



13

©2014 by Cobalt Review

No element of this volume may be reproduced without the written consent of Cobalt Review and/or the artist or author.

All publication rights belong to the author(s).

Poetry Editor: Ruben Quesada
Managing Editor: Andrew Keating

Cobalt Review
Baltimore, MD

For all inquiries, please email cobalt@cobaltreview.com.

Submissions for the quarterly Cobalt Review are accepted at all times. The 2015 Cobalt Writing Prizes will open for submissions on February 1, 2015; and we are now reading for the 2015 annual print issue.

issue thirteen

december twenty-one,
twenty-fourteen

COBALT

(poetry)

CONTENTS

POETRY

John Sibley Williams	Pilgrimage	1
Engram Wilkinson	We Cannot Push Away	2
David Nielsen	Neckties	4
Cara Chamberlain	Knitting	5
Peycho Kanev	The Song of My Computer	6
M.J. Duggan	I Always Seem to Watch You from Afar	7
Brett Foster	Pastoral with Breath Visible	8
Daniel Bourne	Frequent Classroom Problems	9
Danielle Weeks	Tiger Bone Wine	10
Alyse Richmond	Weightlessness	11
Kim Suttell	Decorum	12
Vanessa Couto Johnson	Fitzgerald Park	13
Aaron DeLee	Selfie: Cupping Scar Tissue	14
Katie Manning	The Book of Moot	15
Joseph Rios	Baldemar's Jale	16
Simon Perchik	[Untitled]	17

CONTENTS

Juan Morales	For the Underdogs	18
Derrick Austin	The Bait	19
Tennae Maki	Revolver. Somewhere Else, It Remains Awake.	20
Maceo Whitaker	Mud Huts	21
Kristian O'Hare	Amyl Awake	22
Jakob VanLammeren	The Book of Moot	23
Michael Dowdy	The Dead Send Regrets	24
Dane Hamann	Light Splashing So Deliberately	25

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS

PILGRIMAGE

We're late.

Night has already parceled the wall into disconnected bricks.
Someone's collected the prayers slipped between
and burned them in effigy. In silence the sky responds.
The mothers crumbled to all fours scratching at the wall
have returned home to a different kind of wailing.
The soldiers have already said goodbye to their limbs.
Men with skin darker than the absence around stars
have retired their chessboards and stories and ancestors.

There is nothing left to lose and ask for again.

I've carried a notebook bearing what I cannot release of you
down past the river, through the sands, to this myth.
I am wanting to be rid of your bricks and light: my religion.

But the ears of the wall have closed for the night.
At night the river runs backwards, toward memory and truth.
Tonight I'll sleep like someone who has never known truth
and be the first to relieve this burden of hope
by smashing my head into the wall of the gods
until love has left me so love can return.

ENGRAM WILKINSON

WE CANNOT PUSH AWAY

Night comes walking at us like
an orderly: blue uniform, hand
outstretched, balancing on his palm
our small, paper cup. An offering,
the two pills, things to help. If
what survives of us is love it's
got to be digested first, each star
trapped in the oblong peach-shape
released through the blood. Maybe
this has made me heavy, each
star a small dumbbell coursing
through the body. Maybe this
has made me dumb, my left side
leaden with missed appointments.
Help me. I do not want to be remembered
as a hulking giant, dumbstruck under
the cosmology of drugs I will swallow
tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow.
I do not want to be remembered
with the weight I've gained recently,
addicted to the aftertaste of
panic. There is more blood in me
than I'm supposed to have. You had
this blood, this same blood, heavy,
infected, let it gather in your shoes
as we walked to buy cigarettes, shed it
one night while skinny-dipping in
the lake. What do I do? I grab
the evening's long arm as I would
shake your hand, and accept

ENGRAM WILKINSON

each offering as if it came from
God. I accept. I do not want
to be remembered. The road,
barely lit under the cloudy sky,
is long, but the dog doesn't seem
to care much about that. She runs,
fleeing the quiet from which
we cannot push away.

