



VOLUME 7 | NUMBER 1

F O O T H I L L

a journal of poetry

F O O T H I L L

a journal of poetry

FOOT
a journal of poetry
HILL



FOOT
a journal of poetry
HILL

2017 Fall Edition | Vol. 7, No. 1
www.cgu.edu/foothill

Kevin Riel
Editor-in-Chief

Emily Schuck
Managing Editor

Brock Rustin
Managing Editor

Kelsey Kimmel
Design Editor

Sheila Lefor
Online Editor

Brian McCabe
Editor

Peter Lane
Editor

Ashley Call
Editor

Assistant Editors: April Anderson, Jan Andres, Clarissa Castaneda, Meghan Elliott, Christopher Eskilson, Laryssa Galvez, Kyle Wesley Jenson, Jamey Keeton Jr., Scott Kneeece, Mark Kumleben, and Daniel Lanza Rivers.

Special thanks to Friends of *Foothill*, Anonymous and Priscilla Fernandez and Patron of *Foothill*, Peggy Phelps

© 2017 by Claremont Graduate University
ISSN 2162-8173

Cover art by Chelsea Boxwell
“She said/He said” Acrylic, latex, spray paint, glitter, and fabric on
canvas draped over a wall between two rooms

This journal would not exist without the assistance, guidance, and support of Mandy Bennett, Lori Anne Ferrell, Vievee Francis, the Friedman Grant, Susan Hampson, Ishion Hutchinson, Genevieve Kaplan, Rachel Lachowitz, Wendy Martin, Patrick Mason, Gina Pirtle, Tammi Schneider, Aleta Wenger, CGU Art, and CGU’s School of Arts and Humanities.

SUBSCRIBE TO *FOOTHILL*

To subscribe to *Foothill's* online journal, visit www.cgu.edu/foothill.

To subscribe to this year's print issue, send a check for \$25 made payable to "*Foothill: a journal of poetry*" with "subscription" written in the memo to the following address:

Foothill: a journal of poetry
165 E. 10th Street
Claremont, CA 91711

Send any questions to foothill@cgu.edu.

SUPPORT *FOOTHILL*

Though *Foothill* is produced with generous assistance from Claremont Graduate University, additional support is essential to fulfill our mission of publishing and promoting the world's best graduate-student poetry.

All donations should be made by check and are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. A receipt will be promptly sent for your records. Checks should be made payable to the Office of Advancement with "Foothill" written in the memo. Mail all donations to the above address.

FOOTHILL PATRON LEVELS

Friend: \$100-\$499 for a two-year print subscription and acknowledgment in the journal for two years.

Patron: \$500-\$999 for a three-year print subscription and acknowledgment in the journal for three years.

Council: \$1,000-\$2,999 for a five-year print subscription and lifetime acknowledgment in the journal.

Co-Publisher: \$3,000 (which represents one year's operating costs) or more for two lifetime subscriptions and lifetime acknowledgment in the journal.

CONTENTS

viii EDITOR'S NOTE

BABA BADJI Washington University

Decolonized Metaphor

TIM BARZDITIS George Mason University

Anonymous Time Capsule Letter Dated 1968 Near an Elementary School in Birmingham, AL

I've caught myself practicing for the future

MATTHEW BRAILAS New York University

The winter we went berserk

Love poem with a brick in it

ELLA FLORES Northern Michigan University

Fake Leather

Some Said Yarrow, Some Didn't Say

23 BROOKE LARSON University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Mother & Pother

Another Timeline Grandma

Kakekotoba in Kennebunk, Maine

29 BELLE LING University of Queensland

Out of a Broken Egg

Miso Soup

31 HOLLY MASON George Mason University

Renwick Gallery: An Opening

August

34 MARSHALL NEWMAN Georgia College & State University

Don't Try

- 35 JEANNA PADEN University of Memphis
The Kickback
- 36 KARTHIK PURUSHOTHAMAN William Paterson University
Halloween in New York City
Martin Luther King Day
- 39 KYLAN RICE University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
from *Super bloom* (2)
from *Super bloom* (3)
- 45 REBECCA RICKS New York University
Vespers
Paris 1974
- 47 REBECCA GIVENS ROLLAND Lesley University
Once Called Cleopatra
- 48 KATHLEEN L. TAYLOR University of California, Riverside
A Saturnalian Method for Subverting the Patriarchy
- 49 MICHAEL E. WOODS Columbia College Chicago
[i wish to hell i'd just kept saying]
- 51 CHELSEA BOXWELL Claremont Graduate University
Art
- 65 ISHION HUTCHINSON
Interview
- 77 CONTRIBUTORS

EDITOR'S NOTE

Feeling It

"It's the feeling you get when the Martians land." The first time I heard this—a description of Freud's theory of "the uncanny"—was during a lecture by Mike Davis. The second time was three years ago in a van full of strangers.

There were maybe eight of us, groggy-eyed and crammed into a shared van from the airport, headed to our hotels in Minneapolis. The small talk turned diabolically highfalutin once we realized all of us were there for AWP.

Among us: Editor X (from the journal that had rejected at least 20 of my poems), Author Y (who's last novel was shortlisted for the Pulitzer), Humanitarian Z (a retired English professor who runs a literary program in high-security prisons)—all ethereal visions my twenty-year-old self thought I would be a composite of by now. People like this, who I have a tendency to regard with a mix of reverence, resentment, and terror, conjure my most self-hating persona (qua defensive posture). I'll call him Professor Schmuck McKnowitall.

"I am editor-in-chief of *Foothill: a journal of poetry* at Claremont Graduate University," says Professor McKnowitall (thinking to himself, "god I sound like such an arrogant jerk").

"Oh yeah, that's the one that publishes graduate students, right?" asks Editor X. "I believe you published one of my students, Ishion Hutchinson," says Author Y. Another van-goer, I'll call them Impossibly Sweet Person W, says: "I love *Foothill*. I've read every issue," possibly lying through the gritting teeth of their own persona.

Where in the Milky Way did these freakish extraterrestrials get off staring at me like I was one of them? Where was Mike Davis, whose observation was ray-gunning against my skull, to help me make sense of this anxious, otherworldly feeling of recognition?

This banal psychodrama occurs to me both because Ishion, this issue's interviewee, plays a role, and because it strikes me as I write this, my last editor's note, that the leitmotif of all my editor's notes has been to convey my astonishment that any of the amazing poets from this and past issues would

trust us with their work, or that anyone—*especially you*—might be reading this thing, this “literary journal” that we began without much more than a dream, a prayer, and some generous institutional support (not to mention faith).

Now, when some modest form of recognition arrives—when Martians land—I feel less alienated to it, less the professor, more alien. From the bottom of my terrestrial heart: Thank you.

Cheers,
Kevin Riel
Editor-in-Chief

KINGSLEY & KATE TUFTS POETRY AWARDS

 Claremont Graduate University

Claremont Graduate University
congratulates the winners of
the 2017 Tufts Poetry Awards.

KINGSLEY TUFTS POETRY AWARD

\$100,000 awarded for a book
of poetry by a mid-career poet



2017 Winner

Vievee Francis
Forest Primeval

Tell me
you haven't wanted to stifle
what hovers
dumb before your heart?

KATE TUFTS DISCOVERY AWARD

\$10,000 awarded for a
first book of poetry



2017 Winner

Phillip B. Williams
Thief in the Interior

how I'd wrap you
around my shoulder,
a final possession—camouflage;
cataract, silk.

Save the Date | April 19, 2018

Please join us for a public reading honoring the winners
of the 2018 Kingsley & Kate Tufts Poetry Awards.

cgu.edu/tufts

POEMS

BABA BADJI
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
PHD COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Decolonized Metaphor

Déraciné: is French, uprooted.
~~Black~~skin appropriate name meaning:

brave or lone one. *Je jure sur ma vie.*
Of the “Juba” beater, Sir Jefferson declares,

retelling me of Paul Bogle’s body
hung in the slave ship.

I am a bush boy. A farmer’s boy.
Coming from those deep forests,

a dense place where mosquitoes
& starving spiders rest gladly on

your glacial skin. They suck your
mean dry blood just to make you sick.

