




The Big Windows Review

Issue 23 Spring 2021



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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Christopher Barnes

Bridges Home

...in Crab St. Rule-book tickles
didn't...

*

...not oatmeal. Fortify
with Quorn...

*

...history museum,
rubbernecking a colossus...

*

...I slide back the gateleg,
a torrent of Motown...

Christopher Barnes

Fresh

...fortune-bitter. You sport
a disposition...

*

...palette knife. Turf
onto wire rack...

*

..."Cudgelling fossilized blockhead,"
she lisped...

*

...our gabber. Ultimately,
allure...

Untitled

There was a coyote that had no trouble in the world safely grasping in her teeth the hanging wire on the back of this framed photo, but what she was not able to grasp, of course, was that because her love for Franz Joseph was so great that she forever lugged around his cottony-faced portrait and always propped it close to her as she dozed in daytime hours, nasty folks who wished her harm eventually came to understand they had only to locate this much-scratched picture of the Emperor to know approximately where in their community the coyote was sleeping and dreaming during the late morning and afternoon.

Farmer's Market Portola Ave, For My Daughter

I walk amid the market's masked crowd astonished
I could have spent such time in hibernation.
The yellow-jacketed girls swirl
until their jackets touch like a melding of two suns,
the blue-jeaned throngs sand their legs together
as if polishing their knees or like beetles
removing scents from where they've been.
Old and young men's shaved heads shine
in the early sunlight, and a bag of corn,
tassels slightly blackened by summer's scorch
stand like photographic negatives
to bleached blondes with darkened roots.

I have missed the sight of you,
but in the market am among your people,
the young woman selling dahlias and squash
with a green apron and blue headband,
the flickering eyes of a babe
bobbing in the backpack of her mother
not knowing whether to look or fall asleep,
in the strolling and lolling of women
looking to highlight a day
with a splash of radish
or the dull green of kale
and a small bouquet of blue asters.
And now, I miss your arm, your hand.

Revolution: A Youthful Rite of Passage

Slowly the squall blew in across the water
We saw it gathering, knew it gathered for us
While youth sat crimson on our foreheads
The indigo turmoil milled in the distant sky
You, eyes screaming
Breasts prouder than sails' bellies or eagles' wings
Stroked your gleaming flank
Lips longing for the hush and violence
I was hopeless
Too lost in you to notice my own transfiguration
Hearts glowing lemon with birefringent passion
We longed upward like dust motes
Peaceably floating on sunlit air
For the sudden updraught towards madness

As the funnel neared
We narrowed
Drawn, swept
Losing toeholds
Lifting
Streaking skyward
Our tears of rage and gladness
Splitting wide our eyes to nourish the parched earth
Shaken whirling
Down the night sky
Like fragile, dwindling petals
We rode our certainty and abandon
To the edge of our sane desires
And left them
Weightless in the anarchy of our omnipotence

Richard Dinges, Jr. _____

Orphans

Yellowed newspaper
wrapped and wrinkled
around cracked glass
figurines of cats and
poodles exudes sour
odors of mildew and TV
dinners. Brittle paper
crinkles sounds
into words, echoes
from when she collected
unwanted treasures
in lieu of children,
that I now remove
from an empty room.

Howie Good

Autumn's Menace

A plainclothes policeman, using a pair of handcuffs as brass knuckles, cut the face of a boy who was wandering the city in a hospital gown. Sometimes I think it's just not true that teaching a child to not step on a caterpillar will make you a better person. Sometimes I think the plainclothesman is going to walk through the door, but he hasn't, so I keep waiting. The city streets are deserted – no parade floats, no people. In these slow days of unease, everyone is a biohazard.

Howie Good

Past Is Prologue

Paris, January 6, 1938. Samuel Beckett was returning from the cinema that night when he was accosted by a tramp, who stabbed him in the chest, just missing his heart. He wasn't quite the same afterwards. Maps needed to be redrawn. I'm beginning to understand something about it. The ocean feels a little sick right now. Two teenage boys beat a homeless man to death in the park with their skateboards. Stop talking and look up. Ladders cross the blue sky in a wheel of fire.

Howie Good

Doe-Re-Me

I am writing
at the kitchen table,
or, rather,
struggling to,
when my wife
excitedly calls me
to the window

and points down
into the yard
where a doe
with a coat
just a shade
from golden
is browsing

on fallen leaves
that if it wasn't
for the hours
I spend trying
to make poems,
I would have
burned long ago.

Howie Good

Post-Election Stress Disorder

The emperor's model army marches on,
bringing with them the suffocating smell of smoke,
a darkness like mud, while tens of millions
of just plain folks artlessly demonstrate their devotion
by cheering threats of kidnapping and murder
and parading bright new flags that with each wave
in the lie-filled air grow duller and more tattered,
and when the light dwindles to a final few hours,
there will be tweet storms and wild speeches
and the military music of boots stamping on faces.