DAVID NIELSEN

NECKTIES

In a couple of hundred years
people will see them in history books

and historical dramas,
the way we see powdered wigs today,

not sure, exactly, of their significance—
a position in parliament?

A frippery of the upper class?
The art of tying one has become a lost art.

Once my arthritic grandfather
begged me to conjure him a knot:

eyes closed, head back—
like that statue for Saint John of the Cross—

he stood waiting for a miracle.

CARA CHAMBERLAIN

KNITTING

*No distinction was made between the gestures of language
and the gestures of life.*

—Nicole Krauss, *The History of Love*

It goes beyond the familiar casting on,
binding off, knitting and purling,
to include the slip-slip-knit,
the pass-slip-stitch-over,
the right-slant-increase,
the left-decrease—
all rendered in code such as
K2tog pssso yo and Ssk,
leading to the inevitable conclusion that
our foremothers did not simply make
the stockinette stitch, the trinity stitch,
the seed stitch, as their fingers whipped
through cotton, up to four needles turning
one linear chant into a polyphonic
weave often symbolic. They were tying
their own serene insurrection.

PEYCHO KANEV

THE SONG OF MY COMPUTER

The best way to write is not to try:
let it flow like sadness dripping
down from the summer leaves,
and my computer screams: “Let me
sing my song!” (but computers cannot
scream), (doesn’t matter, this is cybernetic
dream),
and the mirror shows me the fear
of the deer or the bravery of the crow,
My dear, I say in my sleep, sorrow
comes to us when the night falls
over the city,
dark, grey, irrelevant,
it comes, slowly, slowly,
embracing us in its gentle arms—
warm and fuzzy we feel and let us
scream.

M.J. DUGGAN

I ALWAYS SEEM TO WATCH YOU FROM AFAR

On evening where sheets of rooks whirl
like cyclones of flapping ash,
through the dark afternoon window
where I see the shell of a blue star.

I watch you from afar
time beating like an impatient monster in motion,
our day became fitted hours of paid banality,
yet I always seem to watch you leave but never
arrive.

When I heard the wind carry its voice
from cordial gutter to napkin fields of snow,
where horses ran in triangles of untouched lavender
did I see an image of you walking away.

If I could stop time and its deathly ruin
and pause just an hour in your arms
I would see the true wonderment in love
its necessities and beauty in flourishing threads of time.

Yet I always seem to watch you from afar
either leaving or sleeping beside me deep in dream,
passing me in the hallway at night
like a familiar stranger on a returning train.

BRETT FOSTER

PASTORAL WITH BREATH VISIBLE

adapted from The Greek Anthology

It's cold as hell out here, that's clear enough, and yet
as I lead this group of international, high-school students
through Wrigleyville (just to see that place, though closed shut now),
I forget the stinging wind and long, wound-up gusts
when I see up ahead lanky Therimacos now motionless,
young Greek standing underneath an oak
pub sign on Addison, struck still, so still, by a lone
streaking star, which he follows as it flames out across the heavens.
I'm struck dumb with him, everything lost, until the white fire happens—
flurries beginning to fall and reaching us as if they were a thousand
thousand fragments of that one finished light.

DANIEL BOURNE

FREQUENT CLASSROOM PROBLEMS

Often there are simple solutions to challenges
Of classroom technology, the problems that arise
When you are conducting a lesson.
The oboes are flat, or Jacob's mother has died,
Her sad face peering through the window. These distractions
Should not take away class time, so here are
Some remedies to apply. For example,

There should be a blue light in the center of the amp,
But there isn't. This might be construed
As a mere existential error, but for you to be sure
You must consult the proper manual, the one
Buried in the cornerstone of the building
At the beginning of the last century. And as you
Scratch your head, turning knobs and praying, the students

Start to fiddle with their own intricate contraptions, their thumbs
So miraculously evolved. Soon you hear a loud moan.
Jacob's mother flits about the room, just one more
ghost in the machine, sadly, paying even now
Full tuition for her son, who sleeps through every class,
His head down on the book
Meant to open up his eyes.

