

VOLUME 1 • SUMMER

# SPLINTERED DISORDER

EDITED BY  
AMANDA EDWARDS  
RACHEL SMALL



# Poetry by Joe Sonnenblick

## A DEMENTED DREAMER

An occupant of a room whose door keeps getting knocked on, yet no one enters.  
The elongation of this natural talent will never cease,  
Whether deadpan or whimsy, or chronicles of how to lose your shirt and still be served in  
convenience stores...  
I don't want to explore sunken ships,  
I don't want to convene in a room with fluorescent lighting and compare journal entries based on  
a prompt some failure handed out,  
Leave me in a darkened hovel  
A pen,  
A piece of papyrus,  
A knuckle duster on my off hand.  
If I ever decide to really drink again...  
You lot are done for.

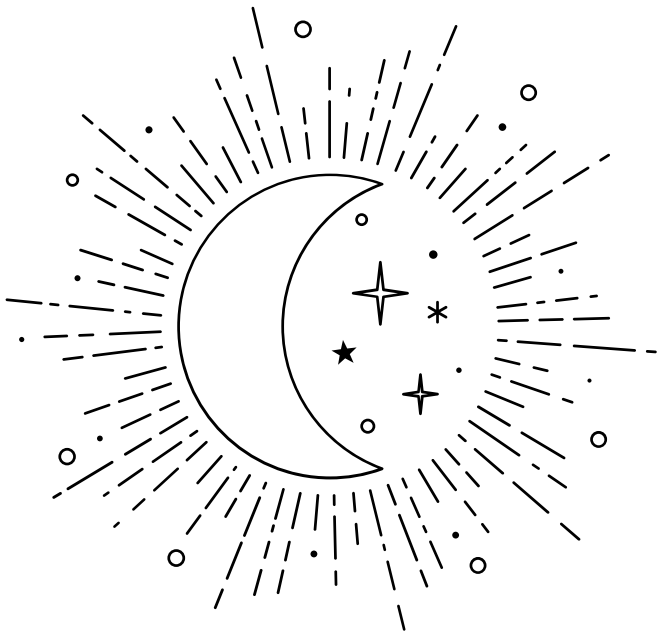
## We All Pay Full Price

Hand of god,  
No fingers  
Just a stump  
Too slippery to grab  
Too non-committal to reach out  
So just enjoy the cocaine,  
Don't think about the repercussions.

# ***SNOWS OF YOUTH***

## **BY FRED POLLACK**

One has the impression that in those days  
the week-long snow piled up against the walls  
of bookstores, groceries, pool-halls,  
immense garages, hostile old saloons,  
and shops that actually repaired things.  
It was like the welfare state:  
its rules resented in offices  
while caring elsewhere for the health of snowpacks  
and thus of glaciers, rivers.  
One recalls a girl in leaking zippered  
felt-lined plastic boots, making her way  
through the snow, already pregnant  
with futures that she put out of her mind;  
and wonders what she saw in him  
who hurried down six flights to let her in.  
Meanwhile the long finned cars, as boastful  
as missiles of the time, were giving way  
to our secretive, small, indistinguishable  
squibs. Yet all were muddy,  
some grinding and sliding, some hidden  
in snowdrifts, some careening into snowdrifts.  
Which, when they melted, revealed  
so much: containers, wrappers, crumpled  
notes one might unfold but which  
one could no longer read.







IN A STRANGER REALM



In Waiting



Heart

**PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY FABRICE B.  
POUSSIN**



# POETRY BY DS MAOLALAI



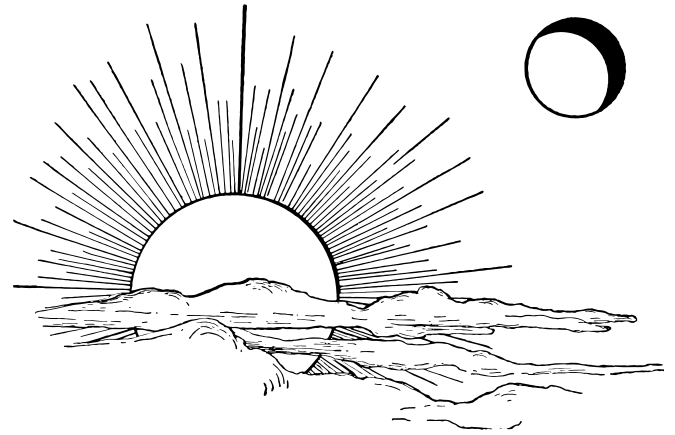
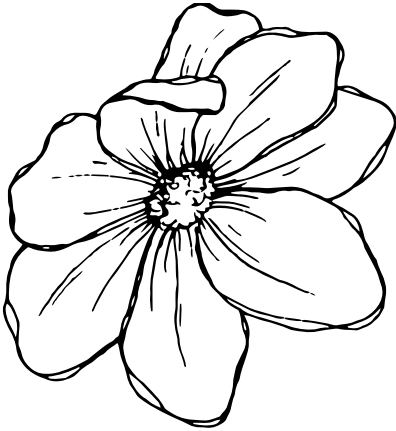
## THE SATISFACTION OF BEING A PLANT.