LS
BLE
R
ED
N
ZED
PERTY



**BE
WARE
OF
FLYING
OBJECTS**

John Grey

To One Hoping to Find Himself on Mount Washington

The only certainty in these parts
is the untrustworthiness of Mount Washington.
Weather is an alchemist making storm from blue sky,
a breeze into hurricane wind,
a modest temperature drop into a bungee plunge.

If the summit's where you're headed
in some back-packer's quest
to find yourself,
then turn back.

But maybe you just wish
for an insanely tangible representation
of the maelstrom
in which you've gone missing.
If so, then head on up.

The Way a Month Still Cares for a Year

Golden Hairstreak Butterfly

June has someone's ocean in her closet, but it's dried out and hangs with her blouses and old homies, the neighborhood just not the same hood anymore. The darkness has settled in but has a great deal of trouble swallowing these days.

June nibbles on chinquapin, oak, one eye on her father, his topside golden yellow with brown outer borders, wider than her mother's. His short tail makes him angry, his underside pale yellow with a faint inner reddish brown mark like a label for what he does. You'd never guess it from looking at him.

In the forests June selects the leaves for her pale blue eggs, attaches them to the undersides of leaves, often near the tallest branch on the bush. They go unnoticed all winter and open in the spring.

Chinquapin is June's source of golden nectar and dreams. This life is not something you can do alone.

June used to be afraid of her father, but now she too has touched evil¹ and it is not the terrible thing she feared. She's gone deeper than damp clothing. She's arrived at the gates one life before departure and waited, just waited.

June wants her night back. She's sleeping in the clouds without a candle. Her angels are softer now, beginning to leave home, which scares her.

¹ found rolled up in a bullet casing beneath an empty armadillo shell shellacked to a nostalgic sepia sheen beginning to flake off

First You Must Be Erased and Then You Can Walk Slowly Home

Golden Skipper Butterfly

It's a frightening pleasure to be knocked down by a wave of the sea's long hand, to find how much not dying feels like love, the male above brilliant light brass-gold with narrow scalloped dark margins, the female mixed brown and tawny-orange below with violet pronounced at the busy lips.

This is how the mind's other reasoning works. You don't even have to be there to participate. The happier response often creates a saddened question, vast seas minnowed with insignificant possibilities and unimaginable mortality rates.

Putting things together wrong amused Nicholas. His confidence leaked and got all over things he shouldn't have questioned. Already I'm not drunk enough to notice something like that. It's not your story either, is it? (The deep wacked laugh of youth still appears to be random.)

One brooding assignation is enough in the shaded gullies and valley bottoms, the grassy areas near waterways, the pine forest clearings. There were no names then for Nevada, Wyoming, the Dakotas or Nebraska and the lovers dribbled south to New Mexico, Arizona and Northwest Mexico, equally nameless. Nicholas the Name Boy squeaked alone, so softly he barely heard himself.

But Nicholas' big bright skipper grows active in cloudier weather than most will tolerate, his wave-drawn cutter lifting and lifting, one fluid obstacle after another. The approach is the life, not the conclusion. If only we could never arrive. No one should be able to fly away now, your last wish and the one after still approaching.

Michael Lee Johnson

Family Feud

Break
in the rain,
thunderstorms;
bolt angular lightning
slithers away west.
Walking,
nanosecond flash
family memories,
personal,
revert,
tautology fault of style
acerbic chats
daggers in heart these words,
confused,
dicey dungeon sharp spike.
A labyrinth, ruined passages,
secret chambers, cellmates, now
for life.
Wind storms move away,
young willow trees natter—
smallest branches, still snap.

Scott Laudati

This City

I'm not kidding.
I'm dying in this city.
I was a prude
when thunder struck and
gave us memory of spring.
But now I'm sick of eating
garbanzo beans
saving for rent
so goddamn high
even last year's ghetto
has a waiting list.

It's been too hot
to go outside this summer.
The cats long abandoned
by breakups
and unrenewed leases
snore
under the dumpster,
ignoring rats swimming for
cigarette butts
floating like
dead minnows in green pools
that stay deep
without rain.

There's a bum on my block
I see sometimes.
He sits on an
orange crate
and doesn't ask for money when
Bushwick crawls home

after last call.
He doesn't ask for money
at noon when Germans
ask him to point out
Roberta's
on a map.
He doesn't have time to hustle.
He's too busy
making drum loops
on his cell phone.

I said hi to him once
and he introduced me
to his brother--
another bum named J Bird.
He was chewing his bottom lip
and told me
"The pigeons here
eat better
than most people.
they're fat as turkeys,
stuffed
on the best pizza."

J Bird was an expert
on pigeons
because he made
all his crack money
off of them.
He said he crippled
the birds with a stick
and sold them
(boxed by the dozen)
down in Chinatown.
An hour later
the Chinese would put them

on the special menu
as all you can eat squab.

J Bird told me he must have
killed
a million pigeons.
But he never ate one.
“They’re too dirty,” he said.

I thought about the things
I’d done
to pay my rent
in New York.
All the bags I carried
and the times even the tips
couldn’t make
my back feel better.