DANIELLE WEEKS

TIGER BONE WINE

At Guilin Park, the beasts are bred for bones
the wealthy pour into their porcelain cups
with every rising sun. The medicine
that lurks in tiger skin, they say, revives
the weakest man and makes a happy wife.

The Park knows better than to kill a tiger
outright. Instead: the starving down to stripes
and feigned concern, the maddening of the beasts
until they crush their brothers' throats, who learn
the brutal mercy of beings already dead.

Their fur is stripped like sheets from a death bed.
The fifty-five pounds of skeleton
are steeped in thirty-eight percent wine—
a heavy set of numbers, wed to bills
that curl from pockets of tailored, imported suits.

The tigers end in Pepsi bottles, hidden
in the bags of auction-winners flying home.
They gurgle down the throats of men who dream
of bone-fed youth, of taking in a life
to mask the certain fade of flesh.

At dawn in Guilin Park, the walking wine
is pawing at the walls and going blind.
Its stripes embrace the latticed shadows of the cage,
a blur of ribs and slowing blood that bows
to ending in the place where it began.

ALYSE RICHMOND

WEIGHTLESSNESS

purple watery beads stain white
ridges of a plastic cup. Bitter, I am
drinking a blend of vinegary reds

and playing back my favorite sex
dream—a voice in my ear, stubble
scraping thin skin, goose bumps

spreading like pox in the deep
blue of nights we should never
have spent together. Because now

I want your palms pressing down
on my wrists, creating a fullness
in once-empty veins—a heft

where there used to be weight-
lessness

KIM SUTTELL

DECORUM

There was a man whose smell was all
I ever wanted. Eating wouldn't
matter—I would abandon life
following his scent. Even
so he made me hungry, so
our legs wrapped and clinging were
smashing sandwich wrappers. Time
and trash heap, with pressure eke
limned sediments. And then
indifference piles up like
rabbits and pheasants in a still
life, with fur warm enough
to care for, it would look nice
over the sideboard. By
the mantel clock I know he lies
still, accreted treasure tucked
in the strata, centuries under.

VANESSA COUTO JOHNSON

FITZGERALD PARK

There are decisions such as whether or not to leave the jacket on in hot with rain. Ducks create small disasters in the fountain. Young, female on a breaded surface, they peck first at each other before eating. Beakless-faced, we juxtapose our noses on a bench. In a soft place, I tell you, The nose is an essential part of the face. You note the wing variations of fowl, how, yet, they fly. But they also rest. When five, I held up dead doves I would later eat. I wanted to show I understood the realities. You know how to hold quail in a petting zoo, then anticipate a flight that does not happen. Something either stays or goes, but the go is limited. The exit is noted in signs, but impossible, as I walk on a sphere.

AARON DELEE

SELFIE: CUPPING SCAR TISSUE

This plum pain in my shoulder, buried
 beneath blade, behind polished, ax-shaped
bone and embedded in blood vessels
 has risen. At first it dripped in boyish
red whine droplets, staining eardrums.

I've tried callousness, thickening my skin
 to sink it again, but leather never made things
better. The pain pooled, flooded, poured
 forth. A cabinet's worth collection
of mason jars pulled it to preserve—the kind
 my mother kept a garden of cherry tomatoes
in; but the ache could not be contained
 under such heated pressure. It rivered

and I filled batches of balloons with its expanse,
 hoping to toss them over my head and watch
them drift off. Yet all would fall back down,
 burst. Swelling into a great cacophony, a black

and blue magnitude the size of Lake Michigan;
 fresh as the day my maker made it,
sunk it deep into me. With the pull and rip
 currents, undertows, its hypothermic
chill, I have had to learn not to resist
 its grip, lest seaweed strangle my kicking
feet, flailing limbs. Instead I accept its tug
 on my wrist and swim parallel to the shore.

