



Bitterzoet Magazine

*Volume 1
June 2014*



Note from the Editors:

Many of us suffered through long, hard, winters this year that never seemed to lesson their hoary roars, even for a moment. But now as I type this sweet note to you, the sun is shining outside and I feel the first warm notes of welcome brown sugar slowly spreading over the back of my hands. With spring and summer come lots of change and new beginnings, and this issue marks the one year anniversary of Bitterzoet Magazine being more than just an idea. We're going to change a lot in the next months, shutting some parts down and starting new projects, and as ever we are grateful to the continued support and loyalty of our writers and readers. We look forward to the summer and to the new pinpricks of creativity the next few months shall bring.

Sweetly yours,

*Pattie Flint &
Wes Solether*

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To the Fairest
Ellen Webre

If Helen of Troy
had borne a son, you'd be him.
All my ships have sailed.

Greek Tragedy
Joseph O'Neill



Cinderella

Robert T. Krantz

What if, by hard-eight chance,
that cruel step-sister of luck,
began, at the beginning, an event
of poetic proportions, brooming resentfully?

If nostalgias peacock-feathered hat, blown gently by autumn winds,
and gendarme shot whistling bells instead of whirring bullets
in the gump of bourbon's bliss

You said: this may be your genesis,
while stabbing aces you held to your breasts,
crimson cherry eyes—the muttering mind,
spitting perpetually, seeking sign.

Then I saw you,
turn from your egg-noodles and kittens,
and karaoke crooners,
and in your turning a revelation.

The slag of industry's cousin kiss,
the mortared silence,
so much for intimacy and the rest of Erikson's versus.
The slag of your heart.

I put this together in a dream,
a dream within a dream, that's how it goes.
nobility's loss to flesh's fare, mind
out of body.

See-saw tongue of the kissing calf,
goldenrod slaughtered, and all these
other false idols we lean on, we
lean on.

My poverty is at soul level,
though I've not taken any vow,
hand-me-down triple-wide,
bondo El Camino,
driving the way, all the way—
from Nazareth to Galilee

I met with your teacher
on Tuesday,
she said you were probably
born with a terminal case of the "fuck its"



Hoc Est Corpus Meum

Robert T. Krantz

Because we are never in the day together, nor the night,
Because we are never in the day.
Because two nights ago, I dreamed a vivid dream—four koi
 lopped on dry land, once dead,
 now opened their eyes,
 flipped their orange tails,
 and flopped back into their tank.

I was waiting today.
January is the harshest of months,
with one bearded face looking back,
one baby-face looking forward.
Today I waited for something unnamed,
someone I never knew.
Today I wait and wait,
Perhaps I wait for you?

I waited for symbols to rise from the bog,
bubble and pop without a sound.
A green bullfrog sits on a slimy rock,
throws his tongue out after fly.
And I waited
I pretended not to know why.

Because we are never in the night together,
Because we are never in the night.
Because last night I had a murky dream—the two
 of us, among the purple Bougainvillea bushes,
 played a game of chess.
And you said out loud like a prophet,
"Children don't try to out think life
like a chess game. They just live"
Just then, in the foggy dream, my hair turned thin and gray,

I tried to comb it like a young man's hair anyway.
"Chaka matu! Chaka matu. Your king is dead," cries the choir.
And father Tom strolls by, the worse for wear, saying,
 "Embrace the mystery."

My body is a Mayan pyramid
sunk into a tan sofa sea,
ego states wrestle,
one pounds the others
head into the turnbuckle.
How happier I am when I don't believe,
still I believe.

