

the
b'k
bitchin' kitsch



Vol. 13
Issue 4

The Bitchin' Kitsch (2010-present) or *The B'K* is a quarterly compzine edited and published by The Talbot-Heindl Experience, LLC in Denver, CO. *The B'K* is an outlet for people who may not be accepted or considered by more traditional publications.

The B'K aims to have a diverse publication from a diverse set of voices and promises inclusivity, diversity, and respectful discourse. Issues are published in January, April, July, and October.

Staff

Editor-in-Chief and Design: Chris Talbot-Heindl

Editor: Dana Talbot-Heindl

Submissions

The B'K has strict submission guidelines. Please read them before submitting something for consideration: talbot-heindl.com/bitchin_kitsch/submissions

Contact Us

For inquiries or concerns, write to: chris@talbot-heindl.com

About the Cover

"The Weary Moon" an acrylic on panel piece by Larissa Monique.

Through the exploration of visual myth-making Larissa Monique Hauck expands on concepts surrounding femininity, queerness, and nature as vessels for catharsis. She has been selected for inclusion in events such as Nextfest 2018 (Edmonton, AB), Nuit Rose 2016 (Toronto, ON), and the 9th Annual New York City Poetry Festival 2019 (New York, US). Tip her on PayPal at [larissamoniqueartist](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?username=larissamoniqueartist).

Table of Contents

Art

Larissa Monique	cover
Mark Myavec	44

Fiction

Devaki Devay	8-9
Krista Bergren-Walsh	32-33
Sol Kim Cowell	12-14
Zach Murphy	18-19
Zary Fekete	38-39

Non-Fiction

Lev Raphael	34-36
(re)becca meier	30

Poetry

Aanuoluwapo Adesina	31
Ankit Raj Ojha	20
Bernice Caña	5
Brishti Chakraborty	10
Cara L McKee	23
Constance von Igel de Mello	37
Divyasri Krishnan	21
Felix Reyes	11
Julianne Larick	42
lauren.napier	6-7
Maeva Wunn	15
Meily Tran	16-17
Priyanuj	28
Rahma O. Jimoh	22
Robin Kinzer	26-27
Shei Sanchez	24-25
Sodiq Oyèkànmí	29
Susan Anmuth	40-41

pangnagdaan

by: **Bernice Caña**

CW: death of parents, grief

i hate english
for its insistence
on marking the passage of time.

was
is maybe
the cruelest word
in any language.
at least in the heart of my own native tongue
my parents don't have to be dead
unless i want them to be.

in the language i shared with them,
my mother still cooks her favorite dish.
i can show you the stand outside the gate
where my father picks up the morning newspaper.
they can still dance around in the living room
and yell at each other from opposite corners of the house.

in english my parents are gone;
it won't let me pretend otherwise.
but in tagalog they're still here:
two vibrant, buzzing shadows standing a little out of focus,
always just
about to turn the corner.

Bernice Caña (she/her) writes poetry and stories but not for a living. Her work has appeared in ALPAS Magazine and Imaginary Beasts. She lives in Manila, Philippines.

Begins of the horrors unable to accept a win
As muscle hardens against desire
 will blood shame
All twist
And retreat into historically protected
And traditionally revered
halls?

lauren.napier finds solace in melody and the written word. She has penned a children's book, *All My Animals*, stories for NPR Berlin, amongst other texts and songs. lauren is often traveling with her feline, notebooks, and acoustic guitar. Find her upon social media as punkrockdoll.

Stay a little longer

by: **Devaki Devay**

CW: Themes of emotional neglect in a relationship

He had been neglecting the dishes for ages. The last time he had seen them, trays and bowls were protruding jaggedly from a swamp of clogged sink water, utensils clawing at the air like upturned crabs.

He pulled himself from bed in the purple evening, rocks swinging in his lungs. There was a dark mound eclipsing a screen in the corner of his room. The light crept beneath it like sour milk from an old carton.

“We should get the dishes done, eh?” Said the mound. It unfurled a bit. “We” meant “you,” but Arjit was happy to hear him speak.

“How’s work going?”

“Same as usual.”

“What about that big project? It’s got you really tied up, huh?”

“Yeah, really tied,” Ronak wound himself back in. There went the light.

“Right,” said Arjit. He walked lightly into the kitchen, pressed his abdomen firm against the metal lip of the sink.

The water wasn’t still. Arjit leaned in. Something was moving: translucent orange fins twirling beside a raindrop-thin body.

A *fish*. He imagined holding it, scooping it swiftly up to his eyes with a fistful of water. But he was afraid of something with such delicate bones.

The last time he’d been anchored with such entrancement was when he first met Ronak. A lab partner who neglected his homework and was more inclined to let the sun kiss his cheeks on grass slabs where he would splay out like a starfish. It began with walks home together in early winter. They were too afraid to touch each other in the light -- that was how they knew.

Arjit began spending days with his fish, swishing his fingers gently through its watery home. Mold growths curled into colorful coral.

The kitchen ballooned into an ocean. The current swept him through the door, his body suspended in silky bulges of deep blue. His stomach turned. The fish grew beautiful off his hunger. He saw it now, its scales adorned with a thousand specks of gold like a mirror capturing flame.

Ronak opened the door. Arjit felt the water rush beneath him, the floor

a lurching solid at his feet. All that was left was a faint sputtering from the ocean-sink. He leaned against the doorway.

“No dishes?” He asked. Arjit swallowed. He wanted to say no, no dishes, no nothing, no brushing against my hand, no laughing into the late night, no dipping your fingers through my hair under the moon. But the bones were so delicate.

“There’s a fish,” he finally admitted to Ronak’s serious face. “There’s a fish in the sink.”

Ronak glanced over. Arjit waited anxiously till he trailed back, smiled gently, walked to the living room and threw open the door. There were clouds. Arjit hadn’t seen the weather in months.

“There’s no fish in there,” said Ronak.

“What! Where are you going?”

“I don’t know. Getting food. Going out,” he said. The door closed with a soft click.

Arjit stayed till the memory of the cool gust had disappeared from the doorstep. When his body pulsed with heat again, he turned back to the kitchen.

He snatched at the fish. It slipped through his fingers. He tore both hands through the grime, stale liquid stench swallowing his sleeves. The fish became smaller and smaller, quicker and quicker, no, no, Arjit dove a fist in and wrenched out the stopper, watched the water swirl and pull till the tip of an orange fin dissolved in the dark, fizzling out like a burning star.