You know
you’re dying
when you envy
the pigeons.
Beaten up
eaten
shit out
done.
They tried to do that to me, too.
In those hotels I clocked in
every day.
A servant with no chains.
They tried to do that to me, too.
And they came close.
I would sit with the housekeepers
on my break
and wonder
“Why don’t

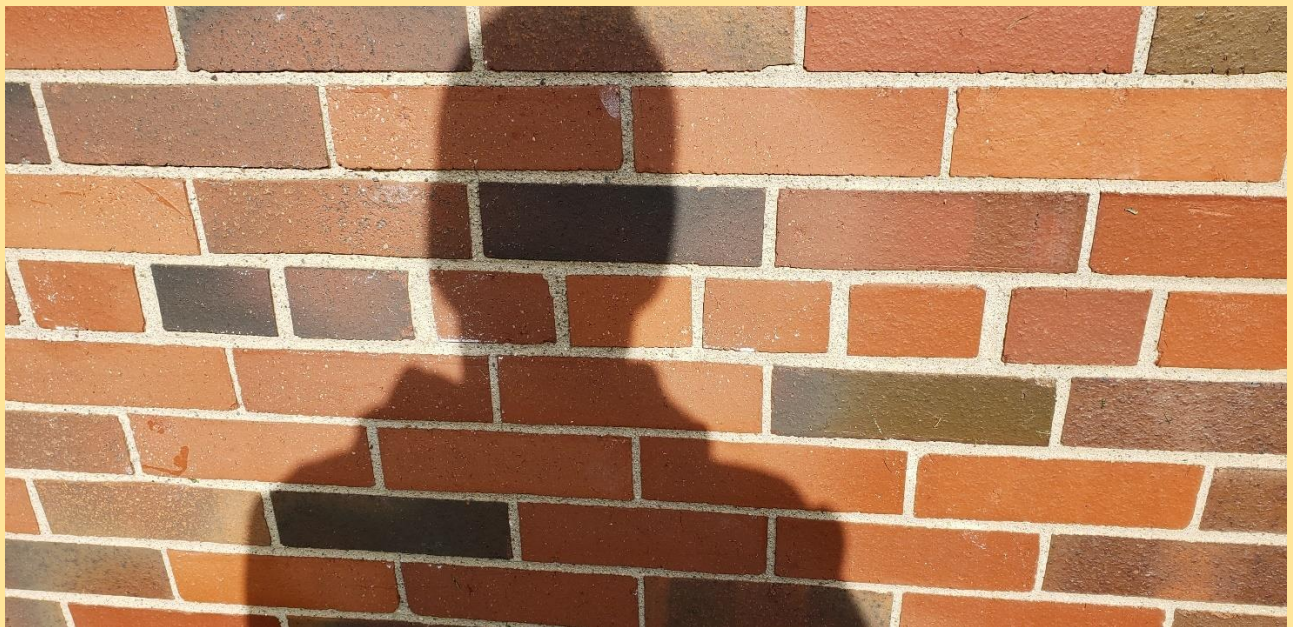
they
just finish
me off?"

It was my smile
I think.
I kept it on no matter what.
Even when they asked me
to get them ice
to touch their wives
to touch them
when we both knew
there was
no tip coming.
I kept
the smile on
and they saw
they could take
my back
and my time
but they couldn't
take my heart.
I either stopped it
from beating
or
hid it very well.
Sometimes I had to
pinch myself
to see if I was
actually alive.

I spent most of
my shifts
flipping between
murder and suicide.
Always one call
away

from telling
my mother
goodbye.
But then it would end
like it ended
every day.
The moon always low
and the garbage piled so high
you could climb it
for perspective.

I studied it all.
It meant my freedom.
It all did.
Even the rats silhouetted
at the base
of
the moon.
They were mine, too.
We were all part
of the city's refuse.



Kevin D. LeMaster

A collection of stones

your mouth is a stone
of smooth silence

agape and rounded
in awe of the world

your lips repeat words
repeat longing without edges

their sound drips into

a puddle of loneliness

I've traversed your valley
under cover of night

more than a hundred miles ago

now I watch you sleep
your neck juts forward

like a small dog, lurching
to take back what is hers

Mike Lewis-Beck

Mexican Wedding Cake

Carlos puts the .45 automatic in the glove box, then waves as he pulls away from the Morelia cathedral in his 1957 Desoto sedan. for the banditos! he says, just married. Dolores of the river sits on his lap, head veil flowing. the rear window plastered “amor de corazon” in lime paint, they drive off to lake Patzcuaro swerving left for the little white fish and their love, as the fireworks castle ignites, and everyone eats hand-machine-peeled oranges.

Watching a play, Miguel reflects, it is watching a play, but not the Cherry Orchard. Chekhov hides the bandits, and the women are old, old maids, or married already. the violence is the purse not the pistol, testaments from a house servant. estates to be protected, land not wives. peasants starved, but not enough. the manse to be sold, the servants to go, the orchard cut down for development.

Whack! whack! whack! ax felling cherry trees. who will nurture the land? who serve the tea?

Lorca?

Lorca? what has he to do with this?

He wants to speak.

