

# S/W O R D



S/6: FALL 2016

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## Anti-introduction

Here's where we usually chime in, but we've gotten too loud. We'll hush.

## for my boat lily

I heard you talk about me in unfocused molecular action  
that treats the desert of the real as a furnishing  
catalogued perfectly at arm's reach away  
and I can't say I'm surprised.

Here in the science of our time together,  
do you phase me, century friend,  
or is my look so characteristically Roman?  
Do I conquer?

I'd glean the caverns in the earthworm itself  
to never send you home from the party  
so long as you say something unfathomably else  
and don't give up on the bottom.

*John Nyman*

## for my boat lily

If I gave you a name like *dragon* it would not be spelled  
the way the fan-girls drove it homeward,  
and the movement would not steal in landscapes of fallow, oh no,  
but contaminate us to the hearts of palm,  
and spread so diligently we'd both need a drink from the fountain.

My world would contract on a coffee bean for you,  
and it would be called the blue, blue August  
when fireworks cracked through your eminent body in slivers  
and fish leapt to the mountaintops for our master.  
He told them there'd be nowhere left to breathe.

I believed him, and ran back to you,  
and consolidated my losses into a single, manageable loan.  
I was unlucky in life; my numbers were one and two.

*John Nyman*

## for my boat lily

Limp tongue on my brain,  
steaming at the morning light, goodly  
– sum of my improvisations.

You might laugh a flicker  
or a snide blink  
so subtle. Surfing  
on teardrops, splish  
– your swallowing reflex.

Headlong at analog talons,  
eyedrum and earball marauders,  
misunderstandings  
collated, uncanned me  
– like a business card over and over  
I write on the back:

Pull my feet  
from my footing,  
free me snugly,  
smile,  
look away.

*John Nyman*

# NIGHT

It had begun to rain  
In the poem, in the drone strikes that were starting to take place

Seeds were dropping

Pick  
A letter, from one

Hundred to an  
Echo

From here to being  
Encased by nightfall

~~Where you can't breathe~~

Writing tells you  
What

To expect— ~~I don't know~~  
~~How~~

~~To disturb you~~

In the dark purse of what we ~~say we~~ mean

When we say or swagger

Into night's soft terror

*Mark DuCharme*

# HUSH

It is the nature of anything to go on changing

Where am I, after here, in prism-light

Arranging voices

Which arrive

In whispers

In tremors of goodnight

The moon

Isn't speakable or here anymore

It resembles an idea

Reflected, in

The way

These whispers

Strike

Until the night

Is broken

& The spoken

Is unclean

*Mark DuCharme*

# UNDERSTOOD

A segment of thought appears neatly      on the table

Voices spill

Over

Breath spills out

Of summer windows—

Of the places where we breathe

Before speaking

~~Before we drown~~

In a river, in

An idea of

A river, in

A surplus, the very

Distance

Between

Strangers in a room

There is a gape between strangers

In a room, measuring distance— another

Word

For goodbye

Wipe that blotch of      light off your face

Swim      the distance

Between stars—

That kid getting off  
The schoolbus  
Won't be able to provide  
Any answers

Tremble, like a silk  
Scarf in the wind  
Then fall down laughing—

It's best if you don't  
Understand

*Mark DuCharme*

# RHYTHM

Everything is a character in this book (except me)

Always is also a period  
Of time

When time  
Is shaped  
By driving  
Rain  
By filmic & impermeable bodies  
Or the shape  
Of the voice  
With a gun  
In its throat

