




# The Big Windows Review

Issue 24 Summer 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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# Chidera Abii

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**there are a lot of ways to kill yourself**

there are a lot of ways  
to kill yourself i write  
on my bathroom mirror.  
i take off my shoes  
and walk the streets.  
it is dark, i am black,  
i am female, i keep walking.  
the ground is sinking,  
the streetlights are sinking,  
the neighbor's dog is sinking,  
the car i broke into is sinking,  
the keys are not here.  
i look into the rearview mirror  
and the sign says no parking  
between seven am and seven pm.

# Lana Hechtman Ayers

---

## Landscape in Dresses

Glimpses reflected in mirrors  
                    part sky part shaken branches  
never your eyes  
                    only the moment of motion   departure  
Where is it you go  
                    when I lose sight of you in fog?  
I'm certain I've seen you in dreams  
                    smell of burnt toast  
On rainy days your laughter chimes  
                    raindrops against roof gutter  
When I taste lemon  
                    I believe I am closer  
to knowing you  
                    tart   craveable

How does desire dress?  
                    In fir needles  
maple leaves  
                    the unlined forehead of youth  
I wet my lips imagining you will ride in  
                    on high tide aback an Orca  
No I don't  
                    I hope the inexpressible returns  
like the Steller's jay  
                    to the handrail of my deck stairs  
every morning around 10  
                    fear  
inevitable as splinters

What I believe I want is soft  
                    what you are is silver glass  
shards gleaming  
                    for the warmth of my blood

Words never pass between us  
                                so there can be no lies  
My fingertips force the pen  
                                over parallel lines  
outside the margins  
                                if anywhere   that's where  
love exists  
                                scribbled   scratched out   indecipherable

When I look into the reflection of my eyes  
                                all there is *is* shaded lake surface  
murk brown   a single pebble radiating out ripples  
                                siren call for help



# paul Bluestein

---

## Subway Benediction

Running for the subway shuttle  
from Grand Central to Broadway,  
I heard music drifting through  
an open door. I swung into the car  
and there he was. Long-haired, bearded  
standing in the aisle  
with his mismatched socks on display,  
singing Somewhere Over the Rainbow  
in a voice so open and sunlit  
that I forgot I was underground.  
Even the wheels squealing  
as the train rocked along the tracks  
could not pull me out of the song  
spinning through the crowded car  
like a spider's web, holding us fast  
for the ride that was suddenly too short.  
A hat on the floor in front of him  
held some silver and some paper  
and I added my thanks. As I left  
the train and headed for the exit,  
I could still hear him singing  
to the empty car, words that poured  
out into the station and were reflected  
by white-tile walls, spattering  
the passengers with red, violet and green.



# John Brady

---

## Dishes

“Who left dirty dishes in the sink?”

She wanted to shout it. But in the cool, gray air of dawn, her voice would have carried, and her daughter was still sleeping.

Anyway, she knew who did it. He was still sleeping too, snoring lightly in the bed she had just left. Probably rolled over to take the heat from her still lingering in the sheets.

Running her hand along the sink’s smooth edge, she appraised the aftermath: the once rubbery noodles baked hard to the pan; the smear of red sauce across the plate; the half eaten meatball speared with a fork.

Her mother knew lazy men. “Look at those hands,” she had commanded. “They’re soft like your father’s. He won’t lift those fingers to help you.”

Yeah. But he had done other things with those fingers. Like hold her tight and stroke her in lovely ways.

Even last night when he came to bed after his shift. He ran his hand along her arm just right. He had smelled nice too, all freshly soaped and showered. She had nuzzled her body into his, smelling his nice smell through the haze of near sleep.

She wondered too though. Wondered if she should come up through the haze and ask him if he had cleaned up. But after a moment, she dropped her suspicions, choosing to hold on to that little joy in the dark.

As far as marital crimes went, it was a small one. Just a minor misdemeanor.

But it wasn’t the first time, and it wouldn’t be the last no matter what she said.