I vomit counterclockwise when I am told strangers are unwelcome.
Mes mains fièrement rouges du sang des mamans noires.

The bites on your pale skin spring brilliantly,
but they are not slave wounds.

Gorée Island is where freed slaves go to claim what’s left of Africa.
Tam tam: is French, drums.

Sounds of *tam tam* are barking to curse
Jefferson’s cargo of slaves.

Of papers signed for darkness to travel
restrained, at high sea.

Dear God, I wonder. I wonder.
Tried to imagine what it must have felt like

to find yourself chained up & wordless.
Wordless in its melancholic sense.

Not being able to speak your *Wolof*, your *Yoruba*, your *Swahili*,
on your way to where? America?

TIM BARZDITIS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
MFA CREATIVE WRITING

*Anonymous Time Capsule Letter Dated 1968 Near
an Elementary School in Birmingham, AL*

I am dead. There aren't any
jetpacks but the microwave
screams at night. Some boy told me
that I have a rusty face.

My birthday was gonna be
next week. I forget my age.
I have two mommies but I
have to tie my own shoes. Way

way back a tin can man hanged
from our porch. He screamed at night.
(My mommies don't talk about it)
He tried to scare men like white

fire singing on the lawn.
They hide from the sun. I played
glockenspiel at school with Will.
I bit his nipple one day

because he played bongo songs
on my belly (Buh-dum-dum)
Do you have jetpacks yet? Do
you hear white fire

play tin-can songs outside?
I don't like The Monkees or
Lost in Space. Thinking about
B-9 rolling through TV door

screaming DANGER! DANGER WILL
ROBINSON! in tin man twang
always gives me the willies.

I've caught myself practicing for the future

Flush cup
of ice cubes
(no less
than six)
down the toilet.
Smear finger
oils on new phone
screens, glass doors,
fogged mirrors. Scald
tongue on salt broth
to keep ramen
squiggle from growing
old. Chew apple
seeds after
Tylenol (but not
before bed). Dip
tips of dress shoes
in winter's melted
muck. Don't breathe
when passing
roadkill, grave
yards, Krispy
Kreme. Cut
your teeth
on rind of blood
orange. Knock
on wood before
opening mouth
(knock on head
if wood is scarce).
Wave goodbye
through frosted
windows before
putting car
in reverse.

MATTHEW BRAILAS
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
MFA CREATIVE WRITING

The winter we went berserk

I don't know how Jake spotted the coyote
Skulking in the crabgrass the night the pond froze over

As if the coke had sharpened his sight to a laser
Even as it rolled the rest of him tight as a grip

A week before a cat had turned up missing
Pieces and trying hard to breathe

In the ditch by the communal mailbox
Jake always had a soft spot for animals

So he walked outside and shot the coyote
Tossed it by its tail into the ravine

Before it was finished dying
Smoke arching out the wound like a hook

Then he washed his hands with baking soda and went back to frying
broccoli
I think he had been shirtless for a month straight

Nevermind the ice climbing through the crack in the window
His arms huge and beautiful in the burned-out dark

Where he handled the skillet like a pro
Rolling the edges and flipping stalks a foot in the air

You can imagine how he felt when he found out Rachel had killed the
chinchilla he'd given her
She bought another and named it the same thing

It looked identical but Jake knew as soon as he walked into the room
He didn't yell

He just popped the plastic regulator off a handle of vodka
And started pulling from it hard

Eyes black as a basement
He said he was going to drive us to a show downtown

I asked why he was driving with a suspended license
He yelled *Because I'm a fucking warrior*

That was the night he pulled the ex-cop out of the green Durango
Wrapped his keys around his knuckles and hit him for a long time
under the stars

Still in the backseat Rachel and I were trying not to make a sound
But sucking air so loud it seemed we'd never get enough

Love poem with a brick in it

It wasn't the ice in your hair
It was how you worried
Your ring that night

In the waiting room
The light so cold and blue
We could cup our palms

And drink it
I'm trying to tell you something important
About the ankle and the ditch

The strays who broke into the church
And the sound of raw meat
Being dragged through snow

Some nights I can't stop
Breathing for even
One minute

Other nights
It's as if I've forgotten
How to swallow

We can call this an eruption
If it helps you
Understand the ash

I wanted it to be a brick
Thrown at a wind chime
But the warblers kept getting in the way

Everything is backwards
Like how deer at night
Could hide forever if they closed their eyes

The prettiest dog
In the electrified cage
So calm now

You would never know
Except for the buzzing
I turned the other way

While the man in the bathroom
Stared at my cock and masturbated
Even when he started whispering

He had this look in his eye
Like something had hurled him years ago
And he was still waiting to land

ELLA FLORES
NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
MFA CREATIVE WRITING

Fake Leather

You mourn yourself for your parents a year
before you cut yourself open to scoop out
 the pit of your stomach with your hands taking turns
 steadying the other, appeasing the nudge in your spine
constant as the new name you can't come up with
 to keep you from being taken
out of context and you learn to stop responding
 to old sounds because
 by the end of your life you will have gone
by many names as you live by yourself
 with yourself and it's a little happiness an island
2000 miles from the closest land and you look at the photos
 your mom collected in small frames
 for you and your stance and your clothes and your face
and that persona of not caring what you look like where
 it becomes one of not loving yourself, and that outfit
 you hide in your bottom drawer, gradually morphs
from a safety line to a hook stuck in your hide and that black jacket
 a ghost, but this one doesn't wander moan or
shuffle doorknobs, it just looks at you.
Silent. Like the first time
you tell your parents.

Some Said Yarrow, Some Didn't Say

Here is a desert.

There are the grasslands.
The foothills. The Sangre de Cristo Range,
or the name we've chosen
to forget before it.

Here is a desert.

There is the river low
on its water, the campground, then
the tree line where many
will sleep. There is a fire I do not know
to build. How the afternoon forgets
here is a desert. The snowshoe hares,
wavyleaf oaks. I do not know the names of
these flowers. I will
ask them later. Here is
desert, sparkling, dune, winding. There,
the glowing evening
dew: a dull city lighting up
to fall asleep. A crook of a valley
lit by the Sun seconds before it is
off and West. A storm
is coming. It's already climbed over
the snowcaps. The rain's anxious
shy before it feels us. The lightning
plots its blessings.

BROOKE LARSON
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE
PHD POETRY

Mother & Pother

I hated my sister's little life
growing inside her

But for the fetus manning the uterus
trying to make a big deal of itself
you wouldn't see the her behind it
so sunken in and hair lost
bloodless reaching face-
less looking, barren as never

Sister mother becoming
the inverse shape of her hope

God to watch her

drop pounds from herself into herself

a kind of pale

cannibalizing piggy bank

I feel crappy thinking

an inner leeching of blood and salt and water
a skin and bones martyr, rounded down

and square rooted by the belly

Already so tiny to start, barely any
hippy leeway, any lipids saved up
sucked dry, creaky, bed-

ridden, bed riding her
bones from underneath
sore all over from saying

Later it may get better

below the same spot of ceiling
inside eight unmoving months

To say nothing

of no madonna glow

no blushy fleshment, just

tubes

needles

baggies

food mushier than a two-toothed baby's
airplaned straight into the vein
bedpan aslant

sister a breakwater
for more crashes to come

That asshole, I could've screamed

In its unborn face but for

sister, too death-masked and sad-nippled
for words with all their teeth

Only moaning when there is no
prenatal prebuttal for the nameless
bodying bloody life lickpenny
hungry for it all before
even pronounced

a pronoun him or herself

Such was the becoming's desire

Yet little more than an apple off the aunt's tree, I myself
confess: who isn't
a burning ambush

consuming and consumed?

Another Timeline Grandma

In those days, there was nothing, nothing for the mouth to say. Honey, everything went smelled.

Ah, the unerring air. Carrying names, bald as morning breath. Baby, those ripe ones! How they'd sink bass-deep into walls, shirts, bedsheets. Names that don't rinse out.

Back then, when you sweat long down your neck, down your spine, arms, and thighs' inners, your pores recited the fathers and mothers. If you sneezed, you emptied of everyone and yourself for a second (some thought this god, inspiring cultivated allergies: a garden of naked men and women—skin opaque with pollen).

