



# **THE BIG WINDOWS REVIEW**

**ISSUE 12 | SUMMER 2018**



***The Big Windows Review*** is a publication of the Writing Center at Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, MI, USA. We publish poems and short (500 words or less) prose.

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### ***The Big Windows Review***

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## Coming Home

I must have always been in the house,  
ear pressed to the ground.

Earth smell; catacomb warrens;  
Akhmatova fall; God-light on everything.

The Mongols touched this land—  
right here, below my temple.

What do we leave in the places we leave  
forever, what scraps decay in the roots?

Skeletal, high voltage towers march  
carrying lightning between them.

Kaschej the Deathless hides among them,  
gnaws on his own femur.

I hear armies inverted underground,  
still in their helmets.

The tallest *surepka* grows from their feet,  
the sweetest *pervotsvet*. Even the house

stops its gestures to listen,  
secrets folded like heirloom

tablecloths: birds and fish embroidered  
over stains, silk delicate at the seams.

What am I but a ghost in its snuffbox?

What am I but a flicker

on the ground, mouth full of spring fir?

From the road, you wouldn't know a door

was here. Every time I sleep I travel and yet  
stay still, surrender the dusk knowing,

the twilight logic. I remember America,  
even as it fades: that was a beautiful dream.

I am here now because I fell asleep here, as a child.  
My grandfather's finger reached from the ground

and pressed a fingernail of dirt deep into my ear.  
Wherever I go, I only hear his soldiers' songs,

homeless sounds, time slowing in eddies.  
I was always here, even as I thought

I was somewhere else. There is a beard of moss  
on the gate, a bird in the eaves. Mongol blood

chokes in restlessness on the flowering linden.  
Kaschej tans in the trees. Sweetness excuses everything,

sunlight on Lethe. Underground, the dead soldiers  
sing in sync with my heart, the wind

a train whistle that learned my name.

**Corfu**

Distant mountains  
lie barren and stony,  
still as the dead.

Closer to the eye,  
towering rock cliffs  
come alive  
with soaring peregrine falcons.

Among the almond and walnut trees,  
lungs inhale and appreciate  
air that sweeps in from the ocean,  
salty and sharp.

Fresh water's not forgotten here.  
It spurts from red and gray rocks,  
clear and clean,  
with no instructions bar sipping.

Myrtle grows thick and wild,  
its flowers like spiders of snow.  
A strawberry bush  
overflows with fruit  
and a battalion of  
a two-tailed pasha butterflies.

But the olive tree is king,  
five centuries old in some places  
and bent and arthritic to prove it.  
Resilience, fertility and regeneration,  
gnarled and twisted like a Van Gogh painting—

such is the pitted, ungainly trunk of life.

The sand dunes are my true asylum.

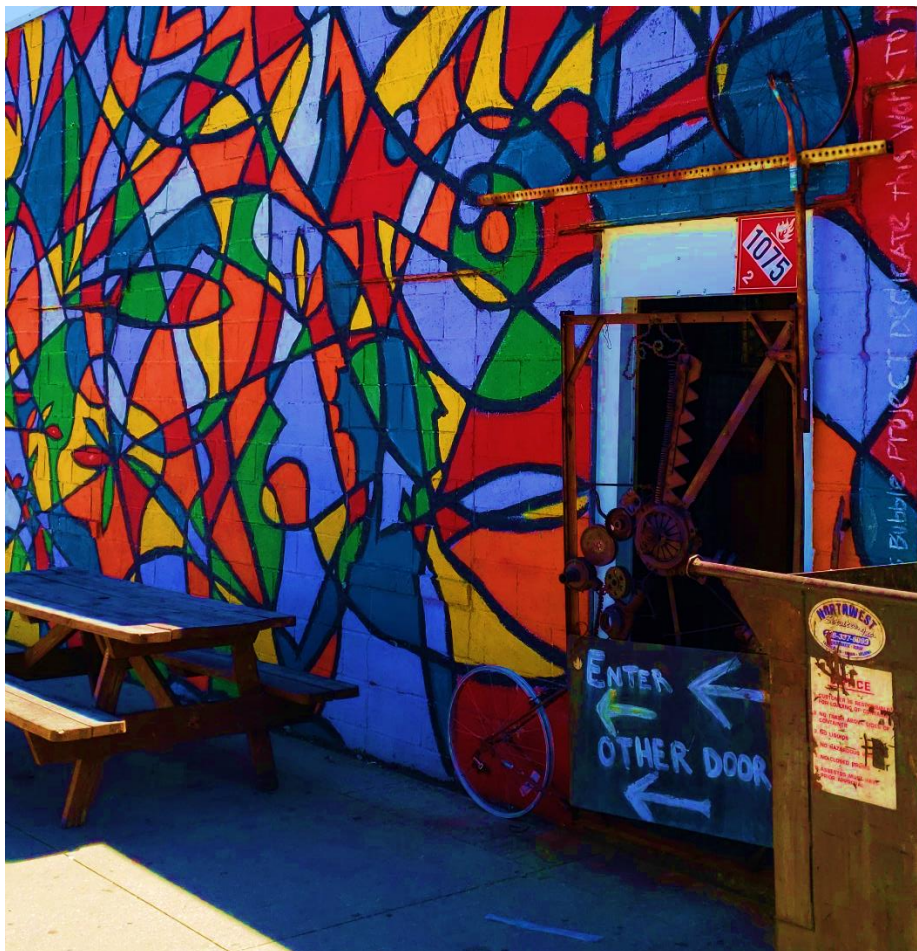
Salt marshes on one side,

lapping Mediterranean waves on the other.

