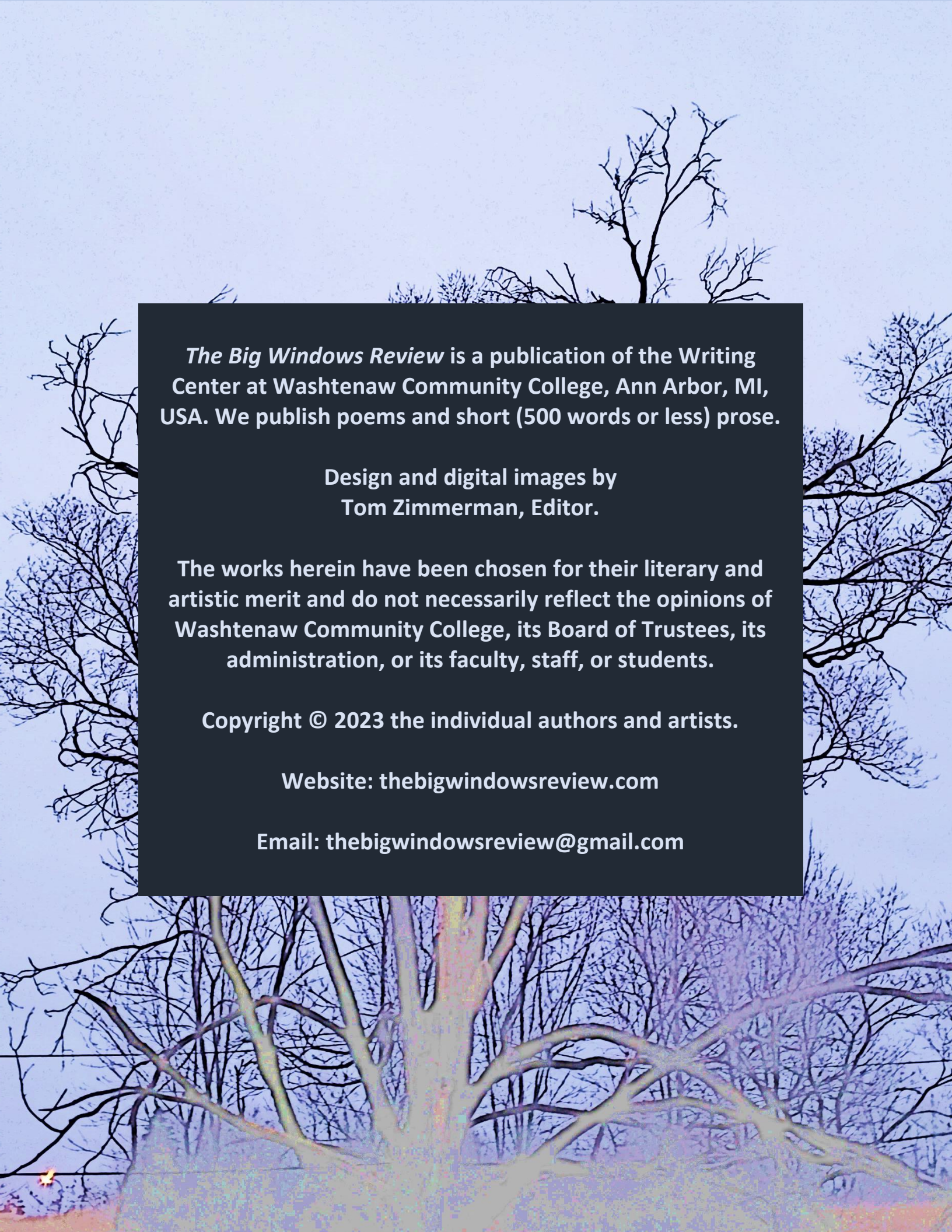


The Big Windows Review

Issue 30 Winter 2023





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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your shadow

My shadow touches the wind around us and cuts my soul to place it in your arms. Sometimes I draw myself as a stilted stick figure with my hands on my head. Sometimes I let the simplicity of it remove my shadow from your gaze. People paint with their hearts and try to make it a song of love. I let my shadow fall into yours and mix together, black ink on black ink against the night sky create warmth likening to a forehead kiss. I am grief and I am love. These two try to coalesce and wander around us, they become the wind that cut me. It's been a few minutes and all you've done is look at me and all I've done is look at you looking. It's been years and we are still here, placing our grief and love on our shadows that never lost touch. No one gets up to find their shoes and walk away. This is the only way for me to tell you I am here.

