

THE BRIDGE



The Bridge

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Of Supererogation

Will Cordeiro

I'll tell you things I won't
divulge again, so listen up.

The clouds part ways.
And if, as hours turn,

our roles fall out, a script
gets shelved—small birds

adrift in summer's hair,
for no one knows much

difference between ash
& sumac birch or beech,

larch & this blond wood
my ass would lounge on

on a bench—large peach
as lush, which I bite ripe,

the sun I'm pointing to
is never quite the same

& whatever else I seek,
a self must still remain

forsaken since weather
fills the space of sense:

its light's like doom yet
luminous, gets scattered

with lost dandelion seeds.
See, overcast breaks now

& then so randomly. O,
truth intuits every day—

thunder plays a tumble
-down swan undersong

while lightning's numen
assumes into the crown

that croons each charge
in the dusk-lit smutty air.

We'll launch our green,
our grand idea arranged

like flowers or a rhyme
as everywhere is sacred

ground. The fire in each
puddle shines with faces

that putter about & out
to lunch. An utterance,

a boon of happenstance
as if the song of love &

love were really one. Rain
or rapture, an excess that

amplifies us namelessly,
entranced beyond repair.

Every limit is unknown.

You'll walk away: streets

emptier—more intimate

for chance & who am I?

The Men

Birch Wiley

after Nick Flynn

I wake to dead fathers – my own,
those of strangers – their hollow
cheeks, their thinning hair. Mine
grew his death, an ordinary
sickness, soft by comparison
to the fathers in Gaza,
the fates of children they leave
behind. I wake alive, exhausted,
nauseous. Years ago, someone
told me a poem: a man
pulls a stone from his stomach
and pushes it out onto ice,
lets it sink in the thaw. Grief
is like this (stone at the lake's
bottom) and also like this
(half remembered poem). I wake
alive and choose again life,
doing the work left to me, proving
someone is left for the doing.

I wake and our fathers don't.
Their ashes mix in cold water.

New York Bus Tours Ranked TripAdvisor's Number 1 New York Hop-On Hop-Off Bus Tour, Big Bus presents the Big Apple in perfect slices.

Bee Carter

In a city of extremes, discourse is dromocratic. To spy the latest insights, the double decker tour bus must move at extreme speeds, and in doing so naturally travels between the known extremes of weather.

In one moment, there is a bright sun, and the passengers rush to the top deck to see dogs bark little tree birds rush escape leaves fall concrete crush shoes yellow bright runners shade petunias.

At the next, total darkness, impending clouds already become rain drops cold feet stomp splash puddles skirt edges torn long drown concrete float soak grey-grey down street sunbound.

It goes this way, polarizing, and between each extreme rush the passengers: total security from reviled rain, dull glares at bored wet roads; corneal flares at lord-set streets gleaming, total freedom aboard the topless top.

The city is all straight. There is no risk of capsizing with all this commotion except one turn, at the very end, which enables the bus to see it all again from another perspective. At the end of this turn is a tavern, age-worn,

independently-owned, well-loved, multi-single-hyphenate in all ways possible.

It is the bad luck of a certain populace, in a poor apportionment of portentous weather, to see the sun at exactly that turning moment. From the bottom they rush—hellspawn ravaging purgatory of everything not bolted down, zergs zagging to the earthly realm—to the top deck to see the sun again.

The bus attempts its turn, the weight is all on the top. Swerving back to the shade-rain to maintain perfect balance, it loses just that which it sought. It careens to one extreme; it wrenches right; the landship capsizes and skids through large marbleon planters, cat-paw-printed concrete, old wood siding, and into the gathered crowd at the beloved family bar.

impulse score

Justine Florence

WAIT IT

WAIT FOR

WAIT FOR

WAIT UNTIL

FOR IT IS NEW
AND GENTLY HELD

FIND IT. REPEAT IT. DEFINE IT
TRY YOUR BEST NOT TO GET
TIRED OF IT

THEN YOU GET TO FEED IT

AND IT OPENS

IT THROWS LIKE LOOSE

UNFOLDING ONTO ITSELF CHANGE

TO THE SOUND OF GRAVEL
TRAIN TRACKS
LANDING WAVES

HERE IS THE ATTEMPT TO SUSTAIN!
THE ALREADY LOOSE THREAD!