the heart going steady,  
slow, like legs under  
water, or the pouring  
of setting cement.  
I am slow sometimes  
to name things –  
sometimes I worry  
that I'll get alz  
too. and I will,  
but not yet, and who knows –  
perhaps it could even  
be easy. like being a plant;  
the satisfaction  
of being a plant. turning to face  
the sun in its motion  
around you. not moving,  
just turning, just facing  
the sun. my grandmother died  
surrounded by children  
and doctors  
and sunshine, a flower  
growing out of her head,  
an oxygen tank  
in the corner.  
I'm not alone – now  
we're all worried. it won't  
be fun, will it? brain gone rotten  
like flowers in forgotten rooms.  
like mushrooms  
sprouting off logs.  
the satisfaction  
of a plant  
dying. dead, forgotten,  
a plant  
repeating yourself.



# WHILE I WORK AT THE KITCHEN TABLE AND YOU'RE ON YOUR PHONE ON THE SOFA.

the heart fills far  
too readily;  
an empty flowerpot  
out on a rainy  
day. your heart,  
your face,  
all rainwater. my heart,  
the empty flowerpot.



## MOLLY BLOOM.

we were drinking. we were  
often drinking – this was around  
the first lockdown  
when we thought things would end  
quite soon. and:  
you can't be serious,  
she said. marriage?  
when the world  
is coming down?  
and I said: yes –  
just think about it –  
no invitations  
to worry us, no  
ceremony  
that we have to  
put in place.  
the only difference  
in practical terms is  
you'd stay in the country  
if something happened  
with your visa. I'm sick of  
worrying about it, and besides  
I love you very much.  
ok, she said. yeah,  
fine, sure.



# ***THE UNFINISHED* BY ISABELLE B.L.**



I now know the difference between black and green olives—it's the colour that determines ripeness. The green are unripe. I have olives packed in brine, olive oil in decorative Sicilian bottles and olives which mirror Etruscan earrings dangling in my garden. There's so much unripeness. I do my best to level the scales. I eat many black olives, but the green olives seem to increase twofold. Tolerable once the green turns to black, swimming in salty water or stuffed.

I can't make banana cake. The bananas are unripe.

The sky today suggests undecidedness. Clouds play hide and seek. Intervals of sunshine. Trees are performing a Hula dance. My Etruscan earrings are moving ardently, before coming to a standstill when the music of nature stops.

The sun's rays are warm and paint over a white canvas. More Vitamin D. Colour on my ghostly face. Rosy cheeks are still my mother's obsession. Her remedy then and now is: Marsala 1/4 of a glass, toasted fingers dipped in a runny river of yolk.

The floorboards have been leaning against the kitchen wall for six months. The shelves arrived five months ago. The box of Florentine tiles, next to the bidet, has become a shelf for soap dispensers and toilet rolls.

He planned to devote Friday afternoons and weekends to renovating, but then our car performed a popular break dance move—the windmill—and so he left me with an unfinished kitchen and bathroom. The worst rooms, right?

Unfinished pills are on my bedside table. Prescribed when I felt the garden was being invaded by too much greenery. When I could write on thick layers of dust, especially in the kitchen and bathroom. The dose doubled when I caught him playing: *tongue kissing my wife's best friend Joe*.

I see spiderwebs before me, but I don't want the sun's rays to tear the spiderwebs. They're intricate. I can even see the spider spinning on her web. All it takes are a few blinks, and she goes away. I have been told I have detached retina which makes my sick eyes twinkle, my mouth twitch. That explains the blurred vision. Untreated, the condition can lead to blindness. I find the timing perfect. I find blindness preferable to green olives, wood, ceramic and dicks.