Devaki Devay (they/them) is a writer with published work in Entropy and Okay Donkey Magazine. They are a proud community college transfer and currently work part-time at a science museum. They can be found on twitter @DevakiDevay.

a list of symptoms (not exhaustive)

by: **Brishti Chakraborty**

1. sometimes you plunge a fist through the air because it's taking up too much space in front of you and you see the dust split like a bone and then suddenly you feel so old and so young but mostly like every breath is your first and then you're late to class and everything is just the wrong side of futile and

2. every year your birthday is shorter and you are shorter not that you've checked since you were thirteen because you suspect bits of you have been falling off and you'd rather not know for sure but everything is worse when you're in the backseat and the window is too warm to call freezing and

3. fatigue

4. you don't know how to sleep anymore and you get the feeling your eyes are getting a little too big for your feverish little face and your hair wasn't ever curly before so i guess that's something else that means you're not eight years old anymore and you're not scared of aging but you don't think it's supposed to feel like this or at least you think it's supposed to feel like something and

5. when you look at your old books you spend too long sniffing the pages but they never smell like anything other than your floor and this isn't even the right floor so where are you supposed to lie down? where are you supposed to lie down? and the sun won't stop setting behind you

Poetry

Brishti Chakraborty (she/her) is a chronically ill teenage lesbian living in India. Her work appears in Fahmidan Journal, FEED Magazine, Fairy Piece Mag, and elsewhere. Find her @brishti_writes on Twitter and @brishtiiii on Instagram.

Family Dinner

by: **Felix Reyes**

I am aware that I often lack subtlety but I
like to think I make up for it with brute force,
I don't
need a pretty metaphor to say my mom screamed
in my face
every day when I was growing up
and I still can't hear any sudden, loud noise
without wanting to shut down or cry
(or both).

Nevertheless,
I am aware that many crave cleverness in the lines they consume
so for this one I can just be a bird,
I'll be a
turkey on Thanksgiving day, maybe
I'll finally start to feel something as you
tear off my limbs and start to masticate my flesh.

Felix Reyes (they/them) is a queer poet born and raised in south Florida. They write poetry that focuses on coming to terms with the past and the difficulties of struggling with mental health. Find them on twitter @chaos_emporer.

See Me In A Stranger

by: Sol Kim Cowell

CW: Setting is a country where homosexuality is outlawed

He's easy like this, so vulnerable to my touch. The streets of Itaewon have never felt as warm as they do right now, cozied up against my back as I puff on a stale cigarette. Usually, it's slim pickings: a few theoretically heterosexual military jocks, more interested in the beer than the company; a couple of businessmen sharing a drink as they whine about their day, wedding rings left on a nightstand in Gangnam; a handful of tourists, pale-haired and sharp-nosed as they titter in excitement.

It's rare that I get such a delicate offering as this. I feel starved, like I've been deprived of touch for my whole life until this moment, but I have to wait. They startle easily — the young ones — and he's got that nervous look in his eye that says he's not quite used to being brazen yet. Probably spent his whole childhood hiding, like most of us did, and hasn't learned to let go in dimly lit alleyways where the only thing that matters is the taste of whiskey on your tongue.

God, I'm never this desperate. I shuffle a little in my jacket, suddenly wishing I had something intelligent to say, because I've been busy talking myself up like I'm some sort of weary-eyed academic the whole night. Smoke curls out from between my lips, shaped like a *how do you do* or maybe a *wanna go home with me*.

Not my actual home, of course. Just a cheap hotel nearby, anything that'll be covered by the crumpled handful of bills in my back pocket. Anywhere that'll look the other way.

He shivers, slightly, and glances over at me with wide, round eyes. "Uh, *hyung*," he whispers, "are you done smoking?"

Nothing else gets to me the way a taller guy calling me *hyung* does. I'm not so arrogant that I can't admit to it. Years of pandering to men with cufflinks and finally, finally, the roles have reversed.

I stub out my cigarette unceremoniously, crushing it beneath my heel, and oh-so-casually brush my fingers against his inner wrist. He shivers again, but doesn't flinch the way we're expected to, the way we've been taught to. Maybe he's a little bolder than I thought.

"Where you from? Don't hear any *satoori* on you, but you don't really talk like you're from Seoul, either," I murmur into his neck, leaning forward until I can feel my eyelashes brushing his collarbone.

“New York,” he responds in English, and suddenly his bumbling innocence makes sense - he’s not from here at all.

“Never fucked a *gyopo* before.” It’s a crass thing to say, but I’m a crass kind of guy, or at least I pretend to be when the sun goes down.

He swallows loudly, Adam’s apple bobbing by my ear, and suddenly it feels as though the moment is a lot deeper than I understand. I think about how we might look to a bystander, so close to each other, and how we’re only centimeters from an embrace— and then all of a sudden I’m putting a stop to those thoughts. There’s no use getting sappy over a guy who I’ll never see after this.

I pull back sharply, concealing my discomfort beneath a cough. I’m not used to being *swayed* like this, and maybe there’s just something different about those American guys or maybe it’s the fact that I’m off-balance today, for some reason.

“I’ve never, uh,” he begins, his voice cracking slightly. “Never. You know.”

Or maybe it’s that this guy’s a *virgin* and I don’t know if I’m ready to play the role of the seedy foreigner deflowering the young maiden. Am I a foreigner, to him? We’re the same, but also so different. He’s certainly foreign to me, but something about him considering me an outsider rankles me, though I can’t put my finger on the reason why.

And then I’m thinking about my first, and how the guy who was with me probably didn’t think this hard about useless, irrelevant things and focused more on getting the job done.

Why is this so hard? I’m attracted to him, of course, and I assume I’m decent enough for him to have played along thus far, but every time I try to take control, it’s like there’s this weight that comes along with it. Like I’m responsible for this kid, like I have to *look after* him, and haven’t I always thought way too much? Always in my head, and never in the moment.

And now the thoughts are coming too fast, in the way they haven’t done since I slumped over a bottle in my last year of university, and my head is swimming and he’s floating away and I’m leaning against the wall heavily, scrabbling for purchase in the shifting membrane of this reality. A thousand pictures flash through my head, a thousand different men in a thousand different places, and I feel like I’m going to be sick.