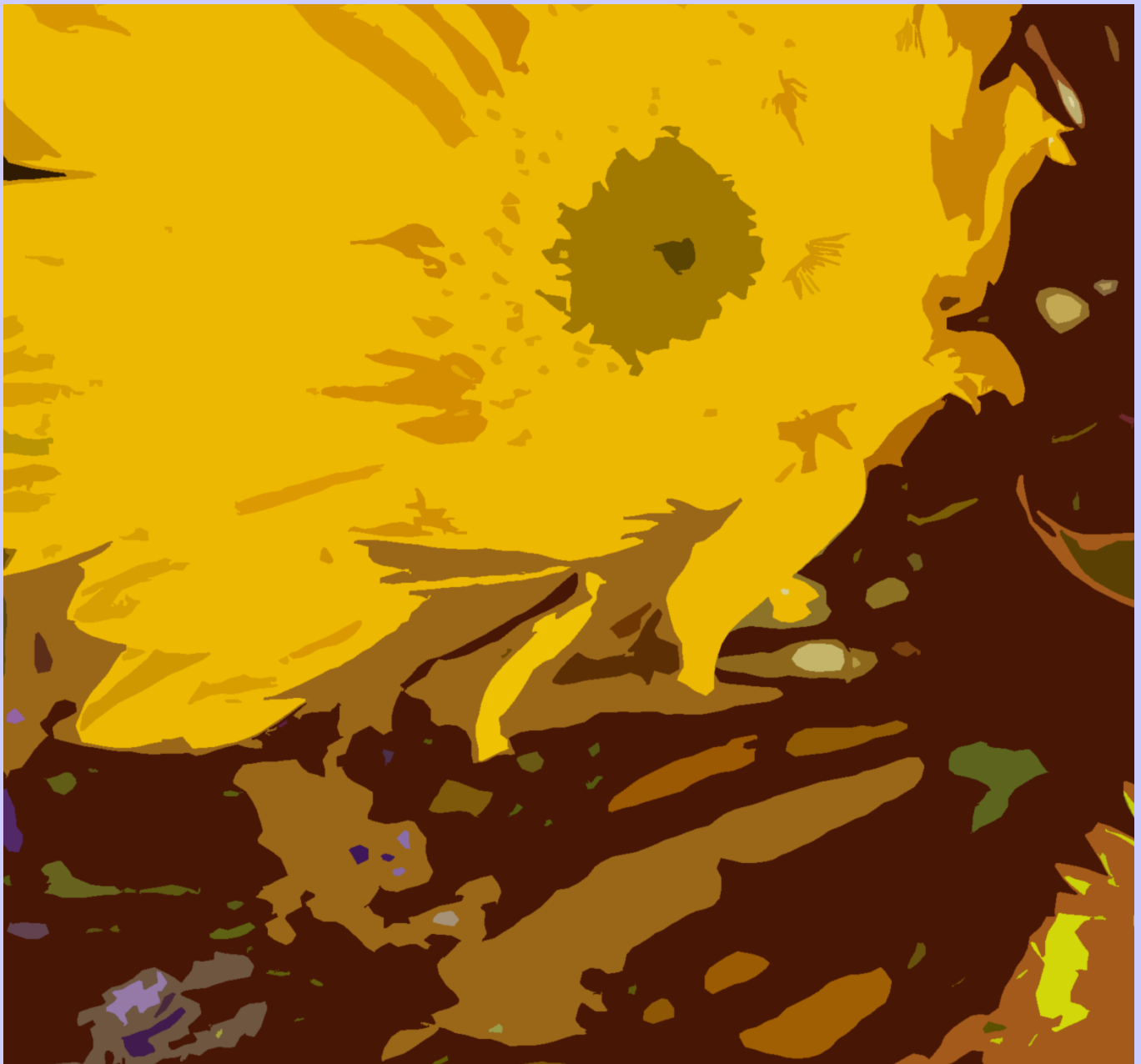
How many small crimes added up to a big one? How many dirty dishes in the sink, how many times being late for pick-ups, how many toilet seats left up amounted to a felonious assault on their being together?

If she couldn’t trust him with the small stuff, how could she trust him with the big stuff? The stuff that mattered. Like continuing to care enough about her to keep touching her in lovely ways.

She picked at the dried cheese with the knife.

It was lighter now in the kitchen, and she recognized the time that had passed. Looking at the clock, “Damn, damn!” She couldn’t be late again.

As she ran to her bus, she noticed she still had the knife. She wondered what she should do with it.



# John Brady

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## Nails

Joyce stood by the stove and rubbed the patch on her arm through her nightshirt. Its roses, once so red, had faded with a million washings.

“Rub it.” That’s what Carol at work had said. “When those cravings get bad, rub it hard. That releases the nicotine faster. Uh-huh,” she had said.

Joyce still wasn’t sure. Carol had a lot of goofy theories she felt free to share. This morning, Joyce didn’t care. Goofy idea or not, the cravings were bad. So she rubbed.

Crazy Carol. And Yolanda. She was a real winner too. With those nails. So long and bright and always matched to her lipstick.

Carol and some of the other girls would laugh about Yolanda behind her back. “Who did she think she was getting all fabulous just for office work?”

Joyce laughed too.

But maybe not as hard. Those nails were kind of something. And long as they were, Yolanda could type. Clickety-clackety. One even had a little diamond in it. Not a real diamond, Joyce knew. She wasn’t stupid. Not real, but it sparkled like maybe it could be real.

Goddamn this water was taking so long. The flames on these dinky stoves were so pale and tiny.

She looked out the window over the sink. Beyond the roof of the house next door, she could see the sky. No clouds and already bright enough to make her blink. There was just too much sun in this town sometimes.

A lady singing about how much she loved her honey floated from the clock radio next to the open sleeper sofa.

That’d be nice, Joyce thought. A stray thought for one more stray morning.

The water in the pan bubbled, and Joyce poured it into the cup. She watched the deep brown crystals turn muddy.

The screen door banged behind Joyce as she stepped onto the stoop.

Across the courtyard, Mr. Ruiz was cleaning his grill. That guy was always grilling. Loved feeding all those kids and grandkids of his. Always coming and going and making such a racket. Laughing and yelling. Laughing mostly.

Joyce took a sip and then shaded her eyes. So bright. Even this early.  
Mr. Ruiz looked up and smiled.

Joyce went to rub her arm, but waved instead. She paused and then smiled a bit too. She would ask Yolanda where she got her nails done. Sure she would, she told herself as she went back inside to get dressed for work.



# Alan Britt

---

## Go, Johnny, Go!

*(Listening to John Doe's "Let's Be Mad")*

We poets remember all those crazy nights  
spent cruising the Mount Royal Tavern  
or Broadway in Fells Point as though roaming  
a wasteland fueled by enigmas.