Green. green. green. *verde, verde, como te quiero verde*. the land must be saved. it is dry, always dry, lost Spanish land, before and after the conquistadores. feed the land, if nothing else feed the land, it must be green.

My little piece of earth, already it has shade and birds, it carries the green on its shoulders, in high wind and low...

So?

There are no bandits anymore, the brides are for nothing, and the servants have gone. but the earth still wants manure.



John Marvin

hankering for a radio gestalt signifier in a world full of rhetorical questions

when some one dies
then each one dies a little
with no recovery
of unique deictic
tendencies or trials

not to mention
arrows sparrows
sorrows tomorrows

and

never never never never never
a blender be
to the last consonant

sigh

of relief or camel rings
wafting songs of slow choking death
over an ironic times square hub
of a crossroads in a fluid

current of commerce

and congestion
unrelieved by levity
while behind the curtain
and you don't know if it's Hamlet
or The Wizard of Oz

that's playing

because the screen is blackened
and the sound track is obscured by

white noise

an echo of gratitude
for what else is there
to overcome the silence of spring

pouring across the meadow
picking up lots of forget-me-nots

too young to be reborn aloft
where sky meets the black suck of deep space

or

even in low orbit broadcasting satellite beeps
and broadcasting satellite bops
humming Dick and Davey
at regular intervals

like heart swells vary waves

very vary waves

whose crests and troughs never hinder demolition
of constants

so formulae founder on rocks
of self described triumph after birth
slowly descends
until even the abyss
fails to talk back
because it considers your discourse
an echo of things to come

dredged up up and away from sludge
moldering in sloughs
thought to be the birthplace of life
by incestuous patriarchs

if and only if meteorites
imbedded just below surface appearances
claim not to be guilty of infesting the planet
with plants and animals doomed to eat one another
casting blame on orgasms

but who the fuck cares
if it's worth it or improbable
because someone or something bets
you didn't see that coming did you

well did you

did you

don't answer that

Jacob Kobina Ayiah Mensah

Freesia

Maybe a stone
now resting on piled stones & this pile resting on a grain of sand
wrapped with wet prairie winds
is rising to the end of the block to the front stoop

& alone & he's sitting here in a wavery circle
a grassy lane leading toward the ban, & she veers onto that without signaling first
maybe something is more sudden & more exasperated

we wait for a wounded stream of traffic that all at once springing out onto itself again, this
time heading north

a bamboo root clinging to it is thrown into the space against the
edges of the enveloped stones, a long noisy swig

life begins in a mould	& up there in a cosmic mouth,
the target of someone	is erected from the rails. The stone
is audible among the winds	but the clay describes routes,
its paucity stuns in bloody	samples, we look closer than
before & everything around it,	grappling the hook of light
	so deep of the core

so deep everything is rotten
to the core & a pair of spike-heeled patent-leather shoes & a bright-red wig & a skin-tight dress
cover the face of the stream elsewhere

freesia
spread
ing
in
its im
ported ter
rain

Martina Reisz Newberry

Attention

Traffic is backed up for a few blocks
and busses are being rerouted.
All very inconvenient.

It's the woman
in the middle of the street;
she holds a knife to her
own white throat.
Two cops are reasoning
with her and the lookers
look from all sides of the street.

She wants to be where everything
stops including her life.
She tells the short Latino cop
that she's out of money,
no place to live,
can't get even a bit part in
a lousy B movie.

The knife flashes
and the other cop,
the one with the mustache,
puts his hand out—
Give me the knife;
give it here, he says.

Her boyfriend kicked her out,
took back his ex—
they have two kids;
she can't even get a bit part
in a lousy movie,

can't get her hair or nails done—
her life is over.

The short Latino cop offers her a smoke—no;
he puts out his arms for a hug—no;
he tilts his head to one side
the way his ex-wife said was cute—no.
The lookers are quiet,
waiting, looking.
The lights change and
change again.

The other cop fingers
his mustache,
shrugs hugely and
walks away.

The woman drops the knife
and follows him.
Don't turn your fucking
back on me
she shouts. Fuck you!
Don't walk away from me!

The short cop shakes his head
and begins taking down the barriers.
Lights change. Traffic resumes.

Martina Reisz Newberry

Philosophy

When they talk about “living in the Now,”
they mean you, Love, with your highland pipes,
smiling a faint smile towards me
while your fingers dance on the surface
of your instrument. Your Now
is palpable; it’s that small gathering of
music dancing in your head, your fingers
finding the dance and joining it there on
the pipe’s clear spine, and the light and shadow
surrounding all of it—the entire Now.

Joey Nicoletti

To Paul Blair

(1944-2013)

Dear Mr. Blair,
when you asked me
if I wanted you to sign
my baseball, bat,
and your rookie card,
my spirits were as high
as a moonshot smacked
by Reggie Jackson: Mr. October.
We conversed as you signed
everything. You said
it was almost as great
to be Mr. October's teammate
as it was to talk with fans
"like me," who treated you
"like family." I don't know
how or why I didn't faint,
but this memory is why
I want my body to be viewed
with the baseball you signed
in my cold, stiff hands, before
I become smoldering ash.

ayaz daryl nielsen

six haiku/senryü

melancholy day...
the pathway by our back door
yes, it's beckoning!

sliver of a moon
it slowly diminishes
holding my wife tighter

a chilly morning...
pulling it over my head
our shabby old quilt

this evening alone
comfort with a long-time friend
path through the forest

beauty of the night
so many pathways exist
sunlight in the east

a new beginning
massive greenways opening
yes, sunrise again!