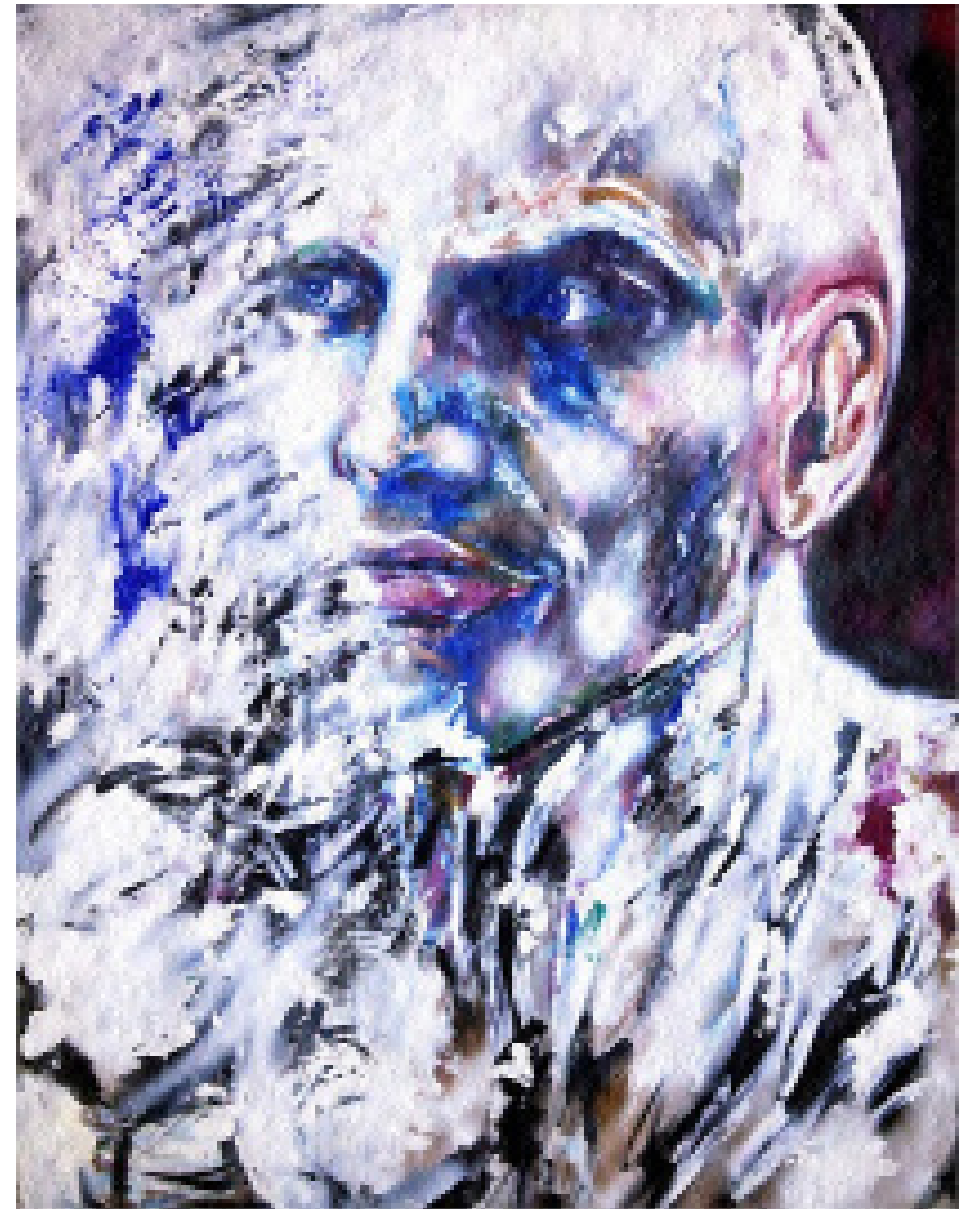
At the zoo
the monstrous vultures,
huge and terrifying,
pick garbage like bones.
"Sometimes in life we have to be strong," I say.
She, being smarter than me,
rolls her eyes and scoffs,
"Sometimes?
All the time."
I encouraged her to play,
to pretend she was painting flowers.
and I, like a gazelle, kneeled down
to the watering hole on buckled knees.
Nothing inside of me needs to be fed.
Hocus pocus.

Because we are never at noon together.
Because we are never at noon.



Do not cast your pearls before swine.
I am the pearl. You are the swine.
A pearl couched in the folds of a deli ham sandwich

Now, softly on eucalyptus tree,
a koala climbs slowly, high.
These words are like tarot cards,
showing what's happening on other levels.
The magician waves his wand
over his table of cups.
Hoc est corpus meum.
Like the poet,
over paper,
joining heaven and earth.