Yeah, those nights spent wondering  
about our next move—  
should we head for home;  
after all, it's only 2 AM.

Those nights intoxicated by youthful dementia.

Those nights wandering beneath the peeling arches  
of Red Door poetry readings populated  
by Baltimore's liveliest poets of the day.

Nights that delivered black rain, plus  
alchemic monks dipping their waxen fingers  
into pools of ecstasy, Georg Trakl style.

Nights that detonated our brains to flow  
from industrial stacks coughing black plumes  
above the Harbor.

All those nights that spawned a revolution  
inside muscle cars fueled by flaming saddle  
shoes and slide guitars!

# Alan Britt

---

## Sufi Moment

One mistake. That one mistake.

Just one is all it takes  
to send our world  
into a gyro-verse that we  
barely recognize.

Still, if we could retrieve one,  
just one  
mistake from the tapestry  
of our lives,  
which one would it be?

Remember, we're allowed  
one mistake only today.

Tomorrow's up to random fate  
(how ironic) fate sporting one  
vermilion swirl on its jester  
cheek with a corroded brass  
bell crunching each arthritic  
big toe crammed inside its  
crumpled deerskin slipper.

Remember, today we're allowed  
one mistake only.

So, choose carefully.

# Sudhanshu Chopra

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## Combustion

I

Where do I go without you? The shell  
in which I hid before you arrived is now  
compromised, and I feel naked as a wire.

I'm an old-school purchaser, always buying  
two in place of one; a spare, an extra  
for emergency.

But with you I was young & careless: never  
thought of getting insurance, never imagined  
slipping my number to another, or handing them  
the duplicate of my back door's key.

I understand persons are not objects; who then  
are these people I see kneeling in cemeteries, talking  
to stone? Where I reside, presidents inaugurate

aircrafts by cracking open coconuts at the landing  
wheels, anointing moist vermilion with their thumbs  
in vulcanised rubber grooves.

II

An ambulance—its siren bawling like a hungry  
child—vanishes as soon as it appears. A grey  
nightjar prepares to launch from an electric pole.

The traffic light: red; the zebra-coloured  
pavement strewn with rat-gnawed foam  
mattresses and homeless tykes asleep

in crisp November chill. Their still,  
subdued bodies shrouded in papery blankets,  
their surreptitious breaths detouring  
no passing feet. Alongside, on the road,

engines hum, exhaust pipes vibrate.  
Petrol continues to ignite.





# Michael Cooney

---

## What You Said in German Was Not about Kissing

Sharing a ham & cheese hero with lettuce, tomato and mayonnaise and a bag of those cheese doodle things you liked on a hillside at the Bronx Botanical Garden was more fun than meeting you in that trattoria on the Piazza Navona with the waiter who spoke such good English because you were wearing the blue dress that buttoned down the front and we were caught in the rain but when we got back to the apartment on 189<sup>th</sup> street it was hotter than ever and we dragged the mattress up onto the roof and ate pepperoni pizza from downstairs where everybody spoke Italian to you but you didn't know a word except maybe *prego* and *scusi* and although you took German at Hunter it wasn't much help when we rode the D train to Central Park where the Met was performing something from Wagner, maybe *Tannhauser* which goes on forever but I loved you because you had read all of *The Magic Mountain* and called it *Der Zauberberg* and sometimes I look at you and want to tell you that Dominic's has been closed for years and there's probably no one else except maybe Barbara Kaufman who remembers the night when you said something in German and I thought you said "Kiss me."

# William Doreski

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## Puddles Shaped like My Enemies

Last night's metallic rain left  
puddles shaped like my enemies.  
I hadn't known I had so many,  
but here they are, bearing weapons  
of quicksilver, chrome, and filth.

You advise me to stomp right  
through them, shattering their calm.  
You have no enemies, no trace  
residue to rebuke you for  
famously missed opportunities.

The hard rain blinded the night  
so absolutely no response  
seemed possible. The cats cried  
nervously, the windows rattled.  
We stayed up as late as we dared,

aware that pale forces were plotting.  
At dawn the sky was meringue,  
the trees stood around embarrassed  
by a night of hysterics. You roused  
the household and told me to don

my boots and splash those puddles  
before they sulked underground to plot.  
We're being silly. These puddles  
don't resemble people except  
in their slouch and selfish glaze.

Besides, my enemies aren't yours,  
so you don't have to worry.  
I plumb the puddles and determine  
that they're too shallow to drown me,  
even if I flop face down.



# William Doeski

---

## The Purples in the Painter's Eye

You can't sneer away the clouds  
knuckling their great abstractions.  
You can't rename every street

after your few brave followers.  
I've tried to appraise you with song  
on the tip of my tongue, but lack

the requisite melody. Stones  
rattling in a mountain brook  
would more likely catch your ear.

Today we expect to hear the truth  
or read it in the *New York Times*  
where every nation has a say.

We also expect the rain to arrive  
in a cornucopia of wind  
tinted by solar distractions.

You refuse to credit the mind  
that mapped the atom forever.  
You place no faith in the art

that names itself after silence.  
You expect celestial glassblowers  
to render landscapes so fragile

and elegant that your old aches  
and pains will find no place to settle.  
I wish you luck and favor

but don't believe the purples  
inherent in the painter's eye  
will rescue you from suffering

you wrought to punish yourself  
for disowning the nation you crossed  
a dozen times driving alone.

