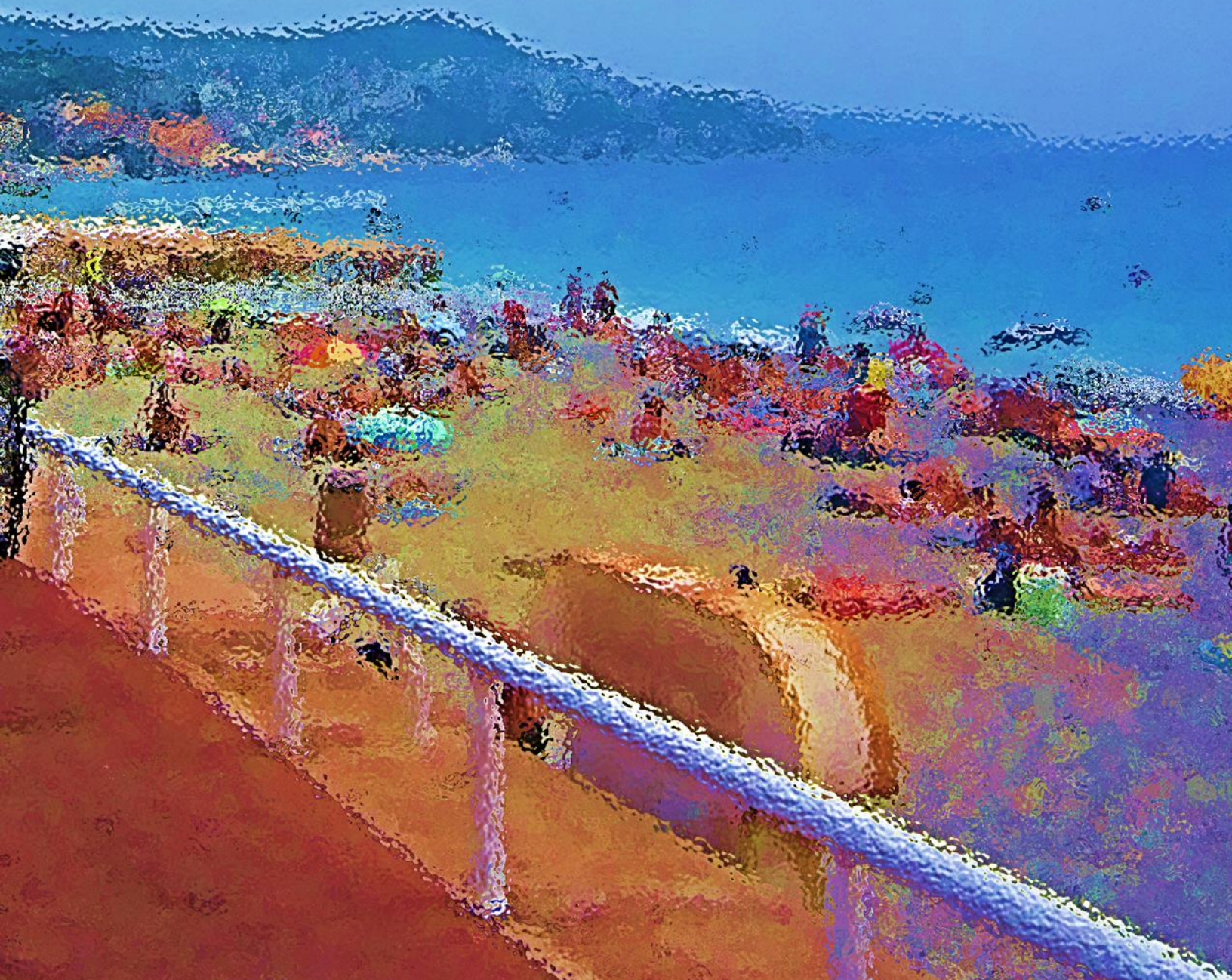


The Big Windows Review

Issue 28 Summer 2022



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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Contents

Carol Barrett	Birdhouse	4
Ariel Berry	Memory, and All the Ways We Torture Ourselves	5
Alan Catlin	Work Anxiety Dream #5: In the Lake District	6
Louie Cronin	Compliant	7
Jakima Davis	Lake By the Ocean	9
Darren C. Demaree	Emily as Regret or Premonition	10
	Emily as Grain, in the Old Way	11
	Emily as Hollering	12
Johanna DeMay	Reasonable Doubt	13
Matt Dennison	Waiting Room	14
Tamas Dobozy	Two Pistols	15
Lara Dolphin	Secret Song	16
Christopher Hadin	Alternative Energy Wishes for My Brother	18
Carol Hamilton	A Normal Day	20
Paul Ilechko	Aubade	21
Alex LeGrys	The Pursuit of Happiness	22
David Lipsitz	Santa Fe in July	24
Frederico Voroniuk Manica	Flooded	25
Thomas Piekarski	Tantric Chant	26
Andy Plattner	The Hard-of-Hearing Priest	27
Kenneth Pobo	Reclining Nude (Fernande)	29
Russell Rowland	Rain at Night	30
Yash Seyedbagheri	Weekend at Volodya's	31
Roger Singer	Abstract Gallery	32
	Empty Streets	33
John Tustin	Your Door Is Locked	34
Diane Webster	Rings of Ripples	36
Theodore Worozbyt	<i>from</i> Letters to the Alphabet	37