Ronald J. Pelias

For Sale

One old man, used,
in acceptable condition.
Balding, but presentable.
Does light housekeeping
and yard work. Limited
cooking skills but willing
to learn. Clean, sufficient
bank account. Comes with
wardrobe, car, and some
scarring. Maintenance
minimal, requiring only
occasional kindness.
Will consider all bids.

Simon Perchik

*

You cover the mirror that's facing the man
standing for hours inside a shop window
staring at your eyes –it's a hand-to-hand place

sells jars, tubes and side by side, small tins
filled with the daily guarantee there would be
no more loneliness once the glass is shattered

by stomping the one heel kept wet for the sound
each bottle makes with its ship full sail inside
where business is business and you lay down

with sea gulls, close to shore for the cries
from stars on the lookout for someone
to shut off the light, find you in the dark.

*

When this pen is lifted to your lips it hears
the ink is just beginning to disguise itself as words
that will feed all night from the page pulled closer

and closer –there's not enough room to turn back
once they dry the way a heart first learns
how much blood it lost only afterwards

as an endless sadness still pouring from one page
into the other till all that's left
has no word for it though it's a fountain pen

knows all about emptiness, what will stay black
turn cold and from out your hand the wound
from a sheet stretching out for the snow.

*

And though you left the sheet blank
the police are still investigating it
as some make-shift wall left in place

when the day after tomorrow arrived
all at once –they're waiting for the lab
to come up with how the ink

could have been swept away when the words
already had a place to stay and one by one
carried you off on a raft made from paper

with the pen no longer making estimates
how far the edge is, how deep the corners
the silence you finished working on.

*

And though it has no name this puddle
is full, was fattened on those afternoons
the rain stopped by to hear for itself

how much each splash sounds like the sleeves
as they emptied thread by thread
stripping her arms to the bone –you grieve

in water that's kept warm :the dress
must have found room between her whispers
where water becomes water again

has her eyes, sees you're older
are leaning over the Earth
the way the first rain was already filled

with loneliness, is still struggling to find
the sun –just one star and for that
you weep forever, constantly wetting your hands

the way this makeshift wishing well was filled
–rusted rings and coins to hear her shadow rising
as the arms that was your home for so long.

*

The rapids flowing through your hand
takes in tow this day-old bread
–from the start impatient for the end

is already sliced the way every waterfall
tries to bring its river with it
become the cry in that faint echo

it needs to find the shattered
–it's not a rock you're holding
though what's inside the splash

was left out to dry on this round table
as a lone crumb for that ancient necklace
you still glue to a fingertip for later

–you need bread that's a year old today
has mold whose shadow stays green
lets you sit where there is no grass

in a chair each night smaller, sure
it hears her when you close your eyes
to put out the light, use the other hand.

Allan Peterson

Wrong Division

Prolate is oblate on its side after a hard day
of arcane political geometries
I can visualize the planet but cannot
see how to solve equations of loss
Some cancel humanity from foreign policy
but I was never good at that
I always remember in their calculations
the numerator was always divided by the detonator

Acquittal

They were all witnesses They had eyes They all saw it
and all agreed wheels because they knew wheels and yes
something of it turned on itself Like an island it was said
and yes isolated certainly and fogged over Well something like fog
an indistinctness and a rushing like a train If not train then fire
that whooshing of outside air drawn to it Some said it entered
from the right some said left some like pop pop pop

Overstatement

Every poem an opportunity to say more than expected
like night is day with the sound turned down
assisted by a certain obscurity and no that is not heaven
that is the original emptiness characteristic of wishes
the origin of cycles so slow we deny change
in dismissive sentences because we expected stability
Imagine our surprise

In Vogue

My fascination with plants goes back to days
when I wondered where we all came from.
When I watered fruit trees and rose bushes
I made no distinction between their existence
yours or mine, deeming all objects measures
of sublimity, subordination or death on arrival.
And I mused about this magnetism people had
for life on a sphere spinning toward oblivion.

In those days I lacked sufficient force
as if I needed a bullhorn to be heard
above the big crowds of protestors
vilifying war and social injustice.

And then I disintegrated in a bitty microwave
slightly above gravity's undertow
where trolls multiply amid snow drifts
and werewolves howl to an azure moon
convincing myself

I could do much better
would save the guts for when glory
reveals itself in the buff
until then call any bluffs resist
bellicose demands of the bourgeoisie.

I would add more light to the room
push darkness aside collect metaphors
extol equanimity uncompromised.

And now serene yet cruel
winter you swindler
blissful but you plunder

and everyone pays the price
so we must get busy
stack wood in our sheds
rub babies with protective ointments.