I stroll between acres of creaking rustling bamboo  
and foaming whitecaps.

A minor event

as cures often are to other people.



**Cavignac, France**

**The din of the rain, the shear of cars as they cut past on wet streets | like my early years in France.**

**Renaults and Citroens painted soft shades of gray | sky-blue windows, tinted | and wipers that**

**::slapped**

**::slapped**

**from the top of windshields | like hands wiping tears from their eyes.**

**Why did I feel so melancholy then? I was no more than four ::I still feel that weariness as I drive down rain-swept streets today | I watch passersby in felt fedoras, huddled underneath umbrellas.**

**But, wait! the nostalgic twinge of a jazz number whispers on the radio | the cymbals—cars whizzing by | the rat-tat-tat of the drums—the rain on the roof | it brings me back there, to Cavignac.**



**Hear like a Stone**

Hear, like a stone,  
as the Amtrak rattles  
its brittle commute  
back to your home.

Your fate is as clear  
as vapor wriggling  
from the lips of  
your dead saints.

The millstones grind  
your thoughts until  
they falter like  
devious old men.

Sunset is red-gold  
on the rails, astral  
fortune for ephemera  
like you. Then,

you punch Sicily  
into your smartphone,  
hoping someone answers  
your granite ears.

*—after Rimbaud, “Entends Comme Brame”*

**Hoping to See a Vision at Saut d'Eau Waterfalls**

Our words—a few casting clouds—  
Shadows drifting over a vast landscape—  
Of trees, rocks, valleys, and fields  
Others spoke but their silence between  
Phrases left an echo of a soundless vowel  
That occurs at the beginning of a word  
Before the breath forces the first syllable  
While behind us a man with a white cane  
Marked with red single-stepped his way  
Through the crowd to see beyond here  
And now of what no one else could

**Monument Valley**

Heading south on 191  
Cars slip away like magic  
As we head closer to the reservation  
As if a 40 percent poverty rate might  
Stick to the skin like a bad rash  
Instead of an opportunity to serve  
Another point of view

Purple sage, rich red sand, black  
Apache tears under vast white clouds  
Dropped onto an eggshell blue sky,  
Cracked backdrop of spiritual enlightenment  
Crass commercialism and cinematic dreams  
John Wayne's ghost battling with  
A simpler way of life

**Jimmy Pro Found Inspiration at a Now-Defunct El Paso Watering Hole.**



1430 Myrtle is gone from the city charts, but it still has a warm place in local barflies' hearts.

Jimmy Pro landed up here a decade or so ago. Foraging the borderline, he was drawn in by the allure of Marilyn and the adjacent sub barrio, resplendent with its decaying funk. For a lensman in search of poetic inspiration, the dingy bar was the perfect place to conjure up a late afternoon, laconic stare; to unwind from shooting; and to jot down a few trigger riffs, teased out by ice cold Lone Star. Happy Hour can often be a poet's salvation until it just isn't.

Jimmy spent most of a decade sifting along The Line, honing his images, both electronic and literary. His voluminous photos further sharpen the clarity of his incisive poetry. "The Border Elegies" hang heavy with Jimmy's prickly historical view of our enigmatic southern boundary. For sharp, visiting insight, de



Tocqueville doesn't have jack shit on Jimmy!

El Paso, for Pro, was the citadel for his wandering self assignment. Its gritty West Texas ambiance and resplendent culture titillated his most deeply held, creative instincts. Comfort, contentment, and creativity anchored him here like a rock for nearly ten years.

But the place that he warmly refers to as "The City Of The Future" is changing. He recognizes this gentrification, having sniffed its putrid spillage elsewhere in places like Gotham City's Chinatown. Now, even this traditional barrio is tainted by ever seeping progress. This insidious creep is what finally took out a mini neighborhood icon like Goldie's.

The place earned a sketchy score of 83 on its last Health Department sanitation inspection in May, 2013. Marilyn was still smiling, welcoming customers in for spicy tacos and tawdry conversation. But Goldie's shelf life was nearly spent. Cheap beer down here is plentiful, and real estate near downtown was beginning to have some serious, long term prospects.

Jimmy finished The Border Elegies, but just in time for his joint to suffer the wrecking ball. When I finally showed up, he took me to another downtown dive bar, The Tap. Here, may be found, possibly, the best jukebox in Texas. I was also really inspired by the endless flow of cold Tecate. So I churned out a hot story about a mythical gunfight and our eventual escape down an endless alleyway that formed a seedy, urban slot canyon. Some editors liked it, and I even provided a dramatic supporting photo for publication.

I never got to quaff a brew with Jimmy at Goldie's, though. But if I had, a yarn featuring Pancho Villa buying a round for the boisterous house might have spewed forth. Pancho would have probably met up with Marty Robbins, you know, "out in the West Texas town of El Paso"! They could have had a bar shoot out with the relentless Federales who had been hot on Pancho's trail since early in the 20th century. Then, I would have provided a cool image to support my storyline. Likely the same hip photo seen here.