IL CREATORE (m'illumino d'immenso)
Daniele Bongiovanni

UNDER WILD PLUM TREES

Taylor Graham

It's been half a year since coyotes killed the lamb.
You walked down the swale into the dry creekbed,
up stair-step rocks that, in winter, cradle a still pool,
to the place where they left her almost intact, just
dead. So many months after, you had to hunt, think
back, remember. After half a year, no trace
of where they dragged their kill. No skull left, not
a nub of wool. We never saw vultures. Other
creatures - raccoons and foxes, green-bottle flies
and beetles - must have feasted. Bacteria, fungi.
The lamb is gone, the universe is fed.
I wonder where her bleat went, her nuzzle,
the soft brown focus of her eyes.



RIGHT THROUGH TOWN

Taylor Graham

The chance of a child wading across
a flooded creek: inverse to the downward
surge of upcountry rain, muddy water
teeming with tree-limbs, plastic bottles,
old tires from miles upstream. A stenciled
NO SWIMMING sign bobbed ahead
of us as the officer guided his raft,
tuning technique and skills to a current
gone wild through town. He knew his craft
as I knew my dog, who stood balanced
at the Zodiac's bow. My job, to watch
for a nose-dip, a head-turn that
might prove he had the missing boy's
scent. Behind us, out of sight now,
two figures bent over a votive candle
at the spot where their son disappeared.
As we passed, I'd focused on
my dog; I didn't see them. I couldn't
get their faces out of my head.





small town

Jessica Robinson

"there is no way we're going to a fucking Harvey's."
my mom drives the car from the passenger seat.
my dad passes gas station after gas station, watching
the gage drop lower and I think he's praying that
we get stuck in the middle of the empty highway
so that a truck can come barreling right through us.
the GPS is upset because no one is listening to her.
recalculating. recalculating. drive twenty kilometers.
I sound just like her in my head. these towns all look
the same, each one a nothing town. the boys huddled on
the street corner in baggy sweaters look just like
the last ones and I stare at them through the window
and they don't even notice me. we are nothing people.
recalculating. recalculating. drive twenty kilometers.

Lucca

Abby Herlin

The curved wall of the city pulls
us in.

We eat white peaches
in the square,
both of us cling
to their sweet stone hearts.

Buskers play the accordion, stomp
their feet
compete
with the a carousel for
sound and crowd
that spins and stops and spins
behind us.

In the music store
off the square,
we flip through old Leonard Cohen albums,
Nina Simone, Miles Davis.
You talk about your father:
his sleepless nights,
how he always walked ahead
of you and your mother.

We circle and weave through the streets.
Past the orange roses crowding
the vine,
the profiles of people and buildings, blur by
cigarette butts wedged in cobblestones,
paint peeled and faded,
laughter and whimpers of children ribboning
past us,

stray calico cats lying in the sun and street art, sharp
and intricate.

Pause—I lose you
in the looking.

Amidst the line ups
for square pizza with black olives,
pistachio and ricotta gelato,
I find you bright in the crowd,
soft against the slant of this golden Tuscan town.

The layered jolt of voices
rise and fall around us.
The sounds disguise the rhythm of our intermittent
words.

But I like not having much to say,
of having the luxury to look
out and in, of having the luxury
of just passing through.

