

# Segue

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online literary journal

JENN  
BLAIR



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*Segue* is published once a year in August. We accept submissions of high quality fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction between January 1 and April 30 (closed May through December), and writing about writing year-round via email. Before submitting, please read past issues to understand the sort of work we publish, then read our submission guidelines.

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# CONTENTS

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Molly Jenkins  
Outside My Window  
Confession  
Author Notes

# Molly Jenkins

Yes, I was the one on the dock who didn't wave,  
clutched her purse grim-lipped til the boat was  
a bobbing dot. Perhaps you think me cold.  
Not a modern lover. An unfortunate from  
that generation taught true ladyship must  
avoid all public expression of feeling.  
It's not the case. I didn't have a purse.  
I had to hold down my skirt in the wind  
lest I bare the thick calves that happen  
to be the particular affliction of my family.  
We buried my father the week before  
with his red handkerchief and a jar  
full of the ashes of days, and I just  
wasn't up to joy. Actually, my hands  
were over my stomach wondering  
if anything was there growing in  
the dark—knitting and knotting  
nothing into shape. Or consider this:  
his fist already growing a shadow  
on my left cheek. If you are a slave  
to the truth, he and I are only  
acquaintances bumping around  
the same faded furniture and teacups.  
I had nowhere else to go.  
He coughs up phlegm every night  
and once a splotch caught on his  
collar. I miss my mother. My ferns  
wilted on top of the radiator.  
The first time he patted my shoulder  
I saw afternoons, marching all in a row,  
and myself there, old and ineffectual,  
a riddle no one any more cares to guess  
standing in front of the kitchen sink  
tentatively digging a bobby pin  
deeper and deeper in my drying scalp.

# Outside My Window

leaves hooked to  
trembling catch  
cups of light, and call out  
to the books on my shelf.

When the final shout comes,  
even the sixth edition of Modern  
Theatre will jump  
out of its spine and fall, fall,  
fall back into green and gasp.

Punctuation  
washed away.  
Til then, everything  
is bound.  
Everything waits.

# Confession

I have plain eyes and a plain face  
no one lingers on  
to praise or pity.  
I do my weeping behind closed doors  
and keep the midnight hour  
at midnight (near enough).

I like to rise before the sky stirs  
and get in the car and drive and drive  
to where the houses are scars  
taken root in the earth  
and the trees around them keep  
growing silence—  
new places for the light and dark  
to try on each other's hands.

I love breakfast far away.  
Knowledge of another country  
before the eggs are awoke  
—startle white in the pan.

## Author Notes

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*Jenn Blair is from Yakima, WA. Currently she is a Park Hall Fellow at the University of Georgia. She has published in Copper Nickel, SNR Review, Innisfree Journal, and the Fairfield Review, among others. She lives in Winterville, GA with her husband Dave and daughter Katie.*

### About the Work

I started to write early on, a natural response to reading that most likely occurred in the way Madeline L'Engle once described rushing home as a child to draw what she had just seen in a New York City art museum—it could sound like hubris—the imitation—but at the very heart of it is joyful response. Being moved by beauty in a Keatsian way—never minding the fact that the first utterances back are awkward and embarrassing and wonderful (“mawkish” to borrow from Keats again—a word traceable to maggots. Again, these things don’t bear very much looking into). I think most of our first efforts are ones only our mother would want to hold onto, yet they remain invaluable for the practice and more than that—the way they kept you alive and more than alive during the actual physical space and time the effort occupied.

Two of these poems are distressingly autobiographical. Yes, we can always talk about a writer’s selves, the way that in fiction especially we *are* and are *not* the characters we present. I know the stress teachers place on the difference between speaker and poet in a poem—and also the way that we can tend to lapse even as we verbally discuss a poem in a classroom setting. “The speaker” we bother to say, but really, wink, wink, we end up having the sneaking suspicion in so many instances it’s actually Donne himself (that old devil!). So although a piece of writing can never fully encapsulate the complexity of a human being, “Outside my Window” happens pretty much like the poem unfolds. I will admit that I changed the locale to “my room” when in truth, it was a classroom tucked away in the middle of Virginia. I was a grad student at the time, doing my best to pay attention in an English class, but it was spring and the trees were that green that Patty Griffin calls “new like a baby”—a vibrant and joyful contrast to the bookshelf beneath the window filled with what seemed like old and dusty textbooks. “Confession” is my attempt at a sophisticated response to my unabashed love of the iconic American road trip (the stranger the festival and the produce it’s celebrating, the better). We usually feel we are getting away with something when we can get away, and I feel that even more when I can get away early in the morning (no small feat these days with a ten month old child!). As my husband sometimes ends up asking, “Who are these people living out here?” Even as we ask, we know others must be shaking their heads at us, in confusion and awe: “Who are those people always driving by?” I recommend Richard Hugo’s *Triggering Town* (introduced to me by Judith Cofer) for the inspiration that locale can have on a writer. I also recommend Eudora Welty’s account (in *One Writer’s Beginnings*) of how train trips with her father and other family journeys were crucial in provoking her curiosity about other lives. A writer who isn’t curious is a fraud.

As for “Molly Jenkins,” suffice it to say that she is a compilation of many women (in my own family and my own reading) who might not have said something aloud, but were certainly thinking it. Subaltern subjects ready to kick some...

## **Jenn Blair on the Web**

[newportreview.org/?archive/issue-2/jblair.html](http://newportreview.org/?archive/issue-2/jblair.html)

[web.mac.com/tomkoontz/Site\\_18/Blair.html](http://web.mac.com/tomkoontz/Site_18/Blair.html)

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