Let's agree on something small  
enough to pocket when we tire  
of fondling its many contours.

The day exposes a yellow rind  
under a sickly overcast.  
Let's read the newspaper at home

and leave the absences grinning  
in the public streets where anyone  
can mistake anyone for themselves.



# Margaret Erhart

---

## Irony

The day Sarah Hofstadter got up out of her seat in 7th grade study hall and wrote the word IRONY in big block letters on the blackboard was the day I stepped away from childhood. The year before, John F. Kennedy was killed and through tears that would not stop, Mrs. Taliaferro, our teacher, assigned us an in-class essay entitled “What Freedom Means To Me.” That day was a step away from childhood too. But the difference was this: Sarah Hofstadter’s blackboard graffiti was not an event that rocked the world. It caught no one’s attention but mine. It was the first time I made a conscious choice—a choice all my own—about what was important. This thing called irony added a dimension to language and to life itself. It was important. It was as if I’d poked my head underwater for the first time and exclaimed, “There’s a fish!”

A word can do that for us. It can grow us up fast. I remember how proud I felt when I learned to spell antidisestablishmentarianism. On the playground we’d sing out the spelling of it, a rhythmic song. We didn’t have the vaguest idea what it meant. It only went so far in growing us up. It was a baby step in the parade of things, including words, that would eventually make adults out of us. And of these, the word “irony” carried the most weight. “What happens isn’t what you think will happen,” wrote Sarah Hofstadter on that blackboard. The teacher told her to go back to her seat and a few girls snickered. It was easy to be unpopular if you were as smart as Sarah Hofstadter. I gazed at IRONY and its definition and put away my history book—I was reading about Charlemagne—and felt a thrill go through me, an *aha!* of understanding. Irony meant that life had levels of meaning, not just one, and if that was true then 7th grade wasn’t all there was; there was more. My sudden descent into adolescent awkwardness was just the visible picture, the surface of the sea, while below swam schools of multi-colored fish I could count on. In every situation there was depth of meaning. I understood this that afternoon and it made me more tolerant, more thoughtful, more dimensionally human.

# Ricky Garni

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## Meditate

For one brief moment  
the article about a beautiful  
troubled woman who wrote  
words in the ocean and lost  
her father and mother in her  
body, transformed itself

into a photograph of the  
Grateful Dead, standing  
in front of an old barn,  
wrapped in Navajo blankets,  
and smiling.

# Carol Hamilton

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## Seeing Yourself

They say Mexican peasants were shown  
themselves for the first time in Diego's murals,  
images walking about all blocky and simplified,  
glorified. Given welder's glass to observe  
the solar eclipse by the National Geographic team,  
disappearance of their Sun God,  
the little Aymaran girls were instead  
entranced at their own faces.

They say sitters for Daguerre's first photos,  
so stiff and grim, thought the captured-image eyes  
looked out, watching them,  
a Doppelgänger existence frozen on paper,  
shocking for both. A chimp with a mirror  
examined his own colorful behind  
once the instant of recognition came  
... the other is the self.

They say we hardly exist now if not preserved  
on film and broadcast for all to prove  
we are not figments of our own imagination.  
We hold out sticks to dangle ourselves  
onto all sorts of backdrops: an elegant plate,  
a child's ballgame, an upthrust feature of stone.  
But a question always arises ... which  
is the created and who is watching whom.



# Felipe Rodolfo Hendriksen

---

Folkestone (2013)

It's always winter there, but it feels like autumn, because it's all slightly dead and slightly broken. It's 2013 and you're still young and skinny and your family can afford the trip and no one knows who Trump is. They use pounds there but the pounds look like big stamps and you forget it's money and you start buying stuff only a teen would. It's 7:30 not 4:20 but you're smoking all the same you don't care, you have long, silver cigarettes (the cheapest, still too expensive) for breakfast. You drink Monster before classes not coffee because you know you'll need it and because you pretend to care but don't and that's okay because you're 16 and in love and there's parks everywhere and people say hi and no one steals a thing because you're in Europe and South America is far away. You think feelings and emotions are for emos and you call them faggots but you know you love someone and that makes you proud and special and it makes it easier to sleep at night after you jerk off (never thinking about her). You live with a young couple that must have been lovely but you never noticed because you're too busy smoking and drinking and watching Heroes with the Muslim friend you never thought you'd have. You lose the house keys once and don't see the allegory there but no one does anything because it's Britain and everyone's polite about everything and no one really gives a shit about an Argentinian. You buy beer with a fake ID from a Pakistani girl that can't be older than you but already is (she has to be), you go to a hidden garden full of orchids and bees and get offered some hashish but you don't have enough money and you're too afraid to try. There's a cemetery in the street where you think you're living but you're not because you will always be an Argentinian and you'll never escape from the Third World. So you go there with the girl you love (names never matter) and you walk and should be holding hands but don't because you're nothing and will never be, and she talks and talks and you're Semele so you can't reply because you're burning inside and everything's on fire even though it's winter and suddenly wearing shorts isn't such a bad idea. She stands in front of a big tombstone with a ship on top, some German soldiers who died once, who cares, she does, so you stare too and think it'd be right to cry for the dead

young men because you're young too (not for long) and dead (this you'll be forever). So one day you get up and think that maybe she loves you back so you call her and talk and make her sit beside you and you tell her. You don't say "I love you" because you know better, but you do say things like "I always dream about you" and "I like you a lot." A second passes and your fate is decided in that second. She shakes her head, says "No," and starts crying. You cry too, but that doesn't matter, your life is already irrelevant and stupid. She goes away and doesn't look back, never looks back, always moving forward (unlike you). A couple sees her and asks her if she's okay and you know what she says and what she should have, but it's too late now and you can't chase her and you'll get scolded once you get home and you will nod and pretend to be sorry and go to your room and see what it feels like to scream in your pillow.

