
I hunt a cry that names me
in the lamplight from yr window.
a soft hum vibrates in the side room
of my trachea, I pluck the new root
until it blushes metallic wind
instrument of the underworld, a sonic
warning broken clocked from a tiny box
of cartilage, wind chimed n tolling
hear me a new son, songed.
in flight over the ocean, I call
to you bird throated n never alone—

Another Lesson on Love

All around the world apologies are being made for not being able to make
sex fun

Sometimes it is a mechanical issue and nothing to do with the ethics of
fake friendships or the immediate pleasures of infatuation

Try using your left hand instead

Try using the bullet in the underwear drawer

Or the one in the pantry

Try striking the singing bowl of perverse longing

It will sing a song so shrill

It will turn you psychotic

Corinna Rosendahl

from *Scenes from the Seconds*

Is it at all better
to see where you are going before you get there

Of all the floating parts

pinch out

this one-room apartment like a seashell

afternoon light
illuminates its interior

Within
two women

lie down together:

The future doesn't exist

one woman says
then thinks

then they sense

spherical
green glass

shapeshifting

all around them

Donald Berger

Relax Man

I didn't expect them to call me when they didn't
Call me—no matter, there were only
Nine or ten of them. I threw that
Shirt into the trash. It's not the world
I wanted in the first place, gravel, the poetry of personality,
an uptick in the number of eyes.

Now there are miracles in part
I'm in love with.
The squirrel makes a fool of the tree.

*Free, free joy to people who make you forget
What you have on.*

To summer, not fall, to spring, not winter.
Not if, but when.
I dread the day
After tomorrow, but otherwise
Life is the one for me.

Philippe AbiYouness

On the Second Day of Fires

we carried our groceries
through sepia fog, and stood smoking
at the sink, and bemoaned the salaries of this
departure economy,
and placed the cabbage
a distance from the fish, and thought
of the broken hearts of fish
and the children of fish
in their schools and nets,
and waited for a glad rain, which, when it came,
would still be rain and resident to
a kind of sadness that was
an ancient sadness,
though that fact was of little comfort to us.

We are no better than them,
the ancient ones.
Our cities, like theirs, are burning.
And our children leave. It's like the sky knew.
It has always been here, the sky.
A phone call to say you lost your breath
and not even from the smoke.
Our East Coast continuance.
We cleaned the kitchen together
and there was no name for that gesture,
or the lives we tired for
or who we left to tend
what body of water.

History as a Hungry Animal

A previously unknown *azulejo* was discovered in 2008 at Graça Convent of Lisbon. It depicted a familiar scene I so often imagined as a child: bare breasts of Queen Ketevan of Georgia, two men standing by her, one—pulling a serpentine rope around Ketevan's neck, and the other—holding a large, hot pincer.

I also burnt my chest when I was three. Mother cut necklines out of my t-shirts to air the blisters. The discarded pieces of colorful fabric, their odd shapes, had a comforting hold on me (I do not remember the pain or the hardening of my child skin).

The rule of martyrdom is to look past any pain. Ketevan had a quiet face, and her index finger pointed to the sky as her breasts burnt. I am at a loss with this image, and the pigmented wall in distant Lisbon that depicts both bodies and fire in blue.

History has rarely offered itself to us without asking too much in return. If Ketevan were to survive the torture, what would become of her? What would become of me? How would anyone teach me to love us?

Laura Traverse

Ghazal for Scott

We ride our bikes through Tempelhof, overgrown airport turned enormous park.
We slide like boats on the tarmac in Berlin.

The skyline shutters the moon from us on the east sky until the moon rises,
its egg light ceramic, a gleaming eyepatch in Berlin.

City of burden. We are strange among strangers
who barbecue, skate, skim the concrete near dusty birds and grass in Berlin.

The skyline hovers on the sky of our sky, that's how big the park is.
We came here to relate our sorrows like straw in a mat in Berlin.

You & I are friends of the highest order in the abandoned weeds of Tempelhof.
Birds flit & call. It's hard to remember we're in the mass in Berlin.

Unbuckle our helmet straps. Ask a passerby the time. We are hung between hours.
Your scratched-up heart softer & less delicate than mine, our shared task in Berlin.

If time were a stretcher, Laura, I'd lay on it for all the hours, you say.
Give me a sky as wide as Tempelhof & I'll settle on pain's back in Berlin.

Béatrice Bonhomme, tr. Emelie Griffin

from *The Gestures of Snow*

In the kaleidoscope of loves, fragmented,
reconstructed and broken, be light chérie so
all the slashes in your dress make
a flower of angles, so the triangle of sex
widens with stars through the adventures of life, the
fragmented diamond of every flower can
stain blue my stormy eyes
tears run and create lightning.

Carlos L. Jimenez Jr.