When was the last time I dated someone, I mumble into the abyss, and the answer springs to my mind instantly. High school girlfriend, before I figured out my sexuality. I bought her a box of *pepero* on November 11th and she dumped me for not being interested enough. How long has it been since then? Seven years? Eight?

How long has it been since I was the guy standing in front of me, innocent and alone and hopelessly out of his depth, but desperate to make a connection? To love someone? To be loved?

Before I realize what I'm doing, I'm stumbling away from him, hood pulled up over my ears, and the cocktail of confusion and panic, topped off with a drizzle of regret, is warming me up until I feel like I'm burning. The stragglers on the road part around me, like whatever I've got is contagious, and maybe it is. Maybe I've been sick for a long time.

Fiction

Sol Kim Cowell (he/it) is a transmasc Korean writer and local café regular. His work seeks to embolden the whispers of the subconscious and to confront the ghosts of the past, with a view to tell stories that resonate across borders. At his doljanchi, he picked up the pencil, and he hasn't put it down since. He can be found on Twitter at @solkimchi. Tip him on Ko-fi at <https://ko-fi.com/solkimchi>.

The House of Rain

by: **Maeva Wunn**

It's noisy
in the house of rain
where the walls
drip salt water
and the floors
weep brackish
and little thunder clouds
float low
spitting lightening bolts
and flakes of snow
hail bouncing off
the slick windows
I leave my umbrella
by the front door
my shoes my clothes
in a heap by the stairs
and I descend
one step at a time
into the murky
depths.

Maeva Wunn is a bi-sexual non-binary neurodivergent poet, crafter, history buff, and music enthusiast living with chronic illnesses. They currently reside in Iowa with their spouse and cats.

The Silver Age

by: Meily Tran

CW: Discussion of death and aging

I never understood why people call it white hair when the thin strands reflect
silver in my eyes, like tangled chains shimmering
in rough seas of murky brown. My mother worries about my premature abundance of
white hairs, grieving the loss of my youth and her own as she
weaves them into a braid. Some mornings, she fishes out my white hairs,
offering them to me like I could sell it off, or weld it into a necklace.
I don't think it's worth that much, but I play along, joking that my scalp's
precious windfall could fund their retirement.
Their laughter is dry, dissenting, Dying the moment they close their bedroom door.
With callous fingers fixtured into stiff crooks from breadwinning crochet hooks,
my mother parts the waves of my father's hair, seeking treasure threads.
With peeling hands, I bury myself beneath sewn soil and pretend I can't see
my parents decay with their
folding skin, persistent aches, parasitic white hair.
There'll be room for regret once their youth spoils: monthly pensions in the mail,
*lai see*¹ slipped into wrinkled hands, arguments with my older sibling
about who will drive them to eat dim sum this week. Only then will I learn
the terror of visiting their house that's too big for two but just right for four,
now enveloped by the scent of their new neighbor—the looming

¹ Red envelopes

Death with his hot pink Diesel vacuums
 clogged with cat fur and tissues and brittle white ponytails.
 Hearing them reminisce the past, their present stagnant and
 their future an ending credit, I'll hoard moldy tupperware from each monthly visit
 in the back of my freezer, waiting with dread for the day
 where I will be the one to hum Teresa Teng as I tuck them into
 the icy sheets of their hospital beds.
 But tonight, we sit in solitude and fish.

Meily Tran (she/her) is a college freshman from Southern California. Most of her works are first drafted at 1 AM and are inspired by her tragic sapphic love life, sporadic identity crises, and beloved pet chihuahua. You can find her on twitter @tran_scendence. Tip her on PayPal at https://paypal.me/MeilyTran?country.x=US&locale.x=en_US.

Opossum

by: **Zach Murphy**

CW: Environmental terror

Pete and Richard's orange safety vests glowed a blinding light under the scorching sun, and their sweat dripped onto the pavement as they stood in the middle of the right lane on Highway 61, staring at an opossum lying stiffly on its side.

Richard handed Pete a dirty shovel. "Scoop it up," he said.

Everything made Pete queasy. He once fainted at the sight of a moldy loaf of bread. Even so, he decided to take on a thankless summer job as a roadkill cleaner. At least he didn't have to deal with many people.

Richard nudged Pete. "What are you waiting for?" he asked.

Pete squinted at the creature. "It's not dead," he said. "It's just sleeping."

"Are you sure?" Richard asked as he scratched his beard. He had one of those beards that looked like it would give a chainsaw a difficult time.

"Yes," Pete said. "I just saw it twitch."

Richard walked back toward the shoulder of the road and popped open the driver's side door of a rusty pickup truck. "Alright, let's go."

Pete shook his head. "We can't just leave it here."

"It's not our problem," Richard said. "They tell us to do with the dead ones, but not the ones that are still alive."

Pete crouched down and took a closer look. "We need to get it to safety," he said.

Richard sighed and walked back toward the possum. "What if it wakes up and attacks us?" he asked. "That thing could have rabies."

"I don't think anything could wake it up right now," Pete said.

Richard belched, "It's an ugly son of a gun, isn't it?"

"I think it's so ugly that it's cute," Pete said.

"No one ever says that about me," Richard said with a chuckle. "I guess I just haven't crossed into that territory."

Just then, a car sped by and swerved over into the next lane. Pete and Richard dashed out of the way.

“People drive like animals!” Richard said. “We’d better get going.”

Pete took a deep breath, slipped his gloves on, gently picked up the opossum, and carried it into the woods.

“What are you doing?” Richard asked. “Are you crazy?”

After nestling the possum into a bush, Pete smelled the scent of burning wood. He gazed out into the clearing and noticed a plume of black smoke billowing into the sky. The sparrows scattered away, and the trees stood with their limbs spread, as if they were about to be crucified.

“Jesus Christ,” Pete whispered under his breath.

Pete picked up the opossum and turned back around.

Previously published in Punk Monk Magazine, Free Flash Fiction, The BeZine, MoonPark Review, and Near Window.

Zach Murphy (he/him) is a Hawaii-born writer with a background in cinema. His debut chapbook *Tiny Universes* (Selcouth Station Press, 2021) is available in paperback and e-book. He lives with his wonderful wife Kelly in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The Infidel

by: **Ankit Raj Ojha**

We were atheists in arms
As long as it was my folks we dissed,
Finding loopholes and hypocrisies in
My blood gospel, until the day
I blasphemed and questioned your gods,
Expecting you to join in
My objective assessment,
And you revealed yourself for
The fanatic you are,
And I a lone infidel.