KATIE MANNING

THE BOOK OF MOOT

all that remains of Second Timothy

who will judge
the dead
God
in view of his
living?

the Lord
loved this world
but
he has deserted me
like a drink

a great number of
itching ears want to hear
myths
from the lion's mouth
but
they
turn their ears away
from every
sound

come to me quickly
Lord

best to get here before winter

JOSEPH RIOS

BALDEMAR'S JALE

Some loud morning, you wake:
a hammer sledge meets a black crow—
bar and makes it sing a vibrating,
humming, knuckle swelling crash
of drum-drum on asphalt black—
note the simple, repeating dashes
painted a cold as fuck yellow,
keeping time under Baldemar's wind-
catching hand, swirling every which way
from the passenger side. See Baldemar
shaking rocks in a paper cup,
sitting there on a plastic milk crate
behind the U-Haul store. He will do whatever
you want for a square ten an hour.
His back, his hands, his limited English,
his supplication, and his silver capped teeth
are yours. When its over, Baldemar only asks
that you return him to where he was found.

SIMON PERCHIK

So much dirt yet you cram
as if these seeds would slip
crush everything to bloom

the way you pick out a loose stone
hoping for an avalanche
and the yard covers with flowers

once your hands come together
so the ground can't move
or light up your eyes

because it's easier than sorting
—you don't cheat anyone :one seed
next to another and another and another

lowered so everyone
is put back piece by piece
and next Spring will climb out

to look for you
—you use colors! come dressed
waving your fingers

sifting the Earth whose light
is wasted in the daytime
counting, counting, counting.

JUAN MORALES

FOR THE UNDERDOGS

Like anyone, I've spent the last few years smelling failure
wafting off the politicians and blotting
onto newspapers that smudge my fingers.
The poems won't come tonight. I'm thinking instead
of this hiss of anti-war, shock and awe, hard-headed Saddam statue yanked
to crack the tiles below. I shake my head for battles
fought for no resolve, and I have to ask if the occupation
turning out insurgents is anything like a failed revolt
tamped down and suddenly labeled terrorism.
I close my eyes in prayer for the underdogs, who
line up on both sides, who
also lament the civilian sisters and brothers,
traumatized by quiet nights and wishing
for uneventful trips to the market. I write
so something like hope emerges even when fears
emanate as burning tires and car alarm screams,
desensitized in the broadcast of our daily quagmires.

DERRICK AUSTIN

THE BAIT

Fishermen in motorboats poised
on anxious waves talk in bursts,
breakers against wooden weirs.
One yanks up a sallow cod. I imagine myself
as that fish with the rictus of a mouth
like a puppet, expressing innocence
and stupidity, lunging for the bait (worm twisting
into hook), drawn into the fiery clarity
of oxygen (my dying must be like a mosaic),
chilled and sold (the pans of a scale; words like gulls
above me), gutted, exposing all
the simple gem-like gears of my erotic life (your kindness,
drawing me out of myself, is not a knife
entirely). Before your lips, I passed through many hands.

TENNAE MAKI

REVOLVER. SOMEWHERE ELSE, IT REMAINS AWAKE.

There was a thin line that ran the circumference of the room. She was the only one that could see it.

Free of imperfections, a circle is perpetually, habitually flawless.

The morning glory had been clipped from its vine days ago.

It remained open, whilst the other buds had returned to their dormant state.

It faded earlier than late.

Dawn.

MACEO WHITAKER

MUD HUTS

Jug bands jam for Tonka truckers.
Damn, life's a peach pit in scraped,
upstate river towns. Basement life:

here's your bed, there's your sink.
Dribble 'til your fingertips rust.
If you can reach the rim, heave

shots like Reggie at MSG. Shoot
'til you no longer miss. Too late?
Large fries and fat nuggets suffice.

Swing a bat. Keep swingin'. Swing
'til your little palms grow pitiless.
Be ready. Bad things will go down.

Wax museums crumble to mud huts.
We grow up and learn the difference
between Emmet Otter and Emmett Till.