I believe in all forms of fire

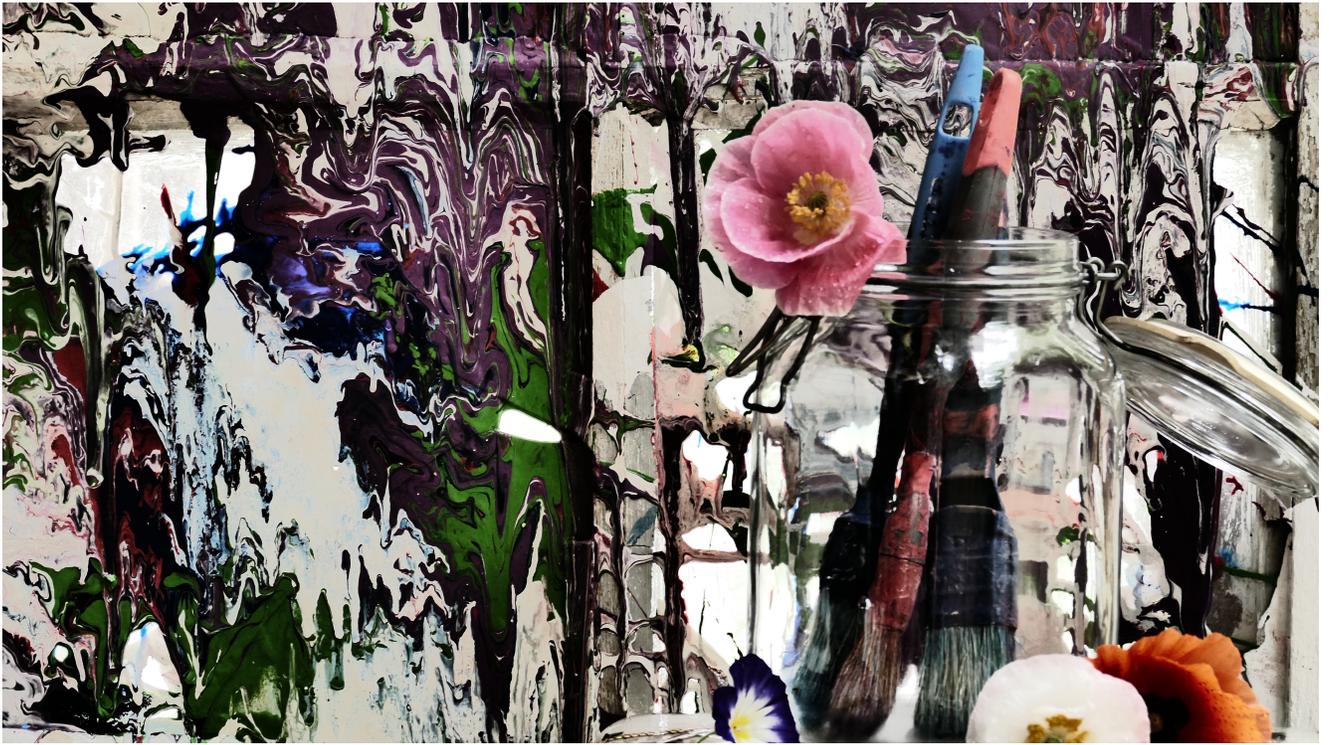
Is it you who are like music?

When I awaken (if I do), will the form run away—

Fire & grace  
On your face—

In rhythm's impact thrashing?

*Mark DuCharme*



*Fabrice Poussin*

## *Notes on Authenticity*

Feeling of the feeling underneath the feeling,  
Beneath the finely-woven, pink-thread sweater with sparkly plastic  
buttons chosen after hours of barefoot pacing before my closet door;  
smiles forced and phrases overheard from parents copied and  
automatically used, the mechanics of habit and the deep  
desire to Break Free. Living inside created worlds and  
only wanting to escape into a hot shower, fog, citrus-smelling,  
steaming the glass pane and relieving congestion. Carefully constructed  
nails painted red or grey, according to the mood, and still –  
there's a glass wall separating me from you.  
Maybe it's not about being authentic;  
Maybe it's about removing the need  
To be. To bury, split, water, to nourish this intrepid seed.

*Elizabeth Hamilton*

\*

This path could be its echo  
clings to your exhausted cry  
and once around one shoulder

climbs, covers the Earth  
already those footsteps  
mourners will use

follow as emptiness  
and not answer anymore  
or look :this path

coming back with stars  
that no longer listen  
over and over.