Carol Barrett

Birdhouse

What I remember best -- that sandpaper.
My father taught me to wrap the tip of a
two by four in stiff speckled sheet, crease
the edges, then sand all sides of that box
for the milky primer, the blue paint. After
first application, I unwrapped the block to
yield unused parchment, rubbed mica grit
on wood until the soft pink heart of cedar
was smooth as a doll face, warming
from friction, what he called *just*
a little elbow grease, the whole shop
smelling of creation, sawdust filtering light
from a small window. Then came the next
gradient, barely sandy, its whisking sound
even higher on memory's strident register,
not even hammer and nails reaching such
acuity, matched only by the tiny sparrows
I waited to hear chirping all spring. Taking
the birdhouse in hand, Father deftly spun
six sides round to check my work, nodded.

Memory, and All the Ways We Torture Ourselves

I remember my mother's soft hands and the way I wrote about them once, unkindly, because I was angry and afraid and the English teacher told me, this seems rather harsh, and I pricked behind my eyes because I knew she was right, and I remember the way those hands comforted me when I was six, and sick, and unable to keep warm in my shuddering fever chills; she piled blanket upon blanket on my small limp body but still I shivered for more, and when I was finally well I went to a friend's house to attend a party and as a joke all the children hid from me and I could hear their giggles as I stumbled dimly in the dark, crying out in my shame, and when I grew older I saw those girls on social media with children of their own, and I accepted their friend requests wondering if their own little girls treat other little girls that way, wondering if they remember laughing and want to apologize, or likely have forgotten; I remember laughing at a little girl when I, too, was small, because she had said something silly but meant it in earnest, and the whole room laughed at her and I laughed along too, even though her red face was the least funny thing I could have imagined; I laughed the loudest—I still think about her, that little girl, what became of her, if she stalks me on social media and wonders if I remember humiliating her; I do, I'm so sorry; I wonder if she grew into a teenager who once drank in her parents' basement when no one was home because she knew she could get away with it, oh wait, that was me, and I vomited the vodka and was still vomiting when my parents got home and I lied and told them I had the flu, and my mother's soft hands, they held my hair back while I puked, and I never told her I was lying, never told her so many things, never told her about her soft hands and how my teacher said, think kindly of your mother because one day you'll never get her back, and she was right, and now I hold my own infant daughter in my arms and her hands reach toward my eyes and I tell her, I hope you never remember; I hope you forget and forget and forget.

Work Anxiety Dream #5: In the Lake District

First orders come from
above through murder holes
drilled into the floor where
the main bar sinks overflow
and the slop sinks leak.
The waitress is sleeping,
head down on the invisible
cellar bar while a rush of
patrons arrive, walking single
file down misaligned stairs,
chanting verses from a Pink Floyd
song, shouting out orders as they
pass into the well-lighted, unfinished
basement lounge. Second orders
come over the bar from everywhere
at once but all the bottles are
somewhere else, up flights of stairs
others are using, all the taps open
and free flowing but the glassware
is inaccessible in too tall, overhead
racks, in too low cabinets you have to
lie down next to in order to retrieve
what lies within, reaching hands
scraped and bleeding on rough hewn
wooden shelves, on the chipped and
broken glass, still more orders come
and there is no room to move,
the basement ceiling pressing down,
more murder holes being drilled,
delivering last orders from above.

Louie Cronin

Compliant

Baby boomer turning 70, ok exaggerating a bit, I've got five more months. Of wearing masks, checking case numbers, primping for Zoom. My friends are all gray. I only see them on Zoom, or outside, bundled up, triple waxed, windswept. I can't afford to go gray. Went wrinkly instead, aged fast, chasing Sandy, who drowned at 22, always in a hurry. My period dried up at 45. Blamed it on ciggies, though I quit 10 years before, when Barry died, an old man of 29, struggling up the stairs at Times Square. Got my period at 11. Thought my life was over then. Maybe it was.

Work? Happy to get tossed out, though I hadn't saved enough, who has? Now I'm aging into the high-risk pool, 68, 69, 69 1/2... I see how the baby doc looks at me, fumbling for my reading glasses. Old girl needs an EKG, a lipid panel. Would you consider eating healthy? Me? I used to rollerblade here, you little fuck! Everyone around me is deaf. I'm ok, unless I'm with young people, or watching movies with the captions on, narration buried under effects. I'd lose my job for that. Oh, right, I did.

Sad to see my brother with a cane. My father used a broom or a putter, died anyway. My mother was compliant, as am I. As I will be. She put on her big bifocals, stocked up on hearing aid batteries, used a cane then a walker then a transport chair. Her sister Gert fell putting in eyedrops, her sister Mary rolling up her hair. My husband installed railings this Thanksgiving. I was fine without them but reach for them just the same.