A lot of things happen after that, too many, you want to write them all down, you get obsessed with the idea of laying down all the facts you think you remember, but no one will ever read them because you're too afraid to let people know how you really feel about her, about that trip, about Folkestone, where it's always winter, where you bought pot once and went to English classes, where everyone says hi and no one steals a thing, where you'll always lie dead.



# Samo Kreutz

---

## All the fog around us

Today is the fog especially thick  
And you hardly can see

The only thing  
That illuminates us  
At least a little

Is the sun  
We ate last summer

## Triangle Stamp

Wayne liked the African stamps best of all. One rainy day his mother bought him a starter kit--a bag of miscellaneous stamps from the hobby store and a book in which to affix the stamps, by country. The European stamps were compelling, especially the lithe Italian images and the German stamps, each featuring that dictator or post-war mop-up image attempting to project positivity--factories, women working, a family gazing off into the future. Nothing wrong with trying to stay upbeat.

But the African stamps were colorful and featured animals and were not always little boring corrugated squares--some were triangles, others were trapezoids. The African stamps depicted colorful action shots of animals, not tedious gray statues or bewigged politicians from the 1700s. It was birds, elephants, monkeys, warthogs, giraffes, gazelles. Some stamps depicted animals for which he lacked a name. This sent Wayne to the Britannica set in the basement. And the countries--he could figure out Sud Afrika and everybody knew about Egypt and Nigeria. But Namibia? Ifni? Rhodesia? Zambia? Back to the Britannica set. He learned more from his stamp set than he did from his geography class.

Wayne's father didn't care for the hobby.

"Why are you wasting your time cluttering up the house?"

Wayne's mother cocked her head, unsure what to say. Caught in the middle.

"I'm not cluttering--"

"It's stuff. The more you collect and hoard the more we have to pick up. The more your mother has to deal with these things, dusting. Cleaning up behind you all the livelong day."

Wayne said nothing. He scratched his chin. He was fifteen years old. He fantasized about driving away, just as fast and straight as he could. But he couldn't do a thing.

His mother tried to explain.

"It's a pansy hobby," Wayne's father said. Looking at all of these little images from 1932 or whatever, he explained. That is not what the man of the

future does, how he operates. “We are forward looking here,” his father explained. “Not backward.”

In this picture Wayne sits staring out the window into darkness. Someday he will be able to do something. Someday he will be able to make his decisions. One day Wayne woke up and his stamp collection was gone. Nobody could say where it went. Later Wayne found one triangular shaped stamp on the rug, next to his bed. It was from Republique Centrafricaine and featured a striped, maroon and black beetle of some sort. Wayne stuck a pin through it and affixed the stamp to his small cork bulletin board. It was perfect.



# Giuseppe Andrea Liberti

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## Loop #2

elbow grease drumkits and a fistful of joints, that's  
what we had, how we managed to be in the spotlight  
before the collapse, free from comforting

some say you reached unknown pits but I'll follow  
the footprints in search of the blue point of stress:

as you told me with nothing but strings

soul has demonic allure  
*save yourself.*

# Terence McCaffrey

---

## Estate Sale

You came to Red Robin  
for the never-ending fries

but you're nowhere near  
hungry. You could vomit actually

at the thought of strangers  
ransacking the house, picking

his blues records, his tools,  
stacks of his half-read books,

operating the electric bed  
where you clasped his face

and kissed his lips  
and hummed "All for the Best"

after which he wilted  
to just a body with a mouth.

When you're done here  
you'll return, half your life

sold. An emptiness  
will try to consume you.

Birds will mean nothing.  
Not until you accept some

comfort with the darkness,  
with those cold, guttural pangs

settling in your chest,  
will you spy one nondescript

morning a slant of light  
pooling near his desk

in the corner room, dust motes  
swimming in a gilded stream,

the whispered fact  
that not all of him is gone.





## What we made

I made stardust. Rather, we made it together,  
We mixed the ashes of our ties,  
Along with time-the famous healer,  
We simply let go.

The ashes divided, broke into pieces  
So minute, so tiny, so little,  
That they became power

And magic, they became our healer

The goodbye didn't hurt anymore,

It simply existed in the universe

Floating

Existing

Remaining

Like the stardust we left behind,

Maybe that's what destiny made of us-

Two souls, too far away yet united with  
magic.

# Dan Nielsen

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## Oatmeal

“Coffee, Sugar?” the waitress asked in passing.

Warren looked up from his book and nodded. A cup and saucer appeared. Coffee was poured.

“Anything else, Sugar?”

“Eggs over easy and rye toast, please.”

She wrote something on a notepad, tore off the top sheet, and placed it beside the saucer.

“Do I pay now?”

“Whenever you like, Sugar.”

“I was going to order oatmeal, but it’s not on the menu.”

“We only have the packets.”

“Oh.”

“Right.”