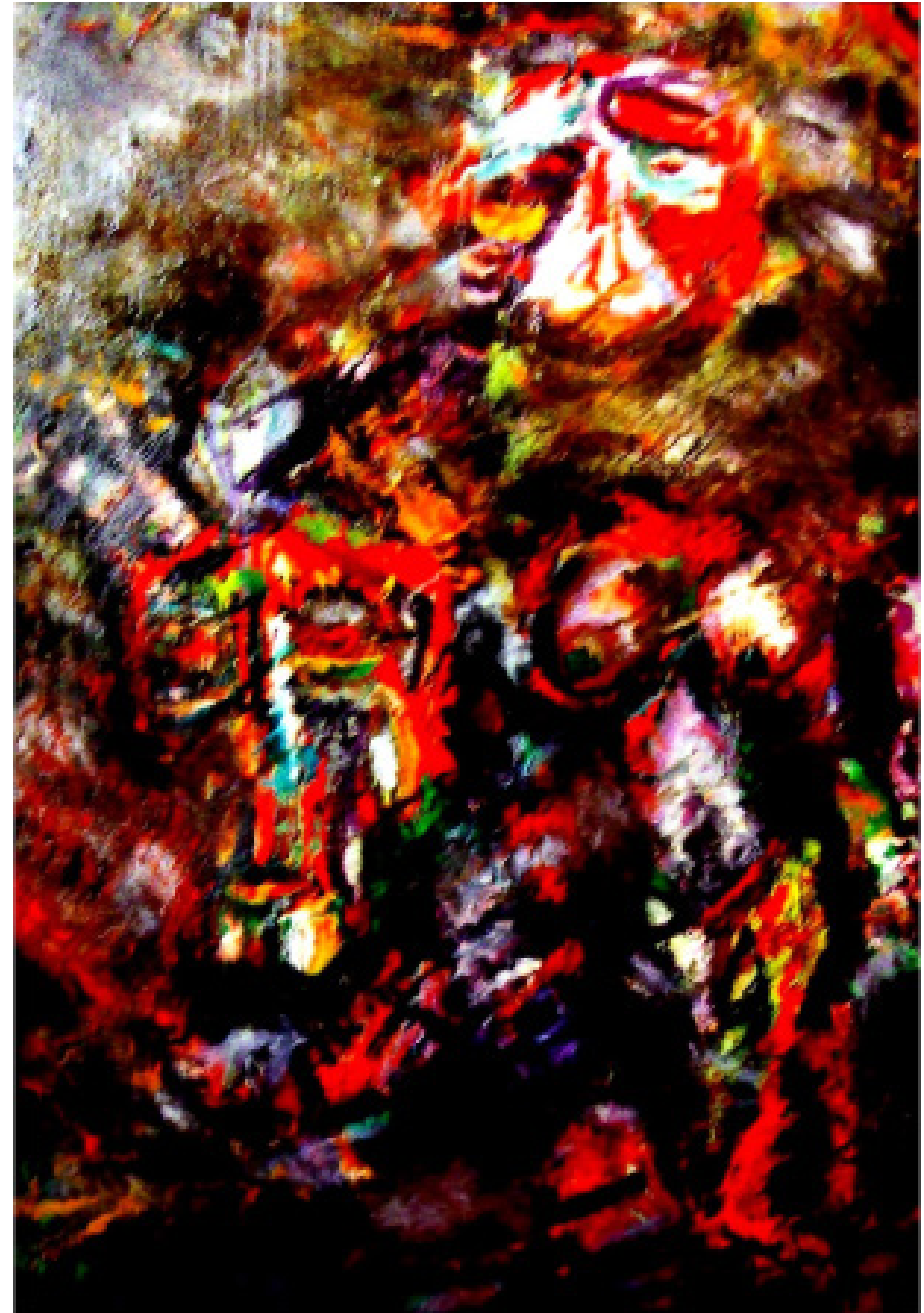
anatomy
Cody Gravelle

when you speak
my skull shivers
words rattle off the inside
like they were held in infant hands
shaken with no stir
of emotion
just noise for the sake of

i bared it all
rib cage and spine splayed
like an ivory cross
femur thick with slurred speech
the inebriation of the marrow

when you speak
there's a fracture between
your knuckles and mine
and so with you
i hide my bones

PELLE SPORCA
Daniele Bongiovanni



Warning Label
Chelsea Coreen

Owns 48 dresses. Gets defensive if you tell her that 48 is an excessive number or that there simply isn't enough closet space in this apartment. Needs to run her fingers across her favorite fabrics when she is lonely. The glittering homecoming gown she wore the night she met her high school sweetheart. The floor length floral from the summer she spent at the bar. The black thrift store bandage that she can't seem to drag over her ass, but swears that if she could just excavate ten pounds Changes her outfit six times before leaving the house. Leaves the rejects in a pile in front of the mirror. Doesn't care if this makes her late. Smirks at the thought of you sitting alone at her favorite restaurant. Makes you chocolate chip pancakes for breakfast. Says vegetarian, even though she eats fish, because she thinks "pescitarian" sounds like an STD. Never forgets your birthday, or your ex-girlfriend's name. The department store flannel you mentioned you liked three months ago, hides in a box under the bed. Was planning to surprise you when you're having a shit day. Drinks iced coffee in the winter, then complains that her fingers are popsicles. Bruises easy under knuckles and accusations. Eyes leak, often. Broken shower heads. Sometimes you'll think its for no reason at all. When you surprise her with fresh daisies, or her favorite red wine, the poems still won't be about you. The pencil sits on the nightstand, untouched. But she writes and rewrites you in her head. The taste of your skin—peach and pine needle. The mornings you kiss her stomach. The clump of blonde in your trash can The side-effects start to consume her. Paranoia. Hypersensitivity. Makes lists of the possible reasons you forgot to call, all of which have to do with the size of her breasts or the pretty girl at the bus stop. Uses this as anesthesia. Edits your presence into an extended metaphor: the freckle turned skin cancer, the botched open heart surgery. When you decide to leave (they always do), her pen becomes a syringe. Forces it deep into your thigh, watches your skin bubble. Her mouth is a flashing ambulance. The worst parts of you echoing through crowded