I should have known better than be
Sold on your sermons when you'd say
Nothing is sacrosanct.

On Tender Hooks

by: Divyasri Krishnan

CW: themes of death and ghosts

We are running out of fruit. My mother,
dead in the kitchen,
digs her fingers in the sweet flesh, unseamed
sunset.
Every night, the knife
flashes down. Every night a severance.
In my family ghosts stay with the bodies until they burn.
My great-aunt's corpse still bulging with gas,
ruining the good velvet.
Her ghost cuts papaya and mango roses
in the kitchen for her husband
who died in the library, supine on the Persian,
a book in each hand like a weapon.
There is only so much we can hold in our teeth.
My brother and I, we try,
shoveling guava and piss-yellow jackfruit
into our wounds until they spit and bleed.
My mother's ghost still clings to its form, but every day we see
her longing to fall free.
We eat until our bodies swallow our hands,
swell through the door.
There is always more.

Divyasri Krishnan is the author of PRIMORDIAL KNOWLEDGE (Bottlecap Press). Originally from Massachusetts, she studies at Carnegie Mellon University. Her poems and prose are published or forthcoming in Muzzle Magazine, Third Point Press, Arc Poetry, and elsewhere. She is a Best of the Net finalist, and she reads for The Adroit Journal. Tip her on PayPal at divyasri.hny@gmail.com or on Venmo at @diivya.

Mirror

by: **Rahma O. Jimoh**

he wears our fears like a turban,
sometimes he forgets

our names & we grow up answering
rows of names not meant for us.

he sticks his fingers into the fire
so it kisses the pot & our stomachs

don't go singing in class.
we grow up swallowing what it means

when a man wakes up at dawn
so we don't line up

the little he makes at the buka.
he showed our tiny fingers

how to weave through home-works,
design paper cards & create magic.

i can still paint the pride on his face
when he edited my first story;

the way his fingers danced
around misspelled words.

a father can be more than a father
when his tenderness skyrockets

to motherly love. i owe my kids
one like him, a mother in their father.

I think of him as tempered glass—
the mirror that must never crack,

a reflection of light. a constellation
of stars lighting up cold nights.

sometimes a glass ceiling
watching from atop.

a glassdoor,
a world opened up.

Rahma O. Jimoh is a creative writer and journalist. She is a 2021 Hues Foundation scholar and a 2020 Pushcart Prize Nominee. She has been published or forthcoming in *Lucent Dreaming*, *Olongo Africa*, *Native Skin*, *Agbowo* & others. She is the Poetry Editor for *The Quills* and *Olumo Review*. She reads Poetry at *Chestnut Review*. Tip her on PayPal at Epharm07@gmail.com.

Whitby

by: **Cara L McKee**

CW: Familial aggression and suggested violence towards a minor

Many years ago in Whitby, my dad
took a photo of my mum, my brother
and me, which showed she was carrying him.
I meant she was carrying my brother,
but read what you like. The photo
would become a memorial for all
that Dad had to lose, or as Mum said, all
he had to loose. That was then.

Now, across the beach, the big wide beach with
beach huts where I'm writing now, there's a man,
a grown man in shorts stood there shouting right
up in the face of a little kid.

A woman watches, she looks hesitant,
in the face of this man stood there shouting.
She's unsure what to do, maybe unsure
(watching, hesitant), if this is the point
that she does it.

Earlier I walked past this woman,
as I followed far behind my own man.
She was writing earlier, when I passed,
in her notebook and glanced up at me,
and I wondered if she'd write how far
I was behind my man, if she wondered
if I ever thought of leaving, leaving,
taking the kids with me.

Right now, across the beach, her man grabs
her boy, she isn't wondering now,
when he grabs her boy, her little boy
by the arm, she gently removes him,
lifting the boy up, without wondering,
into her arms, she removes him, and
my thoughts go back to Mum

gently removing my dad, lifting up
her children, choosing to step away,
removing us from his photograph.
Like that's just what you do.

Cara L McKee (she/her) lives on the west coast of Scotland and gets to work in a village library. Her poetry has been published in places like The Hysteria Collective, Dodging the Rain, and Poetry Scotland, and her chapbook, First Kiss (Maytree Press) is available on her website: skeletonarchitecture.blogspot.com

The Girl

by: **Shei Sanchez**

I'm afraid I'll forget.

The girl with thick pigtails, front teeth
square like Chiclets gum. The girl bringing
her grandpa's mottled hand to her forehead,
the younger honoring the elder, the blessee & her blesser.
Mano po, she would say.

The girl with her seamless
Thank You, Goodbye, Of Course, I'm fine. Her
Salamat po, Paalam po, Siempre po, Mabuti po.
Effortless, drilled-in phrases spoken
at home. Reflexes these weighted

America-branded bones haven't lost.
Responses that intuit the slight bow
of the head, assuring the *titos & titas*
that heaven's still a destination,
that I did eat already, & that no, they will not

be alone when they're too old
to take care of themselves. But the forgetting lurks
in those almost-moments: the invisible letters
trapped in my mouth, taunting my tongue, waiting
for the girl's lips to take over. I bend

every which way, rely on
that natural turn of phrase. And then
nothing. *Wala.*
The girl and I are stuck. Ossified.
Will I forget her, this *batang babae*?

On the phone with my mom
is the only time some of the girl
and her words come back. Words of
hunger, loss, love.
Our conversations meander in Taglish.

The Tagalog, an island surrounded
by American flavored seas, half-seasoned with
Ano po? What?
Bakit po? Why
does a part of me refuse to remember

while another dares not to forget?
Assimilation works
in ungodly ways. The girl and her words
still set in amber.
I do not know
who is holding the hammer.

Shei Sanchez (she/her) is a Filipina-born, America-raised writer from Jersey City, New Jersey. Her work has appeared in journals and anthologies, including Main Street Rag, Sheila-Na-Gig, Gyroscope Review, Change Seven, and Women of Appalachia Project's Women Speak. She lives in Appalachian Ohio. Tip her on PayPal at paypal.me/sheishimi or on Venmo at @Sheiron-Sanchez.