The waitress tore off another sheet and handed it to the cook through a little window. The cook said something that made the waitress laugh. Warren tried to think of something funny to say. He added creamer to his coffee. He turned over the bill. There was the dollar amount and a name he didn’t read.

The eggs arrived. Warren ripped off a corner of rye toast, dipped it in the tiny tub of grape jelly, and used it to break open a yolk.

“Want me to warm that up, Sugar?”

“Please.” Warren thought of something. “Is there a pay phone?”

“You passed it on your way in, Sugar.”

There was a phone book attached to a wire. Warren thought about the alphabet. He hummed the song. He found the page with the name and went down the list with a finger until he came to the full name. He dropped a quarter in the slot and listened to it fall, hitting a little bell somewhere along the way. The dial tone was a dead person in a hospital. He stared at the book and dialed a number. He stared some more and dialed another number. He lost his place. He started over. He made it to the end. Someone answered on the second ring.

“Hello.”

“Hi?”

“Warren?”  
“You said I could call.”  
“And you did.”  
“Is this a bad time?”  
“No, I’m interested in what you have to say.”  
“I found the place. It looks good.”  
“I was a little worried.”  
“There’s no bed, but I saw a lunar eclipse.”  
“That’s nice.”  
“I slept in a chair that smells like cat.”  
“Is there a cat?”  
“Not now.”  
“You have a phone?”  
“I’m in a restaurant.”  
“Are you having breakfast?”  
“Yes.”  
“Oatmeal?”  
“They only have the packets.”  
“Oh.”  
“Right.”  
“It sounds like you’re okay.”  
“That’s why I called. To let you know.”  
“Are you okay?”  
“Yes.”



# Robert Nisbet

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## Councillor Wilkinson

Councillor Wilkinson is walking the Common,  
this quiet morning, early spring,  
rehearsing his farewell speech.

The councillor's mind is tabulating.  
The Common is of course his great achievement.  
Chairman of the steering group, '82 to '89.  
Common Development Committee Chairman  
through to the noughties.

A sudden racket, yowls and yells.  
Small boy, lost ball, a mother fraught.  
The ball is wedged below the eaves  
of the cricket club pavilion.

But Wilkinson has a walking stick  
(an affectation, to be honest),  
so reaches, crooks the ball, tugs it out.  
Oh thank you, sir. They smile, walk off.

But then. Oh dear.  
In tweaking out the ball, he has disturbed,  
almost dislodged, a martin's nest.  
It's angled dangerously. So he climbs  
on the refuse bin, smudging the knee  
of his trousers, grazing an ankle, reaches,  
eases the nest to equilibrium.  
Climbs down. Walks on.

Roads and Bridges Chairman. '84 to '92.  
Forty years in local government.  
Councillor Wilkinson, absorbed again,  
is rehearsing his farewell speech.

# Greg Sevik

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## Good Old-Fashioned Hospitality

You open the front door,  
and there he is.  
Your new roommate.

That's all well and good,  
except you weren't looking for a roommate.

He shuffles in,  
exhausted from the journey,  
throwing his backpack on the floor with a thud.

He curls up on your bed,  
oily hair resting on your pillow.

You remember the Army cot in the corner,  
the one you haven't thought about in years.  
Maybe he could sleep there?

He moves drowsily to the cot,  
wrapping himself in a moth-eaten blanket

and falling right to sleep.  
You watch him snooze awhile,  
a peaceful tangle of blanket, beard, and hair.

You can hardly wait till he wakes up.  
You wonder about his name, his hobbies.  
Maybe you can surprise him with a housewarming gift.  
Maybe pizza.

# Roger Singer

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## Briefly

there was order  
within the stars  
as they lowered  
to my level,  
a mortal touched,  
breathed on by  
an opening  
of light shine,  
a sliver of  
heaven beyond  
the horizon,  
an opening  
of rhythm  
where all the  
parts bless  
sky and soul  
for a  
brief moment,  
before it slips  
behind  
pearl gray  
clouds

# Paul Smith

---

## One Tank of Gas

It's good to go from west to east  
you'll get there earlier  
than you think  
you're going opposite the earth's spin  
and that makes your airplane  
go faster  
Galileo and Ptolemy figured this out  
even before there were airplanes  
it's even good to go from east to west  
because the sun is at your back  
you're like Paul  
singing 'I'll Follow The Sun'  
it's not so good going from south to north  
because the people you meet up there are  
as cold as the land they live in  
they look at you funny and  
make you feel small  
if you go from north to south  
it's a recipe for heartburn  
the people down there fry nearly everything they eat  
plus hominy grits  
biscuits and gravy  
hush-puppies  
if you're from the North and  
you drive from east to west  
it's a good thing  
because you'll enjoy  
gaining an hour  
and with all you have to do  
but  
if you're from the South and  
you drive from east to west

it is inherently bad  
you say to yourself  
'I've lost an hour  
and I'll never get it back'  
because the little hand  
just went from seven to six  
an hour you earned  
through your own sweat  
someone just took your entitlement away  
so now you are sad  
and a little angry  
at all those who ever hurt you  
it makes you wistful  
wishing for that hour  
taken from your sovereign grasp  
the only good thing is  
there is an aeroplane overhead  
going east to west  
that you imagine is full of them  
all snobbish flying first class  
and maybe  
just maybe  
it might  
in spite  
of what Bernoulli said  
or Nostradamus  
or the Old Farmers Almanac  
just go flat like  
a hushpuppy made without Bisquick



# Eugene Stevenson

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## Need is Cold with Cloud

Trees by the windows of the bus,  
mountains by the wing: troubles  
fade with distance, how many miles.