I get tired so early or am I just bored? Another meal to cook, another night to endure, streaming Netflix, trying to read a book. Wine tonight or detox tea? So many steps before bed. Sonicare, pick, floss, cleanser, serum, antiaging cream. PFFFT! And God forbid my pajama bottoms cinch -- my stomach has forgotten how to squeeze, dinner lingers, threatens to turn.

Wait! Stop that. There'll be no turning yet. There are red berries on the prickly

bushes; the bay peeks flat and silver through the trees. There are stacks of cut wood and the fireplace draws like mad. There are baby boys on the West Coast and a baby girl on the East, getting onesies and picture books from distant aunties they can't yet conjure.

Fucking plague stole two good years. Or slowed them down enough that I might notice.



Lake By the Ocean

Step right up to the microphone
Lines written in broken English
Young Shakespeare on the mic
Or maybe a young Dylan Thomas

Step right up to the microphone
Cakewalking babies on the keys
Ringing the jangle sounds
Maybe find the next Bob Dylan

Step right up to the microphone
Visit the lake by the ocean
Spit the alternative soul poetry
Spread it with some blues hop

Darren C. Demaree

Emily as Regret or Premonition

She was right. I
harbored
an apocalypse element

in my solitary thread.
To want
any revolution at all

is to offer up a stabbing
moment of pleasure
that gambles

the landscape it creates.
No matter. I'm
a coward for her.

I take myself to her
bells. I leave the rest of it
to become rope

without me.
All this muscle
& only play-burns.

Darren C. Demaree

Emily as Grain, in the Old Way

Y'all should stop
fucking around
with these more

intimate voices.
There's too much
death beneath

the crop to hide
our joy amidst
a goddamn canon.

Darren C. Demaree

Emily as Hollering

You ever see fire
overtake
a birdsong?

The whole county
can taste it when
the right woman

says hello
to emptiness
with real joy.

Johanna DeMay

Reasonable Doubt

*I don't trust Big Pharma, Margaret frets,
but Mexican folk remedies? Mushrooms?*

*Herbal teas, lime juice, turpentine?
Aren't curanderos just faith healers?*

Tepotzlán's ancient shaman, Don Pedro,
blended Náhuatl with Spanish—duet

of reed flute and Flamenco guitar. He patched
my bloody finger with warm belly fat

from a *tlacuache*—Mexico's beloved marsupial.
Tore a strip from my yellow silk scarf

to wrap his handiwork, warned me
not to wash my hand. I had nightmares—

infection, amputation—yet my wounded hand
felt cool, no longer throbbed.

A week later he removed the bandage—
no lump of putrid fat, just a pale ridge

of ropy skin. *¡Perfecto!* A perfect graft.
After fifty years, even the scar has disappeared.

Faith healers? Auras? New Age crystals?
¿Quién sabe? But *curanderos*...

I'd almost forgotten my *tlacuache* transplant.

Waiting Room

Sitting in the groggy
Saturday morning clinic,
we watch the lucky couples
exclude the solitary woman,
huddle together wearing
black glasses, slight disguises
of bright swallowed laughter,
time slowly circling the room,
one by one stripping masks
from sideways-whispering faces,
exposing forward-facing fear
as the outer door opens
and the solo woman rises
to meet her husband above
averted eyes and hug
her delivered children
for gladly laughing yes
she is pregnant
again.

Tamas Dobozy

Two Pistols

He liked to think he'd spent a long time arming his memory. Stocking the arsenal, is how he saw it. In particular, he liked facts, they were his bullets, shooting holes in every argument he encountered. Truth, well, there was no bullet like that, or at least he hadn't found it, though a few times early on, when he was still capable of belief, he thought he had, only to discover it wasn't that, quite. Once in a while there was a good fact, maybe one of the best, fitted into the right revolver, but it wouldn't keep his opponents down forever. Sooner or later they'd recover, do some further reading in their favourite magazines and newspapers, gather new facts, figure out how to best fire them out, and return to argue it out all over again. He was hard pressed to pinpoint when he lost his love for it—the build-up to the battle, the projectiles singing through the air, the satisfying thud with which they landed when you'd aimed right, the best shots being when your opponent took a second or two to realize, with that dawning look in the eyes, that there would be no shooting back, not until much later. One day he simply noticed that he'd gone quieter. He let people talk. He let them go on. He should have stopped them, right between the eyes, hours ago. But he had less and less interest in causing the death of anything, even an idea, no matter how ridiculous or offensive, and more and more in the death that was his silence, or not death, exactly, but a kind of afterlife. It was that tranquil, that serene. If anyone asked, he said he'd retired as champ, but that wasn't it at all, quite the opposite: he'd just let go, cut himself free of an ego that insisted on weaponizing every word, on marking the world, on tallying the wins and losses as if the number mattered. The silence was, if he was asked to describe it, which he rarely agreed to do, his second firearm, or maybe not second, but the same one, except repurposed, firing its bullet inward, one time only, exploding the cylinder and relieving his need for every victory except that of letting the grass grow, up and around and through his feet all the way to the empty skull where his brain had once been.

