2018 releases

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A Note From the Executive Director . . .

These books. They come from everywhere, or nowhere. They come from unknown distances, across the transom, or from past Etruscans, or word of mouth; they come from Ireland and Greece and lands of redolent imagination. They come disguised as bizarro dictionaries and dialogues with the dead; they come as alternative histories of post-Stalinist Russia and post-Celtic Ireland. The poems challenge ideas of poetry; prose scrabbles conventions and preconceptions.

At first glint, Aard-vark to Axolotl looks like a lexicon—but as you enter its Wonderlandscape of language, it opens a new rabbit hole to definition. Rough Ground seems like a companion to Wittgenstein, but it reflects on our own fragmenting world, while Romer updates Dante’s metaphysical apocalypse. Silk Road abjures Marco Polo’s highway for the less travelled, emotionally fraught journey of his wife, Donata Badoer. Wattle & daub sidles between Kafka and Flann O’Brien in a not-your-granddad’s emerald isle. Sometimes the invisible road is long. Seven years it’s been since Auguste Corteau sent his epic novel, Sixteen.

We’re finally ready for it. We think you are too. Belly up and join us in the journey.

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Essays
KAREN DONOVAN
Available April 2018

Karen Donovan’s eclectic series of tiny essays is a collaboration of text and image based on a set of illustrations from an old dictionary. This collection of prose poems is disguised as imaginary definitions that tease and captivate the reader. From pictures of plants and animals, diagrams and devices, and dozens of other charmingly quirky objects from the pages of her grandfather’s 1925 Webster’s New International Dictionary, Donovan creates a series of wild and whimsical narratives. Sometimes mysterious, sometimes downright weird, these small stories offer alternative definitions for items drawn from a cabinet of curiosities.

Aard-vark to Axolotl is a book that fits into a hybrid category: it is at times lyric essay, or micro-memoir, or prose poetry, or flash. The book is a triumph of ekphrasis; each image from the dictionary prompts a fable, anecdote, remembrance, or unearthly denotation. The dynamic juxtaposition of image and text layers Aard-vark to Axolotl with new connections that surprise and delight, making us wonder about the frangibility of all definitions.

Donovan is the author of two collections of poetry: Fugitive Red and Your Enzymes Are Calling the Ancients. She co-edited §: A Magazine of Paragraphs, a journal of short prose published by Oat City Press. She lives in East Providence, Rhode Island.

Rough Ground
Poetry
ALIX ANNE SHAW
Available June 2018

With a lyricism that is both delicate and painful, Rough Ground explores the devastating consequences of trauma on our ability to speak about the world. Based upon Wittgenstein’s Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Rough Ground distills philosophical speculation to poetic text, enacting an utterance almost beyond speech. While the philosopher concludes “that which we cannot speak about, we must pass over in silence,” the poems writ on “rough ground” enact a portentous silence, mapping a path between word and world.

Shaw is the author of two full-length poetry collections, Dido in Winter and Undertow. She is a visual artist and resides in Chicago.
Romer

Poetry
ROBERT EASTWOOD
Available July 2018

Using the schema of Dante’s *Purgatorio*, *Romer* is a poem of thirty-three Cantos in three-line stanzas, illuminating the experience of a modern man at every stage of his life. Just as the *Purgatorio* explores the psyche in terms of its earthly existence, *Romer* follows the journey of one man who needs to know who he is, where he is, and what he is trying to do. This need is universal, so in that sense, *Romer* is every man.


Silk Road

Poetry
DANEEN WARDROP
Available September 2018

In *Silk Road*, Marco Polo’s wife goes about everyday activities as her reveries form at least partly in the breach between her home in Venice, Italy, and Polo’s stay in Suzhou, China. In imagining eastern and western hemispheres braced to collide, to coincide, she is a global citizen even as she stays at home, living in vivid divide between regions at odds, still envisioning comity.

Daneen Wardrop is the author of seven books, including three collections of poetry: *The Odds of Being*, *Cyclorma*, and most recently *Life as It*, which received the 2017 Independent Publisher Book Award. She is a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and a Robert H. Winner Award from the Poetry Society of America.
Fiction

AUGUSTE CORTEAU

Available January 2019

A famous Soviet composer kills himself upon the announcement of Stalin's death, leaving behind a symphony that provokes mass defections. A haunting tale of love, loss and obsession, *Sixteen* is also a literary thriller centered around the mystery that is music. But can music on its own bring about a revolution?

Auguste Corteau (pen name of Petros Chatzopoulos) was born in Thessaloniki, Greece, in 1979. Over the past 18 years, he has published more than 20 books in Greek. An internationally bestselling author, critically acclaimed translator of English-language literature, and a vocal LGBT+ activist, he lives in Athens with his husband.