Green

A sea of green I see, from every tree house portal, a shimmering, gleaming, billowing symphony of green, green leaves shaped like fat needles, curvaceous lakes, Christmas trees, ovals with jagged edges; Green – spindly, jutting, and flowering, bushes, weeds, plants of all sorts, stretching, poking, screaming, oblong, skinny, bulbous – all luminous green; a trimmed green lawn soaked in morning dew; a lone brown-breasted robin nibbling, lost in a sea of green; the cacophony of birds chirping, chiming, hooting, cawing, whistling, caroming from tree to tree, yup – all green; and even the occasional pink peony bursting, exploding, an exclamation point in Mother Nature’s unwavering, unrelenting, unstinting sea of ... the infinite shades, a painter’s palette, lime, seafoam, jade, forest, pickle, spruce, to name a few, every view, every vantage; spiced with the smell of freshly cut green grass, seasoned with a whiff of green basil, green mint, green thyme, green sage, erupting, volcanic like ... everywhere. Really, nothing but ... green.

Where Ghosts Live

the house was cold
the windows had not been opened in months.
The sun shot arrows through the blinds.
My feet scuttled across the hardwood
 dragging a chill through my bones.

What kind of ghosts live in temperate climes?
Do they prefer the beach and its white sand?
What about volcanic ash, difficult breathing?

Hauntings seem impractical if everyone is sweating.

I woke with a chill this morning but mostly
it was a matter of brief forgetting
a state of
affairs
ideal for hiding hurt.

Untitled

in the darkness
we speak out our feelings
protected by our dimmed perceptions
words in the morning are easily denied
attributed to moonlight and wine
and you do not fool me when I touch you
you come undone when things slip into comfort
you run away and brace the winds and test your strength
because this story is nothing new
and you are not the first story waiting to happen
to spill into the sunlight

Leah Browning

Three Sheets

He shotgunned another beer before he called his sister. She'd been leaving him message after message; the tape on the answering machine was threadbare by this point. "It's about time," she said when she heard his voice, hers snappish as ever, because she was the younger sister and never tired of being disappointed by the scraps and hand-me-downs that life had thrown her way.

What did she want, though? She never said—at least, not until after the fact—preferring instead to play the martyr. He got up to find a book of matches and almost knocked over a floor lamp. Tiredness had made him clumsy.

Outside, it was starting to snow. He lit a cigarette, holding the phone between his cheek and shoulder as she rattled off her latest list of grievances. Then, "So what do you have to say about that?" It was a statement, not a real question, and he wasn't sure what to take from it. Sometimes he was in the mood for her guessing games, or at least a willing participant. Tonight, he couldn't muster the energy.

They went through the motions. Contrition (on his part, of course), and a short lecture—he needed to get his life together, tomorrow is a new day, et cetera, all the staples—and the call ended on a good note, he thought. He'd managed to hold up his end of the bargain.

She hung up the phone and said, "Well, he was three sheets to the wind." She drummed her fingers restlessly on the table. It was getting late. She stood and paced around the room, thinking, thinking. But what could be done? He lived two states away. Briefly, she paused at the window, pulling the curtains back and looking outside. Her pulse was racing. "You should have heard him," she said.

Her husband looked up from the newspaper and nodded. Her pronouncements didn't usually require much of a response. She just liked the running commentary to be acknowledged. She walked into another room. When he had finished the last

few pages, he extinguished the fire and went up to bed. Downstairs, he could hear her clattering around in the kitchen, unloading and reloading the dishwasher, and talking to the dog. From this distance, he couldn't make out the words. The dog was old and deaf, though, and didn't seem to notice or mind.

Then he must have dozed off, because the next thing he knew, she was climbing into bed. He could smell the lotion she slathered onto her skin every night in the bathroom. There was a click, and a soft rush of air as the heat turned on. Next to him, she shifted and sighed and pushed her pillows this way and that.

He closed his eyes again and thought of her brother, and the dog downstairs in its bed, and his wife, and everyone else on this cold night, all of them turning and turning and turning, trying to find a comfortable position.



Talk to the Politician About Tea and Poetry

I'm a natural reaper
I till the land
My harvest was taken away from me
Trade in my fruits
For the blood of the enemy
Tea and oil
Slaves and politics
The drums will come

I was told to go back
Where I came from
From New York to Africa
This is my land
From the goldmines
To the diamond mines
Pick the cotton and sugarcanes
Cut down the trees

This is where I come from
From the honeybees
To the bridges and mountains
The mothers and fathers
Sisters and brothers
The seas and oceans
Tug at my coat
Coat of Many Colors

Somebody talk to me
Electric love and peace
Haters keep on hating
Crack a grain in the bottle
Tears and fears
Put a grain in my mouth
But I don't taste anything
This is where I come from



Holly Day

Attempt

I had just stepped into the street when I felt myself getting yanked back
thought someone was trying to save me from getting hit by a car but no
the kid I'd been talking to for the past block
was trying to steal my purse. I grabbed the strap
threw my weight into it
tossed the 20-something onto the ice where he almost fell
before running off.