Need is cold with cloud, street  
good for suitcases, sodden breath,  
questions laid down on pavement.

A familiar voice glides its answers in  
the wind, but wears the face of  
a stranger, whose sidewalk, street.

A cut strong enough to out the abcess,  
fills the void with piano concertos or  
the monotone analysis of toilet training.

There is a hole in the park outside,  
the earth's blood curious & clear:  
points of reference on a creased map.

Trees, mountains, personal history,  
all as inarticulate as the adulterer  
asleep with another in his own bed.

In the brain's convolutions, study is  
no help when ghosts of past & future  
congregate for dialogue & confusion.

# John Tustin

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## So It Is

I have to close my eyes to see us  
Because there are only two pictures of us together  
And my eyes  
Have worn the photos out.

Only a few have known that she and I walked hand-in-hand  
For what amounts to a short time  
In the measuring of lives  
And of those who knew  
Most were unhappy about it  
And remain so.

So it is.

I close my eyes right now and remember a kiss  
That destroyed planets, gave birth to stars  
And doomed my life to wanting,  
Not having.

So it is.

So  
It  
Is.



# Contributors

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**Chidera Abii** is a Nigerian American writer. She studied fiction and poetry at the University of Virginia and is currently a Michener Fellow at the Michener Center for Writers. She lives in Austin, TX.

**Lana Hechtman Ayers'** poems have appeared on *Escape Into Life*, *Verse Daily*, and *The Poet's Café*, as well as in her nine published collections. She manages three small presses on the Oregon coast in a town of more cows than people. Visit her online at [LanaAyers.com](http://LanaAyers.com).

**paul Bluestein** is an obstetrician (done practicing) and blues guitar player (still practicing) who began writing poetry in 2018 after joining The Poet's Salon in Fairfield, Connecticut. His work has appeared in *The Linden Avenue Literary Review*, *Third Wednesday*, and *Penumbra* among other publications. His first full-length collection, *Time Passages*, was published in 2020 by Silver Bow Publishing.

**John Brady** is a writer based in Portland, OR, whose fiction and non-fiction writing has appeared in various outlets, including *Exposition Review*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Mother Jones*, *Punk Planet*, *The Los Angeles Daily News*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and on National Public Radio.

**Alan Britt** has been nominated for the 2021 International Janus Pannonius Prize awarded by the Hungarian Centre of PEN International for excellence in poetry from any part of the world. Previous nominated recipients include Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Charles Bernstein, and Yves Bonnefoy. He was interviewed at The Library of Congress for *The Poet and the Poem*. A graduate of the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University, he currently teaches English/Creative Writing at Towson University.

**Sudhanshu Chopra** is a poet, wordsmith and pun-enthusiast. 30 and rootless, he is fascinated by nature and frustrated by its incomprehension. He wishes we had evolved better or not at all. It is the midway that causes Catch 22 situations, which are quite troubling, mentally and otherwise. He tweets at [@artofdying](https://twitter.com/artofdying)

**Michael Cooney** has taught English and writing on the high school and community college level in New York City. His novella "The Witch Girl and The Wobbly" will be published January 1 by Running Wild Press. His poetry has appeared in *Bitter Oleander*, *Badlands*, and other journals.

**William Doreski** lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire. He has taught at several colleges and universities and retired after three decades at Keene State College. His most recent book of poetry is *Stirring the Soup* (2020). He has published three critical studies,

including *Robert Lowell's Shifting Colors*. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in many journals.

**Margaret Erhart's** work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Best American Spiritual Writing 2005*, and many literary magazines. She won the Milkweed National Fiction Prize, and *The Butterflies of Grand Canyon (Plume)*, was a finalist for an Amazon Breakthrough Novel Award. She lives in Flagstaff, Arizona. Margaret welcomes responses and conversations at [www.margareterhart.com](http://www.margareterhart.com)

**Ricky Garni** recently retired from his work as graphic designer for a regional wine company and now works occasionally as a staff photographer for Horse & Buggy Press (Durham, NC), a gallery and design studio that uses a nifty 19th century letterpress for many of their publications.

**Carol Hamilton** is retired from teaching 2nd grade through graduate students from Connecticut to Tinker AFB Oklahoma, from volunteer translating, and storytelling. She is a former Poet Laureate of Oklahoma and has published 17 books: children's novels, legends, and poetry and has been nominated nine times for a Pushcart Prize.

**Felipe Rodolfo Hendriksen** studies Literature at Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina. He currently lives in Quilmes.

**Samo Kreutz** lives in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Besides poetry (which he has been writing since he was eight years old), he writes novels, short stories, and haiku. He has published nine books (three of them were poetry books). His recent work has appeared on international websites (and journals), such as *Wales Haiku Journal*, *Under the Basho*, *Taj Mahal Review*, *Poetry Pea*, *Jalmurra: Art & Poetry Journal*, *Haiku Commentary*, *Frameless Sky: Art Video Journal*, *Asahi Haikuist Network*, *Akita International Haiku Network*, and others.