I walk past the letter from the insurance company documenting how much they will pay for the break dance performance.

To the left, handmade invitations, swirly pink ribbon, brown teddy bear pegs and a to-do list for the now cancelled baby shower.

To the right, scattered on the Ikea desk, black lined white envelopes in a semicircle.

Events that have never begun. Unfinished lives. No one should die at 35 years of age or 25 weeks, for God's sake.

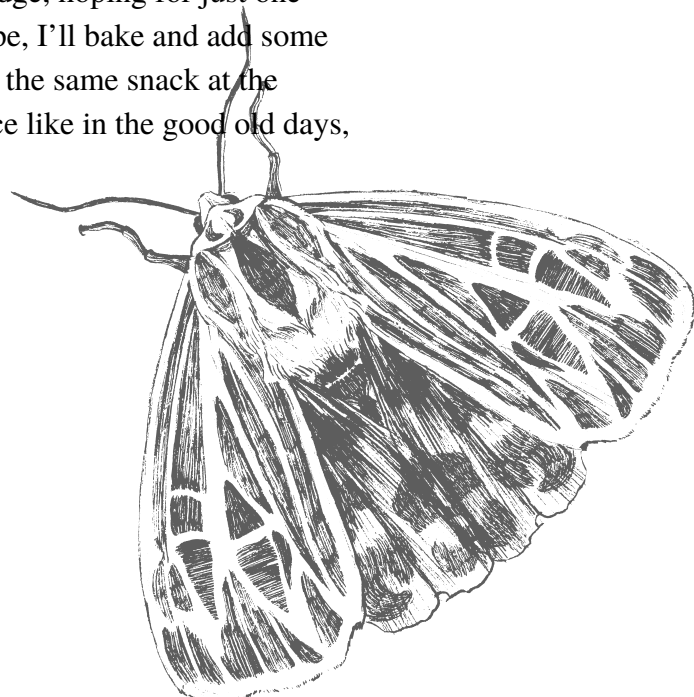
According to my psychiatrist, university degrees adorning his clinical walls, completed family photos in brass frames showing what family should look like, my grief journey is not yet complete. When did grief have a beginning and an end? I would like to disagree with him, but he's an expert. I tell him that grief is a condition that will remain incomplete. He tilts his head to the side. He looks like a puppy who has lost his bone. His sincere bone. He feels sorry for me—a woman with uncountable unfinished business, who has waved her arms in the air, has collapsed on his shiny wooden floorboards frozen in a foetal position—a tribute to the unfinished life.

I look at the last ultrasound photos of my unborn baby. My husband and I created a life, and he destroyed it during a breakdancing routine.

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I pour the pills down my pastel pink basin. Life has the finished and unfinished. Both have to be lived. I call Joe and tell him he has to finish what his lover didn't. Joe owes me one.

Google tells me how to ripen bananas faster. I check my empty fridge, hoping for just one egg. I refuse to use that egg as a blusher. When unripe becomes ripe, I'll bake and add some shredded carrot and a tablespoon of honey. Joe and I used to order the same snack at the university snack bar. Cappuccino and banana cake. We'll eat a slice like in the good old days, then finish the unfinished.







## ***GREAT TRACK BY BEN NARDOLILLI***

Drained in a forgotten tomb,  
my mind is filled with raindrops.

We never had a chance,  
even a word cannot be saved.

That whole production feels  
light years away, loved to death:

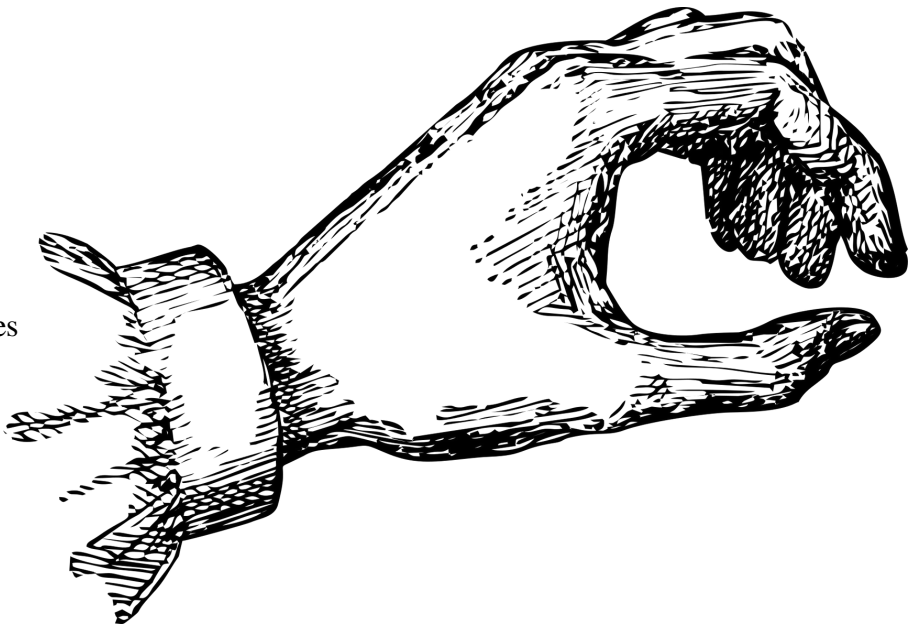
the spectacle of the morning sun  
with no one there to see it.

City lights shine above silhouettes,  
it smells like humid dirt.

Too sad to tell you, remember me,  
what could I say? Only a word

***BEFORE I JOIN YOU***  
**BY BRIAN JERROLD**  
**KOESTER**

These two skulls  
that watch me write,  
they might be 800 years old.  
They mean the same  
as Michelangelo's David.  
You avid skulls,  
I see behind your no more eyes  
your no more minds  
dance in the throb  
of no more life.  
Take no offense  
if after a life wasted  
I take my time.





# ***Dear Toronto by Jamie Zipfel***

Dear Toronto,

I wanted to love you. It's not your fault. When we met, I wasn't in a place to give you my full attention. But I want you to know that I wanted to. Does that count for anything?

When my company asked me to do a three-month stint, coming home every so often, I jumped at the shot, even though I didn't know much about you. Thank you for welcoming me with your characteristic graciousness and hospitality. Thank you for the best cheeseburger I've ever tasted. And poutine! I fucking love poutine! It's carbs and cheese and gravy — food that fills up all the gaps inside you. Your streets were sparkling and laid out perfectly for a visitor to amble through them without getting too lost. I'm sorry that I spent most of my time there ambling about, lost. That wasn't your fault. Thank you for your weird-as-hell public access TV, always on and always unpredictable. Thanks for helping me understand the line about Swiss Chalet in that Barenaked Ladies song. I have been, and will always be, a committed Tim Horton's fan — a fact which Mohammed, who owns the franchise nearest to my apartment, also appreciates. Please send him some of the fancy maple syrup so that he can make the fancy maple lattes which I would gladly cross an ocean for. Thanks for inviting me to my first poetry slam, and letting me get lost in a crowd full of folks ready to blow the roof off that hotel basement. At that moment, all I really needed was to get lost in a crowd. Thanks for letting me meet my first baby stingray in your aquarium. He looked like a tiny, angry ravioli, and it was the first time I'd laughed in weeks. When the sound rasped out of my throat, I wasn't sure what it was.

Casa Loma remains one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen, and I've seen a lot of beautiful places. Standing under the solarium's stained-glass ceiling, I felt like I was in the Notre Dame — burning to the ground from the inside out. I don't have many memories of our time together; one of the many things trauma robs you of is your memory of the specific, the linear, the day-to-day. It's meant to protect you, but it can also make you feel unmoored, as if your brain is in a blender. This begins as a blessing, a way to smooth over the painful, oozing parts. It is a gift, not remembering — it's allowed me to glide over that part of my life the way fingers slide over a scar. I no longer have the urge to pick at the scab to see what comes out.

The night after the assault, when it was clear that my birthday was ruined, my home wasn't safe, and my family had chosen to give the benefit of the doubt to my sister's boyfriend, instead of giving me the benefit of their trust, all I wanted to do was run away, as far and as fast as I could go. The speed limit on the 401 wasn't fast enough, and I spent six hours pushing the cruise control, wired. And there you were, sparkling, distant, a city on a hill, distinctly not-home.

