

# CALIFORNIOS

**A REVIEW FROM THE ENDS OF THE EARTH**

**POETRY   ESSAY   FICTION**

Phillip Aijian

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Bartel

Christian Bearup

Jonathan Diaz

Anna Barber

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t.a.b.carroll

Jayne Meyncke



**Volume 1**  
**FALL 2012**

# **CALIFORNIOS**

## **A Review from the Ends of the Earth**

**Volume 1 ★ Fall 2012**

**Editor ★ Timothy E. G. Bartel**

**Co-Editor ★ Jonathan Diaz**

*Californios*, which takes its name from the Spanish word for the historical residents of California, is a quarterly, online review that seeks to promote quality writing about California and by Californios. We hope to do this by providing a forum for new writing imbued with verve, care, and Californio mythos.

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**Submissions:** *Californios* welcomes submissions of poetry, short fiction, and creative non-fiction, as well as reviews of California-based art, media, and literature. Address all submissions and queries to the editor at [californioseditor@gmail.com](mailto:californioseditor@gmail.com).

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## *The Bear Comes Forth* Editorial

Earth darkens and is beaded  
with a sweat of bushes and  
the bear comes forth;  
the mind, stored with  
magnificence, proceeds into  
the mystery of time...

These lines are from California poet Yvor Winters's "Quod Tegit Omnia," published in 1927, the year he moved from Santa Fe back to his boyhood home of California. 1927 marked advent of Winters at Stanford University, where he became the voice of a west-coast criticism that questioned the emotionalism and fragmentation of Romantic and Modern literature and called for a poetry and a criticism based on reason and morality. Winters argued that "a controlled and harmonious life" was the end of man, and he upheld poetry as a prime avenue to that end.<sup>1</sup> "An artist," he writes, "who can feel the full horror [of modern thought], organize it into a

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<sup>1</sup> Yvor Winters, *Uncollected Essays and Reviews* (London: Allen Lane, 1974), 223.

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dynamic attitude or state of mind, asserting by that very act his own life and the strength and value of his own life, and who can leave that state of mind completed behind him for others to enter, has performed the greatest spiritual service that can be performed.”<sup>2</sup> This ideal directed his criticism of the poetry of others. “If forced to choose,” Winters admits, he would prefer “to judge a man’s ethics by his poetry, rather than his poetry by his ethics.”<sup>3</sup>

Winters’s hardline poetics gained for him a reputation as a stubborn, acerbic personality best left alone. It also gained him the respect of those twentieth-century poets and critics who too were wary of the presuppositions of Romanticism and Modernism. Further, Winters was uniquely Californian in his academic positioning and his poetic subjects. His late poems have titles like “In Praise of California Wines” and “See Los Angeles First.” He avoided New York and east-coast viewpoints like the plague, and is said to have boasted that he had never travelled east of Chicago.

Some of the brightest lights in late twentieth century American poetry and criticism were kindled in Winters’s Stanford classroom, including Robert Pinsky, Thom Gunn, and Robert Hass. Those who suppose that California is a place where reason and imagination go to retire and grow lax would do well to open up a volume of criticism by Pinsky or Winters. They will find that the thoughts of Winters’s western school are, to borrow

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 226–227.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 222.

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Longfellow's words, "long, long thoughts." Whatever one concludes about Yvor Winters's particular theories or evaluations (his continually low estimation of T.S. Eliot can try the patience of even the most generous of readers), he stands as an example of what can be accomplished in this state, on this coast; he is a model of a Californio mind, "stored with magnificence."

This Fall 2012 issue of *Californios* collects new writing by a handful of California writers who, each in their own way, exemplify the verve, care, and craft to which Winters called his students. From the zen-like playfulness of t.a.b.carroll's haiku to the saint-haunted landscapes of Jonathan Diaz and Christian Bearup, the following pages house various views of the Golden State and the life and thought to which it is home. We're just getting started here at *Californios*, for we seek to be a forum for writers who explore with mind, heart, and pen the particular places and interstitial spaces corralled within the borders of this state at the ends of the earth. Thank you for reading our review, where we hope that, through our work in words, California, the bear, may come forth. ★

THE EDITOR

## *Iglesia Pentecostal Luz de Dios*

Jonathan Diaz

These painted cinder blocks all pulse: proclaim.

Tin cymbals hit the rigid plastic rim

To bring in God—the walls are filled with him,

His ecstasy expands, and is not tame.

Your heavy heart, which holds the heat of flame,

Immense old ocean, filled up to its brim

With brilliant fire, whose burn is hot and dim:

Is wordless, and so worships all the same.

This crash, this clamor-clash revival song,

Is borne and belted out of burdened lungs.

The time of God, the praise of God is long,

And long the climb up Jacob's jolted rungs;

The fervent end of all this flame is strong

Unnamed, unless by un-extinguished tongues.

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*three brown shades*

t.a.b.carroll

i.

california skies,

for the most part blue, above

expanses of brown

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ii.

there's golden poppies,  
and purple lupin, but the  
hills are mostly brown

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iii.

the cresting hills rise  
each above the next, golden,  
or just dingy, brown

## Southern California Fall

Anna Barber

– after Dom Julian Stead's “Oxford Rain”

I wear an arid mask here  
Reserved for desert places.  
I blow over the hills,  
Killing and destroying,  
Down from the valley.

The waft of the sea  
From beyond the beginning  
Is stifled in season,  
In the numinous heat  
Of my awakening.

Here I am compounded  
Of brown grass and blown leaves,  
Raised by wind singed  
By October fires. I am

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The yearly reckoning:

Degeneration.

The people pray for rain:

I give them ash.

I am the flame that consumes.

I also am the burning hand

Of slow regeneration.

The wind from beyond

Answers with a hallowed

Aspiration.

## *The Miner's Girls*

Christian Bearup

*My patron came and said to me,  
Your flesh is wounded, cruciform.*

*My devil came and said to me,  
From flesh let blessed soul be torn.*

### 27 March

The water-spotted glass door leads in from rain to the dry interior of a Fullerton antiques shop, one marked by all the trappings of frugality: low ceiling, long aisles cramped with retail, oxygen inexplicably laced with the scent of Marlboro tobacco—a distinctly dark spot in the greater scheme of the Orange Circle. I was tending the register solitarily that day in March, face shielded by the covers of a preserved *LIFE* magazine I had pulled from the shelf. No browsers today; my one employee was on a very long lunch break; I scanned the news of 1972 and contemplated a severe welcome for him, because it's what he deserved.

I heard, but didn't see, two wheelchairs enter through the water-spotted glass door, and roll purposefully into the dense, dusty maze of shelves. Two

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girlish voices wafted back to me, resuming a debate that seemed to have been running throughout the long and dreary afternoon.

“It’s still raining. I’d still rather go home.” “Mom’s not going to let us keep this money.” Silent agreement. “We might as well... I mean, what if we say this will be our last try?” “I really don’t think we’ll find anything more interesting here than we found in the rest of the shops.” You’d think that would hurt my feelings, but no. “Let’s just try. I’m sorry. It wasn’t supposed to rain today.”

The front door opened again. She entered. The stooped remains of an old, hairless woman, bent steeply over a rust-red walker, stained forget-me-not blue dress hanging heavily from emaciated shoulders. The lights from the candelabras overhead pronounced drawn lines that ran across her cheeks like dry riverbeds. I spied her from the sanctuary of my register, meeting her with an expression of profound disquietude, biting my words before they leaped out to scold her, or to show her mercy—who knew what would happen. It’s complicated. She turned away towards the window display left of the door; but I’m sure she knew good and well what things were wrestling inside me.

People passing through the rain-battered street would have seen her enter the window space, hands reaching for the top shelf and grasping the handle of a looking-glass with an unremarkable plastic frame that reflected her face quite crisply. The light filtered by heavy clouds and the shop window shone

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off the immaculate glass and melted her milky blue eyes into pools. Her free hand raised to her cheekbone. Petting it caressingly. Its harshly-defined ridge crossed beneath her eye as pronouncedly as the lip of the sidewalk, and behind her eyes she contemplated all sorts of curses and convoluted memories—I knew—, and pain-tears sprang from her sensitive eyes to guard them from the white light of the rain-blotted sun.

As of this writing, that day has long ago passed and parted out of public memory. Eventually, my boy came back; and the cash box rang twice for the two girls in the wheelchairs; and when they left, it was with their money's worth of treasure. The younger had acquired an ivory hairpin—possibly the only thing in the shop that out-aged the old woman—a lovely thing in itself, composed of a spiraling handle that ended in an open rose, and a stem studded with gold-plated thorns beneath the hard petals; but I'll tell you, it would have been better if she had never found it. Her sister's arms were wrapped around the rust-red statue of an Italian saint, depicted kneeling with the scar of cancer in his leg; it was, admittedly, not so beautiful. They bore their treasures out to the rusty white Toyota in the wet lot out back. I watched from my back window as their mother helped them out of their chairs.

The hairless woman with the rusty walker remained in my shop the whole day through—what's more, she was joined by others, women like her,

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and the air grew stale in their gathering. I said not a word. Why do I allow the things I do?

## 03 April

The weather cleared to welcome a very warm spring, drawing Fullerton out of her wintry dearth and into a second Easter. I met the girls again at Mass; I woke late and missed my regular 8 AM, which was a shame because at 11 AM, I am the oldest and best-dressed man in the parish, and half these folk have forgotten the gesture of the genuflect.

They were sisters, I found; of course the resemblance should have struck me before; Father was telling me their names and their story—native to La Mirada, single parent home, paraplegic since birth—when, as if on cue, the congregation rose from its after-Mass luncheon and passed around us towards the door leading to the sun-graced foyer; someone said “miraculous,” and Father followed them to see what they had seen.

The younger sister’s name was Emilie Annette Guemara; the girl who bought the hairpin that I sold when I knew it was wrong to sell it; today it bound her hair into a beautiful brunette body, suspending it above a pair of pale shoulders; only now, beneath the sun and the witness of the stone saints in the foyer, the parish had seen her hair transformed into long, twining strands of—

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“It’s *gold*, Father”—the fellow’s voice was like sandpaper to my ears as I watched him tug at Father’s cassock—“it’s *gold* that’s streaking through Emilie’s hair—her hair *is* gold! I know treasure when I see it!” The young cleric pressed into the crowd with such focus in his body language that he seemed to age ten years, stopping when he finally parsed the crowd enough to come to her wheelchair. I saw what he saw: the glare of the Sunday sun settling boldly among the faithful, and beauty’s best grace upon the head of the younger sister, Emilie. She glowed like a lit candle. Her hair blazed like a second sun.

Father turned to address the witnesses.

“Who can explain this? Where is the girl’s sister?”

“Father!” cried one, “have you seen such a miracle in Fullerton before? In all my years! What saints dwell among us...” Everyone agreed with this man, supposing many stories and qualities about the girl that might deify her; though I would note that the stone saints surrounding them were just as silent as ever; they were not consulted. In spite of the cleric’s request, nobody would search for the sister, or for any kind of testimony.

In a dream—I dream vividly these days, and only half my dreams are lies—the Sunday sun receded behind the rain, and the spirit of a breeze ghosted in through the window to a room where two girls lay in bed with

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empty wheelchairs to host them through the night. I saw neither of their faces—I’d forgotten them—but that hair, and that hairpin, and the cancerous statue of St. Peregrine perched on the dresser, I remember clearly.

Fear gave the golden-haired girl a voice: “Amelie? Amelie? It’s really happened, Amelie. The hairpin, Amelie, it really will do miracles — like the man said. Aren’t you glad for me? Just say something?”

“You *are* beautiful...” said the other, but without worship.

“I won’t ask you too, but, you can’t imagine what it’s like. We’re not often told we’re beautiful.”

“Life’s been unfair to us.” Her crooked legs lay dormant beneath the covers to give her words their testimony. “So long as you don’t—Amelie, to tell you the truth—I’m afraid you hate me, or that you’ll come to hate me for the sort of girl I’ve come to be—”

“Beautiful?”

“I don’t want you to say that.”

“You are beautiful. How could I hate you? You look... you shine like an icon.”

“Would you like to borrow it sometime? Maybe it can work for you like it worked — ”

“No.”

Then I woke up, and after that, I went to work; the sun was still as strong

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as it had been yesterday.

## 27 March

The shop door opened again, and the powerful drum of the rain outside stamped through the shop, and I came alive at the sight of my one employee rushing in after an overlong lunch break.

“Breaks are thirty minutes, kiddo. Just thirty minutes. It’s getting so I can’t check on my stock without my nose getting stuffy ’cause the dust’s so thick. Here’s the furniture cream. Hello! Here’s the furniture cream. Find yourself a rag. Wash the door first. It’s filthy. It’s gutter-gross.”

He hopped to it. I nestled back behind the shield of the *LIFE* magazine and actually enjoyed the photojournalism, in spite of the old woman occupying my window, and the quiet but important drama in the aisle with the girls who were sisters.

I’ll describe it as it was later told to me:

The two wheelchairs braked in the shadow of three musty shelves in the aisle reserved for diverse plaques and statues. The last shelf, five rows tall and nearly empty, was the most-neglected of them all, planks ingrained with dust that had collected over years of neglect. Its third shelf was occupied by two relics so starkly not-gray that they seemed to either have been freshly

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placed or tended to with fine polish, waiting together until they could be seen by attentive eyes: an ivory hairpin laced in gold, and a solemn statue of an Italian saint locked in genuflect.

The gray sun peaked on them from the window behind the aisle, and they caught it like mirrors and their shine cast a duality of dull glimmers on the drywall behind the shelf, halos pinned like pictures behind them.

From the haloes emerged two shadows that look like men; and then like prayer the air grew thick and warm; and suddenly there are four in the aisle.

She is a motherly character with a benedictive face, and a hand on her heart, and her feet are hidden beneath the train of her colorless dress. He is a young miner leathered by the sun, his hands strong and fit for labor and hair as black as charcoal dust. She speaks softly from the sanctuary of her hood, resembling an icon with her head tilted over the kneeling statue of the Italian holy man; and while she talks to Amelie, he talks to Emilie, each ghost offering its relic for careful consideration:

“Amelie of La Mirada,” says she, “by grace you came. Blessed are you for your suffering, and blessed shall you be when all are restored together. Remember this saint, this holy Peregrine, who in the blessed sanctuary of prayer was afflicted and crippled, and in the company of heaven is thus remembered, a man in prayer with a wound that bowed his head and saved his soul...”

“Emilie, child, cripple in your city,” says he, “welcome to our company. God save you for your good will, God grant you mercy for your spirit’s beauty, which is beyond the flesh to chain or cripple like itself. If you will, I’d have you buy this relic, this hairpin fashioned by my own hard hands...”

She places an ephemeral hand on the head of the statue, and he gestures towards the ivory hairpin with a flannel-clothed arm and scarred palm and weatherworn fingers; and neither sister can think of anything to say.

## 01 May

Sundays came, Sundays passed, and on the first Sunday of May the Deacon found Father at luncheon with me after Mass. The sheep are grumbling, he said; they’re circulating strange stories about the golden girl, and it’d be best if you consoled them.

I watched Father rise and scan the congregation, quickly approaching the man who had tugged at his cassock the day of the miracle: a pious Peruvian who loved the Lord and remembered the gesture of genuflection in the Mass.

“Oh, you needn’t press me, Father,” said he. “I’ll tell you all about it. Emilie, you know Emilie, I showed you her—Emilie showed up for the last, oh I don’t know, how long has it been?—but she’s been to every Mass since the, you know the gold-ing in her hair. Her sister too. I forgot her name. But last Sunday she didn’t come forward for the Eucharist, if you remember—or

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maybe you don't, there are so many of us—but she stayed back and she looked a little sad, I noticed. And she took blessed bread from me but said nothing to me, and she was looking down at her lap the whole time like she was sick or something. And then I saw her with Adriana at luncheon after that, and they were talking, but I couldn't get near enough to hear before she left with her sister to go back home. You'd better ask Adriana what she said. I guess that's all I know. Except that Emilie wasn't at Mass today. And everyone's grumbling about that because she's something like our Sunday miracle—but really now, I guess that's all I know.”

Father found Adriana socializing in the foyer where the weather was once more threatening rain, and he pressed her for her story about Emilie's last Mass.

“Oh. Mm, Father, it bothered me enough that I almost went and told you. She stopped talking to me at a certain point. But before that, she was talking about us all at communion, Father, and how the Eucharist is a perfect body, and that it seemed strange to her to take a perfect body into her own when she doesn't have a perfect body. She used worse words than that about herself. Quite hateful. Of course I told her that she was being silly. I couldn't think of a reason at the moment, not that justified the rest of us to take communion... but, ‘Emilie,’ I said to her, ‘Emilie, you're beautiful, you're a miracle, your hair shines like the head of a saint, and doesn't one miracle

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deserve another miracle? So take the Eucharist.' And she just looked down at her legs, poor girl, and wouldn't look up. It was so uncomfortable, Father. Those sisters have never complained about a thing, much less their, you know, their condition—because everyone knows that they are beautiful girls really, and are kind to everyone. But she kept looking at her legs, and then she asked her sister to go home with her, and so they left. They were talking with my boy while they were going. You should ask him what walking back with them was like. I forgot to ask him, come to think of it, but you should go ask him and tell me what he says. I think he's around here somewhere."

Father found her boy sitting with friends on the patio behind his office. He begged their pardon—even a minister must be courteous—and shepherded the boy through the door and into his office, and inside he pressed the boy to tell him the story of Emilie's last Mass.

"Mm. You know. Mm. I'm sorry. I mean—Father—I know, I didn't tell her to stop talking so harshly about herself when I know I should have... you know what she said? No? Oh. Well. She was down, she said, because the weather looked like it was going to rain again. But Amelie knew that wasn't really what was wrong. I asked why she was really moody, but she would only answer to Amelie. I don't know why. I was there the whole time and I heard everything she said. It's not like she was hiding anything from me. But if you want to know—Amelie tried to stroke her hair to make her feel better,

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and she just snapped, and stopped her chair, and wouldn't move another inch. And she snipped on and on about her legs, and how they, well, I think she said, they made her not as beautiful as she might be otherwise. And she just started crying. I said I'd go back to church, but Amelie told me to wait, and she rolled back to Emilie, and she whispered something to her. I think it was about her hair. Because Emilie said again that it didn't mean as much to her unless her legs could be healed. She said that very loudly. And she just rolled away ahead of us. Amelie told me I could go back now. That was all. I promise, that was all."

## 27 March

The two wheelchairs rolled up to my register. I smelled a purchase and lowered the magazine.

“How can I help you?”

“I’ll take this statue, please.”

“And I the hairpin.”

In rote form I tallied their total; they paid with two fifty dollar bills, and I opened the register for change because nothing in the shop is worth more than thirty, and I asked, “Paper or plastic?” and they said plastic and placed their purchases on the counter, and I drew them across to bag them, and then I paused, because I forgot I knew these items until I had held them again.

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“Where did you find these?”

I bagged while they tried to muster an answer they thought I’d believe. One said she saw Nothing. The other looked perturbed and said there was Something. Then it all came out. You’ve heard the gist of the Lady’s address, but you haven’t heard half the story if you don’t know how the miner sold his hairpin.

Said the girl:

“He really was so kind to me. He was a miner, or the ghost of a miner: his hands were calloused and scarred from work. He’d left his wife on the New York coast to cross all the way to California with the first of the miners and panners who came out to find their fortune. And there was a creek nearby his claim, where his friends found the gold they were panning for, while he was digging hard away in the earth he’d claimed and turned up nothing. And they all split the gold between themselves, and his share was just enough that he could fashion some of it into rosy designs around this ivory hairpin. And his wife crossed over that next year to join him at the creek in California, and he gave her the hairpin he made for her, and said he loved her, and that they would live here forever. And he said that if I wore it—well, that if I wore it, it would do a miracle for me, because it is laced in love, and love will always make people beautiful.”

“What sort of miracle?”

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“He only said that he pitied me, pitied me for the state my legs are in—they’ve been that way all my life—but that if I took the pin, that it would work some kind of mercy for me.”

“What sort of miracle?” I was stern, because I knew that ghost, and I hated his ways and denounced his works.

“It would make me beautiful. That is all.”

Deep creases that do not naturally belong there collapsed into my forehead. I stooped steeply over the counter, coming as close as a whisper, motioning for the two of them to draw near, and said in a tone aimed to strike a righteous fear in both their hearts:

“Don’t you trust that miner. Don’t you trust his promises. That gold he came by was hardly earned honestly—he gives no gifts that come without a taint of his own sins. You think this gold was given to him willingly? He acquired this by violence.” I turned to the other. “As for you. That woman is a saint. Trust her with your life. But the miner...” I glared ferociously into the mouth of that aisle, and then at the old woman standing in my window, and indicated both girls to look at her. Her cheeks were lining with bitter tears. We heard her curse.

“Mark me,” said I. “It was acquired by violence. And violence waits for one of you. I don’t understand—” this to the girl who had bought the hairpin “—I don’t see how this could make you happier.”

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The door opened. In hobbled another stooped form, a second hairless woman supported by a steel cane. My jaw dropped. Fucking two in a day.

The girls thanked me, and left with what they paid for.

## 03 May

At my behest, Father went calling to the sisters' house on a wet Tuesday without any notice. Amelie let him in. He asked for her sister, and she sent him to their room at the end of a long white hall. An open door led him into a small room with papyrus-brown walls, where Saint Peregrine's statue was perched on the edge of a four-drawer dresser, and the girl with the golden hair sat in her chair in the corner with her head hanging in spiritual exhaustion.

“Emilie?” He was content to pause in the doorframe. “You don’t look very well, you know. You know I’ve been asking the church about you? You know they miss you? The shop owner sent me. You aren’t as cheerful as the day we first saw—” he gestured “—your miracle. We all—they all miss their Sunday miracle.”

She breathed in response, “My hair is a miracle. But. My legs. Father. My legs....” Her rubbed-red eyes tried to flush out tears; they had little more to give.

**04 May**

I dream the end of the story as it happens. My dream tells no lies. The blade is keen. Six weeks have passed since that wet day drove them into my shop, and half a month since she took her last Mass, and yesterday Father came to tell her she was missed. The bathroom light is a weak thing above her, nothing but a shadow of the sunlight that graced her on that miraculous Sunday—that Mass when she became beautiful, and knots of gold entwined themselves between the studs of the hairpin's thorns. Time since then has not dulled her golden sheen, yet neither has it been good to her. The blade is keen.

“For all the miracles of heaven, I am still a cripple.”

When Father came calling three days ago, she had confessed her sorrow was by no means guilt for the worship she received from the church at the Mass—which he had hoped was true, though I told him otherwise, and to put no hope in her.

“What on earth do you hate, when all the world would call you beautiful?”

“One must go.” Her gaze lay on her crooked legs with a leaden weight. He did not understand. She said it again. “One must go. One must be cut off from the rest. I will be whole.” She said no more. To be so near to heaven, to shine like the icons, and yet remain a cripple.

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The thin white blade rests between the knobs of her knees, and she trembles to be touched by so cold an instrument. The night outside the dimly-lit bathroom has quieted the house under its jetty chloroform. She ought to be in bed. She raises the blade to the combed ends of her locks, twining long threads of her sunlike hair around its gleaming, undiscriminating judgment, ready to sever these unmerited strands of grace. But her soul resists itself. The blade returns to her lap; to the weak knees that God and nature refuse to heal. But—no—she doesn't hate herself enough to do that. Does she really? A woman weeps unblushingly. She can't seem to hear, but banishes her soul's doubts with a physical gesture and draws the blade across her lap, and defenseless flesh gapes behind it in a violent chasm.

“Your heart holds hate,” says the ghost behind her, “and hate must consummate.”

She looks over the back of her chair without rotating. Together behind her stand the shadows of the miner and the Lady. The miner glowers, but the Lady weeps unblushingly; the pain I felt for the first of the miner's girls I met.

Her arms spin her wheels out the bathroom door to escape into the darkness. She can't—the miner's hands overtake her chair, driving her against her will to her sister's bedside, his weathered hands imprisoning the wheelchair's handles.

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“Towards the crippled state, contempt!” the miner hisses in her ear, so close that she can hear his tongue moving in his dry mouth. “If you cannot truly be beautiful—if your scars cannot be cut away—then find what truly makes you weep inside and cut it off with that very same feeling that whets your appetite for death.”

Defenseless Amelie slumbers between the bed and the warm sheets, her pale blanket undulating with her breath that breathes unconsciously the sweet life that she loves. The miner takes Emilie’s knife-arm by the wrist, and raises it purposefully—never one for suggestion. But the Lady, in an ecstasy of quiet pity, wakes poor Amelie before the blade falls.

“Emilie?”

Amelie would say more, but before she can muster so much as a cry the cold knife assails her with a guillotine’s resolve. A wide miss: Emilie’s small form follows the stroke out of her chair and tumbles into the sanctuary of the bed. One shrieks. The other finds tears for her sin, yet smites again. The blade, weakened by a questioned will, bites nothing but sheets and mattress springs.

“What have I done? Emilie, what have I ever done to you?!”

Emilie has no answer. Her poor sister, blind to the miner and the Lady, weeps into the folds of her sheet as she realizes she has no escape.

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“Do you hate me even more than you hate yourself?”

Emilie turns to her man the miner. Naturally, he nods. Then the Lady works her second mercy: extending a pale arm towards Emilie’s golden crown with a voice like water.

“Did you really think this was a blessing?”

Emilie lurches at the saint instinctively with the blade brandished, but as she turns, the Lady’s hand curls cruelly about the hairpin and pulls—“Oh malevolent miner, reveal your treachery!”—and with no great effort the golden girl finds herself decrowned—her faux-gold hair crumpling in the Lady’s hands like crumbs of old bread.

“Fool’s gold,” the saint says; and the ivory hairpin laced in the gold of California falls heavily to the floor.

Poor, bald Emilie collapses into bed and wets it with her tears; the foul miner falls silently back into the shadows; the Lady takes her by the arms and draws her back into the chair: and in an instant, Amelie finds herself alone.

I wake, and it is morning.

## Today

I am plagued by the miner’s women.

Is it too much to say that I hoped to live out my last days in friendship,

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with family close by? I own a shop in the Orange Circle. My one employee deserves to be fired. My most frequent browsers are women unsexed by a ghost. His wife plagued our Golden State until her bones gave way to death; after her, the fucker saw fit to increase his mistresses even beyond the grave. The story is always the same. He gives them gifts—no, the same gift—and tries to make them sin; when they try, a saintly spirit saves their souls and carries them away; like Cain, they are strangers to their families and the earth. You can't hold out much hope for any of them. The miner's women never grow happy; they bald, they grow old. You see them stare into mirrors, visit my shop, remember the man who made them beautiful.

Yes, of course I tried to hide it. Bury it, sell it, drop it in a bush at Brea Dam Park. No one outsmarts the miner. The hairpin always comes back. Some poor soul always finds it. Some poor girl is always hurtled through blessing towards some sort of heinous crime. Of course, to the Lady's credit, not one of his girls has committed her crime. What they still have, they owe her; what they have are their souls. ★

## *Cosco Busan*

Phillip Aijian

Dodging the bigger question, city officials  
reported, *The bridge is fine*; consolation

a little weak for bay crossers still quivering  
with the slap of steel and concrete.

In the absence of shoulders, some commuters  
just stopped in their lanes and peered down

into a hungry fog—a fog that swallowed sound,  
sight, and the bleeding barge, its wound trapping

pelicans and seagulls. The captain brought a cuss  
to his lips and his starboard gaze to the Bay Bridge

wondering how it got there. All day, voices recalled  
the *Exxon Valdez* while I parleyed red lights

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and old maps, shadows spilling across weekend traffic.

The last bit of day flashed through and evaporated.

I would have called, been on time for dinner—

in haste I forgot to write down your number.

## *Thanksgiving*

Phillip Aijian

I am soon to be called to the clatter;  
knives on cutting boards, the wooden clicking  
of the rolling pin as my mother presses the scent  
of flour into the air. My aunt sings harmony  
to the steam song as my cousins knock  
into each other and send cranberries across  
the floor, and there the creak of the refrigerator.

Yes, we will all eat too much, and  
the dining room table shall become a choir of  
small, delighted groans as I rise from my chair  
before I grow too comfortable.

Hesitating for a moment, I put on some  
jazz piano by Oscar Peterson,  
promising albums of Sinatra and Crosby that  
Christmas is near, but not today.

I haven't seen my cousins since the Fourth of July,  
but we still don't have much to talk about.

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I find myself missing Frank, the cable repairman  
who came last Tuesday, who introduced  
a stunning knowledge of Columbus, complete  
with Castilian Spanish. If he were here,  
perhaps sparkling cider could induce another  
history lesson—I've always been interested  
in Genghis Khan—anything to distract from  
my uncle's career advice and stories about the army.  
Just as he turns to the topic of his expertise as  
a salesman, he hears John Madden remarking on  
the Detroit Lions and their prospects for the season,  
and quickly excuses himself. I thank God for football,  
and start the dishwasher.

Holding the leftovers, I look over to where your  
conversation is concluding, and you nod.  
My uncle can't part from John Madden  
or the green sofa  
as we hug people goodbye. He tells my aunt  
to give me his number so I can call him  
later about if I need more advice

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(I am thankful that she rolls her eyes and gives me a side-hug instead).

My mom hands me the remains of an apple pie and smiles. “It was so good to see you.”

I promise to try and come next month, and to call.

I give you the keys, put the Tupperware in the front seat, and climb in the back, shutting the passenger door slowly.

I pull over an old blanket, ask you to wake me half-way, and wait for the arms of the 101 to rock me to sleep.

## Ghetto Bird

Jonathan Diaz

Once, my brother's friends bought flashlights;  
Heavy handled torches, black as  
Night is, bulbs as bright as stars are  
In the burning of the evening sky.

Pointed upwards these new flashlights  
Sliced the sky with silver brilliance  
And in swift ascending arrows  
Brightened up the bits of air they touched.

One o'clock on Friday morning,  
Running through the shadowed driveways  
And the empty lamp-lit streets they  
Waited for the Ghetto Bird to pass.

When they saw one coming westwards  
From the station in San Dimas  
Glowing blue and red and blazing

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Like some ember in the midnight air,

Lifting up their sullen lanterns,

Piercing night with rays electric,

Lighting up the helicopter

In the shining of their empty game.

Suddenly a bursting brightness

Like the day but colder, falls down

And engulfs their subtle lamplight

Like a forest fire with candle-flame.

Caught in their transgressive folly

In the blue, accusing aura

Of the floodlights turned upon them,

They are silent, trembling; they are still

As St. Paul, seeing light from Heaven.

## *The North Country*

Jayne Meyncke

I look at our faces in the mirror. God I look tired. She just looks old. She stands there, scratching the mirror with a fingernail, whispering quietly to herself.

“Grandma, we need to go back to the living room,” I say, “come sit down again.”

Nothing. Scratch. Whisper.

Deep breath.

“Grandma? Come with me, we can’t be in the bathroom.”

I know she’s ignoring me on purpose. I see the little pause when I speak. Like she’s waiting to see if I’m going to make her leave. Like she’s just waiting for me to go away. I reach for her elbow. Her skin feels papery and heavy under my fingers. She’s so much more insubstantial than I

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remember. She jerks her arm away, trying to turn around in the small space. She gestures angrily at the mirror.

“I’ll leave when they leave!” Her voice shakes. She’s not sure if she used the right words. Not sure if what she said made sense. She’s just trying to assert her independence. I get it, but I was just at the good part of my book. She’s just trying to convince herself, and me, that she’s still here. Still heard. Here. In the bathroom. Smile. Sigh. Holding out my hand, hoping she’ll take it and follow me.

“They will leave when we leave, Grammy. I promise. Please come with me? I’ll make you some tea or something. Are you hungry?”

I sit on the couch, pretending to read. I’m really just staring at her, sitting there. Actually, I’m watching her slowly fill her water cup with crackers. I stopped her twice already. At this point it doesn’t matter. She keeps stopping suddenly and looking around like she knows she’s being naughty. Like she knows she’s not supposed to do that. My Grandma, the cracker-ruiner rebel.

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“Grandma.”

She freezes at the sound of my voice. Caught in the act. I get up and take the soggy mush to the kitchen. I bang the cup against the trash can and watch the mess glop out into the bag. Wash the cup, rinse the cup, dry the cup. I hear a tiny absence of sound behind me and I look up just in time to see her disappear around the corner of my parents’ bedroom. Super. The woman will not sit still for five minutes at a time. I put some water to boil on the stove to start dinner.

“Laura!” I call, “can you stop Grandma please? I’m doing something right now!” I hear my sister’s door slam as she emerges from the sanctuary of her room.

“Where is she?” Laura yells from down the hall.

“She just went in Mom and Dad’s room. Could you make her sit down again? I need a break.”

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“I’m doing my homework. Besides, it’s not my day to watch her.” I hear Laura hovering near the doorway, not wanting to come out of the safety of the hall.

“I’m making dinner.” I say quietly, watching the water at the bottom of the pan form a soft ring of bubbles.

“Have her watch a movie or something.”

“She hates movies. Could you just get her already? I can’t remember if Mom and Dad’s door is locked.” As I say this, I see the top of a silvery head walk past the kitchen windows. Shit. “Laura!”

“It’s not my day!” I hear her voice receding back down the hallway.

“God dammit I know that I’m making dinner! She got outside!” I turn the stove off, shove my feet into some shoes, run out the door. “Grandma!” I am constantly surprised by how quickly that woman moves when she wants to. She’s running that old lady run of hers, shuffling up the hill behind our house. I catch up to her and she stops, frozen in place.

“Grandma, you have to come back with me.”

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Nothing. No acknowledgment. Oh this is a great game. If she doesn't acknowledge me, I don't exist.

“Grandma.” I say again, waiting for her to decide that I’m not leaving her to her own devices. She mumbles “Thanks, no” at me and starts walking past. I move to block her path. She points to the neighbor’s house and mutters something like ‘need to go there’. They do not appreciate her unannounced visits.

“We don’t live there, Grandma. Come back to the house with me.” But she ignores me again. She shuffles a few steps through the dirt and weeds. She knows she has to come back eventually, but she’s not running back, oh no. It may have taken her thirty seconds to make her escape but she’s going to milk her freedom for all it’s worth. I sit down on a boulder and pat the rock next to me.

“At least come sit down, Grandma, okay? We don’t have to go back right away.”

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She comes over and lowers herself slowly onto the stone seat, still pretending I'm not there. That this is all her idea. She starts to say something a few times, but the words get lost before they leave her mouth. I just wait. Trying to give her words only frustrates her.

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When I was seven, my family took a trip to the Grand Canyon. My Grandma helped us build an igloo out of the snow that was still in patches around our hotel.

Jump in the pool. Watch Brigadoon. Dance around singing I'll Go Home With Bonnie Jean. I do not want to go home.

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“I want.”

Wait. Watch the clouds blow by. I think about how much I hate living in a cliché as a tumbleweed rolls past.

“I want to go.” She finally says, so quietly I almost miss it.

“Go where?” I ask.

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“I have to get back North. The people are up there.”

“Which people?” I ask.

“The ones with the purple. With the, the, the things. Breakfast houses and Indians.” She gets up again and starts moving past me. “I have to get back North.”

I think about stopping her. Making her come back with me. But for the next few minutes, I’ll just follow her down the road. Breakfast houses sound nice. Besides. She seems so sure. ★

## The Magpie's Shadow, by Yvor Winters<sup>4</sup>

### Review

*I wished  
To subdue my own unmeasuredness;  
Indeed, though I write, I don't write much  
When toiling on the meter.*

- Gregory Nazianzus, c. 381

*The Magpie's Shadow*, Yvor Winters's second collection of poetry, published in 1922, is the sparsest collection of verse you are likely to read this year. Even by contemporary chapbook standards it is brief. The book consists of 28 poems, each just six syllables long. It only takes up four pages of Winters's 1978 *Collected Poems*.

All of this might lead us to overlook the volume entirely—critics certainly have. In his 1941 review of Winters's *Poems*, Dan Stanford complains that Winters should have “retained a few more poems from *The Proof* and *The Bare Hills*, and a few less from *The Immobile Wind* and *The*

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<sup>4</sup> Yvor Winters, *The Magpie's Shadow* (Chicago, IL: Musterbookhouse, 1922). A public domain version of this book can be downloaded for free through the *Californios* website.

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*Magpie's Shadow.*<sup>5</sup> Other critics have described *The Magpie's Shadow* and its 1921 predecessor *The Immobile Wind* as “early experiments,”<sup>6</sup> or “free verse... experiments,”<sup>7</sup> which they quickly skip over in order to discuss Winters’s later, more formal verse. This tendency is likely due to the now-traditional read of Winters’s poetic career as one of romantic, imagistic dabbling followed by a drastic conversion to a rational, moralistic classicism.

When it was first released, however, *The Magpie's Shadow* caused something of an uproar. “It has violent friends and violent antagonists,”<sup>8</sup> wrote Pearl Andelson in her review of the volume for *Poetry* magazine. On first read, there is indeed something unsettling about the poems. How, after all, is one to react to “The Aspen’s Song”? —

The summer holds me here.

Even those well versed in the short, imagist poems of Pound and Williams might find this poem too brief, too lacking of anything solid. The reading mind is tempted to think of this as a fragment of a longer poem. Could it be the first line of a haiku? the first three feet of a blank verse line that might

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<sup>5</sup> Don Stanford, “The Classicism of Yvor Winters,” *Kenyon Review* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1941), 247.

<sup>6</sup> David Orr, Review of *Yvor Winters, Selected Poems of Yvor Winters* edited by Thom Gunn, *Poetry* 187, no. 3 (December 2005), 243.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Stephens, Review of *Collected Poems of Yvor Winters*, *Twentieth Century Literature* 9, no. 3 (October 1963), 127.

<sup>8</sup> Pearl Andelson, “One Poet Speaks for Himself,” *Poetry* 20, no. 6 (September 1922), 343.

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bud into a sonnet? *No*, Winters tells us, *that's the whole poem. Who has led you to believe a poem can't be one line? What thrall has the multi-line stanza cast over you?*

If the reader slows down, adopts a reading pace more patient, even, than a haiku demands, then Winters' poems will begin to reveal surprising structures. First, we find that six syllables may house multiple clauses, even multiple sentences. Though "The Aspen's Song" is one, simple sentence, many of these poems are much more grammatically complex. Take, for instance "No Being" and "Sunrise":

### *No Being*

I, bent. Thin nights receding.

### *Sunrise*

Pale bees! O whither now?

Each of these poems is organized into two sentences / sentence fragments. Whereas a haiku or sijo offers us several lines which hold discrete images and thoughts for us to compare and puzzle over, Winters drops contrasting images and ideas into a single line, using only punctuation as division. In "Sunrise" Winters juxtaposes the case and mood of his phrases. "Pale bees!"

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is, perhaps, a vocative exclamation, and is followed by the interrogative “O whither now?” What is the relationship between these phrases? Does the speaker address the question “O whither now?” to the bees he has just called to attention? Does the speaker call some other to attend to the pale bees, then ask where that other wants to go next? And what does either opaque phrase have to do with the title, “Sunrise”? When a poem is one line, Winters shows us, the title is drawn powerfully into the poem as a method of making meaning. In “The Aspen’s Song” the title provides us with the only concrete image in the whole poem.

Perhaps this strangeness and this opacity is what led Donald Davies to remark, in 1978, that Winters’s early lyrics are “unparaphrasable.”<sup>9</sup> In 1931, Morton Zabel wrote that Winters’s “early one-line poems arrest … both intuition and sensory perception in one stroke.”<sup>10</sup> If we are arrested by these poems, if our intuitions and senses are befuddled, even halted, it is essential to sit with the poems beyond this befuddlement, to patiently savor them like we would a shot of espresso or a single, dark truffle. To facilitate this patience, it is best to read *The Magpie’s Shadow* in its original form, where each poem is given a whole page. Now that the book is in public domain and available for free on the Internet, we can do just that.

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<sup>9</sup> Donald Davie, “The Poetry of Yvor Winters,” *The Collected Poems of Yvor Winters* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1978), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Morton Dauwen Zabel, “A Poetry of Ideas” *Poetry* 37, no. 4 (January 1931), 226.

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Though these poems have been called “free-verse,” they are not. Winters’s strict adherence to the six-syllable form places them more in the company of haiku or even the short, syllabic experiments of Marianne Moore and Adelaide Crapsey. *The Magpie’s Shadow* may best be seen as an experiment in minimalist formalism, a surprisingly strict aesthetic ascesis in the age of *vers libre*. If we look at the poems this way, we can be surprised at Winters’s ability to house so much variation, so much content, in his iron cage of six syllables. In three poems—“Myself,” “Song,” and “Fields”—Winters even makes use of a second line, but never a seventh syllable.

Content wise, Winters reveals that the short poem, so often used for the strictly concrete images of Pound and Williams, can also house ideas. Zabel, for one, found *The Magpie’s Shadow* almost too abstract: “The true imagism in *The Magpie’s Shadow* … gives way to a repetitiously abstract diction.”<sup>11</sup> Andelson provides a kinder outlook on the tendency toward universals in the collection: “When I find in twenty-eight six-syllable poems not only a complete sensual cycle but such a cycle with both individual and universal implications, ‘I like [it]’.”<sup>12</sup> Here Andelson calls our attention to the overall cyclical setup of the collection, for the poems in *The Magpie’s Shadow* are organized into three sections: “I: In Winter,” “II: In Spring,” and “III: In Summer and Autumn.” This season-based organization lends to the poems

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<sup>11</sup> Zabel, 228.

<sup>12</sup> Andelson, 343.

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that larger circularity and completeness often found in classical Chinese and medieval Japanese poem cycles.

The syllabic forms and experiments of Eastern verse traditions have always played second fiddle to metrical forms and experiments in English-language poetry. In his later years, Winters would tend toward traditional metrical forms, especially the sonnet. But there is something satisfying and appropriate about Winters's early experiments in syllabic verse. For Winters is a product of California, which sits just as far from the white cliffs of Dover as it does from the black sands of Japan. And his early work reveals some of the striking mysteries and variations possible when the poet subdues her own unmeasuredness by whittling her poems into short, syllabic forms. ★

THE EDITOR

## Contributors

**Phillip Aijian** earned a BA in English from Biola University in 2006 and later pursued graduate studies at the University of Missouri, where he completed an MA in Creative Writing in 2010. He is joyously married, and is currently pursuing a PhD in English at UC Irvine. He is working on a poetry manuscript and his third studio album.

**Anna Barber** was born and raised in Orange County, California. She studied Psychology and English at Biola University and is a member of the Torrey Honors Institute. She now teaches classical humanities courses for high school students throughout Southern California. When she isn't grading essays, she writes poetry and fiction. She lives with her husband in La Mirada, California.

**Benjamin E. Bartel** is a folk artist from Central California and is 24 years old. He currently resides in Pasadena, California, and records his simple, honest songs as often as he can in natural settings. To see some of his projects, visit his site: [dinosauraudiogroup.com](http://dinosauraudiogroup.com)

**Timothy E. G. Bartel** is a husband, father, writer, and educator from Whittier, California. He holds an MFA from Seattle Pacific University, and his work has appeared in *Relief*, *Christianity and Literature*, and *Saint Katherine Review*. He is the co-founder and editor of *Californios*.

**Christian James Brendan Bearup** is native to the suburb of La Mirada, California. He is currently earning his BA in English Writing at Biola University, anthologizing his short fiction into a weird collection, and pining for his most glorious woman in the subtropics of Houston. He hopes to be a creative hagiographer.

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## t.a.b.carroll

lives in London, but he dreams  
warm LA winters.

**Jonathan Diaz** is a senior English major at Biola University. He is a student in the Torrey Honors Institute, and spent a term at Oxford University, where he studied poetry and philosophy. He grew up in and around Los Angeles, which he considers to be the greatest city on earth. It is reported, but not confirmed, that his blood runs Dodger blue. His writings have been published in *The Inkslinger* and the anthology *The Air Today*. He also owns a large dog. Jonathan is the co-founder and co-editor of *Californios*.

**Jayne Meyncke** is a Californio, born and raised, currently living in Redlands. When she isn't teaching piano, writing, or watching Jersey Shore in an attempt to understand the East Coast, she spends most of her time trying to find out just who is the Emperor of the Inland Empire.

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