While back in the wet-crotched schoolyard, rationed deodorant made rampant our secrets (then those loudmouthed blood panties I buried in the yard, how the smell never left me, like the blackest tea bag steeped in me, seeped out).

While at the cocktail parties, cologne told a lie at the pressure points.

Truth (which then sat in the stomach, wet linings, armpit, and hung from small hairs) changed with diet and climate in the barest ways (seasons pulled it up by the roots, blew it from mildewed roofs).

Yes baby back then vodka had a smell, like white noise, transparent cabbage in the cabinet, and I love you smelled like:

A dandelion stain on sunless underwrist

Amber blood of trees, embossed on
careless elbow

A pruned thumb's chlorinated bandaid

A humidity of blackberries

Clumped fox hairs in hollow log

Strewn yellow boats of thick grape
fruit skin

Beer, cask; cheese, veined

Storm-spat nets of seaweed

Hair half braided with smoke

Half burnt, then lake drowned

Risen thing

Hate smelled like love but dried and hardened under the
fingernails.

You can't forget, in those days when you caught cold, you died for a
spell, snuffed out of the group in some airless cloister of skull (you
imagine the smell behind your own ear and touch it there, hair-
oiled comma, yourself a shock of kidskin over a small fishbone).

Always, dear heart, death said more than the nose could take. How
it stacked. How we began to bury our blood crusts, sweat piles,
yellowed toenails, wasted teardrops, cum musk thick as compost
beds, our morning-sludged kisses, black-soil secrets and other
garrulous rot—buried all these, our telling potencies, more and
deeper below.

How we breathed in less, opened our mouths more.

Kakekotoba in Kennebunk, Maine

It ends. Shivering on the beach, black
seaweed stares back
with tangles of cuttlefish eyeballs: *What now?*
 Days later I'll curl up
with potent throat lozenges
and a pivot word in Japanese
 reads: seaweed, or, eyes of seeing
meeting of lovers, or
to gather flung seaweed
 dead or is it living still
pivots in me
rolls back in the fevered head
 a red-veined see-tangle
sea-wed under
blue lids. I sleep
 on teeters, fever
mouth hooked, swung
back and gaping
 past where you once loved
into my body on swallowed
sand, green sea-wound
crying its salt into my eyes.

Out of a Broken Egg

Grease on a geisha's earthy face,
multiplying nonsense like drunkards; a daub of yolk
on her noble lips, pursuing man's sexual stress.
She, preening, smiling with a thicker
make-up of protein gold; the man pretends
she's singing summer—
frogs' legs widening lilies, bees burned
in the heroic rise of the theatrical sun, and back
to the wild green. The yellow keeps its horizon.
He concentrates on the simple and talks like a connoisseur, tasting—
her penknife steps, honey-washed hair,
her slight breath of egg vinegared and salted, and a long
darkened corridor in her voice.
It is one of the afternoons far away from loneliness and lust. It is
like sitting in a gorgeous dream, commemorating an elegant spine,
so elegant that it lifts the mind, warm or cool, to the virtue
of not destroying a broken egg, a coax in the magnificently broken.



Miso Soup

Zabo, inspired by Zen, in Japanese, means, "to sit, to forget"

This pond is a far province
of many things: granules, granules,
that a forlorn fin slings to a jut

of grit, of kelps, of stirs in the gaze
poking sparks on the running
of salts, of jaws, of soy.

I know not a rill which can pleat a bean-
curd with so many lures and curls
that a slit on the white head

stitches a bit of every grounded
grain, which dissolves—but not quite,
bridges the sense of rain and the ripples

to come. I know not, in the grains, between testing
out a shape and dissolving, there's a riff, like waves
surging in sheaves, in blades, in wings,

that clarity is a sharp spike—too much,
too little to know. Some say, pigs are oaring
around. Look at the lipids. Some say,

hens are dropping eggs. Look at the languid
yellow. If there's too much, or too little
that makes me know

not, let me go back to the center of it all,
to sit, and to forget,
to sit, and to forget.

HOLLY MASON
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
MFA CREATIVE WRITING

Renwick Gallery: An Opening

It is 9:00 a.m. on a Saturday, and my partner wants to go meet friends at an art museum in the city. And I don't want to because I want to sleep and work and be quiet.

I go though. And feel fine about it. The Renwick gallery on 17th just reopened, featuring an exhibit on *WONDER*. Pieces that use the space "to inspire awe." And they do.

Patrick Dougherty's *Shindig* is a large room taken up with reshaped branches woven into what my partner describes as nests. The nurtured nature reaches the ceiling, spiraling across white walls.

And in another room, John Grade's team used a half-million segments of reclaimed cedar to fashion the suspended hemlock tree taking up the entire room, horizontally, swaying.

I say I like the movement. Someone runs into a branch and is scolded by the docent. The crowds are packed tight in these rooms where art takes up the space, reaching out to touch you.

The next room is a rainbow made of thread, scaling from floor to crown molding. Gabriel Dawe is remembering childhood skies above Mexico City and East Texas. We take a picture

in front of the spectrum and laugh about the cliché in this. Maya Lin's fiberglass marbles spread across hardwood, across white walls; shaping rivers, fields, canyons, mountains.

To build a nest.

First: find branches. Second: strip the leaves. Third: bend, twist, weave. And if lucky, fill with music and wine and color. And if luckier, with children.

August

The birds on the line postpone
then dip. Life
is about waiting.

I once sat in a pew
where the preacher said:
*Stay still long enough
for anxiety to turn
into prayer.*

Anne Carson
is interested in
the *dismantling*
of wisdom.

I want the wisdom
and the unraveling.

Life is either speck
or explosion. Or
maybe both.

I look around
for images to gather.
Then I hear my love's voice:
*Don't go down the rabbit hole.
Come back.*

Here are the smallest red berries
on a bush—holly?
Summer humidity
is declining these nights.

Soon we all go back to school.
The parking lots fill up.
The promise of new knowledge
beyond the field.

Here, a child is drawing a line
with chalk—*this side is mine, that is yours.*

And somewhere inside a house,
clearing the plates,
parents warn their daughter
not to trust everything said
in academic walls.

Gathering, though,
is the beginning of wisdom.

Lit windows.
The soccer team finishes practice.

Don't wrap up, leave open.
"Understanding isn't what grief is about,"
says Carson.

A father is running with his daughter;
he encourages her to keep moving.
I cannot form this image into any sort of salvation.

MARSHALL NEWMAN
GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY
MFA POETRY

Don't Try

Glass is nice.
In it there is water.
How about that

African red sand?
Why I drool over
the pastel buildings

is not a question,
but a hummingbird,
yellow flips, rather

than flaps. Water,
my gourd, the note
I received, reading

thank you, thanks
a lot. And taking
in air, which is underrated—

that is color, that
is a gulp of water,
ice driplets, wind

bending a tree,
great gaawwd
when the wind

bends backward
an old tree.

JEANNA PADEN
UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS
MFA CREATIVE WRITING

The Kickback

me and Momma
hid in the big bathtub
with his pistol
balanced on kneecaps

clatter of our shaking jaws
as loud as the bullet crack

the breaking open
bruise
skin of the world
splitting open with us

red of our palm lines
we read them easy

but the blood of him
seeped thick as gloves
into his own hands

much deeper
than any guilt
me and Momma
felt in the kickback



KARTHIK PURUSHOTHAMAN
WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY
MFA CREATIVE WRITING

Halloween in New York City

This Halloween, I went as Adam
and not the flannel shirt, sneakered
and trimmed beard variety. In fact,
I had trimmed nothing, wore
no shoes, no shirt, and no trousers.
When I say this Halloween I went
as Adam, I mean the original
sinner because it's high time
the brown dude in the nude
got some attention and attention
I got when they let me inside
the glass building where ten
Harley Quinns, all white, laughed
at my junk calling it a baby
elephant's trunk. "The only thing
you all are exposing is how much
more you're still hiding," I yelled
from the console as the leggy
mermaid DJ writhed, tempting me
to take a knife to her net, but I didn't
pack no knife up the asshole
since this Halloween
I went as Adam to the party
on the street that devours the apple
by the hour so Adam fit right in
behind the bull because "who's
the daddy, who's the daddy
now?" with gusto I pronounced
let's form a chain of people
fucking each other, let's
truly occupy Wall Street I cried
to the villagers and the angel
-headed hipsters but not even
the Islanders heeded my call

because no one wanted
to get naked when the world
was so cold and the serpent
stuck his tongue out from the sky
-scraper, our new stronghold.