Industrialists swear deliverance lies ahead
if we stay on track devoted
to the empire's schadenfreude.

Cascading toward spring the river quickens
propelled by runoff it passes through
the delta then bay unto Pacific currents.
Distance ourselves from distain I say
lighten up seek closure
on animus and pain.

Inside monkey glucose
the elephantine recluse
empowered entity
lacking majesty
glows alone
in a vacant cosmos
wanting not to be
obfuscated by reality.

Every dead rose petal lets out a scent
utopian myopic capricious
winged phantasm trailing light.

*

"Mea culpa!" I cried. "Guilty!" I pled
when the Grim Reaper arrived
on a silver sled his bald head gleamed
teeth shiny bright he promised to lessen
my load that very night.

His halcyon words encouraged me to rest
free of perdition feckless prepared
for the best time I've ever had.

*

At such a time in life when you bid farewell
take your last swill of nectar final gulp of air
flowers withered nuclear winter come and gone
shallow waters surround owls extinct
few herons left you anticipate aftermath.

Fish but faintly lit on ocean's
horizon and an amber sunset
suggests you're at equilibrium
experience tells you otherwise
and not likely to be forgotten
you cede the talisman worn
steadfastly around your neck
but they say that doesn't float
because you continue to think
a thought is a thing and a thing
inexcusable blasphemy in fact
an idea that went up in flames
when Constantine declared gods
void then in their place installed
truth and light one Jesus Christ.

*

At Locke again beside the thrashing river I'm hushed.
Not a sound that rudimentary Chinese encampment
built after racists burned them out of Walnut Grove.
Once a thriving gambling haven welcome retreat
for the indigent the dispossessed those reprobates
bet their daily bread not to be denied universal rights.

Pink azaleas in bloom for this is winter red camellias
voluminous I walk the long block decrepit shanties
could become but shambles should an earthquake hit.

If you haven't visited Xanadu lately the Parthenon
Machu Picchu Sistine Chapel try Locke's mysterious
little Dai Loy museum recently profiled exposed
on the Discovery Channel. Equipped with the latest
high tech monitoring devices ghost voice detector
light meter motion sensor the doughty explorers
set out to contact spirits of murdered Chinese
who once lingered there. It's risky and yet I enter
the creepy museum this may prove a blunder since
the floor's so warped I lose balance and almost topple.

*

Adumbrations compound my wanderlust
sparked by claims that God is good
and God is evil both impossibly irrational.

At vintage Sutter Creek
mid Gold Country
bikers park beside
a bridge seem high
debate the best route
meanwhile below
mountain water roils
splashes on its way
to an insightful sea.

Pressure as to elicit international concern
ratchets tightens brain bolts
while hidden from view our planetary retreat
 looms afar the future transfixed
 hordes neutron stars black holes
and quasars gestating poised

for the instant it will birth
a new universe.



Stone in the Lapidary

When you're a stone in this museum, people stop and stare at you. They either say nothing and move along or they say, often under their breath, that I am beautiful. I guess that's meant as a compliment, but I feel naked, like they are comparing me to other stones and rocks. Do I make the grade? I'm originally from southern New Zealand. The Maori love me—but not like passersby in the museum. I'm put to use. They carve me and I am even more beautiful. I lose parts of me to gain a better self.

Pounamou is my name. You can see it written on the white card where I'm placed. In New Zealand I knew the sun well. Now fluorescent lights rain down on me like fine silt. Bored children barely give me a glance. They wait for rock candy. I don't understand rock candy. How sad for anyone who becomes candy.

A few months ago a woman said I'd be perfect if someone smashed me so she could use my pieces in a necklace. As a stone I am silent. That doesn't mean I don't scream. When she said that I screamed so loud that I almost made the museum walls collapse. She heard nothing. It's easy to scream and not be heard. It happens all the time.

I can tell you're tired of me. You're thinking that a few stones away you'll see jade. The museum prides itself on the jade. I'm not jealous, okay, maybe a little, but it's just jade. It may as well be sandstone. The best time of day is when they turn the lights out and everyone goes home. Human eyes drop off me so I sleep well. Until tomorrow. Light on. Door open. I'm seen.

Jade

Lenny drives almost forty miles to a lapidary. No one he knows likes rocks. He goes from stone to stone, a monk before stained glass. He dreams of beautiful stones. Jade carvings rest securely on a stand inside his head. In the morning he wakes up refreshed. With jade you have nothing to hide. You admire it. The sun sees the Earth as a precious stone. Someday the sun will take the stone completely in. For now, the sun keeps distant. The jade shines under artificial light.

Lenny wants to shrink in order to fit inside the jade, own a house there. He mourns his bloaty self stuffed behind a wheel or a computer screen, a stone-less world, not even drab pebbles that long ago lost their souls to erosion.

John Rodzvilla

Port O'Connor

A carpenter shaped the table
A medium uses to contact the dead.
Has she ever run her finger over a whorl
To hear the tree sing its life?

I tried to read about the starfish that dot
The sky down south, the ones left in tide shifts.
The ones that crawl over lovers on beaches
In Texas, but small spots prevented
The words from forming,
Always forming,
Always foaming,
Like vinegar on an open cut.