AND LOSE IT

FAST WITH WHAT
REMAINS

Teeth and Hip Replacement

Lydia Jane Stauffer

The eyes of the sarcophagus meet hers through the glass. She stares intently, and in her intentness falls into the old habit of shifting her weight onto her right leg, forgetting about the hip replacement. This hurts, and she lets out an involuntary hiss of pain.

A smartly dressed docent stands, hands folded, against the opposite wall. No one else is in the room, and she hopes the docent didn't hear her.

According to a label, this is the outer coffin of Khonsu, containing the inner coffin of Khonsu, containing the mummy of Khonsu. She limps over to the docent – she needs to get something out. She points to the sarcophagus.

“That’s a person.”

Yes, it is.

“That is a dead person and you are keeping dead people in your museum.”

Yes, and it’s been done over decades of cooperation with the Egyptian government, and while there may be a philosophical or ethical question at play in regard to keeping dead people in the museum, they’re here and you might as well look at them.

She can’t disagree, so she asks the first question that comes to her mind.

“Who was he?”

In his life, Khonsu was a “servant in the Place of Truth.” This was a job description – it meant he was an artisan who built the royal tombs of the New Kingdom. The “Place of Truth” was the name of the village where the workers lived. He and generations of his family, before and after, did truly beautiful work that survived for thousands of years.

She’s a grad student in Islamic Studies. She owns two cats, Mitzi and Saladin, and is still getting used to parking in handicap spots without feeling guilty about it. She runs a Tumblr blog about Arabic textiles. History is her life, and yet this is so real. This is here in front of her much more viscerally than she could have prepared for.

The room contains the contents of Khonsu’s family crypt, catalogued and displayed behind glass. There’s a jar; there’s a chair; there’s Khonsu; there’s Khonsu’s organs.

“What’s the point?” she asks, catching herself in the habit again and shifting her weight onto her left leg. “You dig up a tomb and then put everything that was in the tomb into a different room somewhere else, and put up a map that shows where everything used to be in the tomb. ‘This is what the tomb would look like if everything we took out of the tomb was still in the tomb.’”

The docent tells her that half of the tomb is here in New York, and the other half is in Cairo. This means, she realizes, that all the objects assuring passage through the underworld, buried carefully with Khonsu to prepare his soul for its journey through the afterlife, have been taken and split across the world. Doesn’t he still need them?

She imagines her apartment covered in an age's worth of dust. Light floods in as the seal is broken and a white guy dressed like Brendan Fraser in *The Mummy* – in fact, she imagines Brendan Fraser in *The Mummy* – enters through the kitchen door. He creeps through the apartment with a torch, weightily, knowing he's treading on history. And he uncovers lost treasures – a laptop covered in stickers of cartoon characters, a stack of hardcover Sarah Vowell books still in the bag from the store, an expensive blender. And mummies, of course. She imagines Mitzi and Saladin mummified – or as Mitzi-and-Saladin-shaped canopic jars with her organs stuffed inside of them. And in the sarcophagus, wrapped in linens within the recursive image of her own self – her.

Not her; it wouldn't be her; it would be a mummy. That's the limit of her imagination.

The docent also mentions that the museum doesn't call them "mummies" anymore – the more respectful term is "mummified remains."

She thanks the docent. They are, she supposes, a servant in their own Place of Truth, even if they're altogether too laid back about the whole dead people in the museum thing. She wonders where her Place of Truth is; she considers being a servant to it. She decides she doesn't have an answer. The room has nowhere for her to sit and consider this. Her bones ache.

She goes home and dies sixty years later. Much later, what remains of her body is put on display behind glass. The label reads, "Teeth and hip replacement."

Four Poems

Julia Kiernan

Philosophy

Genital sky, hanging among its fur
The brown spectacle, the lap of it.

Woodpecker swoops into and out
Of the oak.

Thrumming the frayed opening, we assume
It open, after which we call
It our own.

After which, dropping
Into our own
Liquid organ
We feel on the blue blanket, folding shirt
Up and down, the cracking smell of grilled meats
Accusing, and nearby.

Woodpecker means girl
And oak means boy

And the girl
Enters the boy
In successions
Of involuntary
Percussion arrangements.

This is how nature works, I'm drawing
It out for you, alright?
I'm drawing you out
Of the war you don't even
Know you're caught
Up in.

I'm carrying you on your back
Thank me, thank me, no
On your back.