Susurrations

by: Robin Kinzer

CW: Alcohol use and addiction

I was twitterpated for the whole first year I knew you.
An entire murmuration of starlings took up residence
in my chest. Wild violets were in permanent bloom
in the blue bellies of my veins. Beneath my feet, ivy sprung

to life. Your construction-calloused fingers coaxing sounds
from a new guitar, you learned one Magnetic Fields song
a week for me in the first few months of our friendship.
I'd stumbled upon you humming "100,000 Fireflies"

in the kitchen; could hardly believe someone had the same
favorite band as me. Your voice, low like an uneven cello,
quavered slightly the first time you sang to me. A blush
swept across your delicate, asymmetrical face.

A wide chasm of longing yawned before me, and I leapt in
without thinking twice. Somehow, we are now five years past
the day of our first official date; you, so tender and tentative,
a dozen scarlet roses clutched in your damp palms;

and we are now two states away from each other.
It is astounding what can transpire in the span of five years
spent loving an addict. I've lost track of the times you've tried
to make amends, though I know you drove blind drunk

with me in the car twice. Know I had to send the police
to your house just once. Two days ago, you emailed again,
and within seconds, the susurrations of those stubborn starlings
began again within my traitorous chest. Every time you are sober,

hope looms enormous. I queue up "100,000 Fireflies."
The air still quivers when I remember your fingers trickling
down my vertebrae like rain. This song is a conjuring act—
every time I press play, it brings you back to me.

I try to remember: Hope, too, can be a verb. Can be associated
with *crush*. With *dash*. With something totaled as completely
and utterly as your car on that drunken November night
that was certainly not the last time I almost lost you.

I listen to The Magnetic Fields on repeat, and clasp
my agnostic palms in awkward prayer. Pray that,
sooner or later, sobriety sticks. Pray that, this time,
I will love both of us enough to turn you away.

Robin Kinzer (she/hers) is a queer, disabled poet. She's a grad student at University of Baltimore's MFA program in Creative Writing and Publishing Arts. Robin has poems recently published, or forthcoming, in Little Patuxent Review, Wrongdoing Magazine, Gutslut, Sepia Quarterly, and Fifth Wheel Press. You can find her on Twitter at @RobinAKinzer. Tip her on PayPal at Robinkinzer@gmail.com.

pretty little house plant

by: Priyanuj

a pretty little house plant appeared
one morning.
i let it stay,
then let it
invade my space
like a good host.

i watched it grow—
the pretty little house plant
into a tree,
overshadowing my house.
you've overstayed, i said.
why don't we go on a little journey—
it smirked,
and took me on a guilt trip.

the words in my head
began to grow like creepers—thoughts of courage
outnumbered by seeds of anxiety
i planted everyday.
you reap what you sow—
i should've known.

months went by, and i ran into a drought.
i gave procrastination a day off, and
went with the flow. *i can't keep watering you anymore.*
it glares at me—*i have all the water at my disposal.*
and my glaring omission
had left me with a desert in exchange for an ocean.

i crawl to its shade, begging for shelter—
to replenish you, i've hung myself dry.
it lets me stay,
and i let it
destroy my ecosystem
like a naïve guest.

the pretty little house plant
still stays in my house.
i, its pet mouse.

Priyanuj is a writer with a perplexing penchant for pessimistic protagonists. Longlisted for the Dante Rosetti Awards in 2013 for fiction, he has an MA in Creative Writing from Kingston University, London. Tip him on Ko-fi at ko-fi.com/ghostoftheparty.

water lily

by: **Sodiq Oyèkànmí**

for K [they/them]

they transplant a water lily into the mouth of a boy/
the body of a boy is a floral garden/ & inside

they plant a heart// & i swear by the flowers
that sprout on waters

nothing can be more beauteous than bodies/
blooming with sepals & petals from every interstice

what i feel for K is pure/ as naked heavens. love
this is not love/ love is overused/ this. is. not. love

neither is this plummeting [head first]
into something metallic. this is more divine

than what cupid can ever create. this is kindness/
this is seraphic/ this is the nature of flowers

water lily/ begonia/ lotus / ...
this is registering hereness/ this is art. this is heart

-to-heart language of saying:
here/ we are gods

Sodiq Oyèkànmí [he/him] is a poet from WestAfrica. He co-judged the AKUKO Inaugural Literary Competition alongside Rosed Serrano. A Best of the Net nominee with works published/ forthcoming in Poetry Wales, Olney Magazine, trampset, Kalahari Review, Brittle Paper, Pidgeonholes, and elsewhere. He is currently working on his first hybrid chapbook. Tip him on PayPal at praise@cherrywildo.com.

The birth of venus in my bathroom, alone

by: (re)becca meier

CW: Mention of scars, body image

It's always when I'm touching myself in the bath that I see a spider where I normally wouldn't, head upright and less self-indulgent. I spot one, now, dangling from the bottom of the cabinet beneath the sink, dancing aerial silks, and wonder if this is something I'm not meant to see, either.

Moments ago, I looked into the mirror, bare, hair pulled back in the way I've always hated because it left me nowhere to hide, and I thought *wow, I look beautiful*. I'd never seen a delicate girl study me, all soft angles and freckles from the shoulders up, lashes golden in the light.

The house is warm, womb-like. The mirror is steamed over and reminiscent of the frame of the first painting I ever saw my body in at the St. Louis Art Museum. A woman with thick brushstroke thighs, soft stomach, heavy breasts. *Nana, Female Nude, 1911, oil on canvas*. The description read *sensual*, but her expression always read *pained* to me.

Running my hands over the smooth, raised skin of the scars on my chest, I remember the marble statues that always got the tummy folds and cherub butts just right. I tried to take a picture for comparison, but the lens didn't have the same vision.

I worried the spider would descend onto my feet below the cabinet as I bent over to wash my face in the sink, but upon closer inspection, it was just a clump of hair.

SUN AND MUD

by: **Aanuoluwapo Adesina**

We are the sun-kissed embryos
of recalcitrant fathers.
In pessimism only, is there a life
worth every breath.
The poetry of rustling maple leaves
sedate my orphan eyes—
Orphaned by awe-fanned spies
wielding gelatin swords.
The pagan women in my village
shrunk in old age
From years of holding on to the fear
of a corrupt God.
The cursive men in my village
were bent from neck to spine
from the burden of that
accursed masculinity, which they
carried to their farms.
“Insanity is not so much a case of
uncertainty, but certainty,”
says Nietzsche.
“If then I believe myself to be insane,
and know so with all certainty,
Am I perhaps insane for believing
I am insane whilst knowing
I am insane?” asks Ade.
The commingling of the sun and mud
Is my explanation for the existence
of an angry man.
A man whose molten heart marries
the unfiltered thoughts of his mind,
only to dribble vinegar at the side of his mouth.

Aanuoluwapo Adesina was born in Nigeria, and is the author of *Emocean*, a poetry collection published in 2016 by Kraft Books (Nigeria). He was the winner of the 2016 Nandos Poetry Prize (Coventry, UK). His work was shortlisted for the Jane Martin Poetry prize in 2017. Find him on Twitter at @iya_aanu.

Non-profit was the Vampire that Drained Me

by: **Krista Bergren-Walsh**

CW: instance of disgust towards an unhoused person, ableism at work, use of an ableist term

I lean against the white marble countertop, the nerves from my tailbone down to my toes feel as if they are on fire; as if multiple knives are slicing through my muscles. My cane is hidden from the sight of the customers. I use the countertops to guide me behind the coffee counter as I make lattes and cappuccinos. With practiced ease, I tell the customers which community partner 10% of their purchase is going to.

I love what my job works towards, the Nonprofit Coffee Shop. I love our community partners, the people we work with to help local and marginalized communities. We work with homeless shelters, fellow non-profits, youth programs, and food kitchens. We ask for donations of diapers, shampoo, cans of soup, peanut butter, and tampons. We hold nightly events, awareness meetings, LGBTIA+ gatherings, and drag queen book readings for kids. We sell fair trade jewelry, scarves, tote bags, and coffee beans. We hold events to gather trash on the side of the road and host pot luck dinners to raise money for teachers.

I love all the work into the community my job does, I just wish they would remember to invest in their own community.

I am not allowed to sit down no matter how badly I ache. I am supposed to keep the counter and tables clean for customers, refill the ice machine, restock the coffee lids, cups, and sleeves. Keep the espresso machine clean, keep the brewed drinks hot, and the ice tea cold. I am supposed to be able to answer the phone, answer questions on our fair trade items, community partners, or whatever else the customer may ask. I am supposed to remind students of their high school or college discounts on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and refill the condom box in the back near the books explaining consent and sex. But I am not allowed to rest my aching body that is screaming out how badly it wants to expire.

I am only 23, and I am so exhausted. I am glancing anxiously at my phone to see if my doctor has called back with my test results. My boss is in a meeting with our community partner of the month, and she gives me a sharp look for glancing at my phone. Can she not see the dark circles under my eyes? How despite that I am ready to pass out, I have the room sparkling because of how well I clean? The coffee is hot, I just restocked all the kinds of milk—cow, soy, almond, coconut, and oat—, just wiped down all the flavor syrups from their stickiness. My boss sneaks money to my supervisor so they can buy themselves weed all the time, but I'm not allowed to look at my phone to see if my lab results are in yet or not?

In the left corner of our coffee shop is the book club for the LGBT book club. They seem relaxed for the most part, but they all tense up a bit whenever the bell over the door rings. I can't blame them, there was a small but nasty protest on our sidewalk last week.

I am bisexual, but I am not allowed to go sit and join the book club. I have to remain behind the coffee bar. I want to ask what book they are reading, where are other good safe spaces, but, the mochas will not make themselves.

Sitting sound asleep near the front door is an unhoused man, his coffee now cold by his gloved hands. My boss had slipped me paperwork to give him. Information on shelters, how to find help, where to find free food. Next to him is his friend, who seems a bit out of it, mumbling under his breath. I am worried about them both, the winter is coming earlier this year than usual, and the shelters have been harder and harder to get in.

The woman ordering tea makes some unsavory comments about the two men, and, instead of telling her to take a flying leap, I list off the shelters we work with as I ring up her order.

"Just bring the tea to our table." The woman sniffs, turning to her friend as they settle down in possibly the furthest table away from me.

My legs feel like lead as I prepare the oolong teas, placing them on fancy little trays. I reluctantly take out my cane, shuffling across the scuffed wooden floor to their table. I can feel my boss eyeing me as I try to balance the two trays in one hand, cane in the other.

"Oh, my poor dear! You should have said something!" The woman springs up from her table to grab the trays from me. "I never would have asked you to bring it to me if I had known you are a cripple!"

I feel my mouth go dry, but before I can respond, the man who had been muttering to himself suddenly stands up with a painful howl before he charges out the door, knocking over a table and a few chairs on his way out. The other man jerks awake, looking around the room wildly before turning to look at the heavy door slamming shut.

The small coffee shop goes quiet. I turn to ask my boss what the fuck I should do when I find myself on the floor, fainting. Finally succumbing to all the mind-numbing pain. The floor feels sticky like my co-worker did not mop last night. The cups have shattered next to me, hot tea pooling, the room blurring.

I think this job is draining the life out of me, no matter how much I love it.

Krista Bergren-Walsh (she/her) is very excited to have been writing in both 2021 and 2022, entering in multiple literary contests and submissions. She has an upcoming poem with boats against the current coming up in April she is thrilled about, and honored to have two poems with Wishbone Words. She can be found on Twitter @WhimiscalUproar

If I Were Straight, I Would Never Have Learned How to Swim

by: **Lev Raphael**

CW: Fear of drowning

Sure, I splashed around at the beach in Rockaway in New York where my family rented an apartment for many summers a few blocks away from the festival of colorful umbrellas, transistor radios, beach balls, frolicking teens, and ice cream sellers marching past like clockwork.

We'd go after noon to avoid the worst of the sun—that's what our family doctor recommended. My mother was an excellent swimmer, but never thought to teach me and I didn't ask. The heat, the blueberry blintzes we bought at the boardwalk, and the breeze that always seemed to come up around 5 p.m. were enough. The beach was a refuge from life at school where I was sometimes bullied and often struggled with any class that wasn't English. And it was a place to watch beautiful bodies without seeming obvious about it.

I did take a swim class in high school, but I never felt I knew what I was doing—and being around all those hot guys was intimidating. It didn't matter, though, because living in Manhattan, I needed to know how to swim as badly as I needed to know how to drive.

Even when I joined a palatial health club years later in Michigan with indoor and outdoor pools, I kept my routine to free weights, machines, cardio, and yoga and spin classes. Swimming just wasn't on my map.

Then I saw him.

Jeff was our health club's new swimming instructor, and he was hard to miss. Towering at six foot five inches, possessing the perfect body for swimming, he was like a clone of Olympian Michael Phelps from the neck down: huge shoulders, V-shaped torso, hands and feet like paddles. From the neck up, he was as handsome as Henry Cavill when he played Superman.

A huge glass wall separated the weight room at our club from the indoor swimming pool, and when he'd start his own workout standing at the far edge of the pool, stretching and loosening his muscles, swinging those powerful long arms, time seemed to stop on our side of the glass.

Everyone stared. Men, women, even trainers. They all watched him, transfixed. Twentyish Jeff was that charismatic.

A woman friend at the club joked with me, "Maybe he can help me with my breast stroke." She was happily married and so was I. Well, partnered then—marriage would come later after it became legal in Canada, our second home at the time. Watching him,

I was in awe of his giant frame and dazzling good looks, but he was oddly human. He wasn't one of those preening muscle gods drifting through the gym inside a kind of force field. Even at a distance, Jeff seemed approachable.

My guess was right because when I called the club to inquire about swimming lessons and met him at the pool a week later, it turned out we weren't complete strangers since he'd read about me in local newspapers when I was interviewed about a new book—and he was a keen fan of fiction.

The bond between us was instant, and he was easy-going, without a trace of arrogance. And my being gay wasn't remotely an issue: I didn't have to come out to him since he knew my work and a lot about my life, given all the Michigan media coverage I'd had.

Up close, I was relating to the person, not the hunk.

I confessed to him that I had never been in a pool as we stood there with the tang of chlorine rising around us like a fog and the sound of vigorous swimmers in other lanes making elegant flip turns at each end.

Then it burst out of me: "I've been afraid of getting into the water ever since I saw *Jaws* and had nightmares about it. I'm afraid of drowning."

He didn't laugh. "Lots of people are. But you can't drown in this pool. You won't drown in this pool. And I've never lost a student yet. Anywhere." His eyes lit up. "Come on, let's stand in the shallow end of the pool and see what that feels like."

I sat at the edge and slid down into the water. It seemed cold despite the summer heat outside and being in that much water, even waist-high, was terrifying. I could feel my head starting to pound as if I was on the verge of a migraine. Jeff saw my distress when he lowered himself into the pool and stood looming over me.

As if trying to talk someone down from a ledge, he said "Give me your hand."

"What?"

"I'm going to do what I do with little kids, pull you through the water so you get the feel of it moving past you."

And that's what we did. I wanted to say "Don't let go!" but thought it would be ridiculous. I relaxed a little on our slow passage, but by the time we got to the deep end, I was starting to panic again and wondered how I could escape.

"Let's just stand here for a while, Lev. *Breathe.*"

The water was practically over my head, or felt like it could be at any moment. I was so lost in my own fear and embarrassment I had no idea if people were gawking at me or not. But I didn't care. I just wanted to survive—and calm down. I did, a little, as he talked about a novel he was reading, asked what I was working on, and clearly tried to de-stress what was for me a very frightening scene.

When I said I was ready, Jeff pulled me back and forth from one end of our lane to the

other until I was feeling safe. That took quite a while.

But I trusted him. I liked him. Though he was half my age, he was very fatherly. And he was so much bigger than me, which made me feel safe. Well, safer.

“You can swim. You *will* swim. It’s just gonna take getting over your fear.” Then he talked about how we would structure our half-hour lessons from that point on if we had a weekly lesson.

That’s when I told him I’d also freaked out watching *The Poseidon Adventure* (which came out before *Jaws*) and thought that I would for sure have died in that disaster.

“Well, don’t go on any cruises until we have some more lessons, okay?” he said, grinning.

At that moment I knew for sure that he was the teacher for me. Very easy on the eye, yes, but more important than that, way more important, he was easy to be with. Jeff had a sense of humor, he loved to read, and his confidence would keep me afloat.

Ode to the International Student

by: **Constance von Igel de Mello**

CW: Immigration process, discrimination

You enter with a clear folder only; it holds all the documents needed
To sign away your life. You are not permitted a cellphone
There is an x-ray machine like at the airport. You put the clear folder
into the plastic tray. It has to be even more transparent

You stand in line for the F-1 visa. It is supposed to be an interview
Instead, you stare at the person behind the bullet proof glass
A young Asian woman stares at you twice. A white middle-aged man
Barely lifts up his eyes from the paper. Today, you got lucky

At the border, many months later, you stand in another line, a long one
The old Chinese woman in front of you carries an enormous folder of
yellowed pages. The border patrol officer takes her into the next room.
The Iranian mother in front of you gets asked why she was away for so long.

“My family,” she says. Her English is not what they want it to be.
“A lot of people want to have one of these green cards, you know,” says the officer.

You are lucky because you came here by choice, not necessity
And while this is obvious sometimes we have to state the obvious
And the obvious is that you could have made many different choices
Other countries, other home countries

The border is an invention but the invention is strong and rigid here
Like lead and poison, with walls that are invisible but terrifying
Even when you are inside you are not
Even when you are inside you are always and forever out

(No, there is no way in)

The invention is intriguing and exciting
And maybe even worth the trouble
But the invention is barring you
and asking
You to leave

Constance Mello (she/her) is a Brazilian scholar, writer, and teacher. She graduated with a degree in Cultural Studies and Gender Studies from the Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany, and is currently pursuing a dual Master’s Degree in English and Creative Writing. You can find her on Twitter @constance_ser

Children's Clinic

by: **Zary Fekete**

As I walk out the front door of my apartment building I wave to my downstairs neighbor. He's trying to fix the fence out front. He's retired, probably in his 80s. He has a wooden leg. I asked him about it when I first moved in to the building. He said he lost it when he was 12. He and some friends were trying to hop onto a tram downtown, hoping to ride for free. He said that he slipped and that was all it took. There was no ambulance available in those days. A firetruck took him to the hospital. That happened in between the wars.

I live in Budapest. I've been here for four years.

There's this cheese tasting thing happening today in my book club. Our group thinks that because it's a nice day maybe they'll have it in the garden. Last month we finished up *Heart of Darkness*. Nobody liked it very much. I guess this week we're supposed to pick a new one. So we're going to eat cheese and pick something else to dislike.

I'm walking there now. Our group is held in the Jacksons' flat. They live four blocks from me. I'm an English teacher living in Budapest. I live in the 11th district which is considered the best district for families...lots of wide boulevards and leafy parks.

Our group is mostly other expats who have gravitated to Budapest for one reason or another. There are a couple of other teachers. One guy works for the government. There are two married couples...I think they work for a church.

I actually really don't care for our group. They remind me so much of myself that it makes me sick. We all live here ostensibly to be altruistic. But when I talk with the others it kind of feels like we all took advantage of an opportunity to live abroad while being paid American-level wages.

I'm very privileged to live here. I have more money than most of my neighbors. I don't have to be terribly selective in what I buy at the local grocery store. This makes me both happy and sort of miserable because I feel like I haven't earned the right.

I'm thinking about this as I walk. I turn a corner. I'm two blocks away from the Jacksons' now. I think about my neighbor back there fixing the fence. He is often doing odd jobs around the building. Last week I told him that if I had time I might help him. I said that but I knew that I probably wouldn't. I should feel guilty. Do I? Maybe I'll...

And suddenly, just like that, I notice the vacant lot.

I supposed I've passed it dozens of times. I pass it every time I visit the Jacksons. But today I really see it.

It is overgrown with brush and there are piles of scrap lumber piled here and there. The entire lot has a rusty fence around it. It has an old, crumbling structure at the center...something official-looking. There are no signs, but there is a cracked and fading cameo fresco on one of the outer walls showing two Soviet-era schoolchildren walking...holding hands and carrying pails. I assume that it used to be a national children's clinic.

My downstairs neighbor had told me once that in the mid-twentieth century these kinds of clinics had operated in every district of the city. The government wanted to make sure that everyone had care, and this often applied as much to the parents as to their children. Nurses would call on you shortly after you returned home from the hospital with your new child. "Everything ok?"

Next to the structure are two benches. They face a small grove of trees in one corner of the lot. The benches must have been meant for patients in the clinic (the children) to take a seat in between treatments, to have a small moment quiet in the fresh air. Looking at nature must be helpful for patients who are... well, they don't usually finish those sentences.

Suddenly and quite urgently I want to sit there. The lot is choked with weeds; there is rusty barbed wire around the top of the fence, and the benches themselves are broken and splintered. I...yes.

Before I can talk myself out of it I am reaching up and lifting myself over the fence. The wire tears a small rip in my shirt. As I lower myself into the lot I feel as though the sounds of the city fade just. I'm sure it is my imagination. Gingerly I pick my way through a few patches of nettles. I approach the benches, and I sit.

For the first few moments I feel nervous. Somebody might notice me in here. Is this trespassing?

Then I feel the gravity slowly pull against my legs. I feel the rough wood at my back. I start to notice a few more things. There are several small flowers dotted among the weeds. I see a bee. There are mosquitos, but they are leaving me alone. I can hear their soft wings. Sort of like they are asking little questions as they search.

I look back at the street. It's a bit darker now. How long have I been sitting here?

I stand. I decide to go back home. My group can wait. I'm going to help my neighbor with the fence.

Zary Fekete has worked as a teacher in Hungary, Romania, China, and Cambodia. He has previously been published in Goats Milk Mag, Shady Grove Literary, Journal of Expressive Writing, Ginosko Literary Journal, SIC Journal, Warp10Fiction, Reflex Fiction, Cholla Needles, and Rabid Oak. He enjoys reading, podcasts, and long, slow films.

On the Back of the Kitchen Chair

by: **Susan Anmuth**

drapes a wet t-shirt.
You finally washed clothes.
Two weeks' worth cram the shower rod
which cannot oblige them all.

Laundry an avoidance
of your main mission today:
filling two ten-page forms,
one for your son,

one for you.
Really both for you since the son refuses to count himself disabled
and therefore respond to paperwork
which the state insists on.

His stubbornness frustrates you.

His stubbornness is a life-gift.

The questions are invasive.
What do/does you/he do from the time you/he wake/s up
to the time you/he go/es to bed?
on a typical day.

The answers painfully scant.
The outcome uncertain
as bureaucrats strangle funding ever tighter
every round.

This is the kind of thing
you put off
and off
till you must beg for extensions.

The consequence of answers judged wrong --
dire. You must pretend
to ignore visions of failure bashing the door to your mind,
bent on paralyzing those ten pages times two.

You bribe yourself between questions
with Sudoku
and godiva.
Or as a last resort hang underwear.

At last
you get the forms completed.
You get the forms copied.
You get the forms mailed.

You didn't know
their self-addressed no postage manila envelopes
allow no proof of mailing
till the postal guy explains.

Just one more uncertainty.

Susan Anmuth lives with her son, dog, and cat in Newark, New Jersey.
Her work as a cashier at Walmart provides plenty of material for writing.

Mom, I

by: **Julianne Larick**

CW: Mentions of guns, bullets, and violence

hope my confession doesn't hurt you.
I published a poem
lying to the world that you buried me alive.
Right now, it's Friday and
you are teaching sex-ed at a school in Central Ohio,
reading a book about how trees speak with their roots.
I also maybe told the world that you
sweetened my coffee with bloated fables
of the Old Country, Motherland, the Home Land.
In reality, you're drinking Turkish coffee
with oat milk creamer in a clean buttercup kitchen.
Your eyes never saw guns,
but in my stories you were the bullet piercing bone.
You're probably watching *Gilmore Girls* with the tortoise,
but in my words you are watching girls turn to women
in the blink of a shotgun blast.
I'm sorry, Mom—I hope you're not offended.
Story-Mom is glittery and plastic,
Story-Mom is good and scoops words from ruins.
Real-Mom feeds the backyard bunnies raisins,
she has a sweltering compost heap and thick paintings
of bursting wedding bouquets, Romeo and Juliet, ports of the past
hauled over from Yugoslavia and hanging dry in Columbus.
I hope you're not offended
when I'm doling out plastic and glitter and gunpowder,
bloodied, transient, luminescent women.
What kind of child am I
to warp your life into a poem?

Poetry

Julianne Larick (she/her) is a Midwestern Best of the Net-nominated poet. She has work published in perhappened mag, Blue Marble Review, sledgehammer lit, NECTAR Poetry, and more. In addition, Julianne reads prose at GASHER Journal and manages The Dodge's social media. She tweets @crookyshanks. Find her work at <http://www.julielarickwriting.com>.



Passageway

by: **Mark Myavec**

Artwork

Mark Myavec is a former math teacher and urban planner. His photographs tend to embrace subjects that integrate geometry and nature. He admires the poetry of David Thompson, the visual art of Erin Currier, and the baseball swing of Roger Maris.