POETRY CONTINUED

19  Re: Wild • Crystal S. Gibbins
37  The Brush • Diana Babineau
37  Elegy Walking Through the Woods • Richard Jackson
38  Short Hike in the Chon-Kemin Valley • Raphael Dagold
41  Metallurgy • Raphael Dagold
55  Lachrymation/The Flow of Tears • Erin Robertson
72  New Harmony • Dan O’Brien
73  Death in Other Countries • Faith Shearin
73  Idiom • Rebecca Foust
79  Horoscope for Gemini Men • Christopher Salerno
79  Desire • Mike White
84  Laundry Day • Talia Bloch
84  Self-Portrait with Curses at 35,000 Feet • Hayan Charara
85  Self-Portrait as Scientific Observation • Hayan Charara
85  An Ill Time • Michael Spence
85  Quarantine Triolet • Maria Nazos
91  Acting • David Moolten
91  Utah • Samuel Cheney
91  Malheur • Lillo Way
106  Beatitudes from the Heart of the American Southwest
   • Martha Silano
123  Physics Lesson • Wyatt Townley
123  Aubade as Prey • Alex Mouw
123  [Ron gone, released] • Ted Jean
124  Ode to Running • Adam Scheffler
125  The Reunion • Alice Friman
125  Leaving the Funeral of My Ex-Lover’s Mother
   • Jaime Warburton

MISCELLANY

2  From the Editors
158  Contributors

Cuando la Historia duerme, habla en sueños:
en la frente del pueblo dormido el poema es
una constelación de sangre.

When History sleeps, it speaks in dreams: on
the forehead of the sleeping people, the poem is
a constellation of blood.

—Octavio Paz

“Hacia el poema (Puntos de partida)”
“Toward the poem (Starting points)”

The needless, widespread suffering—of the
pandemic, of unemployment, of violence in the
street—has woken some fundamental questions
that might otherwise have remained dormant:
what is a government for if it refuses to promote
the general welfare, much less domestic
tranquility? What are political parties for if one of
them refuses to argue with intellectual honesty for
its principles, if they seem to have traded in those
principles for power? What are the police for if they
refuse to protect and serve? In the United States
132,000 deaths and still climbing. George Floyd
murdered in Minneapolis, Tony McDade in
Tallahassee, Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Almud
Arbery in Georgia, and more and more and
countless more. Rubber bullets, tear gas, batons.
Next to these crises, it hardly seems commensurate
to ask: what is art for? When the
North American
Review was founded in 1815, the editors firmly
believed it was their duty to discover, promote, and
shape a uniquely American literature, anxious to
prove their worth against Old World models of
artistic excellence. They were the educated elite of
Harvard, a handful of young affluent (need it be
said “white”?) men, “the wise and the good” who
knew exactly what art was for. Their editorial
policies were decidedly conservative and cautious,
on the question of slavery at best agnostic. Their
chapter advances the plot of a long nationalistic
narrative of white supremacy and privilege that
even now its rapt audience has trouble recognizing
as a fiction, something first imagined and then
brought vividly, terribly to life.

After living within this fiction for so long, how is
it possible to tell another story? After recognizing
the fiction for what it is, how is it possible not to
try? “When History sleeps,” writes Octavio Paz in
1951, “it speaks in dreams.” This is what art is for: to
dream more deeply, more beautifully, more
strangely, more justly. If artists are to take seriously
the founders’ call to form a more perfect union, they
must understand it as an aesthetic imperative to
create something different, to see anew, to revise—a
job that writers and editors should be well-prepared
for. The Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky’s
oft-cited technique of defamiliarization is not meant