I am just proud to have ever off centered Goldie's in my viewfinder. For his part, Jimmy Pro is content to have found poetic synergy in a small barrio icon, now lost to time. Gone from the charts . . . but never, ever from our hearts.

**Private Eye**

There's been no rain.  
People wait  
before the Hall of Justice—  
not waiting for justice, no reign.

First guess. A protest, Chavez country.  
No, just a line, a snake dance  
for driver's licenses  
or child support payments.

Seven am and the sky a burnt blue.  
They wait, haggard now, a Bible  
Banger saying God gave them Freedom  
Of Choice and won't take it back...

A young fella, farm shoulders—  
no shirt—bums a light for his smoke,  
throws the lady her matches back, doesn't take the light.  
The lady says, *What that mother Okie crazy do that?*

The Bible Banger walks, checks  
his red cell, his grey meter, his beat-up  
Chevelle wagon, California plates, blue on white.  
I pencil out the number, since maybe it's him.

Seven-thirty am. The hall doors open.

**Legalese**

Too early in autumn for leaves to turn,  
and boats are still on mum harbor waters.  
I feel the warmth of an unencumbered sun  
as it massages my back and shoulder blades.

Here at the waterfront retaining wall  
that bends and curves its way from the head  
of bustling Fisherman's Wharf,  
general contentment rules the day.

From the railing I scan down a few yards  
to the beach where a little boy, all alone,  
is building a mound from wet sand.  
With every handful he shapes and pats  
his private little Mount Everest.

But his cause is lost, for the law of erosion  
is absolute. And as if to demonstrate  
the veracity of this law, the tide  
continues to build, rising with every  
incoming wavelet. Those wavelets  
wash the mound away at a faster pace  
than the boy can replenish it.  
And so he gives up in defeat,  
walking away dejectedly.

A hippie guitar player blissfully strums  
and sings to the pleasure of passersby.

Then along comes the spunky Park Ranger  
all decked out in an official uniform.

He extends his hand in mock friendship  
mandating that the musician move on.

Meanwhile a ways down the stone seawall  
a harmonica player carries on uncontested.  
He bums a cigarette from a skateboarder  
then continues blowing his harp, confident  
no law could make him trim his scraggly beard.





Walden, Brookside Apartments, Jackson Street

Love your sooty, sullied hearth. It is your own.

Love the copper ash sighing in the rubbish bin.

Love the raindrops winking in your empty pane, tracing the dying geranium's  
tallow arms.

Love the hunchback hippie-nun in 3B, who swears she taught Hemingway the art  
of drinking.

Love the spirit of the madwoman in your cupboard, whetting her lone candle  
stub  
with secrets whispered in the rain.

Love the damp cracks in your ceiling, through which you'll rise to meet the  
goddess of your choosing.

Love the leaping kettle's humming in your veins. It is your own.

*from 'small love'*

and who are you now,  
a meandering storm from the navel of  
our unbelievable Caribbean? This is where your mother  
starved. This is where the wind fell.  
This is where I should've burnt in my father's funeral pyre.

and who I am now,  
a whimper, misread as a kiss, a celebration rather than a plea,  
like they confuse cremation for roasting bodies like marshmallows,  
my skin goes gentle into the hand, a pressure from the grasp,  
tight like blood pressure cuffs, emulating my mother's firmness,  
somehow I am still uncertain if this is home, or if this  
is hell.

you and i have lowercase tendencies,  
disembody our importance,  
shadow our mothers.

and this is a gut feeling-- wind wails triumph,  
falling ever downwards in my mother's arms,  
is this my whimper or my kiss, my celebration plea,  
my wish for death to wind its way about my throat,  
I am the woman my mother raised, my fingers get tight  
around ligatures-- you ease me away.

you and i have suicidal tendencies,  
double digit patient,  
you bring a capital G god into me.

Perhaps this poem....

opens the red and orange berries

of the bittersweet vine to cedar waxwings

that pluck and pass as they line up in a row

spills over its margins like the rose-breasted

grosbeak's stream of whistles that crowd

the cedar waxwings off the vine

huddles alone in a dying pine quiet

except for the hulk of the ivory-billed woodpecker

that doffs his flaming crest in vain and fades

Feeling Uncertain

When I want to know how I'm feeling  
I place my hands on the surface of my body  
and move them around,  
it is tender the way it always is—  
I'm trying to be careful  
in order to feel more carefully,  
checking in with my feelings,  
*hi there,*  
*how are you feeling?*  
*Are you feeling okay?*  
You don't want to have bad feelings,  
or a feeling that is a pointless or worthless feeling,  
or the kind of helpless feeling you have when you don't even feel like yourself,  
as if you're having somebody else's feelings—  
you're not even sure if it's confusing or if you're just being inclusive,  
as in *Lonely Avenue*,  
songs of Ben Folds,  
Nick Hornby words,  
and photographs by Joel Meyerowitz  
after the song *Lonely Avenue* first performed by Ray Charles.  
Of course, you want your feelings to get along together,  
to be comfortable with each other,  
although there are also times when you don't even know how you feel,  
or if you're feeling anything,  
you're not even sure what it *feels* like to feel something—  
when this happens I lay my hands on my body and move them across the surface  
in the sort of shallow arc a jumprope makes,  
it feels a little swollen,  
as if there's something under the surface that's pressing on the surface,  
buried like a fossil or relic waiting to be brought up on *Lonely Avenue*,  
*I could cry, I could cry, I could cry.*



## **The Wealthy Are Always Feasting**

**1.**

*Nocturno's Sand Dial* marks off the minutes before the bank takes my home. *The Happiness of Loving My Brunette* has been eclipsed by the misfortunes my brunette and I have experienced.