Lara Dolphin

Secret Song

When Dolly started out
There was Bill Earl Owens
With his signature Gretsch
Standing beside her
While she sang
A voice small as a country cabin
Grand as the Smoky Mountains
When she started writing
Nashville took notice
And made her a star
Both astral and human
A sequined jewel among
Staid country crooners
But there is a deeper truth
Kept from the public
Locked in a box
In the heart of Appalachia
A box made from chestnut
Uncle Bill's favorite
That at its finest
Offered shade
Strong lumber
And bounteous food
How fitting that now it stores
Year after year
The unsung lyrics
The unstrummed melody
That will be the Queen of Country's
Parting gift to future generations
What music lies within

We can only imagine
Perhaps it will speak of a world
Where we fall in a heap
At the feet of majestic trees
Worshiping God's sacred creation
Perhaps it will sing the music of Paradise
A hymn to second chances



Christopher Hadin

Alternative Energy Wishes for My Brother

*"I am ok. Work is kicking my ass.
Sometimes I wish I did something
else like install wind turbines or something."*

I also wish you
installed wind turbines.
Or mini hydroelectrics
on downspouts
of the lonely.
So when it rains
a mechanical arm
hits a gong every 30 seconds.
The gong is tuned
to the frequency of the human heart.
Or solar panels
on people's eyelids so to
power their phones
they must sit
perfectly still
eyes closed
thus creating an
inner dialogue
rendering a cell phone obsolete.
Or biothermal
exchange generators on
the thumbs
of a polydactoid cat
rigged to a tiny projector that
shows kaleidoscopic lights
on the ceiling

when one strokes its ears and it purrs.

Or a pressure differential converter
built into the floor of
the room

of a disabled child

so when she

rises from her wheelchair

and takes

a single step

messages flash out

all over the world

celebrating the sacred dignity

of small things.



Carol Hamilton

A Normal Day

is ever poised on a fine-stropped edge
we cross barefoot but never know it
until we teeter.

Yeats saw a metal ball balanced
on a small fountain jet
in a shop window, remembered
it when troops blasted
two ancient bridges near his Tower.
Not knowing what aerialists
we were born to be
until the swaying begins,
we are blithe
in our daily centrifugal dance,
never look down.

Paul Ilichko

Aubade

Gray scrabbled with light eclectic
in its fingering reach
 with classical structure
hardened by shadows the perfumed wings
 fluttering in corners
a gloved hand points to your reflection
 as you babble excuses
 to redeem a lack of inspiration

your eyes are stained wrapped in sheets
in paragraphs of obsessive narrative
 the fever of stolen pleasure
before the morning ever really began
everything is shape is silk and copper
 and a funeral parade
that passes in the street below

everyone is waiting
for the opening move the girls
 in their blistering boredom
 outpace the climbing sun
the boys pretend to care
 about the weather
a delusion of permission of permanence
strangers in each other's arms
 requesting pardon.

The Pursuit of Happiness

we all know that at the beginning of every country road
sits a dilapidated farmhouse, with tick-infested boxers and
golden retrievers, barking for attention while their
owners fail to pay the electric bill yet buy designer
sunglasses every holiday season

but there is a garden shed in the middle
of every country road filled with moldy teacups and
empty liquor bottles and milk snakes slithering
with one another, waiting for the day to come when
Tiresias tramples them as they copulate—
snickering as their own pain gives rise to
seven years of involuntary womanhood

as this event transpired I would stumble
from the country road's first house, where I'd
have been arguing with rednecks about tax policy
and how they were only hurting themselves
each time they cast red in a ballot box—
they'd tell me to get off my cross and funnel
cheap red wine down my throat

Tiresias would turn to me leaning
against the shed, shrinking at the milk
snakes and vomiting red slop over their
love-making

in a decade we'd meet again on
another night of my half-hearted attempts
at following Christ with ritz crackers
and gas station merlot and pleading the
construction workers to collectively bargain

and as I'd sit in the dirt, shivering at
the serpents, he'd tell me how lucky I was
to be a woman— how much better men are at
pleasing women than the other way around

his only punishment for such nonsense
was never to have to see snakes fuck
again— and that, is perhaps the male condition
I'd tell him— the punishment always
winds up being the reward.



David Lipsitz

Santa Fe in July

I breath sage fragrance rising from bundles of desert flora.
A bare-foot magician wearing a brown derby hat
proudly shows his open palms
to those learning the language of his hands.
First people artisans display handmade jewelry
on plant-dyed woolen rugs, unique offerings for sale
to those walking and embracing the 400-year-old plaza.

Unfenced apricot trees line the walkable narrow streets.
Married to the law of gravity,
ripened orange fruit falls gently from the open sky.

On a goat path trail, we hike through vanilla scented forests,
carrying time and water,
crisscrossing creeks of unfrozen snow.
Butterflies float like house dust between ponderosa pines.
Scurrying sand lizards hide under misplaced rocks.
Late day monsoon showers leave puddles, and conversations,
that evaporate into the desert before sunset.