I once tried bleach but it made our limbs too brittle.

It could have been the sun,
Or the sugar in the blood,
Or the sap in the xylem,
Or the toddler screaming in the pool,
Or the swimmers who formed a union
To combat the entrenched disinterest.

You choose.
I need to find my eye-patch before this
Becomes a nightlong battle with a migraine.

Later Orion will skinny dip in the motel pool,
His sword over by the lounge chair.
I got a little lost looking to find my way back,
Reading the guide book under the winter sky.

When the clock strikes twelve
It has no arms to hold me.



Sophia Vesely

A week in the life of a teenager:

I ate *aged* lo mein for breakfast.

The gas pump was too far from my car.

I ripped a hole in my favorite turtleneck sweater.

I fell down the stairs in new heels.

I carried the bones of a mastodon to a secure location.

I pretended to mop up the water from the hurricane.

A pitbull chased me down the block.

Moment Revealed

Moment revealed
by alert cat
slinking through tall grass
laid flat by journey
toward crabapple tree
poked by two woodpeckers
up, down trunk
while resident hummingbird
twitters territorial rights,
and dove flaps a grip
on chain link fence,
flies as old neighbor
bully cat enters gate
searching
for perfect place to poop.

Allison Whittenberg

Jane's Veins

Two diaries: one lies, the other dreams until reality
Loops into illusion.
Neither records terrorist attacks, murder rates, or evolving leaders.
One contains measurements of her bust size; one holds friendship and love,
pursued, sustained, or in need of resuscitation.
Both contain hate for prettier girls.
Each smells soft as if sprinkled with powder.
One is black and plain, that's kept under her bed.
The other is pink and has birds and flowers on the cover that's often on her desk.
The world is microscopic. Each night as her wrist moves the pages, she scripts with
red juice.

Contributors

Christopher Barnes is an award-winning writer and artist who also works in radio and film. 2005 saw the publication of his collection *LOVEBITES*, published by Chanticleer Press, 6/1 Jamaica Mews, Edinburgh. In May 2006, he had a solo art/poetry exhibition at The People's Theatre. He has also written art criticism for *Peel* and *Combustus*.

William C. Blome wedges between Baltimore and Washington, DC, and he clutches a master's degree swiped from the Johns Hopkins University Writing Seminars. His work has appeared in *PRISM International*, *Fiction Southeast*, *Roanoke Review*, and *The California Quarterly*.

Jeff Burt lives in Santa Cruz County, California, and works in mental health. He has contributed to *Tar River Poetry Review*, *Williwaw Journal*, *Heartwood*, and *Sheilana-Gig*.

Alan Cohen/Poet first/Then PCMD, teacher, manager/Living a full varied life/To optimize time and influence/Deferred publication, wrote/Average 3 poems a month/For 60 years/Beginning now to share some of his discoveries/105 poems accepted for publication so far this year/Married to Anita 41 years/in Eugene, OR these past 11

Richard Dinges, Jr., lives and works by a pond among trees and grassland, along with his wife, one dog, three cats, and seven chickens. *Pennsylvania English*, *Stickman Review*, *North Dakota Review*, *Talking River Review*, and *William and Mary Review* most recently accepted his poems for their publications.

Howie Good is the author of *The Death Row Shuffle*, forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. He co-edits the online journals *Unbroken* and *UnLost*.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in *Soundings East*, *Dalhousie Review*, and *Connecticut River Review*. Latest book, *Leaves On Pages*, is available through Amazon.

Rich Ives has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Artist Trust, Seattle Arts Commission, and the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines for his work in poetry, fiction, editing, publishing, translation, and photography. He is the 2009 winner of the Francis Locke Poetry Award from *Bitter Oleander* and the 2012 winner of the Thin Air Creative Nonfiction Award. His books include *Light from a Small Brown Bird* (Bitter Oleander Press—poetry), *Sharpen* (The Newer York—fiction chapbook), *The Balloon Containing the Water Containing the Narrative Begins Leaking* (What Books—stories), *Old Man Walking Home After Dark* (Cyberwit—poetry), *Dubious Inquiries into Magnificent Inadequacies* (Cyberwit—poetry), *A Servant's Map of the Body* (Cyberwit—stories), *Incomprehensibly Well-adjusted Missing Persons of Interest* (Cyberwit—stories), and *Tunneling to the Moon* (Silenced Press—stories).

Michael Lee Johnson lived 10 years in Canada during the Vietnam era and is a dual citizen of the United States and Canada. Today he is a poet, freelance writer, amateur photographer, and small business owner in Itasca, DuPage County, Illinois. Mr. Johnson published in more than 2,023 new publications, his poems have appeared in 41 countries, he edits, publishes 10 poetry sites.

Scott Laudati is the author of *Hawaiian Shirts In The Electric Chair* (Cephalo Press). Visit him on social media @scottlaudati

Kevin D. LeMaster lives in South Shore Kentucky. His poems have been found at *The Lakes*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *Praxis Magazine*, *Rockvale Review*, *Inkwell*, *Birmingham Arts Journal*, *Constellations*, *Plainsongs*, *Coe Review*, and others. He has had recent work published in *SheilaNaGig* online and *Heartwood Literary Review*.