Martin Luther King Day

“Stylings for men” is
what prompted me to enter
the eighty-year-old enterprise
because I wanted a specialist,
but who’s to say those capable
of one kind of segregation
won’t partake in other
otherings too? Shamrocks
glued to the mirrors, bats hung
by leathery handles from the frame,
the faces elongated upon seeing
my dark brown hair they’d
have to touch with their hands,
clutch between fingers and taint
their broom’s bristles with
as the scissors snapped
unlike their teeth that bit
the words back. Yet I dug
the music, so I asked which
radio station was playing
the jazzy interpretation of
“What a Wonderful World,” who
won last night the Cowboys
or the Packers and why
the place was deserted
to hint at the holiday that
gave me the time, of course
the civil rights and old
Mr. Alibrandi twelve extra
dollars cash on a “slow day.”

KYLAN RICE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL
PHD IN LITERATURE

from *Super bloom* (2)

The pizzicato, pointillism, the where-have-you-been
on a map of the world of light night rain against my cheeks:
The mind goes first to Seurat then tries to recover
by thinking instead of the surface of small seasonal pond
formed in the impermeable andesite of a nearby table rock
as the only way to know is it raining. Where all that is
there in the sawtoothed stillness are ova and spore. There
has been no time for fish to fledge in the variable depths—
instead, imagine the clusters of eggs strafed in the silt
beneath the stippled face of this vernal pool. Think,
too, of the last time you saw a whole, unbroken egg
rendered in art. Probably it has been a long time
since the egg is a symbol for violability and fleshing out
and we think of ourselves in a clumsy, ill-lit
relationship with the outside world, where there is always
something new coming out, at least we have that, being
able to observe the remnants of an event of plenitude
or of predation I took no part in, the unclutching
on its own of a clutch of quail eggs, speckled where
they were reinforced with deposits of protoporphyrin,
suggesting low levels of calcium intake, meaning
levels in the soil must be also low where there are growing
up panicles everywhere of wild oats, blackberry embankments.
But we are in an age where you don't need to just look
or guess. Plant tissue analysis is a cost-effective way
to determine the fertility and cation soil exchange
wherever your concern may lie. Wherever winter wheat
has already started to tuft up, one hundred and fifty
borzoi streaming through it, forming star shapes around
their quarry. I am like Rostov in this, this is something
I'm good at, and though I swore today to rest
from hunting, the drifting mists make a perfect day,
and I will swear to God, again, give me just this, just
this human-eyed wolf, and I will be happy for the rest
of my life, and by the end of it, the day at least,
I will find myself in the home of a distant relative,

whose entryway smells of fresh apples, where I will observe my sister metamorphosing into a woman while dancing a dance she did not know she has always known, must have leached into her, as from an upper field untiled, undrained so as to stabilize how much potassium there is there, how much nitrogen, nodules constellating among the roots as rhizomes. But how much like pizzicato this really is, like the movement in Mahler's Fifth where the register contracts down to just shivering detail, the detail even in a full-blown cavalry of shivering horse hides, the ripple of skin to rid itself of flies. The fly that means death when it is a detail in a still life, insinuating this is still life, where life means all airy reedy architecture of the pond side will subside into compact stratified layers of subsoil, subducting into zones still deeper, superheating, metamorphosing into, then resurfacing as speckled stone, stone of fit grain for an architrave, an architrave stronger in several pieces, "if those pieces are placed with their length in the direction of the center of the world," Leonardo writes in his notebook, "because stones have their grain or fiber generated in the contrary direction i.e. in the direction of the opposite horizons of the hemisphere, and this is contrary to fibers of the plants which have . . ."—and here the text is incomplete, yet not so fragmented that I don't come away from it without a sense of the actual griddedness of the world, the real coordinates, the reCOORDINATING, repurposing of riparian fibers into stone superpositioned onto capitals, columns, plinths, giving an airy, weightless feeling to a space, a Parthenon, not of Athens, but of Nashville, the Athens of the South. Because it is hard to just be here, to see here as itself. Hard not to see, "May 31st, a red and white cow . . . wading first through the meadows full of ditches" and not see instead "a buffalo crossing her Mississippi," and then not see even the Mississippi, but "a kind of Bosphorus."

What else is this? For instance a quail's egg
is also an aphrodisiac. To eat of some of the things
of this world is to have instilled in me an unconquerable
lust for other things. Unconquerable and so given
to monumentality. To works. A half-sunk shattered visage
in the sand. To crane the neck, look up, imagine my face
being rain shattered, more pond surface than gazing
into the surface of the pond, seeing in the ripples
there a network, not of movement but of light, light
reflecting on the bottom, the depths, to focus on this out
of fear of a shallower reflection, a wader through what is
no more than a meadow full of ditches.

from *Super bloom* (3)

There is the promise of a porch and some beer, without which, though only just offered, the day would now be incomplete. In the meantime, I remember the reason Del likes to work in Colorado: the particular light he gets to enjoy in his studio, that everywhere it is the same sun being immaterial, for source matters less than its perception, that is, my closeness to it, the differing rarefactions I gaze through, the air of this world unevenly distributed, as with the deepness of a lake; the truth of perception being this is how I encounter all other truths, where that perception is mediated by a ratio of long and short wavelengths, the shorter being more reflected via scattering—an effect I know is, even now, making my iris blue, for all the world to see, to comment on, as when, as a boy, whenever I emerged from swimming onto a lakeshore, the lensing of water into globes and cusps along my eyelashes would impel the others also just emerged to bend toward my face and wonder at the richness of the blue in there, which, when I shut my eyes and tried to imagine seeing my own eyes as if through theirs, I imagined them less blue as much tooled and embossed with opal or inlay. The Tyndall this scattering is named for is not the same as Tyndale, translator of the first English bible to work directly with original sources, though I often make this error of association. Dissemination of his version exploded due to the technology of the printing press, obviating the necessity of a copyist, their hand, the pretense for time taken to emboss an I with crushed blue, leaf it with gold. You should leaf some of these with gold, my teacher Dan tells Del, referring to the cedar shims in his sculpture called “Machine Botany”: a column of dimensional grids, nexuses of what could be models of man-made molecules, pure carbon, or a short stack of vertebrae;

you should enshrine its processural nature, shunts suggesting the work's not done, pointing to the awkwardness of realization, of realizing what it is—that herd, that which was just there—that you're pointing to has scattered because of you, because of the awkwardness of your step, your scoliosis, a crippled forger. The kiln is still too hot to look at his current project: down-renderings of Morandi still lifes into quadrants and tiles, down as in reduced, to distillations of just the arrangement of the original objects, so that arrangement becomes less grid than syntax. Order that speaks. Order that is oracle. As soon as there is more than one of something, there is possibility. Is its scattering. At some angles blue, where the angle is what lights it just so, no blue at the heart of anything, unless a heart can be a scattering. A heart as in a core. A core as in a line, as in along the lines of what exists: what I'm trying to more than just follow, but in fact to exist within, resonate with, is plucked, so me, too: less singing on or about than with. Less commentator, scholar, back bending though into his own light, more a dredger, a forder with a net of a stream, step stirring the silt, light leafing gold my scattering. My re-rubbling stones to dislodge then sample how many nymphs, how many caddisflies self-enshrined in a doric of pebbles, though it was me who suggested this outing to my friend who works for Fish and Wildlife, purely as a pretense to get into the world, less to actually figure the acidity of the river. Likewise, the hand-madness of a book of hours gave Bourdichon a pretext to render botanical precision in the margins, to detail string beans, the detail all but worshipful, so aware of how real it knows it looks, a damselfly's wing breaches the part of the page where the text begins. Because how else reverence a text that commends

you to the world to come than with all that is good in this one, reproduced with singular granularity, the limits of paradise being the limits of thinking whose limits are my world, whose limits are language, writes Wittgenstein. Read margins here for limits. By this time we have relocated from the studio to the porch, drinking our host's beer, and I mourn out loud I can't just stay on one single thing. There is no being in the world for me that isn't also propagating. Isn't also ringing, ringing out, having blinked as I emerge, drops dropping back into the watershed, formed first around the fringes of the eye, bonding dictating each molecule attract each other molecule, except for those touching nothing, those therefore pulled back inward, internal pressure ensuing, impelling the surface contract to a minimal area, that is, to a globe, adorning the eye so it looks, in this light, nothing like my eye. More like an enshrining.