*Simon Perchik*

Shelter Skelter

burning not mine  
co-opts my wardrobe  
sky removed rain from its dictionary

colors we euphemise--  
not to their face  
a tease of clarity  
a promise of synonyms

the same shirt in 100 different fabrics  
your new house paint has to be unique for 3 blocks around  
houses sprouting from the mud each spring  
red & orange attack in october

as if snow was all colors  
cleaning the street after Pride  
from color to collar  
from the yellow city to the red state  
a river of toner, a lake of naked easter eggs  
one sun following the other, a second moon for weekends and holidays

across the line is yesterday or tomorrow  
before fire was at our fingertips  
when true darkness more chemistry than shadow  
the more people you put in a cave the brighter it gets  
all those thoughts and CO<sup>2</sup>, the bitterness of radon

you can tear down a house  
but its crumbled soul will infest whats built upon  
cross bred into apartments  
doesn't matter how small its mine  
a loft without walls  
a murphy bed, a murphy kitchen, a murphy bathroom  
air filled walls instead of plaster  
clear ceiling so the floor can stay green

*Dan Raphael*

*Response to Some Questions (for Ana)*

What it is like to love you is not when  
wintering south, birds stop to feather themselves  
in other wings for shelter and, some, for fun—  
you are more fun and less safe. Nor like what  
human instincture sewn in us compels,  
a sorting among this-es for that  
one to love whom depends only on who  
happens by, for your happening  
pervades me, is all that I happen through  
and in, and that evades me. And no where  
can overcome your resistance to being  
cordoned by distance: you permit no there  
to part us, pointing too early at death,  
or to stop you from being why

I draw breath.

*William Glass*



*Fabrice Poussin*

## XX

1.

Moira spills a beer on her iphone, *XX Beer*. She curses, towels the phone off, puts it in a pot, puts rice on top to absorb any beer that might have got into electronic cracks and crevasses.

2.

Grandma comes in, sees the pot of rice, says to herself: *That Moira, starts everything, finishes nothing*. She puts water in the pot, sets in on the stove, click click click, ignites her favorite burner, goes back to watch *Animal Planet*. She likes animals more than people. She believes that everyone does, they just pretend to like people.

3.

Lew picks up his guitar, a Candy-Apple Red Stratocaster, straps it on, strums a harsh chord. An old girlfriend stole it and gave it to him, along with a big shiny kiss. She's long gone –whatever happened to her? That was before he met Moira, that beautiful bitch.

4.

Moira needs to make a phone call, needs to call the law on her ex, Lew, who's not paying child support. Gringo motherfucker.

In the hall, on the way to the kitchen, she sees the goldfish she once gave him swimming lazily around his tank. After all this time, *Finned Fucker's* still alive. That's the name Lew gave him, and Moira hasn't bothered to change it

5.

Back in the day, Lew's ma worked in a watch factory painting radium on dials. She licked her brush to keep it pointed. All the ladies did. They giggled about their radium smiles. She passed it on to Lew. Lew's grin is radium grim. His band is a garage band. They play in his garage. In the dimness, Lew's teeth light up his face. His band mates like the eeriness, named the band *Nuclear Teeth*. They worship the old stuff, *Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs*, *Question Mark and the Mysterions*, *Roky Erikson and the Thirteenth Floor Elevator*, the first psychedelic band. In their honor Lew has learned to play the electric jug, though its hard on his radium lips and teeth.

6.

She wanted to give Lew a pretty parrot. Maybe he could teach it to rap, she thought. But it was too expensive. She passes her grandma watching TV. A lion roars. Moira giggles. Moira enters the kitchen.

7.

Lew doesn't go on genealogy sites. He knows who he is. Every time he looks in the mirror, every time he doesn't brush his teeth, every time he sees an unguarded photo of himself onstage, in love with his Stratocaster and the sounds it makes, he knows who he is and where he came from.

*Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois*

## Sharia Law

1.

In Iran a sixteen-year-old rape victim is in court for Crimes against Chastity. She sees that the judge is against her and that Sharia Law is unyielding. She takes off her shoes and flings them at the robed man.

She remembers her contempt with satisfaction in the moment before she is hung. Like a bride, she gives herself over to contempt.

2.

I escape to Mexico. There is no Sharia law there. If I drink enough mescal, I can forget the stupidity of Americans. When I am blind drunk, I see everything clearly. My eyes are bloodshot red. The jaguar's eyes burn red. His mouth is red and glows from within. I come and go. The world is full of phantasmas.