While Vape Girl Was Sleeping

I took her eyes out
rolled them in my hand
they chimed like medicine balls
i took them to my work bench
and studied them under my magnifying lamp,
looking for it in her sleepy black bear pupils
shook the right one like a Magic 8 Ball
it came up saying "Ask Again Later"
plopped her eyes in a glass of water
watched their stupid bobble

i called a guy who knows a guy for appraisals he said
"things like these ain't worth much
mostly sentimental unless the eyes are famous
and even then they're better when paired with the sockets, you know?,
skin, lids, lashes, liner." i told him i wasn't selling
rather, explained what i was looking for
he asked if i talked to her about it and i said yea
then he said "well all you can do is believe her" he hung up

I went back to her, snoring loud
pulled the red retina strings out of her empty sockets
soldered the eyeballs back on
held my breath from the smoke
when i was done she woke up gently and i saw it again
she asked me what i was smiling about.

Morgan Boyle

Lorraine (a found poem)

are you reading this?
everything can be within reach
cotton candy vibes,
bubble lucite legs,
can be mounted either way
soft/silky to the touch,
american, gently used
ivory cream,
or with lily of the valley and rose
call (see reply button at top for contact phone number)
lorraine

EXILE

*from: a migrant mother in the Gulf
to: a daughter in the Himalayas*

The Green Zone is not green.
The Green Zone is a country without a country.
My friend & I were going to Kurdistan, but I ended up in the Green Zone.
At night, the Green Zone closes like a newly bloomed lotus.
Locals are forbidden in the Green Zone.
Only two people enter the Green Zone: migrant workers & Shades.
The Green Zone is ten square kilometers of blast walls, barbed wire, checkpoints, & shrapnel hungry for flesh.
Only after a year when my friend called me from Kurdistan did I realize the Green Zone was not Kurdistan.
The Red Zone loves the Green Zone.
Every day the Green Zone contracts.
In light, the Green Zone opens like the red in a coal when breathed on.
My friend in Kurdistan begged me to help her enter the Green Zone.
If you don't have the paper in the Green Zone, they open you like a lotus.
I fell asleep in the Green Zone & woke up in red.
In the Green Zone, Shades smuggle shapes to sickle the circle.

"i like my own dirt"
thesmellofranciddarkskin
boilingunderahighnoon
rumblingmybowelsforsport
directingmyguttoreleasetheshit
andrescuemyselffromthemoldygaze
ofcottonpolitics

istillwantsomethingsloppy
istillcanbesomethingsloppy
likethisghostlyfiber
collectingallmydayoldjuices
todaytheflavorisoxtailstew
cusyouknowiwenthardlastnight
buildingupthesalt
togivehimatasteofhisowngrit

im concrete silk island silt

#

"aintthat the same as being a man?"
whichistosay
aintnolandworthmorethanme

Anselm Berrigan

Antivost

Everything about me on
the subway transforms
except for my feet -
they just hurt, & refuse
Transformation. Fuck
your imagination, I
imagine my foots to
Say, & fuck assigning
Us variability. I didn't
do that. Dr. Williams
did that, not exactly
long ago. But since I
have youse here, do you
know what a provost is?
Or does? Or could become
on the Golden Path
In which, or on which
We become giant sandworms
& scatter, only to retreat
from thinking machines
& end on a cliff-hanger
our children feel compelled
to address with exceptional
speed & stupidity? Dude
stop pretending yr talking

to your feet. Baby, I'm
not pretending. Now
what the fuck is juice?
I mean, what's a fucking
provost? My feet
at this point sigh in
resignation. The unnamed
interlocutor who said Dude
turns out to be an old ex
just because I says so.
I fucks off. This is all
set in the subway station
at Lorimer & Metropolitan
one of the more inhospitable
places in the city; you can't
even stare at people there.
Everyone's too busy to be
stared at. One gigantic
amalgamation of blurry faces.
I will survive, & generally
do, for now, by getting off
at 3rd avenue, & going to
The Penny Farthing, & talking
Charlotte out of executing
everyone in the bar.