REBECCA RICKS
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
MA ART

Vespers

These days the metaphors
all seem to describe luminosity:
I am sucking the light
and the marrow straight
from your body.
Ours is the language of desperate stars
gesturing to each other
across centuries of missteps.
The words are unrenowable,
imbued with past languages, like
the exchange of breath
between movements.
I lost an eye once
to gain the knowledge
that God is just
another sponge like me.
Tapping and flinging
a thing against a wall,
just to see what
seeps out.

Paris 1974

Every clouded figure,
each mountain on the horizon
speaks of other figures
and other mountains
in the same way books
speak of other books.
My mother recites to me
a topographical
dream map, in which
a little boy
with tangled curly hair
navigates the circumference
of a living room
where she sits
on a sullied green couch.
Every man I meet
somehow resembles that little boy.
As if my mother's adventures
are being renarrated
over my own adventures.
Or perhaps her stories are
the subtitled version
of my stories.
The stories comingle
and unite into one
superstory.

REBECCA GIVENS ROLLAND
LESLEY UNIVERSITY
MFA CREATIVE WRITING

Once Called Cleopatra

He didn't abandon you. His ship
swept off course. Seas sputtered, spanned—
infinite largesse. Fires and legionnaires

conspired to wheel him back. Still breath
attacked rooms in between you. Now
he turns to flee, betrayed—you flesh

out mottled diaphragm. Blood sugar,
poison, asp—you faint, whistle each dim
conjecture, each obliteration, queen's

armature. Your throat's cast, corner-cut
marble, angular prisons you perished
from. Silver, bronze, belated. Nothing

from your message applies. No single
god stays innocent for long. Always
a brighter wager (gold-flecked, tinged

with wine drops) intervenes. If your fate's
to be widowed tomorrow, fine. If not,
you throw down ropes, ask him to climb—

good luck. Handmaidens will haul up,
hemlock consume, take control. Names
of heirs forgotten, gravesite bare. Waiting

to decide till you know how floodwaters
hit. How black waves outside your window
unhinge. Give him that message, under

half moon, in the space between elbow
and spine. Heed grief—cymbal distracted
from crashing by the gong in your chest.

KATHLEEN L. TAYLOR
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT RIVERSIDE
MFA CREATIVE WRITING

*A Saturnalian Method for Subverting
the Patriarchy*

Each of the forty five
skinned-alive distortions
of daddies that I had imbibed
nine months prior
to this creepshow,
disgorged, sluicing
out of me, oleaginous,
onto the floor. I crotched myself
on top of the newborn corpses,
outpouching my gut enough
to smother their voices.
My muttering ovaries hummed
a dumbbed-down dirge
while I kept regurgitating
internalized abuses as afterbirth.
Their wormy figures turned
slickly Stygian with it.
Indistinguishable anymore,
I malformed the mess,
compacting it into pigheaded
obsidian. A pseudobezoar
that I gifted to another woman
who waited nakedly, impatiently,
to take her turn with my toy.



MICHAEL E. WOODS
COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO
MFA POETRY

[i wish to hell i'd just kept saying]

i wish to hell i'd just kept saying the exact same thing / don't leave /
on my way home on Dorchester Avenue / in the sidewalk dark grey
are maple-leaf shaped / etchings flesh almost an inch deep / at the
center inside these / lie actual leaves so many leaves like gingivitis
preserved / somehow / though wet and sodden / the wind didn't need
them / to move or i don't think / rashly enough to remove them /
neighborly to remove them and save the walk / where it looks like
duck feet or geese or some kind of webbed / i've tripped on the holes
left but i want to know / how deep they can plunge like an unbuttoned
blazer like my dad wore / if once / through the concrete they will fall
a/gain a/part to know if what the leaves are destroying is what keeps
them / safe / i wish this umber gun flesh would / say whether saying
is trueing or bludgeoning an if / the only if / that should be said is
whether movement gushes or excavates a space / to rest / right on the
know/ledge my father's boot is slipping around my foot / well he stole
them from me on accident and i thought i had lost them / but i found
them in his closet underneath some plaid shirts and next to a bag of
unopened mail / when i was clearing his drawers and laying clothes
and books out / for his friends to take / he wrote three letters / not one
word to his best friends / of fifty years or more friends / the he was fifty
seven knew them in this very house as a child friends / party in the
Ozarks every year friends / Dungeons & Dragons every Monday friends
/ who found him on a Monday in his car in the garage / friends so i told
them to take anything / everything was to go either way / in the way /
of saying exact or saying what you mean or saying hell can you let the
leaves make room for themselves and let it go



ART

Get on my level
**Acrylic, latex, and glitter on
unstretched canvas and
sequin fabric**
2017



Glitter, Untitled
Acrylic, latex, and
glitter on fabric and
unstretched canvas
2017



She said/He said
She said side
Acrylic, latex, spray
paint, glitter, and
fabric on canvas
draped over a wall
between two rooms
2017



She said/He said
He said side
Acrylic, latex, spray
paint, glitter, and
fabric on canvas
draped over a wall
between two rooms
2017



I'm like a river
**Acrylic and latex on
drop cloth canvas**
2017



Wonderwall
**Acrylic and latex
on canvas
2016**



INTERVIEW

ISHION HUTCHINSON



*Ishion Hutchinson was born in Port Antonio, Jamaica. He is the author of two poetry collections, *Far District* (Peepal Tree Press, 2010) and *House of Lords and Commons* (FSG, 2016). The current Joseph Brodsky Rome Prize Fellow in Rome, he teaches at Cornell University.*

Foothill: B.H. Fairchild said in an interview with us that “it is ridiculous that graduate school is almost always thought of as being a requirement for becoming a poet.” As a graduate-student journal, and many of us being poets ourselves, we always like to ask about graduate school. You’ve got both an MFA and a PhD. What was your experience in these programs? How did they differ from one another or impact your poetry?

Ishion Hutchinson: I am coming from an opposite background in which graduate school is not at all thought of as a requirement for becoming a poet. That background shaped me, and I’m really still there. For me, until my last year of university in Jamaica I had never heard of an MFA as such. How it was described to me, though, as an idea of a concentrated time to read and write poems with other people—that sounded like something that I would want to be a part of.

For me, I think the major reason was the opportunity to be away from home for a while; to be in New York City. And that was very intriguing. I had never lived for a long period of time outside of Jamaica. The people that I read, and the poetry and literature that I read, came from other places. So that might have influenced the wish to travel for an MFA program. I found that at NYU, the city itself was my school. To be in the metropolis comes with its own shade of prosody. Everything was so different from what I am used to. I can’t say precisely how it impacted my poetry, but perhaps the awareness of new sensibilities: living through different seasons and the experience of being abroad with strangers, many who became

friends. The anonymous flow of the city has its own compositional context. I think in the city, what I learned mostly was this idea of layering, simultaneity, the palimpsestic existence, the daily routine of the city. There's so much to uncover.

More than anything else, being at the heart of empire felt like a call to be vigilant. To never take home for granted. It's a very sentimental thing. With the idea that you're away, there is a sort of pledge to the self to return stronger, a very Virgilian sentimental thing. To return to the country bringing the muse, even though the muses are already at home. Though the great difficulty was continuing to learn to be home while away from home.