Americans pour agua purificado from jug to jug, as if their rituals of juggling clean water will void damnation.

3.

The Mayan ruins sit heavily in the dark, as do the gowned Mayan women in the red brocade seats, like cups of chocolate candy in foil wrappings.

4.

The jaguar's teeth are sharp as a shark's, sharp as a moray eel's. This peninsula was once a sea. The jaguar's whiskers are bristly as my uncle's, who owned and ran a clothing store in Queens. His face cut me when he bent to kiss. I'd already learned that vampires came from Rumania, and here he was, with his flat cap and red eyes. Ruler of the ghetto, he cheated black men, who were afraid to buy their work clothes from someone else.

5.

The guitar maker is like me. He withdraws from the babbling world. The Scottish call it "havering." "Loathsome" is the word that best describes human society. People make his skin crawl. In his workshop are guitars in various stages of completion, redwood, rosewood, maple bodies and necks.

*Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois*

## Squeezebox

1.

He lies on the bare wood floor, accordion on his chest, and plays a tarantella, the same one he performed last week for the Merida Symphony Orchestra. He's a round man with a florid Slavic face, the kind that warns: *Step back! Heart attack!* He sweats like a pig when he plays, even in an air-conditioned hall, as if his body is only attuned to the humid world outside, with its slice of moon.

2.

Sally wants to watch my downfall in 3D, see every one of my pores emit fear, see the fear transform into pain.

She wants to sip a sloe gin fizz as she watches. She's like a victim's father watching an Oklahoma execution, in which three chemical compounds combine to create death. Sally wants to toss kernels of popcorn at the screen of my demise.

3.

The natives call him "the Waterfall." His wife never sweats. She is afraid to, afraid that if she starts she will never stop and will run away like a river to Argentina or the South Pole.

4.

A Russian court will determine my fate soon. It's all been fixed, well in advance. Sally has connections.

I put on my bright pink dress and matching baklava and hope I will not be judged too harshly. I am a man. I am not even a homosexual, so you may ask: *why is he dressed so?*

Sally did this to me. Sally betrayed me.

5.

Their friends celebrate him, the way he lies on the floor and pulls the bellows in and out. He's a local novelty. Through association, he enhances their status. He was a chemist, but now he's returned to the love of his youth, the instrument his Rumanian grandfather taught him. He's forgotten all the chemistry now.

He's a lot older than his wife. She's chronically depressed, but it's not his fault. Her brothers live in northern woods like animals and sometimes she thinks of them, in Idaho and Minnesota, and wonders how they got that way and what she's doing so far from them, in the Yucatan.

6.

My father risks looking weak if I walk free. My father is dead. Figure that out. I am no hooligan motivated by religious hatred, though I hate religion. I am vilified by the state media, though I use ivory soap and am always clean, even in my jail cell.

Sally always used fancy boutique soaps, scented with lemongrass and patchouli.

*Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois*

# a hole at the end of the world

smoke in the distance grows thicker/blacker/a base level consummation of everything in the path/Consummation or Consumption/doesn't matter anymore/its gonna come 'round soon/come 'round and get us

i wanted to see home again/talk to my family/tell mom i'm sorry/mom i'm sorry/i won't do it again/now or never/i wish these fucks would stop screaming/all they do is hoot and scream/always nonsense/not one has ever said a sensible thing in their entire lives/when i think of consummation i think of sex/everyone will quiet down once they understand the gravity/there won't be anything more to say

how many days since the officers stopped coming/how long since they brought us food/I remember pain/hollow and constant in my stomach/felt like the remnants of a hard punch/a bruised inner cavity/then it went away/just stopped

now it has returned/so hungry/STOP beating on the fucking doors/die already if that's what your gonna do/i want to eat a cockroach right now/i'd take my time with the little guy/stalk him like a hunter/careful not to squish him/i want the guts to burst on my tongue/not the floor/i wanna pick off his squirmy legs and chew till there's nothing left/one at a time/dissect him bit by bit/savor him for as long as i can