"You shouldn't be so friendly with strangers,"
my husband said when I joined him on the other side of the street.
"You might get hurt next time."

When we got home, I ordered a set of knives
all different sizes, to wear around my neck and shove in my pocket
because next time, I'd be the one on the offensive
I'd cut the hell out of the person trying to steal my purse
send them to the hospital
or at least make them easy to identify.

When the knives came in the mail, I practiced how I'd carry them
wore one around my neck for a week just to get the feel of it
practiced drawing it quickly out of its sheath, made stabbing motions
I would be prepared.

After a while, though, I started worrying about the person
who might try to rob me, wondered what would happen
if I accidentally killed them, some kid my son's age
slit their wrist and let them bleed to death
put out an eye and blinded them for life.

"I just won't talk to strangers anymore,"
I promised my husband, without mentioning all the knives
I'd been hiding in my purse, wearing as jewelry
slipping into my pockets whenever we left the house.
"I'll just be super unfriendly, and it won't be a problem."

The Plane

A jet-fueled torpedo
slices sound into
sharp-edged fragments
that sever wind's
soft brush through pine
needles, splits blue
sky with a white
contrail that slowly
blurs with the plane's
retreat across a far
horizon and roars
dissolve into a quiet
blush of breeze.

Distortion

I want to know a little something,
why no one understands how the build-up
of wax in an ear clouds what they see in the bottom
of a tea cup

those clumps and frays of wet leaves
mean everything to those who know how
to read. are the instructions not clear? too cryptic?
for the sighted only?

i beg to display what the doctor pulled out
how he laid it on a tiny metal plate
for me to see. *There's the problem*, he said.

Night Thoughts (After Mei Yao Chen)

I can see nothing moving
on this dark night.
The sky is a black pit.
The moon is a thin slit.
There's no one
to share wine with.
In a bare oak tree,
I stare at a heron's nest.
The young have departed.
The nest is now empty.
I'm sixty-three.
I drink my wine alone.
When young I'd find
a symbol for a poem.
But herons
and that oak tree
mean nothing now to me.

George Freek

Poem Written in November (After Tu Fu)

I part my curtains and stare
at the distant moon.
Beyond the dead moon,
the stars are dying.
I lay alone in my bed.
Clouds huddle together,
speaking of nasty weather.
The blue grass at the river's edge
is frozen. It will snow.
It won't be long.
I've reached sixty.
Spring is still far off.
I watch leaves fall from the trees.
Life is a terminal disease.
I suddenly fall to my knees.



The Pursuit of Happiness

“Are you happy?” Felecia asked.

Vance expressed surprise. “What sort of question is that?”

She nibbled the chocolate cake before her, then laid down her fork, gazing at the horizon as she savored the flavor.

The aroma made Vance’s mouth water. “How can you stop at one bite?”

Her eyes returned to his. “Would you like the rest?”

He raised his palms in denial. “If I started, I’d want the entire cake.”

She smiled. “You might find a taste more satisfying.”

He huffed. “I doubt that.”

“Even after a good meal, don’t you relatively quickly want another?”

“Sure.”

“Eating is a fleeting pleasure.”

“But natural and necessary.”

Felecia chuckled. “Not a whole chocolate cake. Reducing the urge for unnecessary things eliminates unhappiness over unfulfilled desires.”

“How do you define unnecessary?”

Felecia mused. "You've just released a video that went viral on TikTok. I'm wondering how you feel?"

Vance frowned. "Happy but not satisfied."

Felecia shook her head in disappointment. "Your video is trending, and you can't take more than a moment to enjoy the achievement?"

Vance leaned back, kneading his chin. "I need a second hit. Something to top the first. But my mind's a blank, and in a week, people will forget me."

"You're pursuing fame?"

"Yes, but becoming an 'influencer' also has financial rewards."

"How much money would make you happy?" she asked.

"Enough for a penthouse in Manhattan, a Ferrari, vacations in Europe, and a private jet to get me there."

"Wow. Your net worth will require a lot of zeros."

Vance nodded. "I suppose."