At night, our warm skin sleeps under a humming ceiling fan.
Moving air, comforts vivid dreams,
multicolored and four dimensional, streaming within our eyes,
darting in the dark like schools of released fish.

We awaken in the morning without clocks,
holding natural light next to adobe walls.
We rise from restful sleep to begin our chosen day,
7,000 feet above the level of an unnamed distant sea.

Frederico Voroniuk Manica ---

Flooded

Cotton pressing against cotton
Blue rivers sinking into silk
The materialistic urge for more than
existence, to feel
cotton sheets embodied by
water (detached elemental
motion, raw mass
seamlessly moist). White absorbing
mud, seedless — light brown,
brown, dark — cotton. In
my insides, a dirty mind. What does
that make me?

Tantric Chant

Mansplaining strictly prohibited.
Mountain peak tantamount.
Explorative retorts tutorial.
Instant impression immanent.
Sensory sessions seedless.
Patronizing servants lionized.
Decision's revision impending.
Ablution possibly soluble.
Presumptive oratorio triumphant.
Perceived time dissolute.
Prudence generally accepted.
Remaindered brains entombed.
Finished product demolished.
Preeminent evidence detected.
Scientific edicts erected.
Astrological alchemy revived.
Infinite love included.
Safe havens vanish.
Trepidation whited out.
Death defies demigods.
Age fictive revisionism.
Prayer usurps desperation.
Atmospheric spirits ubiquitous.
Rock displaces sod.

Andy Plattner

The Hard-of-Hearing Priest

The girls of the eighth grade at St. Joe's cleaned the parsonage every Friday. One of the nuns would line them up at the bottom of the steps. The girls held buckets and brooms and mops. They walked up the steps in single file.

They cleaned the parsonage while the priest presided over confessions in the church. While still a relatively young man, the priest became hard of hearing and in the confessional, he had to ask the confessor to speak up. As a result, anyone kneeling in the pews outside was likely to hear. It didn't matter; the verdict was always guilty, the penance always light. Say the "Our Father" three times and be on your way.

After lunch period on Fridays, the priest would come to the classroom the seventh and eighth graders shared and would sit at the teacher's desk and ask students questions related to the bible. The students would stand when answering. The nun, whose classroom it was when the priest wasn't visiting, stood in a corner of the room with a peaceful expression, hands folded at her waist. The students knew to speak clearly and amplify their voices.

Though the priest was hard of hearing, he did not speak loudly himself. He delivered his short sermons in a soft-spoken way. Some of the older members of the parish were hard-of-hearing, yet they appreciated his brevity.

One night, a Friday night in fact, the parsonage was robbed; the priest happened to be at the house when the thieves arrived. He didn't hear them wedging open a window. They tied him up. They also decided to give him a beating. The priest had a small safe in his closet and the thieves took it away with them.

The priest was discovered the next morning when two altar boys went to his front door because he was late to say mass. The police interviewed the priest in his hospital room, and he said he didn't get a good look at the thieves. The theory from the police was that the priest knew the identities of the thieves, but they were also members of his parish. A further theory was that the at least one of the thieves had a sister who'd cleaned the priest's house and knew about the safe.

The parishioners, when talking amongst themselves, could list any number of potential suspects. This parish being what it was.

Because the priest could not, would not, name his attackers, a case was never developed.

A few years later, following a short battle with brain cancer, the priest died. The doctors said the cancer might have been growing in the priest's brain for quite a while and this might've explained his hearing condition.

The doctors might've wondered, too, why no one in the parish had ever encouraged the priest to have his hearing checked.



Reclining Nude (Fernande)

Gouache on paper, Picasso

The book of clouds opens
to page infinity, has no covers,
no authors. No one can claim
ownership. No wonder it stays
open. Every turned page
brings rain somewhere. I read
while reclining nude. My chum
Fernande lies on the ground,
head on a pillow. She too is
a cloud, good at dispersing.
I might get dressed. It's late.
Ground calls me. Fernande
and I will have dinner, moon
ladles pouring steamy soup
in our bowls.

Russell Rowland

Rain at Night

Rain insists all evening. We shelter in place,
not thinking about the homeless. Love may conceive
upstairs, in isolation from the elements.

A boy's night is long under canvas, him alone.
Rain fingers' patter cannot reach his face; they seem
feminine, like Sirens tapping Ulysses' prow.

Or he lies on a bunk in the cottage Dad helped build;
listens to rain on shingles just overhead.

A book of poetry, from the shelf containing all

the Reader's Digest Condensations, has The Eve
of St. Agnes: "Her rich attire creeps rustling
to her knees." In the rain he can hear it, as he waits

for parents to go out for the evening. He will drift
asleep afterward, rain on the window like pearls
she removed, warm from her bosom, in Keats' poem.