Foothill: In *Far District* we noticed the clash of the natural and industrial world, a signature of many postcolonial narratives. But even more specifically, there seems to be a friction between instinctual and experiential knowledge and imported canonical knowledge. For example, in "Anthropology": "Their eyes burn, gazing / at the half-yam moon – their tribe's / biography, a possession they cannot read" combines the potentially dry academic nature of biography with the more visceral bodily experience of the natural world. And jumping forward to "The Orator" in *House of Lords and Commons*: "a tweeded rodent scholar lectured / on his authority of 'Caribbean Culture,' / phosphorus Caliban, switching dialectics / in a single line."

How does the intersection of these two themes inform, drive, or complicate your poetic projects? Or does it?

Hutchinson: I don't think there's any versus in it, really. Or maybe you are indeed saying that there is a unity rather than a clash. They are together, at any given moment it's all combined. Sometimes it's not even possible to make any distinction.

Caribbean life is like that. The good versus evil is a very thin line for certain aspects of Caribbean life. There's less of a dichotomy. One little path that I would take, so as not to be overtaken by one thing or the other. One of the most amazing things when you look at a Caribbean walkway is that if you enter into a place and there is an official path or walk, no one—or very few people—actually use that path. You look around and there are several, several little patches beaten from people going, crossing.

So, there is actually a transgressive spirit of the people. It had to have been so given its history; you can't open a gate and say, "this way." The looker will observe that there's something other than what's being pointed out, because it might be too good to be true.

Foothill: The *New Yorker* recently categorized you as a post-post colonial poet. Besides the difficulties of using post as a prefix for any kind of movement or time period, do you think you “fit” into this category? Or, to what extent are these sorts of classifications only useful to a certain degree before they become ultimately arbitrary?

Hutchinson: That kind of encouragement in graduate school is doubly disconcerting in a creative program. You hope that what is taught is how to identify writers by their strengths and weaknesses and not by any kind of labeling. Really, it comes down to if it is good or bad. Writing is harsh in that sense. The work has to stand alone.

I don't disagree with attempts to place a writer within certain contexts. The danger, though, is creating false vacuums that can pull writers down paths that aren't advancing the conversation that the work is trying to engage. But it is a risk a critic must take in trying to create those contexts and can only do so, I believe, with sympathy. A sympathy like love, in service of telling a reader why he or she should read this book. That is the critic's job, which is provisional at best. But the poet, when good, will defy one context or the other, so the contexts must grow endlessly in renewed ways. I don't think any of those contexts fully contain the poems.

The question of whether the work is illuminated, though, will remain personal, and it is left to the discovery of each individual reader. The question for me becomes, “Is the reader illuminated by the work?” One of the motivations of inspiration to continue working harder is that the poet never knows and is sometimes deeply suspicious that the answer is in the negative.

Foothill: You've got a pretty impressive digital presence as a poet. Besides having a beautiful website, you also collaborated on a digital poem, “The Garden.” Considering that technology generally speeds up the dissemination and rate at which we absorb information, the digital version of “The Garden” pushes against this a little bit in that it is not skimmable; it forces slow, deliberate, thoughtful, and creative reading. What do you think the digital medium adds to the poetic form? What was the process like? Is there a reason you decided on this particular poem for digitization? Can we look forward to more digital work in the future?

Hutchinson: All praises go to my friend and collaborator Joel Golombeck. He was the one who digitized “The Garden.” He also designed my website. He was a former student in a class I taught at NYU, an intro in creative writing, and we did prose and poetry. We became and remained friends throughout the years. He's a

wonderful prose writer; he's written incredible short stories. And he has a company that seeks to bring classic tales to a new platform, like what he did for my poem. I am the only living writer that he has ever illustrated a work for, but he has done works like Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart."

Joel picked the poem out of a batch, and that was the one that spoke to him most. I think why he was interested in doing that particular poem—as you can guess from the fact he's illustrated Poe and Kafka—was that it has a darker tone.

As to his process of creating the digitized version, he first illustrated images for the poem by hand, inked illustrations. What the digital medium does is add a haunting quality, I think. It sort of travels through something like medieval woodcuts rather than existing on a flat surface, so the poetic form had to be dismantled. The poem is one sentence, and in its stanza form, it's heavily enjambed. But in the illustrations it has a serpentine, twisting, sinuous look to it. I've never done anything like that before and haven't done any since.

Joel has actually been illustrating a long poem of mine called "Revenge Mule." I don't know when it will reach its final format. It's something to look forward to, so I hope soon.

Foothill: Unfortunately, being a poet isn't always a particularly lucrative profession. Many of us, poets and graduate students alike, teach to pay the bills, and teaching can take a lot of time. How do you reconcile the sometimes-tedious number of hours required for prepping a class with writing time? How do you navigate the various demands of graduate school with your creative pursuits?

Hutchinson: First I would have to say that both the MFA and the PhD were great experiences for me. I looked at it as a conversation between critical thinking and imaginative, explorative being. They became sort of jointed and were nourishing and extended my grasp of literature.

I struggle a bit with the term "creative pursuits," because for me, I don't think of poetry, or being a poet, as that. A pursuit has an end in mind. A creative pursuit could easily be reversed, or end with something as simple as boredom. It seems to me that graduate school was, or is, a creative pursuit; that is, anything that leads you to write better poems. Reading is the core reason to get an MFA or a PhD. With the MFA and PhD, it was the pursuit of reading as a reciprocating act: the demand and the pleasure of getting inside of the technical life of a poem or prose. But as far as poetry is concerned, on the contrary, it is a commitment.

Before coming to an MFA, I thought that this wish, or even to put it more strongly, this gift—I consider someone who is a poet as being in possession of a gift—was one that had to be realized one way or the other.

Foothill: Brilliant. I really love the idea of thinking of graduate school as a creative pursuit and poetry as a commitment—something ongoing.

Hutchinson: Yeah, if you're really serious about writing poems, it will happen. Some of it is just logical time management, of course. What I often do for teaching is figure out what my current reading interests might be, and I try to invite students to read with me. So I create the class or classes around what I am reading. It's not necessarily completely about that, but it does involve a bit of what I am reading personally, and hoping to generate [creative] work out of that. So I find that to be a helpful approach, particularly when the teaching load is a lot.

I'm not sure if I have very meaningful advice. One thing I have heard is that prose-writers don't teach much poetry, but the poets [who teach] are usually a bit more open to bring prose to the curriculum. For me, I feel like that can only be figured out by returning to some favorite prose. For instance, I often bring in passages from *Treasure Island*. It's one of my favorite books, though I read it for the first time so long ago. It's a great way to talk though prosody. That is, the typical issues that prose writers deal with, character building and plot lines and so on.

Foothill: It is intriguing to me that prose writers tend to teach more prose and less poetry, whereas poets tend to be less likely to lean one way or the other. What do you think it is about poetry that makes so many instructors and students kind of gun shy?

Hutchinson: I've been wondering, too. Maybe it comes from how, or if, it is taught in high school and the way in which they were first introduced to it. But something is so freeing about poetry once you bring it in, because there's this search for meaning; "What does it mean?" and that is a starting point. A very freeing kind of engagement. The real excitement for me in the class is the poem being recited. In doing that, in having a poem be read aloud and let it be, is a lesson in itself. You don't have to go further right then. Sort of sitting with it and exposing it to the air. Perhaps returning at another time, to then slow down that recitation and look at the effects sonically.

Foothill: What are you reading right now? What should we be reading?

Hutchinson: Right now I just finished the last story in Italo Calvino's collection called *Marcovaldo*. It's an old collection, really wonderful fables set in the Monteverde section of Rome. These stories are written in the 40s, 50s, and 60s but they feel of this contemporary moment.

I also am about to read *Letters to His Neighbor*, a new translation of some letters by Proust done by Lydia Davis. So I am excited to read that. They seem really beautiful from my quick glance. I am reading Bunyon's *Pilgrim's Progress* again. I don't know why.

Foothill: Any particular poets that we should be reading that we might be missing?

Hutchinson: That are alive?

Foothill: Or dead.

Hutchinson: It depends. When I'm in a certain space, at least after a while of drafting things, I realize, "Oh, I should return to these kinds of work." So lately, returning to *The Iliad*, I've been looking at various translations. For a few different epics, actually. I started recently to reread also the translation of *The Divine Comedy* by Reverend Henry Francis Cary. It was one of the books that Keats took with him when he went on tour his first time. [Cary] translated all three books of *The Divine Comedy* and called his translations *The Vision*. Worth reading.