**2.**

Your mother forced you to carry ice for their whiskey, then shoved you out into the storm.

**3.**

When I took the *est* training in the seventies, that weird blend of encounter groups, Zen and Sado-Masochism, I learned that I choose everything that happens to me, but I'm having a hard time figuring out how I chose this.

**4.**

Her white boyfriend came out and caught you, drove you into the hill's cold powder. The cabin lurched like a flogged Wyeth. Snow swirled.

**5.**

Miró (creator of *Nocturno*, *The Happiness of Loving My Brunette*, and several hundred paintings titled *Woman Bird* or *Bird Woman*) went to bed without any supper and saw shapes on the ceiling, which became his paintings.

My brunette and I look in the front window of the house we worked hard to acquire and now have lost. We spend some timeless time surveying *Still Life with Old Shoe*.

**6.**

To freely run my hands over your body, the softening of your eyes.

7.

*I will assassinate painting, said Miró, I will break Picasso's guitar.*

8.

In a photo I'm expressionless, on stiff legs in front of a shuttered hotel. Your heartbeat is a tension in my chest.

9.

I kick in the front door. I remember once fixing the hinges.

10.

Heart shredded, my body dehydrates as we distance until my skin is ground chalk. The wealthy are feasting tonight.

11.

I have this sensation, one I never had in all my days as a millworker and carpenter: *Hands Flying Off Toward the Constellations.*

The wealthy are always feasting.



**Harpist**

Turned to one side,  
she resembled my lover,

and by extension,  
you.

(If only our music  
were without sadness,  
too.)

**Traffic**

Wait. She sleeps in  
irregular breaks. Stop  
honking. I *will*  
judge –

so what? They're all the same.  
Mama knows a lullaby. Doorbells &

schnitzel. Wild  
things.

No,  
I will *not* move.

Two Poems

You lean into this tree as if its roots  
struck something made from wood  
no longer moves, became an island

with mountains laid out in rows  
and though they have no arms  
they open them when someone

is left close by –under such a weight  
their hands break apart the Earth  
from feeling their way around it

grave after grave, blinded by moonlight  
as the chunks you never saved  
form this nearly empty night

with nothing but the bright green hole  
this dying tree drains, keeps dry  
between what you wanted and the shine.

\*

From inches away his finger can't miss  
–the other kid plays dead, falls arm over arm  
the way all games come with a well

are filled with wishes hardened into stones  
sure the Earth would go along  
though there's no splash –what you hear



is the thud that purifies each death  
as one aimless night followed by another  
overflowing and this park

becomes the sudden laughter  
you no longer get to be  
are waiting for this dry wooden bench

to open, let you in, hear the stream  
stones hear when young, not yet  
sent to the bottom even in the afternoon.



**Two Poems from “After the Mermaids Have Gone, Vol. 1”**

**16.**

**I’m free of the anvil  
That hath killed all my  
Neighbors**

**[insert Norwegian death metal shredding]**

**I’m free of the succubus  
And have been sodomized  
By Muses**

**[insert Norwegian death metal shredding]**

**The occult, with its  
Focus on freedom  
Is in the gutters and tapwater  
Of this smalltown venue**

**[insert Norwegian death metal shredding]**

**24.**

**My heroes didn’t hear my songs  
And I didn’t hear theirs until they were dead**

**We miss each other and don’t even know  
Our own cornbread with cracklings, the stale musty**

Living room, with the plaid-covered couch  
And its wooden frame where guitars were played within

The wood—the paneled wooden walls and false teeth  
Of the great-grandmas

Rattling at night in glasses  
In the medicine cabinets

As the trains earthquake by with promises



**Incautious Reverie**

She was cautious, so wary,  
she hid her feelings from everyone,  
including herself, as tarnished images  
that could only be revealed once  
a cyanide solution was applied.  
What was revealed was a photograph  
of a dream where voices were heard  
but there was no one there to speak.  
Was a shadow of a spirit that hid  
behind objects the way rocks hide  
in a landscape of stones mined from  
a nightmare that has no beginning  
and no end. Hiding reveals nothing,  
she thought, roots you to a ground  
that refuses to be as solid as the roots  
that seek to find purchase there.  
Unbalanced as she was nothing is  
reveled to her like images in a developing  
tray. Remove them too soon and too little  
is exposed, too late, and all the details  
become fixed in the wrong places, become  
landscapes with no horizons. Still,  
she continues to bury what she needs most,  
mornings after dreaming, the day becomes  
the night she was afraid to focus on,  
a reverse image on a negative that mirrors  
what is missing in her life. Reaching out  
to hold something, anything at all, is futile,  
the fears she sought to hide have claimed her.