I'm sorry that all I could manage to do was eat takeout under the covers in the Hampton Inn outside of town. I'm sorry that when the fugue was over and sleep finally came back, and I mustered the courage to leave my little cocoon, that I just shuffled around. I did things to say I did them, fully aware that I wasn't actually processing any of what I saw or heard or tasted. I'm sorry for freaking out a church full of Filipino Catholics by quietly sobbing in the back pews. I'm sorry for running full-speed out of a 24-hour Korean sauna in the middle of the night because one of the therapists touched me the wrong way. I thought I could sweat out what happened. I should've known it could never be so simple.

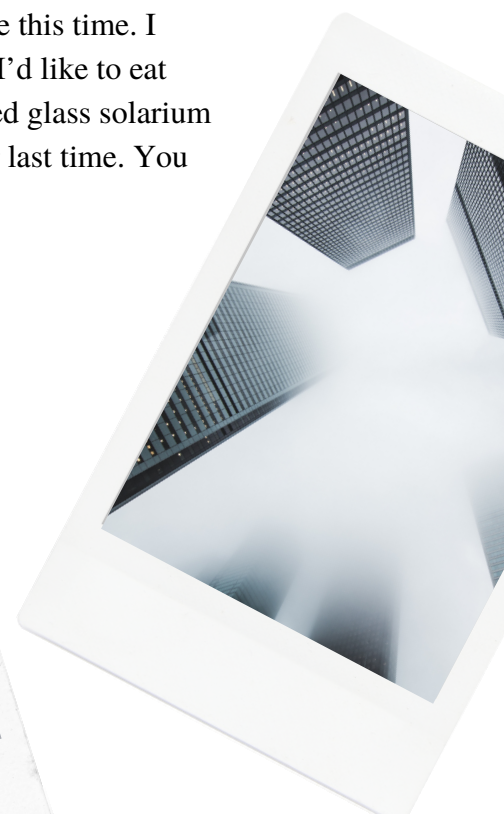
One of the clearest memories I still have from that stint was a visit to Niagara Falls one weekend. It was early spring, the falls still frozen-over. If the cold wasn't enough to stop me in my tracks, the sight of the Falls lit up at night was. They were so big, and so imposing, that it was impossible to think about anything else. That, too, was a gift. I stood there, corporate-logo beanie pulled as far over my ears as it would go, hands shoved deep into my pockets. The cold ripped straight through me, and I knew I couldn't stand out there forever. I wondered if there was still life teeming underneath the shears of ice. I wondered if spring would come, if I too might thaw out and be reborn. If the white-gray frozen mass might someday break apart into color.

I'm sorry that for me, you were a place to escape to and not a place to experience. In your own right, on your own terms. I'm sorry that all my memories are jumbled around. I'm sorry that my entire experience of you is inextricably bound up in one of the worst periods of my life. You stand as an emblem of an epochal shift, a symbol of the assault that cleaved my life into two neat piles: Before and After. It was the only part of that spring that could be described as "neat". Thank you for accepting me at my absolute messiest, sweeping up the frozen shards into a tidy pile and then inviting them inside to escape the cold.

Five years later, I know now that this is how grief goes, but it wasn't at all clear to me then. Now, having thawed out, I'd like to give your city another try. A fair shake this time. I never made it to a Maple Leafs game. I never went to the top of the big needle. I'd like to eat another monstrosity at the Burger's Priest, stand underneath Casa Loma's stained glass solarium again. There's so much more to you, and to me, than what we saw of each other last time. You know, if you'll have me.

Sincerely,

Jamie





# BIOGRAPHIES

**JOE SONNENBLICK** IS A NATIVE NEW YORKER WHO WAS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE NOW DEFUNCT CITIZEN BROOKLYN MAGAZINE. JOE HAS BEEN FEATURED IN PUBLICATIONS SUCH AS IN PARENTHESES FOR THEIR 6TH VOLUME OF POETRY AND THE ACADEMY OF THE HEART AND MIND, AND IMPSPIRE LITERARY REVIEW, THE BOND STREET REVIEW UPCOMING PUBLICATIONS INCLUDE: AJI FOR THE SPRING 2021 ISSUE, AND ETHEL FOR THE JUNE/JULY 2021 ISSUE.