Foothill: To come back a little bit to your poetry, we feel as if the island landscape is more immediate in *Far District*, whereas in *House of Lords and Commons* it is revisited with a greater sense of reminiscence or nostalgia. Again from "The Orator":

You write "I remembered the peninsula / of my sea, the breeze opening the water / to no book but dusk; no electricity, / just stars pulsing over shanties, / and, later, an inextinguishable moon, / invisible in this dark NYC room."

Having previously grappled with this sort of subject matter in *Far District* before revisiting it in your next book, has your poetic relationship with Jamaica shifted?

Hutchinson: I was writing poems that ended up in *House of Lords and Commons* at the same time that I was writing poems for *Far District*. So I feel that the attention to home and certain details will remain the same and perhaps it will always be that question of an islandness, island being in all its modalities. I see that obviously you're right, that there's a perspective of distance because that is true I wrote the book in America. So maybe more of that distance came between or entered into the voice. I still hope it continues the intimacy, and I feel it does because my tone is naturally shaped by the island.

It hasn't shifted from that, but maybe there is an alertness to certain urgencies. What to call it? The necessity of an awareness of a broader political spectrum, but not just confined to the politics of or at home. This is a realization for me of the notion of the Black Atlantic, broadly speaking, the Americas. So the experience is more and more sort of grappling with landscapes that were earlier imagined, but now encountered, and seeing with a closer eye what is, for instance, the American moment. The ricochets are really wide and that is also the world vibration.

It's easy and perhaps too simple in the case of distance, given that distance makes things sharper or at least puts them in sharper perspective. For me, I would perhaps want to pay more attention to the emotional frequency, a kind of—like what you said—a nostalgia. What is even more sentimental than nostalgia? There definitely must be a word for that.

It's desperate in a way because it's not just in space and time that things are rapidly changing. Returning home and seeing things as unrecognizable. But the desperation, and also the feeling of perhaps even guilt, that something has been left behind or changed, and I didn't record it. It is what has happened to many communities all over: the documents have not been written. So we're sort of left to return to what was first recorded, and usually that's the colonial, written from the colonial's hand. This is of course simplifying things a great deal. For instance, in the Caribbean, music is the highest expression of the history of the people.

But to speak in terms of poetry, many things have not been named. Many things were written about in an earlier period, and those things are important to revisit. [I want to] be conscious about my place in that kind of continuance of colonial life and where I am coming from. Those voices are still coming out now.

So I've gone a long way around answering the questions. I just only wanted to end by saying something about memory as a form of actualization. Memory as presence. If and when a poem is true and it

records something in memory, it has returned it to the present time. So when a poem is read and you breathe it out into the air, the line of the poem is then brought to the present moment.

Foothill: You mentioned Caribbean music just a moment ago, and that is a nice segue into our next question: You said in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* that “music performs an internal rebellion” and that it “gives you a space to retreat into this intense privacy, which is a form of resistance.” You’ve also connected *House of Lords and Commons* specifically to a musical aesthetic, suggesting that words, like music, are “left to do subterranean work.” In today’s politically divisive climate, what responsibility does poetry or lyric have and how can it engage in a dialogue of resistance?

Hutchinson: Poets are so terrified of that word responsibility. Maybe there are ways to qualify it and narrow down what we mean, because the poet would first say that the responsibility is a) to the poem now being written and b) broadly to language. And I would still hold that line. The responsibility to language, to use a language, renewing it, making sure that language—even in a very playful poem that on the surface has nothing to do with, say, the politics of life—has ethical proportions.

I would want to align myself with the job or the duty of creating a shield for anyone who might be so kind to read a poem of mine, to feel as if this poem offers a kind of armor to go into the world. But you know, saying that too, it’s just being open and being vulnerable, not to set up a didactic poetics to serve as an answer to whatever might be happening. But rather to create a poetics of ambiguity through reengaging the questions from other angles where the poet is not someone with the answers laid out, through layering questions, and through opening the space of making the questions increase.

I think it is the poet’s role to condense all of them into a sort of precise language of immediacy. Not to confound by being a word dazzler, but somehow really trying to get to a simplicity. Even the simplicity you find in music, right?

Of course, in music, there is pure sound. Language doesn’t interrupt the flow because the linguistic properties are so extensive. One word possesses an etymology, and there’s a moral implication and this can be endless, and tiring, and might be very clunky in a poem when you start to then investigate. Sometimes what is most interesting in a poem is the absence of what you think should be there, where the poet decides to allow white space or line breaks. Those poetic acts are really acts of resistance, and even resisting

accessibility, that is, the notion that I should read this poem and then know everything about it. I think a poem does not try to show off by creating density through just heavy words, but density with the technical possibilities that are available to a poet. Some poets with a limited vocabulary—someone like John Clare—can create poems that can stand next to any other poet of vast vocabulary—like Milton—simply because there’s a through line in their use of prosody that connects them and makes them equal.

My feeling is aligned with perhaps one of the most militantly political poets, Shelley. He has such simple lyrics, but then he can go high. One of the things he said is that poetry is a sword of lightening, ever unsheathed. And it consumes the scabbard that would contain it. Even the form that would hold a poem is consumed by poetry. But we might not remember the distinction between poem and poetry. We need poems, but we find poetry. And we never know when we might. Poems can even be some sort of pop thing that we recite and feel good about. But then, poetry is an elemental sword.

Foothill: Your poetry is rich with allusion. As T.S. Eliot famously noted in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” the artist is enmeshed with the fabric of history that came before him, the “pastness of the past” and its presence. If, as in “The Wanderer,” “history is that rusty anchor holding no ship in the bay,” how or does *House of Lords and Commons* engage with the past, if as Eliot believes, poetry is indebted to and also troubles the notion of history?

Hutchinson: History is deeply problematic for various reasons. You have the capital-H history, official history. When we speak of it, we’re perhaps following a tradition of how history has been handed down to us that has been more or less the story of big men. It’s a fragment and the odd bits, the little things. What we might call the poetic breach of history is where the real conscience of tradition is shown. More than ever, it takes the poet to be able to reveal those, because it’s not the official standard. And the poet is never that, never the official standard. So we’ll go to the cracks and the fissures, the traces.

There’s a great poem by the poet Geoffrey Hill called “History as Poetry” which I think is very instructive in that sense of the endless battle between those two forces: history and poetry. At one point history was written in poetic form, the early classical mode. All the historians were poets. So maybe we could even think of it in a sense as a form of return. The difference is that it’s the lost, buried histories that are now being brought to the fore.

Foothill: Are there any specific rituals that help you bleed at the typewriter?

Hutchinson: No. Waking up.

My favorite, though, is working in the morning. Writing in the morning. It's different, though, it depends on what stage it is. When you say that—writing—you only mean what it says literally, the moment of putting pen to paper. But when actually writing things, I equate that kind of labor with reading. So reading many things at once is perhaps one of the beginnings of each stage [of writing]. Like most poets, I have to hear a melody, some sort of rhythm happening within me and then extemporizing, things like that.

Foothill: Of course, the inevitable question: Do you have any advice for young poets? What would you tell your 14-year-old self?

Hutchinson: I think imitation is, for the young poet, a real blessing. You start imitating early and imitating simply by repeating the works of poets, writing it out in journals, copying it. Learning by instinct certain rhythmic patterns by writing it out, becoming a sort of apprentice. Just by creating your own canon early. And if you can memorize the first few stanzas of poems, then that's the secret of becoming a great poet.

What would I tell my 14-year-old self? Huh. When I was 14, I was in high school. The high school is on a cliff on the border of Portland and St. Thomas. It overlooks the sea. [Laughs] It wasn't too shabby. The higher you go in grade, the higher you go in the building and so the more vantage you get to see the sea. And at 14 I was probably mid-level. So I wasn't getting the perfect view yet. There was a time when I should have spent more time at the back of the school, where there were these cherry trees. So these cherry trees—if I'm not mistaken—they shaded the grave of either an early founder of the school, or at least there was a grave-like brick structure. I used to sit there. Sit on it, below the cherry trees. I should have spent more time there.