If You Asked, I Would Say

My back strikes the wall as I watch  
your roots tendril taut  
around my spine deep  
enough to prevent me  
from scattering my own seeds—  
I've been waiting to flower  
since I discovered

how to spell *love*. You train  
my etch-a-sketch heart  
that three lefts make a right  
decision, that my left hand

is shaped to hold  
only calluses, that my bruised  
smile gives you permission  
to seize the bold parts of me

and rewrite them in italics.  
You're a safety blanket  
with a hole I am

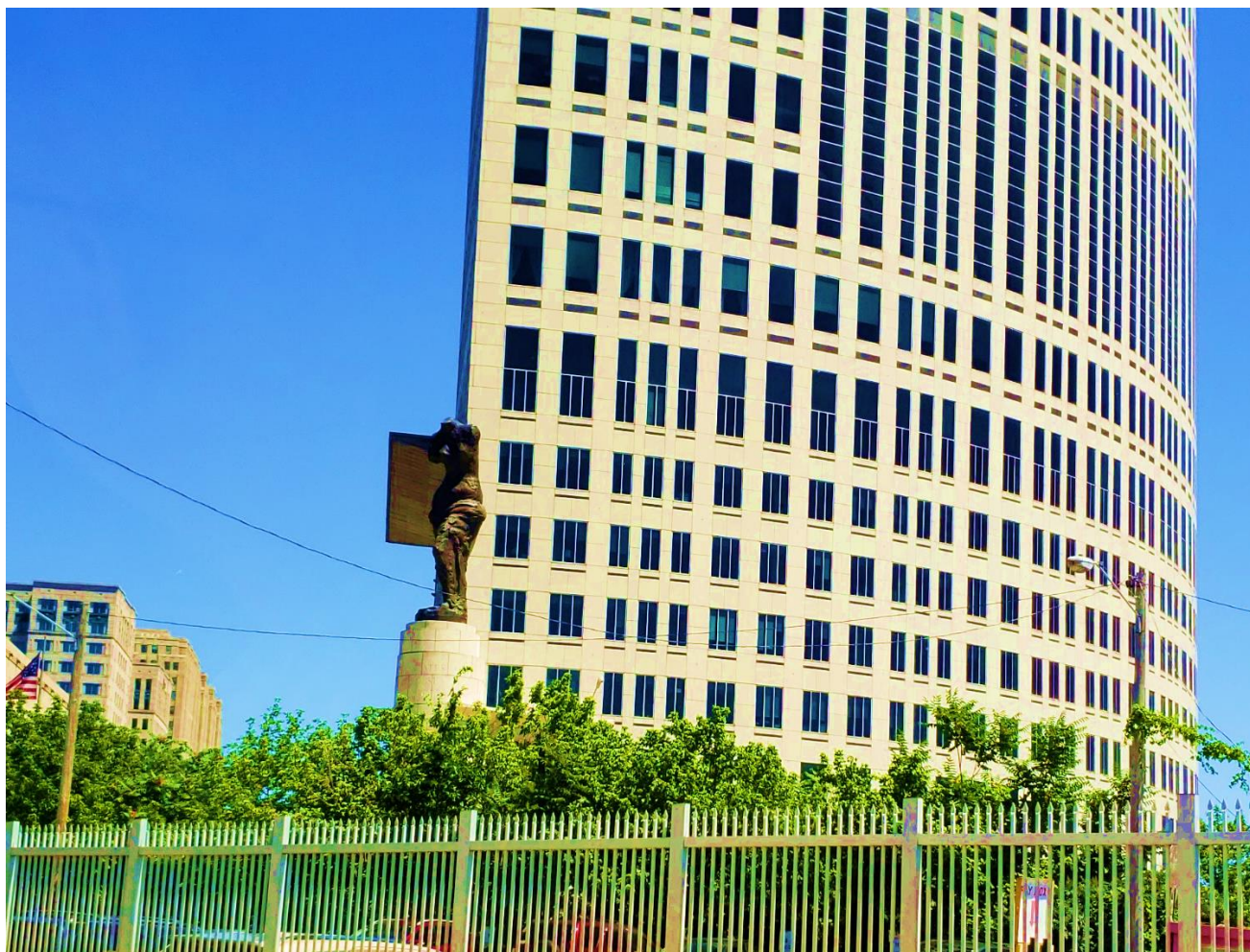
reaching through.

You do not want me  
whole-heartedly. You consume me broken.

When my backbone slams the wall,  
it hangs there. I remember  
to forget the feeling of wind



leaving my body: a backhanded breath  
I catch later.



**Chickenpox (1962)**

I found the bump  
below my belly button,

sitting on the toilet,  
petticoat encircling me  
like a queen's grand hoop skirt,  
feet dangling above the floor,  
an angel too new  
to get off the ground.

I rubbed the red bump,  
pressed it  
like a mysterious button,  
wondering if anything would happen.

Nothing happened.  
I've long forgotten the fever  
and the countless bumps  
that came out like twilight stars  
all over my helpless skin.

I remember only that first bump,  
one red blossom  
in a field of smooth, white,  
little girl skin,

and I remember innocence,  
long before pubic hair,  
long before sex,

life still white,

everything white,  
except that single  
red bump.