**FRED POLLACK** IS THE AUTHOR OF TWO BOOK-LENGTH NARRATIVE POEMS, THE ADVENTURE (STORY LINE PRESS, 1986; TO BE REISSUED BY RED HEN PRESS) AND HAPPINESS (STORY LINE PRESS, 1998), AND TWO COLLECTIONS, A POVERTY OF WORDS (PROLIFIC PRESS, 2015) AND LANDSCAPE WITH MUTANT (SMOKESTACK BOOKS, UK, 2018). IN PRINT, POLLACK'S WORK HAS APPEARED IN HUDSON REVIEW, SALMAGUNDI, POETRY SALZBURG REVIEW, MANHATTAN REVIEW, SKIDROW PENTHOUSE, MAIN STREET RAG, MIRAMAR, CHICAGO QUARTERLY REVIEW, THE FISH ANTHOLOGY (IRELAND), POETRY QUARTERLY REVIEW, MAGMA (UK), NEON (UK), ORBIS (UK), ARMAROLLA, DECEMBER, AND ELSEWHERE. ONLINE, HIS POEMS HAVE APPEARED IN BIG BRIDGE, DIAGRAM, BLAZEVOX, MUDLARK, OCCUPOETRY, FAIRCLOTH REVIEW, TRIGGERFISH, BIG POND RUMOURS (CANADA), MISFIT, OFFCOURSE AND ELSEWHERE.

**FABRICE POUSSIN** TEACHES FRENCH AND ENGLISH AT SHORTER UNIVERSITY. AUTHOR OF NOVELS AND POETRY, HIS WORK HAS APPEARED IN KESTREL, SYMPOSIUM, THE CHIMES, AND MANY OTHER MAGAZINES. HIS PHOTOGRAPHY HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE FRONT PORCH REVIEW, THE SAN PEDRO RIVER REVIEW AS WELL AS OTHER PUBLICATIONS.

**DS MAOLALAI** (HE/HIM) HAS BEEN NOMINATED EIGHT TIMES FOR BEST OF THE NET AND FIVE TIMES FOR THE PUSHCART PRIZE. HIS POETRY HAS BEEN RELEASED IN TWO COLLECTIONS, "LOVE IS BREAKING PLATES IN THE GARDEN" (ENCIRCLE PRESS, 2016) AND "SAD HAVOC AMONG THE BIRDS" (TURAS PRESS, 2019)

**ISABELLE B.L** IS A TEACHER AND TRANSLATOR CURRENTLY LIVING IN NEW CALEDONIA. SHE HAS PUBLISHED A NOVEL INSPIRED BY THE LIFE OF A NEW CALEDONIAN POLITICIAN. HER WORK CAN BE FOUND IN THE BIRTH LIFESPAN VOL. 1 AND GROWING UP LIFESPAN VOL. 2 ANTHOLOGIES FOR PURE SLUSH BOOKS AND FLASH FICTION MAGAZINE. HER WORK IS FORTHCOMING IN DRUNK MONKEYS, AMPLE REMAINS, THE CABINET OF HEED AND FIVE MINUTES.

**BEN NARDOLILLI** CURRENTLY LIVES IN NEW YORK CITY. HIS WORK HAS APPEARED IN PERIGEE MAGAZINE, RED FEZ, DANSE MACABRE, THE 22 MAGAZINE, QUAIL BELL MAGAZINE, ELIMAE, THE NORTHAMPTON REVIEW, LOCAL TRAIN MAGAZINE, THE MINETTA REVIEW, AND YES POETRY. HE BLOGS AT MIRRORSPONGE.BLOGSPOT.COM AND IS TRYING TO PUBLISH HIS NOVELS.

**BRIAN JERROLD KOESTER** IS A PUSHCART PRIZE NOMINEE AND A BEST OF THE NET ANTHOLOGY NOMINEE. HIS COLLECTION IS TITLED WHAT KEEPS ME AWAKE (SILVER BOW PUBLISHING) AND HIS CHAPBOOK IS CALLED BOSSA NOVA (RIVER GLASS BOOKS). HIS WORK HAS APPEARED IN AGNI, STREETLIGHT MAGAZINE, DELMARVA REVIEW, RIGHT HAND POINTING, LOUISIANA LITERATURE, AND ELSEWHERE. HE LIVES IN LEXINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS AND HAS BEEN A FREELANCE CELLIST.

**JAMIE ZIPFEL** IS AN EDUCATOR AND VOICEOVER ARTIST. SHE SPLITS HER TIME BETWEEN THE MIDWEST AND THE MIDDLE EAST. SHE'S CURRENTLY PURSUING GRADUATE STUDY IN INDUSTRIAL-ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY.