



EXHUME

ISSUE 003

Featuring the work of
Robert Beveridge
Emily Clarke
Ellen Huang
Jennifer E. Hudgens
Sandra Kolankiewicz
Emily Lake Hansen
Edward Lee
Hannah Wang

EXHUME STAFF

Scarlett Peterson, Editor-in-Chief · Emily M. Deibler, Prose Editor · Maeve Nettles, Poetry Editor · Laurel Ann Lowe, Managing Editor

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dear Readers,

I'd like to begin this letter with an apology—it took me entirely too long to get this third issue to you. That being said, I do think it's our strongest issue yet! Our poets and our visual artist this round were brilliant. Thank you for returning to Exhume, and thank you to our excellent writers and artists for submitting and being patient with us while we got this issue together for all of you.

It's a new year, and Exhume's third year online. We're expecting it to be our biggest and best year yet. In fact, we hope to publish our biggest issue in the Fall, but we need your help! Please spread the word about Exhume, submit, and encourage your friends and family to do the same. We'd love to continue publishing new voices this year, and we welcome submissions from the excellent writers and artists we've published before.

The editorial team has elected to discontinue drama submissions. Though we enjoy a good play like anyone else, we haven't found the genre to be a good fit with Exhume. Our drama editor, Laurel Ann Lowe, will be stepping into a new position as Managing Editor for the journal. We have her to thank for Exhume's formatting and design, as well as our new, downloadable PDF option!

To make things easier for our editorial team, we've also decided to impart deadlines for our Fall and Spring issues moving forward. Fall submissions will be accepted from April 1st to June 30th of every year, and Spring submissions will be accepted from October 1st to December 31st every year. Submissions received outside of these time-lines will not be considered for publication.

Again, we have included a master list of trigger warnings, but have not placed them at the beginning of individual pieces. This is in an effort to keep our readers informed without giving anything about an individual work away to readers who may not need trigger warnings. If you think you might need to know ahead of time what subjects this issue entails, please take a look at the master list before reading. Should you find any triggers which we did not address, feel free to email us so that we can better meet your needs in the future. Your comfort matters to us.

Exhume plans to welcome a few new editors to our team soon, so keep an eye on our Twitter for announcements to come.

With love,
Scarlett Peterson
Editor in Chief

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Content Warning: This issue includes discussion and/or themes of animal violence, animals, birds, birth, blood, burning, colonialization, coming-out stories, death, drowning, general body trauma, guns, hunting, the Me Too movement, mental illness, mothers, murder, nudity, pregnancy, religious language, scarring, serial killers, sex work, sexual assault, spiders, Ted Bundy, therapy, tornadoes, and the Zodiac Killer. [For more specific details, please see the master list on our website.](#)

Sherman Alexie puts a hand on my knee

in the little white church house and says “I am your hero.” I know I have no choice. I know I am as much his as I am my own. I know when they ask me about my favorite writer his name will still dangle off my tongue easy and sweet. And it feels good, most of the time, to finally say what they want me to. Fulfilling expectations is safe and it’s good to feel safe when you live life in fear of losing your own skin. But tonight, in the last pew, I know I’m lying when I smile. Coyote was a trickster and my worship is no different. My hero has taken off his mask. My hero has screamed, but only the ancestors have screamed back. I let Sherman rest his hand there, atop the half-moon scar on my leg. The women whose bodies he’s colonized hang by red thread from the arched ceilings above us. They hang like the Jesus neither of us believe in hangs from the cross. I breathe in unison with the bodies above me. Our heartbeats synchronize. But Sherman, he doesn’t breathe at all. His heart is buried deep in his belly. The only sound his stagnant form emits is the low howl of his grinding teeth.

ALLEY, RUBBISH | EDWARD LEE



ROBERT BEVERIDGE

BIRTHRIGHT

sometimes
I wear it
like a scar
over my right eye

it meanders down
like the Mississippi
to my cheek

sometimes
I punch glass
and smear knuckles' blood
over my forehead and cheek

sometimes
in my dreams
I can see the puppetstring
from my right eye
up to my mother's hand
the string she cut at birth
to tumble me
into the guts
of Washington
to be snatched up
and raised by the wolves
that roam suburban streets
at night

sometimes
the ruby in my right eye
glows
in its hunger
for flesh

but most of the time
I just lie there

BIKE, GRAFFITI | EDWARD LEE



EMILY LAKE HANSEN

My therapist says when there's trauma, the body keeps the score

but it stores good things too:
the mechanics of tying a shoelace,
the hipfold of triangle pose, the slow
building of an orgasm.

I've forgotten the rhyme, but my fingers
remember: over, under, pull it tight
and through, how to make a bow
out of strings.

Even when the brain freezes,
the body knows to survive:
an infant instinctually swims
if dropped in water, we hold our

breath at the smell of fire.
The body's smarter. Stubborn.
It keeps a closet locked full
of treasure: weeds and germs

we thought we plucked years ago
and scrubbed away with clorox.
I'm surprised by what it remembers,
what it knows that I don't.

At the Vegas club, it electrifies
where I fold: at the scooping
of a back against back, the running
of a hand through hair,

the softness of a skin
I'd never touched. It was ready
when I wasn't. It holds on
where I let go.

At the Palomino Club

In the dark room, I want to ask for more -
her skin soft as silk, I've melted
uselessly into a puddle. I know
you see me, my water face electrified
and embarrassed. I am a good girl -
or I was a good girl - and I'm acting
out of sorts.

How do I recover from this? I touch
her arms, her hair, her waist. There
is glitter in my brain like a snow
globe being shaken and I'm afraid
it will break.

At home we're swirling in it. We find
traces of glitter in the carpet, specs
on dinner plates, even pieces in our bed -
we wake some mornings with translucent dots
like freckles on our naked bodies.

*Let them stay, I say, let's make
a mess, sleep with the sheets falling off
for a while or for a while longer.*

I wonder what love can survive -
I hope it's everything - and I clutch you
and clutch you again in the morning dark.

My therapist assigns homework

In the mirror, tasked to love myself -
no, I reprimand, she said *fall
in love* - I play a game of eye spy
with my flaws. *I spy with my little eye
a new parenthesis of wrinkles,
a double chin, my father's witchy
nose, my glasses perched on triangular
stone.* I want to watch it all smooth
over how the ocean turns shells
to sand, see instead an airbrushed
photo of anybody else. If I squint,
I spy the tiny hairs above my lips,
sharp like blades of grass, my pores
divets in the yard where flowers
should have grown instead. *I spy
with my little eye a ribbon
of loose mascara, an earring
missing its back, the beginnings
of something concerning growing
on my right ear.* When I was eight,
my mother sat me in front
of her bedroom mirror - a closet
covered in panels of glass -
and showed me each blackhead
on my nose and chin. She dug
at them between her fingernails,
pushing out accumulated scum
from the pits. *I spy with my little
eye a hole where something else
might go, a mouth ready for new
words to tumble out, eyes looking
all about for home.* If this is it,
I'd like to redecorate, declutter
a bit at the edges, throw
some things in the trash. *I spy
with my little eye something green,
rings around pupils, a golden
highlight to my cheeks, a smile -
just a smile - on the face
of someone I might love
in a new life.*

BRIDGE | EDWARD LEE



Artemis and a lost boy

I grew antlers from my skull last evening, to see how they felt.
/ I shook my entangled hair from them, musing at the leaves in
my branches, / when I heard the snapping of twigs. Quick as
an arrow / I turned and saw him, not quite a man but a human
fawn. In his eyes was a different kind of love, a humble / awe on
his freckled face and perked ears. He asked for antlers, too, to
make him full grown out of his smallness, / for the stirrings and
shortcomings of Eros never visited him. I cursed him with a rare
blessing, instead—to see me, *know* me, and live. To share in the
moon's sole fullness / and be led to return. Only wanting the boy
to remain as he was, / I did not account for an agony worse than
childbirth, / how humans hunt down the blessed.

HANNAH WANG

i wasn't ready to come out to you

i know the place at beaver lake
where the cattails parted to show you
a baby robin, fallen. a mercy
of the midday blue. a twitching
handful of hunger, an icarus
made brittle by yearning. i know
the place where you were a savior,
where an angel was returned to its nest -
your fingers soft as dusk
from the down that clung to them. and yet,
it ended as all things must:
with my knees in the peat and
your palm against my crown,
moon water coursing through my eyes
until i am swimming, made of it.
i know the place at beaver lake
where the cattails were not enough
to break my fall. oh mother, oh fleet
feather goddess, they will say
that my wings melted off my back,
but it was you who snapped them
like windpipes when you saw me
embracing the sun. my lips,
scorched ember black from kissing her
and kissing her again - there is
another name for this, and it is not
hubris. my meteorite body
crumbling into crater at your feet -
there is another love for this,
and it is not named. mother, i saw you
that afternoon with my own two
hearts. i saw that you saw me,
naked ribcage bird, saw you bless
my bones that hollowed to soar free.
me then, in your hands. me now,
beneath your hands, and the sun has fled,
and i have lost her behind the mountains
because i am drinking lung after lung
of frigid light, face down dark,
and still the moon in the water
is just a blank silver circle,
and always i will girl, will be tearful lust
for gold. even clipped and charred,
i can never forget how to fly. mother,
i know the place at beaver lake
where you are drowning me.
my mouth too ragged to scrabble
or plead; still, i know the place
where you found another daughter
of the sky, and you knew then to show her
mercy, you knew mercy -