Yash Seyedbagheri

Weekend at Volodya's

comrade, you drag up a body
long festering among the maggots
a man who created empires
who expanded a map
and purged the soils of sedition
while giving your country's name
a bearlike ferocity

you pull arms right and left
look, he's waving
while you assault another wall
another cathedral
and order a dead child for breakfast
in a pesky hospital

just keep dragging that body around
look he's waving
this is truth
and soon you will drink vodka and eat caviar
in the rubble of another house
and in a palace that once waltzed with privilege
now prop him up just a tad more

Roger Singer

Abstract Gallery

doorway watchers
he said, she knows
nobody knows
creative oblique
voices on the piano
a jump of junk
barbed wire love
piercing affections
shadows on doors
painted hands
abandoned shoes
canvas footsteps
still framed colors
blocks of people
crashing oceans
windows weeping
wounded clouds
star blessings
mirrors of self
burning candles
heaven without hell

life is a cartoon
between comic books

Roger Singer

Empty Streets

I hear hounds
howling
and windmills
slowly grinding
bitter rust

a porch light flickers,
as moths circle
above dusty chairs

there's an
upstairs light,
someone passes by,
casting a shadow

nearby
steel wheels of
boxcars
promise safety
and a soft
wooden floor
to the next place

John Tustin

Your Door Is Locked

I walked down the dark alleys,
Looking into the grimeiest windows.
I drove like a knife dividing the night,
Sleeping by the side of the road in the light
Of the sun.
I asked the sky, I begged the moon,
I cursed the time-carrying sea
That led me to you.
Your door was locked.
I knocked.
You did not open it.

I studied Kant and Confucius,
Socrates and Nietzsche,
Thomas Paine and Aquinas.
I tried to understand why
They all said something different yet
They all led me to you.
To a door that is locked.

I read the poems of the Sufi Mystics,
The Chinese wanderers,
The English Romantics, the doped-up Beats,
The angry American drunks
And the lovely suicidal women.
They led me to you.
Your door is locked.

I said Ohm in the Ashram,
Questioned G-d in the Temple,
Stared into the eyes of Catheaded and Lionheaded deities

Long buried before us,
Lit candles in Cathedrals of Jesus and of alone,
And all of them led me to the Hosanna of you.
They led me to your door.
Your door is locked.

I sleep uneasily,
I awaken in a pool of sweat,
Not remembering the nightmares.
I awaken to me standing
Before a locked door,
Waiting.



Rings of Ripples

In solitude
each remaining pylon
that held the bridge
casts a shadow
on the lake.

Tiny rings of ripples
pretend to wiggle
poles back and forth
as if phantom cars
still cross
in rhythmic thump, thump...
thump, thump.

Shadows lengthen,
reach for night cover
when solitude laps
a lullaby pulse
between mother
and infant
a heartbeat distant.

Theodore Worozbyt

from Letters to the Alphabet

F

The soil itself is exhausted, the icicle radishes flexy and hot. Albert, that line you wrote
Re: your wife waking to a hellish spate of days has remained with me, though the poem's
Name and my wife have not. I'm bad with titles, and once left a dinner party angry because
I confused style with pretension. All I remember is one guy had long hair and wore
His white scarf in the restaurant. Everything seems to have happened so long ago
My mother had a beehive and not to matter now. The way I live is completely observable
From the two tachyon chairs that traveled so fast not to get here they disappeared before
They came into existence. That's a world record. Often, no matter where I go in this farm-
Working town a smell of cakes almost burning in what must be giant oven hives heavies
The air with a sweetness that belongs elsewhere, and I stand in the yard, the parking lot,
Inhaling to no avail, feeling not Grandma's German chocolate cake on the wind but
Prison cake icing its own languishing meditations as the flesh layers up and melt away.
Snow falls down of course and catkins swirl like the arms of little galaxies, but no one
Mentions the cake smell or has an answer. Death Cab for Cutie played in the bait shop when
I went in.

G

I went in for the medicine, but the clerk had never heard of me or what I couldn't buy.
Soap operas are no joke. When they end it's like air conditioning broken in July.
You sweat, but cannot sweat it out. I don't know what the smell of chicken cooking is to me.
I sent myself a tiny peep from the Czech Republic, where if I still had my white silk scarf I
Could be more easily seen watching from behind my beardless hour the grey hat of Leonard
Cohen saying goodbye among two hundred and ninety eight others. It hatched blue lines
When I stepped on it in the grass. Sooner or later even vermouth burns. Sam Stosur took
Her second tournament and removed her sunglasses. The one thing I shot and killed
Without my feet I waited to dispatch until it had passed over the thicket where it would be
Lost to my mouth. Its feathers coming out made a soft resistant zipper. I soaked the breast
In cognac and ate it with braised cabbage and a male gaze. I never did distribute that
Herman Melville flyer. I'm afraid to brush my teeth; they might dissolve. *I just one to find*
Love, said the barber to the flea. What sauce goes with mullet; it is so oily. I live in Snellville,
Near Seattle. So it goes in the lecture about you know who, whose shoes reminded Viola of
El Greco, Jr.