Night train

Eyes closed you are riding on a train of fibrous air.
Nodes the color of foreign currency, nipples, pickled plum
Triangulating all around you in every vocabulary.
Webs of all you've touched inside you
Hidden and deeply known
like a Biblical story, your infatuated
movement flooding the muzzle
of the sanctuary.

Along the way are many stations
where you may rest your face:

1. caution silica
 2. water protector
 3. green recyclable
 4. the thing's name
 5. wage artery
 6. learned glass
 7. stove eye
 8. life sized affirmation placeholder
- performing maintenance

Now, enter: the true possibility
of the river on the other side
of the aggregate processing facility.
One day I will oversee
the republic
of your small
plastic body.

A visitation and a rift

Lone white Clydesdale keeps vigil eats
alfalfa orchard grass go up the stairs
while fabrics breathe in the moving field

Vulture picks at a fawn while grass grows
on the other horse's grave while we flip
through photographs of moth genitalia

Sacrilegious images of secret sacks and prongs
You smell of wax we sleep while you sew

You don't go out meaning to hurt each other
just feeling, not having anything you're thinking
and not saying

And at night ghosts' feet in the kitchen
banned and haunted by electricity
In bare feet they trudge silently in place
sand and grain pour endlessly
out of holes in their pockets
And their feet are so calloused
Like a yoga ball they bounce

Cross the oil of your doubt

You give birth to a stripe of light that breaks
and is dropped into to an expanse
under a push of thunder
over the buried half of a pair of angels
under the bucking trees flashing white
under blind, over blind
under blind, over blind

After Mykhail Semenko (Spring)

Wide glass bowl of day,
at the bottom,
sitting.

A poem brings my heart
to springtime—
lawless air flirting buds birthday eyes...
garlic grass dumb goslings lukewarm
rain white violets wet skirts sheer belief..

So I go outside, even though
a foot of snow
is predicted.

Along the frozen brook
dust and salt, no squirrels,
dead people driving
all around the place.

First walk in weeks. I keep
my eyes averted—into
the outside the poem
promised—

There is nothing where the wind comes from
Nothing fondling the wind

Four Poems

Alex Kulick

whether heard or remembered

the bell and its tongue

the hand and its clapping

a thunder from the weather of a cloud

shakes low into long-eared distances

rumbling hum the source of which

is ultimately a mystery, even if described

as an acquired fear of the sound

remains in the heart, darkly

and the static of originary encounters mars

the analytical flesh of midnight-writing

arriving at irreverent palimpsests

through a blurred finger's refractive conjecture.

your dowsing tongue
breaks walls
the hidden well is
a fissure
the shape of divorce — union
above a ring of myths sutured together

Y

passion sprung from fecund cracks
like a sprout ground-breakers
door-openers founding
ideomotors
piecing me together
those original syllables..

bibliomancy

compendia — a rummage
in what the word
blurs, in volume
against the whiteout:

shatterjars of sources
in multicolor fields, vaulted
from the mouth

collecting what we are
as it collects, or has
in its study
corrected us.

*“The thought of the multitude
Can not grasp the categories
Of the thoughts of the spirits
Circumvolving, but the tense mind
Can shoot arrows towards them.”*

—Confucius

•

o god if i break

the mirror tightens
the twist in its own form

i fly the most heart-spurned arrows
in the direction of dead thickets

pierce the hay-dry foliage
as a fiery woundpath

radiant permissions
to heal recollections' shear

the drawing-bend alone a tense bow
its wooden stress close

to shatter, a quiver
my desire, puncture of shadow

and the cord once engraved in finger flesh
is released, begging a new

laceration of speeds
freed from knotted twine

the tension so far flown we believe it
ripped from ragged time-spindles

weighted o awaiting its arc.

Marimba Story

Ernesto Hernandez

I love to play marimba. I learned to play when I was a freshman in high school. My school had a policy which was called “Musical Orientation.” It was the principal’s idea since he liked Tchaikovsky and Mussorgsky, and I think he had a fixation with the Russians because one day they had sent me to his office for throwing silly bands at people’s napes, and he was reading Lolita. The Musical Orientation program started one day when we were 14, and Richie, the guy that would teach the seniors to play guitar, came to our class to take us on a tour. You guys have seen Divergent? he asked. This is going to be like Divergent, but with music.