KRISTIAN O'HARE

AMYL AWAKE

On a slow night, you swing in a sling reading Genet, copiously greased,
waiting tangle-tied in strap and bind. Eventually, they arrive, naked except
for shoes. One gets behind you, he uncaps a vile, places it under your nostril.
You inhale. A benign shot—a neon-zippered flicker. In a blind eye squint,
you watch the scurry of men, a flash of white flesh, skin loose and limp like
plucked chickens. The sound of clenched leather, a lisp. His breath: A
blue-muted penance, an unheard chaplet. You lose consciousness, then wake
to another man, an insidious ginger beard, skin so pale, it is almost translucent.

A lick of wet above his lip, dirt in his teeth. It all plays out like a Fassbinder
film in bulged strobe and bar light. A crooked nail like the number seven.

An odorous cluster of torpid grubs. A veined rage, then a gasp tells us it is all over.
Slack in stirrups. A receptive warmth. A cumulus smear on black linoleum.

Gestation period unclear. You open your mouth wide and close your eyes: the
glory disappears. You open your eyes and shut your mouth: the glory reappears.

A lonely douche hose hangs in a vending machine like a noose.

JAKOB VANLAMMEREN

AT NOON ON TUESDAY

with Nathan Thomas

I will listen
to the Beach Boys
& everything will
turn out
yellow-beige
after the bruises heal,
rawhide is returned
to the hook behind the closet door...

This animal: it's been building inside of me
[for I don't know how long].
I practice restraint against the day.
Wash with soap & water.
Appreciate the clumsy fumbling
after dark,
then morning
where the marks come alive
when he says
don't worry baby.

MICHAEL DOWDY

THE DEAD SEND REGRETS

*Day of the Dead Parade
Bywater, New Orleans*

Dear Youth,
We dig the grills you swab
in pallid hues, the fuchsia glow
of mambos pleading time and chance.
We adore the wobbly come-ons,
the sneakers skimming asphalt waves
like goose feet or fathoming rods,
the bonfires leaping blowtorch hot,
the tanks and hoses for the bends,
our passports shined with spit and beer.

Next year avoid the fierce and clenched,
inspect the sails and stock the decks.
Procure pallets of gumbo, vials
of Mississippi silt, rings laid
with tourmaline, some working stiffs
who haven't been chiseled to bone,
the subsurface rights to gas, oil.
Veiled in mist, marigold, and lime
we'll float ashore, alert as bees.

Next autumn leave tools. Nail guns, booms,
hammers, two-ton drills, pumps that purr.
We've got blueprints and chalk for miles.
Deliver goods that groan and crunch.
Backhoes, cranes, Skilsaws. Quid pro quo,
we'll build boulevards to the throne.
Boss man says payment's due up front
for your shining kingdoms to come.

DANE HAMANN

LIGHT SPLASHING SO DELIBERATELY

I'm through the door and into a ravine
of storefronts. Lonely delivery vans

lumber out of sight, their fat tires
screeching around corners. Pans clatter

behind a screen door, bakery aroma
drifting into the early morning dust.

A taste of the lake on the breeze.
Lavender light softens spasms of neon

from the sidewalks. The brightest
remnants from last night are stained

leaflets fluttering against telephone poles.
Every ten minutes, a train clatters empty

down the Blue Line. Masses of vine-like
wires crackle now and then overhead.

The very bricks of the buildings course
with invisible electrons. I'm magnetized.

The Coyote Building looms like an art deco
mountain and pulls me to its shadow.

There, where the sun hasn't yet reached
and the air is still cool, hollow newspaper

DANE HAMANN

machines colonize a star-shaped intersection.
Sunrise begins to pool along the windows

of the chalk-white Flatiron. And yet,
this seems the extent of the world:

blocks of humming, bolt-locked buildings,
light splashing so deliberately below

my feet. My only choice being to alleyway
into the gentle, graffitied fuzz of the day.

CONTRIBUTORS

Derrick Austin's poetry has appeared in *storySouth*; *Relief: A Christian Literary Expression*, receiving an Editor's Choice for Poetry; *The Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle*; *Ganymede Unfinished*; and *Poets for Living Waters*.

Daniel Bourne's books include *The Household Gods* and *Where No One Spoke the Language*. His poems have appeared in *Field*, *Ploughshares*, *American Poetry Review*, and elsewhere.