H

This afternoon I glanced at the door and in the window dark hair gathered, wound
Itself around a wild smile, threw me a kiss and went on. The pit bull shakes his head
Violently. I've let him down with my golden key, again. My neck feels better, the rest is
Expensive and not worth shit. Walk in and out as you wish, you won't miss anything.
Just all of New York City weeping into a cab driver's toilet as I smash his hood.
My days glow red in my fingertips. I cannot stop staring at the sun. A kiss from the door,
Like wine, salumi and a bowl of salt to an old man. The old boy can't be touched enough;
He needs a bath every few months. I change the furniture instead, but who wants to drive
Two hours to buy a chaise lounge from Huff Furniture when the original owner is still
Prone, eating an avocado, watching Ed Sullivan and calling out, Boy, bring me a toothpick.
Light my Camel. It tasted rich, like a suicide door black Lincoln Continental. The first
Was pink. It went. It got cut up with the Paris jumpsuits, shoved into suitcases and tossed
Over the wall at Four Seasons. The Marines drew robots in pencil, and bought a puppy
That made pats in their beds. A little piggie got stuck to my hair, they called it funnier
Than their K-rations.

I

Behind the Wal-Mart graveyard the black dog rolling in the grass, his stomach
Whitened in the sun. He twists up and runs. Now he goes. Beside the dumpster
A rough pudding of meat material lies curiously flyless. Often it's a thick pork bone, a hip
I guess. In the commercial of not looking at you, dark-haired sisters intimate an Elsewhere
Gaze for the camera. The shape of a white shadow completes the idea of a breast. The bottle
Displays as a navel. I overcooked the chicken so his pills would fit snugly in. I think
These things come from the Chinese restaurant as kindness to the strays, but there are no
Strays, only machines and erosion barriers. Dung is what I need, and plenty of it. The meat
Resembles an inverted pie, and stays colored even after three days like boiled beets. It should
Have, like all confusions, a smell. Sometimes being apologetic is nasty. Would *you* have worn
A shirt made of marijuana to the opera? When I lean words forward they shrink. Just an
Observation. Here come the ears, I would know their sound anywhere, anytime. It will be
The last sound I listen to, the final sound I taste. Pardon me, I have to go handle the chicken
And rice. I'm already too late, of course. I ran home in the dusk because of the new rule,
For Mother's meal.

J

Ane Brun expected this song, I heard it in the engines of a cross-continental flight.
 Her, I cannot but agree. Kumquat soap is no measure of forgetfulness, since forgetting
 Cannot be measured in the way surgeons measure punctuation's death in the skin. Hours
 Were the alphabet but thirty scalpels exceeded the bleed limits and the Roman count.
 The objects we live with on the skin are ghosts, brown spottings at the folds, the slides
 Of guitar juice, and what Coleridge claimed was a dramatic propriety. The laudanums
 Of the one hundred and forty million citizens in my country are childless. I am so sick
 Of me I can't italicize the end. When I push a white button the orchids surround
 My cup with their diagnomens. The fever is growing among the few and the cats
 That make footholes in the garden. Applause for the silver six foot fire wire, its clear
 Rope of skin. I am still wondering why I didn't tell you about the meter of black snake
 The Maestro strolled over and I picked up, spoke to, and moved to a safer place
 Than the dirt road in the woods by the college. I didn't expect to say what I have said.
 Man O Manischewitz.



Contributors

Carol Barrett has lived in nine states and in England. She enjoys sending work to places where poetry will be a surprise (*JAMA*, *The Climbing Art*, *Oregon Birds*) as well as to literary magazines. Her books are *Calling in the Bones*, *Drawing Lessons*, and *Pansies*.

Ariel Berry has a Ph.D. in creative writing from Western Michigan University. Her work has appeared in *Filling Station*, *HOOT Review*, *Night Picnic*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, *American Short Fiction*, *100 Word Story*, *Gone Lawn*, and *Southword*. She lives in Albion, Michigan, where she surrounds herself with books and animals.

Alan Catlin has been publishing for six decades, which feels like the answer to a *Jeopardy* question these days. His most recent full-length books include, *Asylum Garden: after Van Gogh* (Dos Madres), *Memories* (Alien Buddha), and *Memories Too* (Dos Madres).

Louie Cronin's novel, *Everyone Loves You Back*, was a semifinalist for the VCU Cabell First Novelist Award. Her fiction and essays have been published in *Compass Rose*, *The Princeton Arts Review*, *Long Island Newsday*, *The Boston Globe Magazine*, and on *PRI.org*. She formerly worked as a writer/producer for *Car Talk*.

Jakima Davis writes, "I've been writing for almost 22 years. I've been published in underground publications. I've published three chapbooks. One in 2016, and two in early 2021. I'm expecting my full book published soon. This is my third appearance in *The Big Windows Review*."

Darren C. Demaree's poems have appeared, or are scheduled to appear, in numerous magazines/journals, including *Hotel Amerika*, *Diode*, *North American Review*, *New Letters*, *Diagram*, and *Colorado Review*.

Growing up in Mexico City, **Johanna DeMay** began writing to bridge the gap between her two languages, two cultures. Now retired, she writes and volunteers

with the immigrant community. Her poems have appeared in numerous journals. "Waypoints," a collection of her poems, will be released by Finishing Line Press in 2022.