**Nathan Leslie** won the 2019 Washington Writers' Publishing House prize for fiction for his satirical collection of short stories, *Hurry Up and Relax*. Nathan's nine previous books of fiction include *Three Men*, *Root and Shoot*, *Sibs*, and *The Tall Tale of Tommy Twice*. He is also the author of a collection of poems, *Night Sweat*. Nathan is currently the series editor for *Best Small Fictions*, the founder and organizer of the Reston Reading Series in Reston, Virginia, and the publisher and editor of *Maryland Literary Review*. Previously he was series editor for *Best of the Web* and fiction editor for *Pedestal Magazine*. His fiction has been published in hundreds of literary magazines such as *Shenandoah*, *North American Review*, *Boulevard*, *Hotel Amerika*, and *Cimarron Review*. Nathan's nonfiction has been published in *The Washington Post*, *Kansas City Star*, and *Orlando Sentinel*. Nathan lives in Northern Virginia with his wife, Julie.

**Giuseppe Andrea Liberti** lives in Naples, where he was born in 1992. His first poetry book, *Pietrarsa* (2010-2019), was published by Arcipelago itaca Press in April 2020; his poems have appeared in journals like *L'Elzeviro*, *Levania* online, *la Repubblica Napoli*, and *Critica impura*. Nevertheless, he's still trying to take himself seriously.

**Terence McCaffrey's** poems have appeared in *Connecticut River Review*, *Freshwater*, *Red Eft Review*, *Right Hand Pointing*, and elsewhere. He received a M.A.L.S. degree in Humanities from Wesleyan University and a B.A. from the University of Hartford, where he was the recipient of the Phyllis B. Abrahms Award in Fiction. He lives with his family in West Simsbury, CT.

**Tanvi Nagar** is a high school senior at Delhi Public School, Gurgaon. She has been writing for the past eight years and is passionate about public speaking, travelling, playing sports and reading. She has contributed to national newspapers like The Times of India and Hindustan Times; journals like Flare Journal, The Weight Journal, Nymphs Publications, Secret Attic, Hebe Poetry, and Anti-Heroine Chic and anthologies like The Last Flower of Spring and Riding on a Summer Train by Delhi Poetry Slam; The Great Indian Anthology by Half Baked Beans and She the Shakti by Authors Press. She is the former Editor of her school, currently edits for Ice Lolly Review and Cathartic Youth Literary Magazine and is the present Head Girl of her school's student council. She has authored four books, titled Metamorphosis, A Treasure Trove of Poetic Wonderland, A Bountiful of Rhythmic Stories, and My Book of Short Stories and Poems. She has also won the Eye Level Literary Award 2018 by Daekyo South Korea, The Create Change Challenge by The University of Queensland, Australia, and the Millennial Essay Writing Contest by UNESCO. She has also worked on in-depth research projects with the Boston Latin School, USA, and the Wayne College, USA. She loves solving maths problems and her favourite singer is Halsey! She believes kindness is the best way of life. Her website is [tanvinagar.com](http://tanvinagar.com).

**Dan Nielsen** is a part-time standup comic. His least favorite flavor of jelly is petroleum. Recent FLASH in: *Connotation Press*, *Jellyfish Review*, *(mic)ro(mac)*, *Necessary Fiction*, *The Cabinet of Heed*, and *Cheap Pop*. Dan has a website: *Preponderous*, you can follow him @DanNielsenFIVES. He and Georgia Bellas are the post-minimalist art/folk band Sugar Whiskey.

**Robert Nisbet** is a Welsh poet who has been published widely in Britain, where he has been shortlisted for the Wordsworth Trust Prize, and the USA, where he has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

**Greg Sevik** teaches writing and literature in Upstate New York. His scholarly essays have appeared in such publications as *The Emily Dickinson Journal* and *Style*. His poetry



and translations have been published in *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Inventory*, and other venues.

**Dr. Roger Singer** is the Poet Laureate of Old Lyme, Connecticut. He has had over 1,150 poems published on the internet, magazines, and in books and is a 2017 Pushcart Prize Award Nominee. He is also the President of the Shoreline Chapter of the Connecticut Poetry Society. Some of the magazines that have accepted his poems for publication are: *Westward Quarterly*, *Jerry Jazz*, *SP Quill*, *Avocet*, *Underground Voices*, *Outlaw Poetry*, *Literary Fever*, *Dance of my Hands*, *Language & Culture*, *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *The Stray Branch*, *Toasted Cheese*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, Ambassador Poetry Award Massachusetts State Poetry Society, Louisiana State Poetry Society Award 2019, Arizona State Poetry Society Award 2020, and Mad Swirl Anthology 2018 and 2019.

**Paul Smith** is a civil engineer who has worked in the construction racket for many years. He has traveled all over the place and met lots of people. Some have enriched his life. Others made him wish he or they were all dead. He likes writing poetry and fiction. He also likes Newcastle Brown Ale. If you see him, buy him one. His poetry and fiction have been published in *Convergence*, *Missouri Review*, *Literary Orphans*, and other lit mags.

**Eugene Stevenson** is the son of immigrants, the father of expatriates, & lives in the mountains of western North Carolina. His poems have appeared in *Angel City Review*, *DASH*, *Gravel*, *The Hudson Review*, *The Loch Raven Review*, *October Hill*, *The Poet*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *Swamp Ape Review*, and *Tipton Poetry Journal*, among others.

**John Tustin** is currently suffering in exile on Elba but hopes to return to you soon. [fritzware.com/johntustinpoe](http://fritzware.com/johntustinpoe) contains links to his published poetry online.