## Ashtray Memories

The insistent smell of cigarette smoke has always given me nostalgia, not for my father, who had never had a cigarette in his life (after tenth grade), but for my uncle, who had smoked a pack every day (after tenth grade). I loved the smoke, silver like his hair, exhaled like a whisper, like a secret, like the punch line of a joke my father would have said I was too young to hear. He would glower at my uncle who would look back, sheepish eyes over a wolfish smile so you knew exactly who was wearing whose clothing.

The nostalgia isn't worth walking behind this old man on the sidewalk as he meanders in a lazy zigzag. I try to scoot past him, but I'm worried I'll burn myself on his cigarette. I guess memories are like that, impossible to dodge past without singeing yourself.

My uncle is smoke now. Cremated. You are what you breathe. My father caught me in tenth grade burning a cigarette. He yelled at me for it, but my mom told him that he was being too hard on me, that I was grieving, growing, going through a phase. I didn't feel like explaining that I just wanted to smell him again, that the end glowed like his eyes catching the porch light and tossing it my way. America's pastime. Passed time is all I want back, when he would finish a final story and stab out the stub of the cigarette in an ashtray, as full as my head was of memories. He'd give me a final hug, smelling stronger than ever, and send me home on my way.

I look closer at the man in front of me. Hair silver like smoke, built like my uncle. Suddenly I don't want to pass him. If I pass him, I'll see his face, but this way maybe I can tell myself I'm following my uncle's ghost through the night, through one final, stolen night before he pats me on the head and sends me across the street to go to bed, walking past my father whose nose wrinkles at the smell of cigarette smoke still leaking off of me. How like my uncle to cheat death for a single night, just to give me another story.

**Falling Leaves**

Quiet creeps down through old elms  
now open to the clear autumn sky.  
I stand before my childhood home  
and the scent of burning leaves  
loosens the grip of time.

In bushes near an iron gate  
a concrete angel watches, a teacher.  
She's long awaited my homecoming.  
She parts hazy curtains, welcoming  
me to the clapboard house.  
She returns the slatted swing to the porch  
and the gazing ball to the lawn  
near the sapling my father and I planted  
before he went to war.

This lofty tree marks decades  
and I've grown old and stiff.  
yet under its spread  
I take on the body of my youthful days  
that rolled in piles of leaves  
like a forest troll with twig-tangled hair.

A red orange leaf takes flight  
and drifts aimlessly down to the lawn  
where I stand with leaves from another time  
still clinging to me.



Lesson

The gray and white cat  
stills and tightens

at the edge of  
the weed-and-Easter lily patch,

tail-tip twitching serious,  
and blurs into chase

when the  
cottontail bursts

out to kick through  
the weed-and-raspberry patch.

The rabbit scuds  
deftly under the board fence.

*Wham*, the cat doesn't fit,  
recoils and

shakes the blow from his head.



**Seven Poems**

**moments**

**window beside desk  
rumble of evening  
a day's leftovers as  
blood and ink mix  
writing my presence  
naming my deities**

**— —**

**You and I**

**Have been. Will be. Are.**

**— —**

**The pattering wings of  
late night snow across an  
almost empty street**

**Walking unnoticed among the flakes  
as if an oceans cold, hushed depths**

**Boots shuffling along the sidewalk  
Faint glimmer of our porch-light...**

**— —**

**close, sultry afternoon  
a windmill daydreams of its**

rain-bowed multi-winged hero  
flitting, scrabbling dragonfly

— —

window left open  
the city still quiet  
Spring...  
morning rain

— —

rapacious hawk in sunlight-  
as if a veil is  
suddenly removed,  
an archangel soaring  
closer to the divine...  
humbled, and suddenly  
stuffed full with grace

— —

deleting another poem  
I'm without words for. . .  
power squandered,  
my laptop  
sighs  
    turns  
        itself  
            off

charm and strange

broken down it turned out  
*charm* paired with *strange*  
named for the lifetime of the K  
particle strangely long  
and *charm* only on a whim  
they came in twos and threes  
like *truth and beauty* until  
those names were deemed  
too sentimental until that pair  
was renamed *top and bottom*  
along with *up and down*  
the lightest of quarks each  
fundamental particle unable  
to be broken down any further  
the way obituaries have the last  
word on Richard Taylor  
smashing electrons into protons  
to reveal what lay within  
the heart of all objects his  
a story in an invented language  
quarks themselves named  
for a line in *Finnegan's Wake*  
*three quarks for Muster Mark*  
begins the story anywhere  
in 1990 when the Nobel Prize  
was awarded for quarks  
we had so little time to wonder  
about the heart of anything  
was it fractional charges  
that had brought us together  
to the blue house a world

built of children and work  
dogs and cats lilies and irises  
if anything we might have found  
time instead for translations  
of Octavio Paz another prize  
winner that year literature  
over physics since the story  
begins anywhere



**Fear of the Cosmos**

*(After Su Tung Po)*

I open the window,  
and breathe the spring air.  
I stare at a sickle moon.  
The night is incredibly clear.  
I can hear crickets,  
hidden in the grass  
singing discordant hymns.  
I'm lost in memories  
of springs past.  
I drink a glass of wine.  
I'll soon be fifty-five.  
The stars surround me,  
a halo in the sky,  
but they are far away.  
They bring me no cheer,  
and they've been dead  
for millions of years.

**Void**

Twisting spirals intertwined,  
Red and green  
aligned.  
Jutting roof, dragon corners  
a sweep of shade below  
—she emerged.