BROKEN GLASS | EDWARD LEE



Self Portrait as Broken Records

After Ocean Vuong

What kind of woman is this if a woman
at all, is s/he feminine enough to be kissed

on the mouth by a long list of lovers,
favored, or desired as passionately as any

beauty, any folklore, any archetypal question
mark, or appetite; the kind that never leaves—

Never touched to lips that understood the
meaning of sacrament, of tongue, teeth, or

rigidity of body—rusted soft palate sings, much
like a brute lie or burnt bible, full with bitters,

a skeleton key, an army of banned books—ready
for translation, where is the first kill—first kiss

from an un-mother, first fuck from memory
calloused knuckles, uncles play pretend—

cousins play tornado alley and baby goddess worship,
1980s taught them—proved wombs can murder

future generations, sister a mourned wishing
well of fractured ovum, swollen tongues of sad

eyed pixie cuts—how appetites never grew but
bellies did, lies prettied by loneliness, mother

never stopped living inside her own shadow self—
photographs were soured with echo, coming from

inside, from the basement of that house,
from the base of such a massive Oak, so still—

several tarantulas gave birth to themselves from
rose bushes, from sweet throats, those sweet little

throats full of warm whiskey, sing praises,
taught the ugly, numbed sky—to love

gravity, to first kiss birds, feed them newly born—
until they flit from earth to fragmented sunset,

none of these photographs are true, except the
eyes, none of the smiles are real, and the house

stands idle even with all of this burning.

JENNIFER E. HUDGENS

I Think My Mother is the Zodiac Killer

Her heart was Dallas November 1963. She was Jackie O's Oxblood painted pretty pink suit. My Mother licked her fingertips in quiet sequential order, wishing she was Jackie O. She cried when other girls cried, and smiled when she shook LBJ's hand years later: Riverside, California.

Mother's bedroom altar had a worn photograph of Cheri Jo Bates. In candlelight she was Cheri Jo's sister. Night classes had Mother's friend parking next to caution tape. *National Guard officers were hot*, she said, *I wonder if Cheri Jo got to kiss the person who murdered her. I think there were more bodies.* I shrug my shoulders, she continued, *I remember Zodiac symbols etched into desks—Zodiac was killing lovers who kissed in dark cars and deep back seats.*

Mother moved from Riverside after all the guns had gone off, her belly spoiled with my brother—the bad seed. *I was in Denver when Ted Bundy was kidnapping women, keeping their lips in his pocket.* She could've been set deep in the woods—pretty plaything.

Oxblood lips and a song he loved to sing while kissing corpses.

I wish your father would've kissed me as much.

GRAFFITI THROUGH GATE | EDWARD LEE



We Gave Ourselves Names

We gave ourselves names, for that's what you do
when you want to recreate yourself, make
your own moniker like a riddle to
the meaning of what flows through you at a
speed so fast the particles cannot be
distinguished from the waves, indifferent
to walls and skin, detected only from
the corner of the eye when thinking of
something else. She was the Forest, and we
all agreed. Another claimed Ultimate
Power, the five syllables slowing us
down when we said them, curbing our response.
The Sunflower wore a bilateral
cross bite and lovely teeth, whitest in the
collective smile. I was the Weed, no clear
botanical definition, claimed just
because I was growing in a place no
one wanted me, imposing myself in
a plan, striving where few others would live.

In That Old Experiment

The time I just lay back and did not
struggle was the last. What he wanted was
my pushing away or my pulling towards.
By then I felt no more resistance, had
spent myself trying to preserve, become
a dog no longer fighting to escape
the electrified flooring in that old
experiment by throwing herself at
the walls of her cage, instead loosening
her mind, letting shock take over, current
run through and out till the long moment was
done, time compressed, the minutes finished. I
turned my head to watch birds hopping among
the bare branches outside the window, each
waiting for time at the feeder below.



Read more about our poets, writers, and artists on our website.

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