Sixteen

Fiction

BRIAN COUGHLAN

Available October 2018

Dragged forward by an ear-twisting narrative force, the stories in this debut collection meld and stretch into truly new directions. Unsettlingly funny/bleak backgrounds inform *Wattle & daub* and introduce singular oddball characters to a coldly unconcerned world. Every page is mined with humor, sympathy, and blistering language that mark Brian Coughlan as a unique fabricator of short tales.

In *Wattle & daub* the world is a mysterious, menacing and peculiar place. Characters inhabit their individualized zones with a mixture of ignorance and apprehension, ever at the mercy of changes to their circumstances, or else striving to make sense of their own shortcomings and disappointments.

Brian Coughlan lives in Galway, Ireland. *Wattle & daub* is his first collection of short stories.

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H. L. Hix

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By Pamela Turchin

A 1925 Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language that once belonged to her grandfather became the inspiration for Karen Donovan’s forthcoming Aard-vark to Axolotl (Etruscan Press, 2018). It is an eclectic series of tiny stories and prose poems, based on a set of illustrations from the pages of that very dictionary. She collected pictures of plants and animals, diagrams and devices, and created a new narrative for each one. The charming result of her effort is an assortment of small poetic diagrams and devices, and created a new narrative for each one. That very dictionary. She collected pictures of plants and animals, prose poems, based on a set of illustrations from the pages of (Etruscan Press, 2018). It is an eclectic series of tiny stories and words was passed along. Not only is Donovan the author of two prior volumes of poetry, Your Enzymes Are Calling the Ancients (Persea Books, 2016) and Fugitive Red (University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), but for 20 years she and her husband co-edited a literary journal of short prose called ¶: A Magazine of Paragraphs. It was a true labor of love. “We published ¶ from 1985 to 2005,” she says. “From the beginning, it was a tremendous amount of arduous, painstaking work and a total blast. We did our entire run of 25 issues before the Internet struck. Everything was paper. Piles and piles of submissions coming in the mail from everywhere, following us doggedly through three states and five changes of address. One day the postman asked me, ‘What is it you guys do again?’”

Donovan especially loved reading submissions. “Once the box of envelopes reached a certain unmanageable height, we would call time and spend a weekend reading,” she says. “The magic was that you never knew what might be in the envelope. When all you ask for is paragraphs of 250 words or less, you can get some wondrously berserk and idiosyncratic voices. The concept behind ¶ was homeopathic. Many small doses of reality in very short form, perfectly sized to fit in the back pocket of your jeans. We assembled each issue, printed only 400 copies, and sent them out as an antidote to the world’s ills.”

But there’s more to the story behind Aard-vark to Axolotl than meets the eye. Sure, it’s a fun and fascinating read, full of wit and whimsy and clever observations on life. But Donovan’s connection to her grandfather, to whom she dedicates this book, goes far beyond being captivated by the pictures in his old dictionary. She says, “I knew my grandfather Raymond as a gentle, soft-spoken man who taught me how to play chess and died when I was ten years old. Not until much later did I learn about his awful drinking problem and then finally understood why he did not live with my grandmother and why my mother was mad at him a lot.”

She goes on to describe a bookplate pasted on the flyleaf of the dictionary. “It reads ‘The R. H. Burton Estate Service, established 1921.’ It gives his office address in downtown Providence in the Industrial Bank Building, an iconic feature of the city skyline that everybody calls the Superman Building. An old leather bookmark is still stuck in at the start of the ‘O’ section. For me,” she says, “the dictionary is a token of the real man behind the disease. He managed to have a life before everything fell apart on him, and this dictionary tells me he would have been thoughtful with language—that he cared about words.”

It’s obvious this attention to the details of language and words was passed along. Not only is Donovan the author of two prior volumes of poetry, Your Enzymes Are Calling the Ancients (Persea Books, 2016) and Fugitive Red (University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), but for 20 years she and her husband co-edited a literary journal of short prose called ¶: A Magazine of Paragraphs. It was a true labor of love. “We published ¶ from 1985 to 2005,” she says. “From the beginning, it was a tremendous amount of arduous, painstaking work and a total blast. We did our entire run of 25 issues before the Internet struck. Everything was paper. Piles and piles of submissions coming in the mail from everywhere, following us doggedly through three states and five changes of address. One day the postman asked me, ‘What is it you guys do again?’”

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Donovan has continued this thread with Aard-vark to Axolotl. Her quirky images and definitions may not be the solution to the problems of our world, but they certainly are a welcome distraction and sure to cure what ails you.

Pamela Turchin is pursuing her M.F.A in fiction from Wilkes University, where she serves as a graduate assistant and as the production editor at Etruscan Press.
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