Ivanna Baranova

distraction field

drops fall everywhere
some water ,
sequential thought
brevity at last lasting

revolving door havoc
incants epiphany in transit
the psychic , the pity , the gist
in the street , who can see me ?
who can call me the rain ?

starlight pools quiet
at the base of the mind
focus , unrendered
the city , all distraction

oblique compulsion
carries the feeling
to final adage ,
small retching when the instinct flips

the image I love
I can see it's not sad ,
it's polarity

stars scattered without number
across the sky

lasting gusts protect looser vows

the field , the fields

the rain rain

alfonzo solomon kablil

i'm not haunted, you are

if the now is now
and the Yesterday is assumed

if the memory constitutes the past rather
than the past constituting memory
if the tree falls in the forest / who will remember
the stump it leaves?

if the lover left before the body did

did the lover leave
did the lover leave

Erika Hodges

Prayer for Relief

Life will outlast empire
I know, still it leans heavy
to get up, dragged back
into the sloughed off tissue
marching on toward
progress, my shoulders
full of white phosphorous
my eyes untruthful
lined with the waxy residue
that penetrates bone

Life will outlast empire
pink and inside out
but it's been a long time waiting
swollen with fracture
and there are only so many ways
to rationalize annihilation

I know, I know, Life
will outlast empire
but you get home so late
hollow cheeks, empty
and my mind is barely with you
stuck in the day, lodged in all
that cement and ash, mixed and falling
from the unpainted sky.

Ry Cook

Self-Portrait as Asu in a Shadow

One classmate talks about how spring
freaks them out, another can't stop weeping
sakura petals—says it's due to the dead coming to life
again. Underneath the sidewalk mechanical root
systems dictate how and when I will be
late. Sweaty bodies sail
to their repressed sublimity.

Once a thing is born it begins
the boundless dance of autonomy. I like when my feet
get pins and needles, it feels nice to touch.
strangers pass my bench weeping
at a conversation that is muted by Washington Ave.

I still feel your laughs in the pit
of my tongue like a sore—
look how red I can get it.

Saddiq Dzukogi

The Last Significant Wilderness

I.

In hindsight, if I were to believe my mother
as I did then, it seems the purpose of my mind
is to taunt me with nonexistent monsters

who speak in booming voices
from dark-roomed walls. It's not quite clear
why this is relevant now. I stopped fearing

monsters. I got tired of not dying
by their hands each time
I thought I would. I'll always survive.

I'm molded from that dust. I can, perhaps, see little
in that grid of lights underfoot something divine.

Monsters have simply stopped trying to feed
me into the jukebox of my own fear,
where even my shadows betray me.

Alex Braslavsky

IF YOU CAN ONLY

Sugar your tigers. In a glade.

I had about a hundred and twenty shots
of laser

into my eyes. The psychic dreams of sweet flesh

she was looking for
were in ivory reliquaries and ivory crucifixes,

in the tuberose, very much loved
by the decadents. Sugared flesh. Swimming

tigers. Love is different from a table.

He's not a message boy.
I'm not a message girl.

The student left her dorm room propped
open and when she returned there were pants
in her room that did not belong to her.

Monica Joy Claesson

To the Figureheads in Pablo Neruda's Living Room

Silent audience of sea gods collected here
in the poet's coastal home angelic host of wooden women

ripped from the ships to which they were sworn
washed up onto gray Chilean beaches.

Maritime idols posed in perpetual
union with the mystery they fix themselves toward

oaken gazes vacant with a longing
men might mistake for sadness.

Rare women of their era. The few allowed to satisfy
their craving for horizon spines arcing vigilant

burdened with the weight of their sisters'
unmet hunger. Undeterred by decades at sea

color faded and salt-scrubbed billowing skirts cracked
they radiate resolve as if they still held

the spirits they were built to contain as if they knew
their work on this earth is not yet done.

Randall Tyrone

Graveside Manners

My protector has passed into the glowing dark
Your grave is still
unmarked & i am waiting for your headstone
to be made & placed Today
on this graveside visit
i saw a beautiful Black youth
younger than me
pacing the cemetery
roads between the plots & endpoints
of hundreds of hearts broken further open
He was crying until he had to choose
between wailing or breathing He kept to his ache
kept pacing
i felt i should've said something anything
but i was empty
i felt i should've given him the hug
i thought he needed to relieve one of us
but like all the other ghost here i witnessed
i often feel like a clay jug with a weakness
along its base My contents leaking out slow
& steady & no one has to tell me how it ends
i want to believe i was cracked
that this life's structural has had me
i am afraid i was born misshapen
unable to do the one thing i was made to

Cori Hutchinson

Alterations

Six classes, one
shoulder torn and smothered
in six perfumes, sweat mistaken, not even one
stone in your bathing suit between shores
Fixed without being cleaned please
Cedar waxwing I have looked, sucked-in
When I reach the future I will look down
instead of for you, toward light cast
Our experiences find away cowardice
in the difference of cowards, 6

Anthony Sutton

from *Decorporeal*

A week later, I met Matt
for drinks. We sat

at a small table under an oversized
beach umbrella shielding us,

an orange sunset melting,
then clotting into dim clouds.

In what sounded too much
like a confession, I told him

that if I should be referred to
at all, *I'm O.K. with any pronouns,*

*but also none, if you know
what I mean.* He didn't.

*I thought they/them was confusing,
but I'll try,* he said. *Thanks.*

I didn't tell him that yes,
I do feel rather confusing

and multiplicitous these days,
like individual slices

of an onion lacerated
around the knife's edge.