Felecia scoffed. "Society induces false beliefs about what we need. Vain desires like power, wealth, and fame are insatiable. Past a certain point, they add little happiness."

"I can't agree. Anyway, what's your answer?"

"I rather focus on tranquility and freedom from fear."

"I don't want to die a one-hit wonder."

"Fear of death causes unnecessary anxiety. There's no Heaven or Hell. Don't worry about it."

“What about God?”

“God exists but isn’t involved with humans. He has zero troubles, so why get involved with people who might bring Him down?”

“What about the ethics of doing good versus evil?”

“Live a virtuous life to avoid the pain of not doing so and the societal consequences of your bad behavior. But a fear of God causes unnecessary trepidation.”

“You still haven’t told me your formula for happiness.”

“A self-sufficient life surrounded by friends you can count on.” Felecia’s eyes held Vance’s. “Especially, a soulmate.” She paused before continuing. “Better to dine on bread and water with a friend than to eat chocolate cake alone.”

Vance took Felecia’s hand. “I enjoy being with you.”

She squeezed back. “The mind misunderstands happiness. There’s a diminishing return on pleasure – say another viral video. Chasing yet another hit, you’ll continue to be tormented that you might lose your popularity, blunting exaltation at your achievement.”

With a sigh, Vance released Felecia’s hand. “Perhaps, I’ll never be happy.”

Sacrifice

I stood beneath the ash tree
Full of guilty appreciation
For the splendid death of its leaves,
The mass sacrifice at Nature's behest,
Because I knew the parting must have been cruel.
Their colors were pure and liquid
(I could feel them running through my fingers)
And as I stood among them
I heard their empty veins cracking like bones,
And I felt the arrival of a new, darker season
When moons and harvests would ride the equinox
And bronze latitudes as if they were horses,
To rout summer's honeyed inertia.

Stephanie L. Harper

Winter Poem

—*For Matthew*

Another Indiana winter
sets down its brown
incarnate sentence,

 a barred owl hovering
over a cornfield's scoria—

 a story of things fallen
prey to the talons of cold
punctuated with naked
chalk-white sycamores:

The giant silver maple's orphaned hands
amass on the backyard deck;
the pin oak's fists clench
in brown protest.

December's subdued rays reach
through the windows; their orange suggestion
of warmth stippling the living room
is yet another of winter's ruses
condemning

 your beloved Oregon's evergreen
to memory's rearview...

Here, in Indiana,
even the cat's shed whisker,
a once-white shaft now absorbed
into the office desk's walnut veneer,
is a casualty of this annual assault,
left brownly inert

when the illusory-tropical summer
you'd been savoring vanished.

My son, what weighs on you I wear
around my trunk like the husk of a dormant oak
& grow older in my latency as I weather
your browner seasons.

I know it wasn't for my sake
that you just passed the day's failing light online,
enrapt in looping time-lapses of a solar flare
on NASA's website,

to defy the brown in your mind
with a new winter paradigm—

of charged particles' earthward-careening
promise to ignite the thermosphere purple-green
before the oncoming front of December's first snow—

but, oh, how seeing you
find your way aloft in this long night
of things prey to falling

has lifted me.



In the Wavelength of Light

red is the longest color, a primary,
bold, blazoning in shades of look-at-me
daring. Embracing natural undertones
of expressiveness, it has become the face of
danger. Nature's warning of venom's presence,
man's signal to cease progression. Yet its allure
remains. Tangible desire drips from its hue
as it shades our eyes with images of love.
Hearts and roses give rise to depth, the heated
center of passion, sex. Lipstick and lingerie
resonate with resilient ability to incinerate
all male defense. A fitting tribute, a reminder that
while biting the apple may have caused the fall,
Eve must have looked good holding it.

Song of the Deeply Underappreciated

Who is in charge of the ratings for this fine day
turning gray around the edges? So many hard objects
are jockeying for the number one position. A bright
idea is gaining on them, and the weather is always
a solid contender. What will hold my attention? It has been
made to be grabbed, but I would like some caressing.
Perhaps a ripple through the grass or a vague form
settling on an unconcerned rock. I smell the exhaust
of a handheld machine. Now there's this song of the deeply
underappreciated trying to climb to the top of the charts.