are they still pounding on the doors or is that my head/the sound matches my heart/does food fuel the heart or does water or does both or does god or does blood or does/what else am i lacking/character/moral standards/abstract nonsense/stop fucking screaming/STOP STOP STOP

i ate my stories page by page/folded and balled and ripped/they tasted like paper/best i ever had/knew they'd be good for something one day/knew I wasn't wasting my time

water is mostly gone from the toilet/but the lights are still on/and at least they aren't beating on the doors anymore/now they only cry and wail/should have written about a thick juicy hamburger patty on a wheat bun/the kind with some little oats on top/and all the sauces/sauces galore/sauces of every color and

tangy flavor/and pickles/and cheese/so many cheeses/sharp cheddar and pepper jack and muenster and bree and bacon/big strips of bacon that stick out of the bun in pork grid patterns/some jalapeños/tiny pieces of ham/baklava on the side/an entire pan/if i close my eyes real tight maybe this page will taste like

where is my father/my father should have come to save me/our fathers should be our heroes/until we grow up/until we are lying stock still on a prison bunk and the fires outside are pushing smoke in the window and the guy below is laughing like a hyena between bites of his own fingers and chunks of palm and then we sort of realize heroes don't exist/they never have/just pretty pictures we tried to draw in an ugly world

the bloods don't yell for soup in their high pitched bitch call/the aryans stopped hating niggers/the crips stopped walking and dancing and making silly hand signals and saying the word folk/the pedophiles don't think of children anymore/they only think of their insides halting in final catastrophic failure/then again/maybe they do think of children/probably of eating them

the generators stopped humming a while ago/now there is no light/i hear the roar outside/a cacophony of violence/explosions/the crackling of grass ablaze/will these cement blocks eventually burn/or will they act as an oven and cook me alive/i am well on my way to finding out/i wanna sleep/but i've run out of paper and the hollow knocking in my stomach/steady clock tick/but i don't need my biology to tell me what time it is/i have known since the big hand struck over and the little hit done/but still tick tock tick/the room won't let me die/keeping me alive like a life support system with no plug to pull/i ate my parole papers/they tasted like freedom

i'm starting to question the whole thing like maybe this is one of those deals that isn't happening even though it seems like it is/maybe it only seems like it so i will think it really is but in reality it isn't at all/just me playing tricks on myself again/so hot/tick tock tick/and if this is just me thinking it is what it is even if it isn't how do i make it stop seeming like it is and make it seem like something it is not/or maybe it seems like what it is not trying to disguise whatever it is by pretending to be what it is so i will start to question whether it is what it is and run it all around in circles in my head/tell me it isn't what it is/tell me it's a beginning wearing a mask that looks like the end

I don't want to know if heaven is real/heaven scares me/angels seem like

monsters/nothing that looks human should have wings/i ate some of the  
bible/ezekiel and genesis/they tasted like wrath/god doesn't seem natural/more  
like a film director that got it wrong/won't get it right despite winning oscars year  
after year/best screenplay/best cinematography/best actors in supporting and  
lead roles/but never best director/my heart sounds like a pendulum/i ate the  
script/it tasted false/maybe he needs a new directors chair/maybe that's the  
problem/his throne coming apart at the seams

if i'm still here when the world starts back up/wake me please/i'm so tired/so  
hungry/so hot/i wonder if my death certificate will taste like

the end

*Joseph Rutledge*

from *Moss*

we name a plant and ourselves two  
literal Laurels and a metaphorical  
other, not literally after an animal, but  
tenderly catcall to our deer or piggy

the crooked birds  
peck at cracks  
stare and caw at us  
so crow feathers  
appear everywhere

if we are hired to drive an ice cream truck  
and called in sick  
then we were busy replacing dog barks  
with a less tired symbol

we consider young squirrel scamper  
from rose clumps  
in an old growth London Plane Tree awe  
walk in the park

the moss and lichen  
branch caught in sun  
crossover frames us

*Michael Rerick*

## Contributors

Fabrice Poussin teaches French and English at Shorter University, Rome, Georgia. Author of novels and poetry, his work has appeared in *Kestrel*, *Symposium*, *The Chimes*, and more than a dozen other magazines. His photography has been published in *The Front Porch Review*, the *San Pedro River Magazine* and more than sixty other publications.