Matt Dennison is the author of *Kind Surgery*, from Urtica Press (Fr.) and *Waiting for Better*, from Main Street Rag Press. His work has appeared in *Verse Daily*, *Rattle*, *Bayou Magazine*, *Redivider*, *Natural Bridge*, *The Spoon River Poetry Review*, and *Cider Press Review*, among others. He has also made short films with Michael Dickes, Swoon, Marie Craven, and Jutta Pryor.

Tamas Dobozy is a professor in the Department of English and Film Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University. He lives in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. He has published four books of short fiction, *When X Equals Marylou*, *Last Notes and Other Stories*, *Siege 13: Stories* (which won the 2012 Rogers Writers Trust of Canada Fiction Prize, and was shortlisted for both the Governor General's Award: Fiction, and the 2013 Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award), and most recently, *Ghost Geographies: Fictions*. He has published over seventy short stories in journals such as *One Story*, *Fiction*, *Agni*, and *Granta*, and won an O Henry Prize in 2011, and the Gold Medal for Fiction at the National Magazine Awards in 2014.

A native of Pennsylvania, **Lara Dolphin** is an attorney, nurse, wife, and mom of four amazing kids. She frequently wonders where the time has gone. Her poems are widely published in print and online. Her first chapbook, *In Search Of The Wondrous Whole*, was published by Alien Buddha Press. Her most recent chapbook, *Chronicle Of Lost Moments*, is available from Dancing Girl Press.

Christopher Hadin is a writer, naturalist, and environmental educator. His work has appeared in *Sky Island Journal*, *The Thieving Magpie*, *Better Than Starbucks*, *October Hill Magazine*, *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, *The Headlight Review*. and *Loud Coffee Press*. He lives in Ferndale, Michigan.

Carol Hamilton taught 2nd grade through graduate school in Connecticut, Indiana, and Oklahoma, was a medical translator and storyteller. She is a former Poet Laureate of Oklahoma and has published and received various awards for 19 books and chapbooks of poetry, children's novels, and legends and has been nominated ten times for a Pushcart Prize.

Poet and songwriter **Paul Ilechko** lives with his partner in Lambertville, NJ. He is the author of several chapbooks. His work has appeared in a variety of journals, including *The Night Heron Barks*, *Feral Journal*, *K'in*, *Gargoyle Magazine*, and *Book of Matches*. His first album, *Meeting Points*, was released in 2021.

Alex LeGrys is 20 years old and attends Bard College. Her work has appeared in *Apricity Press*, *Better than Starbucks*, *Fire Agate Press*, *Modern Literature*, and *Blue Lake Review*.

David Lipsitz's poems have appeared in *Main Street Rag*, *Chaffin Journal*, *Cape Rock*, *From The Depths*, and other literary publications.

Frederico Voroniuk Manica is a young aspiring writer that is fascinated by abstract and symbolic poetry. They have recently participated in the *Poetize 2022* contest.

Thomas Piekarski is a former editor of the *California State Poetry Quarterly*. His poetry has appeared in such publications as *Taj Mahal Review*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Literature Today*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *South African Literary Journal*, *Modern Literature*, and others. His books of poetry are *Ballad of Billy the Kid*, *Monterey Bay Adventures*, *Mercurial World*, and *Aurora California*.

Andy Plattner lives in Atlanta, Georgia. He has taught fiction writing at the University of So. Mississippi, University of Tampa, Emory University and Kennesaw State University. He has published stories with *The Southern Review*, *Paris Review* and *The Literary Review*, as well as other places. He has a forthcoming short story collection, *Tower*, with Mercer University Press.

Kenneth Pobo (he/him) 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 *Lilac And Sawdust* (Meadowlark Press). His work has appeared in *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Asheville Literary Review*, *Nimrod*, *Washington Square Review*, *Mudfish*, *Hawaii Review*, and elsewhere.

Seven-time Pushcart Prize nominee **Russell Rowland** writes from New Hampshire's Lakes Region, where he has judged high-school Poetry Out Loud competitions. His

work appears in *Except for Love: New England Poets Inspired by Donald Hall* (Encircle Publications), and “*Covid Spring, Vol. 2*” (Hobblebush Books). His latest poetry book, *Wooden Nutmegs*, is available from Encircle Publications

Yash Seyedbagheri is a graduate of Colorado State University's MFA fiction program. His work has been published in *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *The Journal of Compressed Creative Arts*, *Write City Magazine*, and *Ariel Chart*, among others.

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.

John Tustin's poetry has appeared in many disparate literary journals since 2009. fritzware.com/johntustinpoetry contains links to his published poetry online.

Diane Webster's goal is to remain open to poetry ideas in everyday life, nature or an overheard phrase and to write. Diane enjoys the challenge of transforming images into words to fit her poems. Her work has appeared in *Home Planet News Online*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Eunoia Review*, and other literary magazines.

Theodore Worozbyt is the recipient of fellowships from the NEA and the Alabama and Georgia Arts Councils. His books are *The Dauber Wings*, *Letters of Transit*, and *Smaller Than Death*. Recent work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Bennington Review*, *Conjunctions*, *Pithead Chapel*, *Po&sie*, and the anthology, *Gracious: Poems from the 21st Century South*.

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