Mike Lewis-Beck writes from Iowa City. He has pieces in *American Journal of Poetry*, *Alexandria Quarterly*, *Apalachee Review*, *Big Windows Review*, *Blue Collar Review*, *Cortland Review*, *Chariton Review*, *Guesthouse*, *Heavy Feather Review*, *Pure Slush*, and *Wapsipinicon Almanac*, among other venues. He has a book of poems, *Rural Routes*, with Alexandria Quarterly Press.

John Marvin is a teacher who retired and subsequently earned a Ph.D. in English at SUNY Buffalo. He has poems in scores of journals, including 6 Pushcart

nominations, and literary criticism in *Hypermedia Joyce Studies*, *James Joyce Quarterly*, *Pennsylvania English*, and *Worcester Review*. He has a chapter in *Hypermedia Joyce*, and his book, *Nietzsche and Transmodernism: Art and Science Beyond the Modern in Joyce, Stevens, Pynchon, and Kubrick*, awaits a publisher. He seeks to marry the experimental, non-narrative with the lyric and traditional in the manner of Nietzsche's marriage of Apollo and Dionysos. He generally avoids accessibility for its own sake, and the prosaic personal story with superimposed line breaks that is ubiquitous these days.

Jacob Kobina Ayiah Mensah, who is an algebraist and artist, works in mixed media. His poetry, songs, prose, art and hybrid have appeared in numerous journals. He lives in the southern part of Ghana, in Spain, and the Turtle Mountains, North Dakota.

Martina Reisz Newberry's newest collection, *BLUES FOR FRENCH ROAST WITH CHICORY* is available from Deerbrook Editions. She is the author of six books. Her work has been widely published in magazines and journals in the U.S. and abroad. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Brian, a Media Creative.

Joey Nicoletti was born in New York City. He works in Buffalo.

ayaz daryl nielsen, veteran and former hospice nurse, lives in Longmont, Colorado, USA. Editor of *bear creek haiku* (30+ years/160+ issues) with poetry published worldwide, he is online at: *bear creek haiku: poetry, poems and info*. Among other deeply appreciated honors, he is especially delighted by the depth and heart of poets worldwide whose poems have a home in bear creek haiku's print and online presence.

Ronald J. Pelias spent most of his career writing books (e.g., *If the Truth Be Told*, *The Creative Qualitative Researcher*, and *Lessons on Aging and Dying*) that call upon the literary as a research strategy. Now he just lets poems lead him where they want to go.

Simon Perchik's poetry has appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The Nation*, *The New Yorker*, and elsewhere.

A visual artist and poet, **Allan Peterson**'s most recent book is *This Luminous, New and Selected Poems*, a finalist for the Oregon Book Award. Other titles include *Precarious*; *All the Lavish in Common* (Juniper Prize); and *Fragile Acts*, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award.

Thomas Piekarski is a former editor of the *California State Poetry Quarterly*. His poetry has appeared in numerous publications in the U.S. and abroad, including *Taj Mahal Review*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Literature Today*, *Poetry Salzburg*, and *South African Literary Journal*. He has published three books of poetry, *Ballad of Billy the Kid*, *Monterey Bay Adventures*, and *Mercurial World*.

Kenneth Pobo is the author of twenty-one chapbooks and nine full-length collections. Recent books include *Bend of Quiet* (Blue Light Press), *Loplop in a Red City* (Circling Rivers), and *Uneven Steven* (Assure Press). *Opening* is forthcoming from Rectos Y Versos Editions. Human rights issues, especially as they relate to the LGBTQIA+ community, are also a constant presence in his work. For the past thirty-plus years he taught at Widener University and retired in 2020.

John Rodzvilla teaches in the Publishing and Writing programs at Emerson College in Boston. His work has recently appeared in *Harvard Review*, *gorse*, *Decomp*, and the *Alexandria Review*.

Sophia Vesely, 19, is from St. Petersburg, Florida. Her poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Girls Right the World*, *Bridge Ink*, *Route 7 Review*, *Oddville Press*, *Triggerfish Critical Review*, and *Delmarva Review*, among others. She also has a published poetry collection on Amazon.com entitled *The Road to Amour de Soi* that explores the complexities of first loves and heartbreak in order to empower young women through the notion of self-love.

Diane Webster grew up in Eastern Oregon before she moved to Colorado. She enjoys drives in the mountains takes amateur photographs. Writing poetry provides a creative outlet exciting in images and phrases Diane thrives in. Her work has appeared in *Old Red Kimono*, *Home Planet News Online*, *Salt Hill*, and other literary magazines.

Allison Whittenberg is a Philadelphia native who has a global perspective. If she wasn't an author, she'd be a private detective or a jazz singer. She loves reading about history and true crime. Her novels include *Sweet Thang*, *Hollywood and Maine*, *Life is Fine*, *Tutored*, and *The Sane Asylum*.





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