Ashy-dark hair  
with some white dust remaining.  
Hung heavy and low.  
Her feet scraped the ground leaving  
a train of dirt and pebbles scattered  
in her wake.

Coarse yellow threads make  
a decaying tapestry broken by  
the rusty columns which  
do nothing to stop  
clouds of dusty sins.

The swirl of tradition and ignorance surrounded it.  
Weaving a hazy cloak  
blinding people.  
Not a new home  
old.  
Old as religion.  
Stolen from over the sea  
stuck onto a new landscape,  
dry, decaying wheat.



Woven like straw  
banded.

Yellow-framed, a red and black staircase  
going up and up...

Cut off. Dried blood.

Drooping towards the ground before  
being caught up.

An ancient slithering cord of poison  
—brought to surrender.

Truth preys at night  
sneaking into  
troubled minds  
once set free by lies and fantasies.

Her venom pours  
out of her ash hair and  
her mouth and  
her dirty feet.

Crippling certainty that  
dries up the  
world.

Truth is blank—  
hiding and scurrying.  
Slipping in and out  
of gaze.

Avoiding needles and questions  
sliding out  
of fingers.

An empty bucket overturned  
somewhere in the world.



## CONTRIBUTORS =====

**Linda Casebeer** lives in Birmingham, Alabama, and has published one collection of poetry, *The Last Eclipsed Moon*, from Cherry Grove Collections, as well as poems in journals including *Slant*, *Earth's Daughters*, *Pinyon Press*, *Hospital Drive*, and *Soundings*, among others.

**Alan Catlin** is the author of *Blue Velvet*, winner of the 2017 Slipstream Chapbook Competition. His full-length book *Wild beauty* will be published in 2018 by Future Cycle Press.

**William C. Crawford** is a writer & photographer based in Winston-Salem, NC. He was a combat photojournalist in Vietnam. He later enjoyed a long career in social work, and also taught at UNC Chapel Hill. He photographs the trite, trivial, and the mundane. Crawford developed the forensic foraging technique of photography with his colleague, Sydney lensman, Jim Provencher.

**Pablo Cuzco** is an American writer of poetry and short stories. He spent his early years in France and Germany with his family. In his teens, he traveled across America, guitar in hand, writing songs and jotting memories along the way. Now living in the Southwest with his wife, he has time to reflect and share those stories. His work currently appears at *Underfoot Poetry* and *Pablo Cuzco ...in My Mind's Eye*

**Kathryn de Leon** has been writing poetry off and on since she was about nine years old. She lived most of her life in Los Angeles, but is now residing in England due to a life-long love of the Beatles. She's had poems published in several small literary magazines.

**Allison DeRose** is an English/Creative Writing graduate student at The College at Brockport in Western New York. At the college, she has received several scholarships for her poetry and is currently a writing tutor on campus. Allison is constantly being inspired by words and also enjoys taking photos of nature.

**Mariya Deykute** was born in Russia, raised in Brooklyn and grew up in the UMass:Boston MFA program. She is a poet, performing artist and teacher. Currently, she teaches on the Navajo Reservation and is the founder and curator of the First Fridays reading series in Gallup, NM. History is important to her; as are words; as is our inner and outer wilderness.

**George Freek** is a poet/playwright living in Belvidere, IL. His poetry has recently appeared in *Carcinogenic Poetry*, *The Adelaide Review*, *Off Course*, *The Tipton Poetry Journal*, *The Ottawa Review of the Arts*, and *The Sentinel Liteayr Quarterly*. His plays are published by Playscripts, Inc.; Lazy Bee Scripts; and Off The Wall Plays.

**Tim Gavin** is an Episcopal priest, serving as the head chaplain at The Episcopal Academy, located in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania. He oversees the school's volunteer service cooperative and its partnership program with St. Marc's School in the Central Plateau of Haiti, which he visits three to four times a year. His poems have appeared in many journals and most recently in *The Anglican Theological Review*, *About Place Journal*, *Chiron Review*, *Digital Papercut*, *Evening Street Review*, *Screech Owl Review*, *HEArt On-Line Journal*, *The Lake*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *decomp magazine*, and *Blue Heron Review*. He lives with his wife and sons in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania.

**Tony Gorry's** essays, memoir, and poetry have appeared in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, *The Chronicle Review*, *The Examined Life Journal*, *The New Atlantis*, *The Fiddleback*, *Cleaver Magazine*, and *Belle Rêve Literary Journal*. His essay in *War, Literature and the Arts* was cited as Notable in 100 Best American Essays 2012. His book, *Memory's Encouragement*, was published by Paul Dry Books in April 2017.

**Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois** has had over fourteen hundred of his poems and fictions appear in literary magazines in the U.S. and abroad. He has been nominated for numerous prizes and was awarded the 2017 Booranga Writers' Centre (Australia) Prize for Fiction. His novel, *Two-Headed Dog*, based on his work as a clinical psychologist in a state hospital, is available for Kindle and Nook, or as a print edition. To read more of his work, Google Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois. He lives in Denver, Colorado, USA.

**Craig Greenman** teaches philosophy at Colby-Sawyer College in New Hampshire. His short stories have been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize, and he was a finalist for the Walker Percy Prize in Short Fiction. His philosophical work includes a book, *Expression and Survival: An Aesthetic Approach to the Problem of Suicide*, and various articles.