What cavernous depths
are lodged inside anyone?

What word could breed and flourish
enough to shroud me perfectly?

Katie Marya

Brother Remembers My Birthday

We built a theater under the bed,
lined bean-bag animals in rows,
shushed them, elbows side-tucked,

bed skirt raised to watch the night sky
on the window. Devastating when
you told me the beans were plastic.

I believed, should we have to run away,
we'd have food inside softness. I cut
the squirrel's tail to be sure—a thousand

white pellets falling into your hands.
That's what drugs look like, you said.
When I turned thirty, you texted.

I printed out your message, stuck
it to the fridge—luminous shapes
connecting me to your hands.

Donna "Dante" Marie Gary

how to become a saint

not by choice
but by lineage
by inheritance
by the stubborn wisdom tooth
by the pinky toe and her borrowed balance
by the whistle of baby hairs
by the thick browed and flat nose
by the mystery of our origins and the shapeshifting tongue
by the love of our big bellies of twins despite no shoes and no land
by the name that can only mean Before

All This

Apocalypse

I Bless you in Blackness

I Knight you in Kisses

I promise you a future of promises kept

I give you enough

Earthen skin to never be denied your maker

I forgive you

for hating this life

and living still

worthy of your madness

Daniel Coudriet

THE TABLECLOTH

Crocheting can only get you so far.
The streets refuse to intertwine,
even as they pull the night sky closer.
There are different ways to remember
people or tastes and smells. Cleaning
the pool reminds you of cleaning the pool.
Or riding around blocks, the same route,
a procession of cars, it's summer,
the open doors & the few seconds of music
from each house, each family.
Each separate night sky.

Bridget Talone

Laughing Last

When words into the woods are screamed
and crack beneath the frigid air, this shattering
accelerates the telling. And if it isn't clear
perhaps it isn't clear because you hate her.
Still, there's something funny there— inflated,
bright puffed-up. A hatred maybe got on loan.
From who--from her? Here's a crowded feeling
that won't be bitten down. Slick furious beads
like candle wax repeating down the skin. A knot
and an infinity, depending on how you pull.
In a motherhood disguise. Induction's when
it's willed into or upon you. Who started it, I start
to ask but don't know who could tell me. If I
am in your power and there'll be no laughing last.

Lena Walker

When I touched the cube of insight, he lectured me.
John Donne wrapped me in wool.
He pet me, and kissed me, like a red fish candy.
Kiss me, kiss me, whatever!

I AM YOUR PERCIPIENT.
Warm, in a blue pamphlet.
Making an eggless tart.

I fled sex to launder the silk blouse.
Written softly, said softer—
I'd be castigated,

I'd be corrected,
by all the soft faces of love.
A rougher organ than sex,

A spider climbing the organ.
Damn the aesthete!
I cannot get across sleep.

Mandy Keifetz

Why He Never Asked Me In: a Valediction

What have you got in your house, I wonder,
The bones of your previous girl, asunder?
A yellowing snap of your Papa at Ypres?
Not kids, I don't think 'cause you'd blanch at diapers.
But maybe a wife, ruddy and yar.
Or memories you've stolen and squished in a jar?
You can steal most of mine, limn them in rust.
I'll just keep a handful and then -- eat my dust.
Your sister's mad shoes in the Orthodox Church.
The time I saw Alfred Hitchcock in the bark of a birch
And I never told you -- his stomach a leaf --
Did I know even then that you were a thief?
Call forth if you will your dream-stealing forces.
I've skulked off with your smell: zinc and old horses.

Bennett Lieberman

Weekend Prayer

To the bellicose salamander
Who breathes fire from beneath the pond,
I dedicate this ruddy cheek.

To the trees of dancing shade
Whose merciful limbs protect us,
I offer what water I carry.

To the sky whose curvature
Awakens renewal and descent,
I pledge my curiosity.

To the corridor of wind
As I run from Brooklyn to Brooklyn,
I lend my hope.

To the sun whose mere shudders
Innundate our air with great sheenings,
I offer my silence.

To you who are elsewhere
But also here, this making me dream,
I offer my protracted dream.

Theo Thimo

poem

he walks around not realizing that his life is already over,
but am I that person

another dream, now I'm just here
and I don't know why

after all of that and now just this,
I can hardly believe it

I go to the bathroom to lay down on the foamy bath mat
for a while, just to be there

me and everything just going along
just me and everything except you
e.g., the light polluted night sky, my dead friends, people who don't like me

but when I shut the door it's just like that, I'm all to myself again,
just alone, but there's always this thing in me

that won't leave me alone and I don't know what it is
or how to talk about it, it all escapes me

to do wild and wondrous things