auditoriums. The cuts you thought had long since healed now wet and blooming like poppies. A dull ache, and you can't remember exactly how you looked before.



Sex Canal
Joseph O'Neill

Author Biographies

Chelsea Coreen is a poet/feminist/sparkle enthusiast. She has represented the SUNY Oneonta poetry slam team for three years. Her work has appeared/ is forthcoming in *The Nervous Breakdown*, *The Legendary*, and *GERM Magazine*, among others. She released her first chapbook "Glitter Bomb" in March 2014.

Daniele Bongiovanni is an Italian academic painter and illustrator. (Sicily, Palermo, 1986) Work on the national and international territory. From an early age he devoted himself to painting and drawing in a professional manner; from the various studies on the experiments and the classic portrait of the subject. In the years of training before studying in private laboratories and the State Institute Of Art in his city, he works on commission and participates in various initiatives for artists. His painting has attracted interest from collectors around the world, from Milan to Las Vegas. His technique is characterized by the color and the faces of expressionist. The characteristics of his work vary; from the purely academic painting figurative abstraction informal.

Taylor Graham is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in El Dorado County. Her poems have appeared in *The Iowa Review*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Poetry International*, *Southern Humanities Review*. Her latest book is *What the Wind Says* (Lummox Press, 2013), about living, training and searching with her canine partners.

Cody Gravelle is a recent university graduate who is only just discovering vigilante crime-fighting is not a viable career path. Poet is just another alluring imaginary job, albeit one that involves marginally less spandex. He has previously been published in *Yellow Bird Magazine*.

Abby Wener Herlin is a poet and academic in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia and braids her passion for poetry and grounded academic work in social justice issues pertaining to young women and narrative inquiry. She has been published in a wide range of journals and anthologies such as Leaf Press's 2013 *The Wild Weathers* and is forthcoming in *Anthem* and *Room* magazines.

Robert T. Krantz was born and raised in Western New York. He studied creative writing and English Literature at both Niagara County Community College, NY and the University of Akron, Ohio. He is currently an M.F.A. candidate at the University of Arkansas-Monticello. His short story, *Down the Street this Lady Comes*, was named a finalist for the 2014 Gertrude Stein Award for Fiction (*The Doctor T.J. Eckleburg Review*). Robert also published a chapbook of poetry and prose entitled *Leg Brace Legato*, which was published in 2013. His work has appeared in *Akros Literary Review*, *Bare Fiction*, *East Coast Literary Review* and *Poetry Quarterly*.

Joseph O'Neill's journey started with his Grandmother, also an artist, who constantly encouraged him to be creative and explore the artist within him. He soon discovered the photographer Eugene Adget and his unique way of capturing the simplicities of everyday life. Also, Manray for showing him that photography is art.

Jessica Robinson is a young Canadian writer, previously unpublished. She is currently a finalist in the 2014 YRDSB Poetry Slam. Her time is mostly spent watching people exist on subways and trying to do them justice on paper. She is thrilled to be a part of this endeavor.

Fabio Sassi makes photos and acrylics using tiny objects and what is considered to have no worth by the mainstream. Fabio lives and works in Bologna, Italy. His work can be viewed at www.fabiosassi.foliohd.com

Ellen Webre is a Southern Californian writer and artist who grew up with the influences of a multicultural heritage due to her Taiwanese mother and Russian-American father. Myths and fairytales have been major influences in her imagination, and now she uses them in writing poetry and screenplays.