A letter from the editor

Journals such as this one operate on the premise that there is something more to offer in the world of literature. A plethora of books, ebooks, chapbooks, magazines, newspapers, blogs, and journals are published each year.

There is more than any one person could conceivably read in its entirety with anything like enjoyment. As such, one's decision to invest time and energy to reading any one of these publications in particular becomes quite difficult.

I do not take this for granted.

Your patronage of this magazine is very dear to my heart. This publication is a labor of love, as are so many of its kind. Thank you to everyone who supports this independent literary magazine. I truly hope that you find within its pages something transporting, transfiguring, and transformational.

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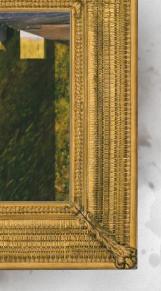
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PHOTOGRAPHY

Brittanie Bond Alana Marie Cheuvront Linda Tucker









The Water in Tartu

John Sherer

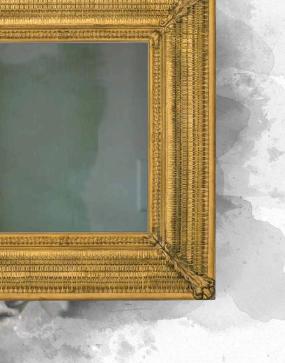
The water in Tartu tasted better than any glass of wine I've ever had—it soothed my throat like pineapple

and quelled a riot in the ghost I'd almost given up; and as I turned to look

at the snowy blue lightsoaking into the curtainsthe kind that nods yes, it's winter

it once again was possible to believe that there may be something new under the sun, that I could let the world begin again,

that I could be wanted, even loved, that I could get lost among a thousand streets and reach the border of my being.



Nightingale's Song

Chelsea Reynolds

can I see this?

Yes, if you swear

may I have this?

to take it all. If
you will put that hand here
and fasten lips tight
and don't let the silk ruffle.
Spin me to a pulp
in three quarters time.
Only then may you.
I hate all that mars

the rhythmic black and white

stop your slurping

sounds that pump from an organ or some distant drum rattling.
Enter my ear and close the door behind you. I don't want to

outlaw your eyes from mine know my body deceives me.

Oh, to be lonely.

What welcome change
that would be. There's plenty of company
clattering around in here.

Squishing. Squish. Squelch. The sound
of my gut. The sound of
my heart remains to be seen
or heard. Still. Listen.

Ah. It pumps.
But only under siege.

Pecking. Rapping. Pricked brain protruding. Arms splay out probing for sip of sleep I know nothing about. Tomorrow, on a terrorizing golden lawn I will stroll.

Not stagger, but stroll.

on payday we celebrate with rice and chicken

GS Murphy

at 5'1" she was a comical sight to the height of the 6'4." American Dryer ADG-330D machines, which stood taller still on palates for maintenance.

she would muster the strength to haul bag upon bag of filthy laundry into the machines cavernous and stoic, then transport into dryers, the work would dry her hands to desert scab, chafed, chemical raw and arthritic at 33.

(The state hadn't determined that a throw down 2 flights of steps and 2 dislocated disks were enough for state benefits) the violence was a parting gift from her last job Now slightly hunched and pain-be-damned-poor she cleans the neighborhood laundry, a modern day Magdalene sister,

the distant ancestors on her father's side would nod approval the rest of her bloodline wouldn't say much; mostly massacred and left for dead, bastard discards of Dawes Rolls and those fortunate to escape the great and terrible walk.

she spends 12 to 14 hours a day elbow deep in shit-stains, body odor and balancing chemical burns from both industrial and commercial detergent you never lose the smell of bleach in the nose, once sweet, then

(to this day, to her children one smell of a laundry-mat enough to quicken tempers and produce an unasked tear)

forever acrid, vile,

this is back when 50¢ an hour plus tips were legal as long as the table was taller than the work.

there is no other income, the patriarch more often out of state spending as fast making it,

bourbon and whiskey was fathers perfume
just as acrid as bleach, if not worse
bleach will kill you quick, bourbon will convince you of love, then
break you,

with a leather belt, the illusion until the next drink

but the violence was always 2 weeks out at a time, while the struggle for food was every day, and she worked, raw hands and toothless smile,

on payday there would be Uncle-Bens rice, and a half pound of cut/grilled chicken,

there would be huggies and Lipton tea,
there was mom and the lingering smell of our neighbors sweat,
mixed in with Marlboro cigarettes
and bleach.

Photo: Brittanie Bond



Vigil

Self-help

John Sherer

By the Emajõgi I sat on a bench, unable to walk farther, and wept when I remembered the fountain in paradise, the cool fruit handed to me.

A terrible dark fell over me and I felt my life was laughable.

Somehow I stood up, as if in stirrups, to depart from this Babylon, which I should have known was no Babylon, but a slow river in Easter light with greyhounds playing on the bank and trees kneeling to the water, the kind of paradise that is our portion.

I want to see you again and gaze upon your devastating skin, and hear your voice explain how little I have understood. Try to find the holy in the soggy dish sponge; the spilled coffee in the satchel; the onion in the kitchen sprouting long-necked scallions, rotting, finally resting in its garbage grave. Try to find the holy in the brain silence that rules most of the day a torpid mist polluting and for which your recent accidental gardening is now a metaphor. Try to find the holy in an unexpected dawn, when you're gulping water

Now sketch her face without looking at the page.

and the guests have gone.

Photo: Brittanie Bond



Mania Strikes Noon

Sophia Falco

You'd visit me when mania strikes noon stuck in a tiny hospital room the world was mine, but I didn't make it in time and seconds minutes hours collapsed on my head so I hid under the white sheets on my bed—

a prison a prison a prison

depression talks back, don't you know?

Whereas reality crumbled at my finger tips like a stale sugar cookie depression

talks back to me, don't you know?

And you you love me always— just the same.

Above High Street

Stood up for a date (how funny—my nose had bled, a first in twenty years, and I was nearly late), I sat at the floor-to-ceiling where you joined me for a Sazerac or two, and agog we watched a Nile of people in animal costumes glide past, spilling from a convention in lavender dusk. Cars were clogged on busy High Street by cartoon elk and foxes; the bunnies and the bears lingered in the crosswalk, their eyes like shells, their smiles immutable. And to think I have ever complained about my life.

John Sherer

Hotel Monteleone

Revolving around the bar once each quarter-hour,
Aviations and a Vieux Carré quaffed,
we said that marriage was unthinkable,
almost, for us, unspeakable,
for we are different every decade,
and promises are made by those
who don't need all the information.
The mirror kept us in sight
as we carouselled, caroused
around this tiny toe-hold of the universe.