John Nyman's verse, visual, and conceptual poems and poetics have appeared in a variety of print and online publications including *Rampike*, (*parenthetical*), *Cordite Poetry Review*, and *Hamilton Arts and Letters*. His first full-length collection, *Players*, was released with Palimpsest Press in April 2016. Originally from Toronto, John is currently completing a PhD in Theory and Criticism at Western University in London, Canada.

Mark DuCharme is the author of *The Unfinished: Books I-VI* (BlazeVOX, 2013). Among his other recent volumes of poetry are *Answer* (2011) and *The Sensory Cabinet* (2007), also from BlazeVOX, as well as *The Found Titles Project*, published electronically in 2009 by Ahadada Books. Other parts of *Defacement* have appeared or are forthcoming in *Futures Trading*, *Moss Trill*, *Noon*, *On Barcelona*, *Otoliths* and *Pallaksh Pallaksh*. His work appears in recent anthologies, including *Litscapes: Collected US Writings* (Steerage Press, 2015). He lives in Boulder, Colorado and has been active in the movement for contingent faculty equity.

Elizabeth Hamilton is a writer in Dallas whose stories, essays, and reviews have appeared in *The Santa Barbara News-Press*, *The Dallas Morning News*, and *Cordella Magazine*. In 2013, she received a B.A. in philosophy from Hillsdale College. She writes regularly about life and faith on her personal blog, [elizabethannehamilton.com](http://elizabethannehamilton.com). You can follow her on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *Forge*, *Poetry*, *Osiris*, *The New Yorker*, and elsewhere. His most recent collection is *Almost Rain*, published by River Otter Press (2013). For more information, including free e-books and his essay titled "Magic, Illusion and Other Realities," please visit his website at [www.simonperchik.com](http://www.simonperchik.com).

For a couple decades Dan Raphael has been active in the Northwest as poet, performer, publisher and reading host. His 18th book, *Everyone in this Movie Gets Paid*, came out in summer of '16. Current poems appear in *Basalt*, *Wilderness House*, *Big Bridge*, *Peculiar Mormyrids*, and *Caliban*.

William Glass was born in a Florida hospital where once doctors amputated the wrong leg off an accident victim. He grew up on reruns and fish sticks in a town that was 65% populated by strawberries, and the rest by barefoot kids with jean shorts. This vestimentary background served

him well, as “jorts” are required for admission to the University of Florida, where William completed a degree in medieval literature, after which they shut down the program – surely because no one else would ever do it so well! Always the savvy player, he now pursues a PhD in religious studies, not so much for the fun of it as for the money there is to be made. And for as long as anyone can remember, he has been a deep devotee of the hot dog.

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois has had over a thousand of his poems and fictions appear in literary magazines in the U.S. and abroad. He has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, The Best of the Net, and Queen’s Ferry Press’s Best Small Fictions for work published in 2011 through 2015. His novel, *Two-Headed Dog*, based on his work as a clinical psychologist in a state hospital, is available for [Kindle](#) and [Nook](#), or as a [print edition](#). To see more of his work, google *Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois*. He lives in Denver.

Joseph Rutledge lives in and around the Disreputable South where he is known to collect prosthetics from amputees and arrange them into mannequins and furniture. His various scribblings have been published in *Word Riot*, *Poor Mojo’s Almanac(k)*, and *Thieves Jargon*. He is currently processing his first novel: *THE DOPE SHOW*. Any questions or concerns may be sent to [jsphrtdg@gmail](mailto:jsphrtdg@gmail.com) or [literaryCOCAINE.tumblr.com](http://literaryCOCAINE.tumblr.com) where they will likely languish, sad and alone, until they are systematically read and ultimately ignored.

Currently, Michael Rerick lives and teaches in Portland, OR. His work has recently appeared at *Coconut*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *H\_NGM\_N*, *Indefinite Space*, *MadHat*, *Marsh Hawk Review*, *Ping Pong*, and *Tarpaulin Sky*. He is also the author of *In Ways Impossible to Fold*, *morefrom*, *The Kingdom of Blizzards*, and *X-Ray*.