**John Grey** is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in *Examined Life Journal*, *Evening Street Review*, and *Columbia Review* with work upcoming in *Leading Edge*, *Poetry East*, and *Midwest Quarterly*.

**Ana Hahs** is an English major at San Jose State University in California. She uses poetry as a tool to explore her own emotions but hopes that the end result expresses an idea that is in some way meaningful to all readers. When Ana is not putting words down on paper, she spends her time getting inspired by other authors, as well as pop culture and her personal life. Ana has an A.A in English from West Valley College, and some of her other poems have been published in their literary anthology *Voices*.

Raised in Chicago and residing in Nashville, **Doug Hoekstra's** short stories, essays, and poems have appeared in numerous literary journals. He has two book-length collections to his name *The Tenth Inning* (2015) and *Bothering the Coffee Drinkers* (2007 Independent Publisher Award finalist) and as a singer-songwriter, released eight CDs on U.S. and European labels, touring extensively throughout the US and Europe in support. <https://doughoekstra.wordpress.com/>

**Peter Leight** previously published poems in *Paris Review*, *AGNI*, *FIELD*, *Beloit Poetry Review*, *Raritan*, *Matter*, and other magazines.

**Mike Lewis-Beck** writes and works in Iowa City. He has pieces in *Alexandria Quarterly*, *Apalachee Review*, *Cortland Review*, *Chariton Review*, *Pilgrimage*, *Iowa Review*, *Rootstalk*, *Seminary Ridge Review*, *Taos Journal of International Poetry and Art*, and *Wapsipinicon Almanac*, among other venues. His short story, "Delivery in Göteborg," received a Finalist prize from *Chariton Review*, 2015. His essay, "My Cherry Orchard in Iowa," received recognition as one of the "Notable Essays" in *Best American Essays of 2011*. His poetry book

manuscript, *Wry Encounters*, was a Finalist for the 42 Miles Press Poetry Award 2016.

**Kaja Lucas** is a Maryland-based poet currently representing Baltimore as a 2018 Youth Poet Ambassador. Currently in high school, she has been featured in her school's literary magazine, and works closely as an editor. She loves sunsets and black tea.

**Joseph V. Milford** is the author of the poetry collections *CRACKED ALTIMETER* (BlazeVox Press) and *TATTERED SCROLLS AND POSTULATES, VOL I.* (Backlash Press). He is an English professor and Creative Writing instructor living south of Atlanta, Georgia. He also edits the online poetry thread, *RASPUTIN, A POETRY THREAD*.

**ayaz daryl nielsen**, veteran, hospice nurse, ex-roughneck (as on oil rigs) lives in Longmont, Colorado, USA. Editor of *bear creek haiku* (30+ years/140+ issues) with poetry published worldwide (and deeply appreciated), he is online at: <https://bearcreekhaiku.blogspot.com>

**Donna O'Connell-Gilmore**, poet and psychotherapist, moved to Cape Cod In 2000 to focus more seriously on poetry. She published the chapbook *Africa Is the Mother Who Lies in the Grass* in 2015 (Sandheap Press). Donna's poetry has appeared in *Willow Springs, Blueline, The Hopper, Off the Coast, and Glassworks*.

**James Owens'** most recent collection of poems is *Mortalia* (FutureCycle Press, 2015). His poems, stories, and translations appear widely in literary journals, including publications in *The Fourth River, Kestrel, Adirondack Review, Tule Review, Poetry Ireland Review, and Southword*. He earned an MFA at the University of Alabama and lives in Indiana and northern Ontario.

**Simon Perchik** is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review, Forge, Poetry, Osiris, The New Yorker*, and elsewhere. His most recent collection is *The Osiris Poems* published by box of chalk, 2017. For more information, including free e-books, his essay titled "Magic, Illusion and Other Realities" please visit his website at <http://www.simonperchik.com>.

**Thomas Piekarski** is a former editor of the *California State Poetry Quarterly* and Pushcart Prize nominee. His poetry and interviews have appeared in literary journals internationally, including *Nimrod, Florida English Journal, Cream City Review, Mandala Journal, Poetry Salzburg, Poetry Quarterly, Pennsylvania Literary Journal, and Boston Poetry Magazine*. He has published a travel book, *Best Choices in Northern California*, and *Time Lines*, a book of poems.

**Pieper Roderick** grew up in India and Indonesia before moving back to the United States, where he was born. He attended university in Florida, where he still lives, teaching high school English. His favorite color is purple, and all of his uncles are still living, though many of them do smoke.

**David Anthony Sam** lives in Virginia with his wife and life partner, Linda. Sam has four collections, and his chapbook, *Finite to Fail: Poems after Dickinson*, won the 2016 Grand Prize in GFT Press's Chapbook Contest. In 2017, he began serving as GFT Poetry Editor. [www.davidanthony.sam.com](http://www.davidanthony.sam.com)

**Cassidy Street** is a librarian's assistant from Falkner, MS. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Eunoia Review, Five on the Fifth, Indigo Lit, and the Scarlet Leaf Review*. He is also the 2015 winner of the Kirk Creative Writing Award sponsored by Blue Mountain College.





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