Foothill: We like to finish with a question about finishing. We, of course, were delighted to see "Bicycle Eclogue" in *House of Lords and Commons* in a slightly different form. What is your revision process like? How do you know when a poem is finished? In other words, at what point do you feel you have earned your beverage of choice at the end of the day?

Hutchinson: That's a good one. I'm always thinking of that famous saying by Paul Valéry that a poem is not finished but abandoned. You know, ["Bicycle Eclogue"] for instance is certainly the way that

I compose. It was part of a sequence, so there were many eclogues that I was writing at the time. I was trying to create a sequence that would go together both from the standpoint of narrative—the verbal web of actions—and the technical structuring of the form, the sonic integrity. So I revised drafts based on those two principles.

But for me it's never the end of the day. You know, the poems gestate for a long time, so they sit for a while after they're written. With the eclogue poem you so generously published [in 2011]—that was written in 2009—a year before *Far District* was published [in 2010]. And then it was taken out of the sequence it was first a part of. And then over the years, I tinkered with it until it was published [in *House of Lords and Commons*, in 2016]. So when you saw it, when you published it, it was already tampered with. Then afterwards, there wasn't an overhaul change. I had come close to the final shape. Generally, the reason for tinkering is the rhythmic life of the poem. That's my motivation for making changes. Secondly, it might have to do with a certain precision, textual as it is contextual. There are certain things that are really facts. We can't all have that Keatsian moment of putting Cortez in place of Balboa, right? So sometimes it might have to do with that, just being wiser about the information.

I think I earn the beverage of choice after listening back and feeling that, if someone else were to pull the poem apart, something would feel amiss. In the end it had become irreducible.

CONTRIBUTORS

BABA BADJI, born in Senegal, West Africa, is currently a chancellor's fellow and third-year PhD candidate in comparative literature with the Track for International Writers at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. His interests are poetry: fixed and free forms, poetics of exile and poetics of blackness, postcolonial studies, translation and borders, and imagination and the art of exile. He holds a BA from the College of Wooster, Ohio and received his MFA in poetry and translation from Columbia University. He is fluent in French, Wolof, Mende, and Diola. His first chapbook, *Owls of Senegal*, was a finalist for the *Seattle Review's* 2016 Chapbook Contest, judged by Claudia Rankine. His translation of Todd Colby's "How to Look Like Everything Is Okay in Photographs" was featured in the 2014 PEN World Voices Festival. He is working on a new collection, *Ghost Letters and Museum of Exile*.

TIM BARZDITIS is currently a graduate student at George Mason University's MFA program. Prior to his time at GMU, Tim earned his BA and MA in English at Lynchburg College. He is currently involved with the GMU literary journal, *So to Speak*, as well as Stillhouse Press. His work has been recently featured in *Freezeray Poetry*, *FIVE:2:ONE*, and elsewhere.

CHELSEA BOXWELL moved to Claremont, California in 2016 from Texas for graduate school. The bright lights, colors, and neon signs of the city have given her and her vibrant eclectic paintings a place to belong. She has always been interested and fascinated with color, and as a painter she has continued to keep color in the spotlight. She focuses on the properties of synthetic colors that react with light in ways that create the fluorescents, the glosses, and the satins and how glitter changes the perception of color. Boxwell has recently shown at PØST in downtown LA and at the Millard Sheets Art Center for the *SoCalMFA 2017 Juried Exhibition*, which she also helped organize and co-curate.

MATTHEW BRAILAS is a recent graduate of New York University's MFA program. His work has previously appeared in *Plain China*, the *Nassau Weekly*, and the *Nassau Literary Review*.

ELLA FLORES is currently an MFA candidate at Northern Michigan University. She is an associate poetry editor for *Passages North* and *Milk Journal*. She has had poems published at *Cider Press Review* and *Fifth Wednesday Journal*, and has an upcoming publication in *Puerto del Sol*.

BROOKE LARSON holds an MFA in creative writing from Columbia University, and is currently a PhD student in poetry at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Her poems and essays have recently appeared in the *Offbeat*, *Gravel*, the *Swamp*, and *Dialogue Journal*, and she was this year's runner-up for the Tennessee Williams Poetry Prize. Often she runs away to teach primitive survival skills as a wilderness guide in Arizona's Sonoran Desert.

BELLE LING is studying for a PhD in creative writing, specializing in poetry at The University of Queensland, Australia. She likes writing poems that shuffle between the quotidian and the transcendent, provoking in-depth thoughts on philosophical reflection. Her poems have appeared in *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, *Barnwood International Poetry Magazine*, *Overland*, *Meanjin*, *Taj Mahal Review*, *The Istanbul Review*, and more. Her poem, "That Space," won second place in the ESL category of the International Poetry Competition organized by Oxford Brookes University in October 2016. She is currently working on her dissertation on the relationship between food and poetry by looking at Pablo Neruda's food odes.

HOLLY MASON is a Kurdish-American poet from North Carolina. She is currently in the MFA poetry program at George Mason University, where she teaches English composition, literature, and creative writing. She is the blog editor at *So to Speak*, a feminist journal of language and arts. Her poems have been published in *Outlook Springs*, *Rabbit Catastrophe Review*, and *The Northern Virginia Review*.

MARSHALL NEWMAN is a poet, fiction writer, freelance editor, and English writing tutor who earned his master of fine arts degree at Georgia College & State University in 2017. Prior to his pursuit of poetry, Marshall was a nationally touring musician out of Austin, Texas. He has worked as a bio-hazard technician, a bouncer, and in metals fabrication. He enjoys welding, the study of Near-East history, building remote-controlled planes, and exercise. His poem's inclusion in *Foothill* will be Marshall Newman's first publication. He is very grateful.

JEANNA PADEN is a first-year MFA student at the University of Memphis studying poetry. She works as a fiction editor and distribution assistant for BelleBooks, Inc., and she volunteers as a poetry editor for the *Pinch*, University of Memphis's literary magazine. In the future, she hopes to pursue teaching so that she can put books in the hands of people who need them the most. You can find her @JeannaPaden on Twitter.

KARTHIK PURUSHOTHAMAN hails from Chennai, India, is an MFA candidate at William Paterson University of New Jersey, and reads submissions to *Map Literary*. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Rattle*, *Subtropics*, *The Common*, and elsewhere.

KYLAN RICE has writing published in the *Kenyon Review*, *RHINO*, *West Branch*, the *Seattle Review*, and elsewhere. He has an MFA in poetry from Colorado State University and is currently a PhD candidate in literature at UNC-Chapel Hill.

REBECCA RICKS is a New York-based artist and technologist with a master's degree from New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program in the Tisch School of Arts. Her work explores themes of narrative and self-concept in an era of automation. Among her best text-based pieces are a series of programmatically generated poetry, internet chatbots, and explorations of online identity in 3D spaces. Ricks's writing has been published in *IEEE Technology & Society Magazine*, *Wayfarer Magazine*, and the *Write Room*. Her work has been written about in *Technical.ly* and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

REBECCA GIVENS ROLLAND is a graduate student pursuing an MFA in creative writing at Lesley University. Her first collection, *The Wreck of Birds*, was published by Bauhan Publishing, and she has two chapbooks out through dancing girl press. Currently she lives in Boston.

KATHLEEN L. TAYLOR is an MFA candidate at the University of California, Riverside where she serves as poetry editor for *Santa Ana River Review*. Her work has appeared in *Southern Women's Review*, the *McNeese Review*, and *White Stag*; among others.

MICHAEL E. WOODS used to live with a family of raccoons in Missouri, but currently they edit the *Columbia Poetry Review* and teach at Columbia College Chicago as an MFA candidate. They received the Merrill Moore Prize for Poetry in 2015 from Vanderbilt University. Other recent poems can be found in *Pretty Owl Poetry*, the *New Territory*, *Hollow Literary Journal*, and *Heavy Feather Review*.

FOOT

a journal of poetry

HILL



Directed by students at Claremont Graduate University, *Foothill: a journal of poetry* is an annual print and online poetry journal that features the work of emerging poets enrolled in graduate programs around the globe. To listen to some of the poets performing their work, visit www.cgu.edu/foothill.

 Claremont Graduate University