Cara Chamberlain lives in Billings, MT, and teaches at Rocky Mountain College. Her work has appeared in *Tar River Poetry*, *The Southern Review*, and elsewhere. She is the author of *Hidden Things*, a poetry collection.

Aaron DeLee's work has appeared in *Court Green*, *Mad Hatter's Review*, *Interrobang*, and various other journals.

A native of Virginia's Appalachian Mountains, **Michael Dowdy** teaches at Hunter College. His website details his scholarship and teaching (Latina/o poetry, doc po) and poetry (hillbilly Brooklynites).

M.J. Duggan's poems have published in many magazines such as *The Seventh Quarry*, *Roundhouse*, *Chimera*, *Dwang*, *Graffiti*, *The Delinquent*, *Cutting Teeth*, *Moodswing* among others.

Brett Foster's first book of poetry, *The Garbage Eater*, was published in 2011, and his second collection, *Fall Run Road*, was awarded Finishing Line Press's Open Chapbook Prize.

Dane Hamann holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Northwestern University and currently helps staff *TriQuarterly*. His writing can be found in *Jet Fuel Review*, *Floodwall*, and *Stymie Magazine*.

Vanessa Couto Johnson is listed as a Highly Commended Poet for the 2014 Gregory O'Donoghue International Poetry Prize. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Blackbird*, *Toad Suck Review*, and elsewhere.

Psycho Kanev is the author of four poetry collections and two chapbooks. His poems have appeared in more than 900 literary magazines, including *Poetry Quarterly*, *Evergreen Review*, among others.

Tennae Maki's work has been published in numerous print and digital journals, including; *491*, *Spillway*, *Eunoia Review*, *The Bicycle Review*, among others.

Katie Manning is the author of three poetry chapbooks, including *The Gospel of the Bleeding Woman* (Point Loma Press, 2013).

Juan Morales is the author of *Friday and the Year That Followed*. He is the Editor of *Pilgrimage Magazine*, a CantoMundo Fellow, and the Director of Creative Writing at Colorado State University-Pueblo, where he curates the SoCo Reading Series.

Kristian O'Hare earned a PhD in English with an emphasis in playwriting at Western Michigan University an MA in English from Boston University. He teaches English at Christian Brothers University in Memphis.

David Nielson's poems have appeared in *Fourteen Hills*, *Parnassus*, *Ploughshares*, and other magazines. He lives in Cincinnati, OH.

Simon Perchik's poetry has appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The Nation*, *The New Yorker* and elsewhere.

Alyse Richmond is currently pursuing an MFA at Chatham University.

Joseph Rios was born and raised in Fresno County. His chapbook *Shadowboxing* is forthcoming from Achiote Press. He studied literature at UC Berkeley. He works as a handyman and lives in Oakland, CA.

Kim Suttell is currently the poet-in-residence in apartment 3B, an honorary position, to be sure.

Jakob VanLammeren is the Archivist/Collections Librarian at the Leather Archives & Museum. Jakob holds an MFA in Poetry from Bennington College, and work has appeared in *Gigantic Sequins*, *Hanging Loose*, and elsewhere.

Danielle Weeks was the nonfiction editor for *The Evansville Review* and an editing intern for *Measure: A Review of Formal Poetry*. In 2013, her poem “Cardinal Heaven” received an AWP Introduction Award.

Maceo Whitaker is a Creative Writing teacher living in Beacon, NY. His poems are in the current issue of *The Common and Rattle*, and forthcoming in *POETRY*, [*PANK*], *The Pinch*, and *The Florida Review*.

Ingram Wilkinson lives in New Orleans, LA; in May he’ll earn his B.A. in World Literature. His poetry has previously appeared in *Wag’s Revue*, *Tulane Review*, *Glass Mountain*, and *VOX* magazine.

John Sibley Williams is the author of *Controlled Hallucinations* (forthcoming) and six poetry chapbooks. He is the winner of the HEART Poetry Award, and lives in Portland, Oregon.