We went to the choir room first. It was okay, just a bunch of older kids choreographing a song about Jesus’s resurrection for the upcoming Holy Week. Richie knocked and the singing professor opened the door to let us all in. The room smelled like a nail salon and I got nervous when I noticed all the hot chicks from grades above me were sitting there looking at their iPhone 5s and Samsung Galaxy S4s while the singing teacher was going on a rant about the importance of resonance and synchronicity. We left after five minutes of listening to him talk and the group singing their own interpretation of Somebody That I Used to Know. It sounded great and it made me think of my friend Angel’s mom that would put that song on sometimes when she would give me a ride home after soccer practice and

my mom wouldn't be able to pick me up. It was fun to hear her sing, especially the part where she would say, now and then I think of all the times you screwed me over and then continue to sing along the rest of the song with that fatal grace of a scorned woman. I remember one time she cried and I stayed quiet the whole ride.

After the choir room, we went to Richie's guitar classroom, and he asked us if anyone knew how to play the guitar. I said, yeah, because I knew Stairway to Heaven, that I had memorized for my dad's 40th birthday. Richie had me play in front of the class, and it was cool and fine until I looked up, and I noticed Teffy was sitting there, and she had a new haircut, and she looked cute. And my fingers got tangled like the intestines of the dog I saw the other day when I was riding my bike, and I poked it with a stick. After messing up the song, I said I had to go, and I stood up and went to the bathroom, and I threw up.

I sat down on the toilet after throwing up, and started drawing some foxes with guns on the door with my Sharpie, until Richie came looking for me. Where were you? You missed the flute room. I hadn't realized how much time had passed, but I felt good when he told me that he had liked my Led Zeppelin cover, and that I should consider pursuing the guitar in his class.

After leaving the bathroom, Richie took me to the marimba room, where the rest of my classmates were. I guess I was left behind. They were all

sitting in plastic chairs across from what looked like three big keyboards, but made out of wood, with awesome designs on the front. This class smelled like incense, and behind one of the wooden keyboards there was a short man, with glasses, wearing a red cape with bird patterns stitched by hand, playing the most beautiful song that I have ever heard. And for a moment I had forgotten all about Tchaikovsky, and iPhones, and slit-open dogs, and scorned women, and Led Zeppelin, and Teffy, and haircuts, and I felt both very happy and extremely sad, and I didn't know if I wanted to stay still like a lake or explode like a grenade. So instead I kept listening to him play, and then he stopped and looked at me, and with a smile said, joining us late already?

I played marimba for four years and my professor's name was Byron. I say was because the last thing I heard from him was from one of my marimba homies who played first voice or leading voice, and he told me he was helping raise money for Byron's cancer operation. I was in Pittsburgh when he called me, doing graffiti and drawing foxes with guns under the bridge. I had about four dollars in my pocket, enough for a beer and a shot, in Ruger's Pub by South Ride, if I made it in time for happy hour. There was a band playing when I got there. It sounded like some indie folk, or maybe folk-pop, since it was lighter and more melodic. The band was just one guy and one girl, and I liked it because the girl looked like Daria and she would sing and play the kazoo while the guy played the guitar, and he was slim and

had long ginger hair and sang like what the foxes that I had drawn earlier would have sounded like.

The band and I went outside for a cigarette after they finished their set, and I asked them if they remembered what it felt like to have a bedroom. They said, sometimes, and we stayed in silence, and since the moon was huge, we looked at it. The guy broke the silence by asking me if I knew how to play something. I said, yeah, I play marimba. I told him that I think we invented marimba for the delight of God. Some birds came out of my open fly that I forgot to close after I had taken a piss inside the bar. One day, I said, it'll rain down mallets and shafts made out of wood and heads wrapped in yarn, and corn will cover the entire earth until each person will have their own pair of mallets, and with the help of the birds that'll come out of our open flies, we'll build a marimba that'll cover all the streets and the highways, and we'll play together through the end of times before the sun explodes. We will hold hands and do one last ceremonial vow without first having played the most tragic and beautiful marimba song that will sound like making love and death at the same time, like throwing up and getting haircuts and climbing stairways to heaven. We will restore the innocence of the soul of the dead note by note, in unison, and the girl can join us by playing the kazoo.

I love playing marimba, and I cannot wait until we all play our final piece together forever.

the photograph
on the back
cover
of this issue
is by Eli Smith



Phragmites