**This poem first appeared in the anthology Open: Post Pandemic Anthology of Literature.*

The Bleak

from the void
the bleak arises
grey-eyed, sleepy, slow, it slinks
into the unattended mind. it's cunning,
hides behind a host of masks — not just despair
or sorrow.

here it brings us accidie:
we face the future with dull fear,
unable to prepare, to plan;
here it brings obsession, as our houses fill
with piles of what we don't desire,
but cannot bear discarding;
here it plays with recollection,
blocking snippets of the past,
apparently at random.

it needs such drab disguises,
for if once we recognise it, see its face for what it is,
it loses power —
can be flushed out,
defeated.

Shake Hands with Impermanence

I appreciate hands,
those with natural gifts and learned skills,
admire the ones that push aside the ordinary and plain.

Some make flour rise with free spirits,
direct ingredients from the farmer's market
to act in a culinary play.

Others merge planks of wood to build custom furniture and floors,
with beauty and function,
or cut right-angled shelves to shelter food, books, and ideas.

Skilled potters mold clay, form and glaze ceramics
with the fulcrum of eyes in their fingers,
make objects that will hold things and balance the weight of rooms.

Jewelry makers place select metals and gems into circles of light.
Fabric craft hands create unique coverings to give comfort
for people, walls, and naked floors.

Balancing nuances of colors,
artists draw and paint from ethereal dreams.
Some carve living features into the hearts of wood and stone.

Musicians use keys, opening sounds from sensory stories,
swirling in space with tapping steps
of barefoot notes, dancing in the sky.

These creative ones, listen to fleeing moments,
hear silent voices,
gently shake hands with impermanence.

Stephen C. Middleton

Water Torture

Before the plague
Raw hands wept

Allergy, OCD
& conditions dormant this quarter century
Skin porous

Even water
Caustic on infected eczema

Chapped & ripped as I slept

Or: the very minimum of requirements
(Expectations floor level)

From here to Flint, Michigan
Far more than trace elements

Allodynia
Water torture
'Not on the face'

Gardening with My Daughter

Sun rays erect a wall
behind us,
and on that canvas
I and my daughter
paint an orchard.

The bonsai town
sprawls around.
Our garden is the giant.
I have seeds on my palm.
Our voices explaining
soil and sun sink the traffic
of the toy cars left beyond
for this moment.

Passing Through En Route to Nowhere Better

How much ginseng should one expect
in a bottle from a vending machine,
or luxury in a discount motel,
or France from its continental breakfast?

I don't mind — this is my habitat when not at home,
comfortably generic, the staff furtive
if not helpful — we're all assholes to our backs
and in that sense equal before the raw
anxiety of underpaid labor.

Any other citizenship remains
an elusive memory from an age
before we ground the seed corn and set fire
to the last of the unsold furniture.

My mind's still clenched like my toes
from a four hour flight to the same damned place
spread over the Potemkin boulevards
that pass for public squares — each kiosk
a variant of the same six warehouses.

Each worker sweats through a store-bought smile
as a few blocks away the roads break up
to dwindle into nests of invasive weeds,
the double-wides aping the pressboard mansions.

Ambition's an artifact of reality shows,
an absence of despair, but in its place
faith in the ill intentions of the Other,
and here a visitor, bringing the same
conceit of normality, believing

somehow in restoration, as if
we could just find a world we agreed on.



The Search

So much of the matter that makes up the helix of our being is neither human nor animal, but the stuff of cosmos—stardust mangles under time's bed, hairs from renegade comet tails, shards from planets and stars long dead, debris from the jumble tumble of eternity that has bonded us into one species in love with the idea of forever. The imprint hidden in there somewhere, before the union of sperm and ovum, before the zygote grows an alien-looking head with closed eyes that see, before the thumb buds and mouth slits to suck nourishment in the secret amniotic sea of dreams where we rock until the water breaks, and we are cast upon the shores of light where we learn to wait through the nights and days, to spend our lives searching for who we are.

Avian Dance

In the winter my grandfather fed the birds. I followed him to the garage, my red galoshes squeaking across the hard packed snow, our breath billowing out of our noses in a fog of white vapor.

The sparrows sat in a line, their toes curled around the wire of the garden fence, a brigade of small fluffed out soldiers awaiting their orders.

He'd fill a half pound coffee can with little yellow seeds and fling them across the snow, dappling the white ground with tiny pieces of gold.

The birds would rise from the fence in a gray-brown cloud, bodies swooping up and down, peeping, twittering and chirping as they fed.

Many, many years later I feed the birds, trying different nuts, berries, and seeds to see what will come to the feeders. Where I live there are five different species of woodpecker. How many will I see? Only three so far.

Bluebirds arrive in January attracted to the mealworms—also starlings—they bring their friends—fifty or seventy uninvited guests for dinner. That bright red spot against the snow is a cardinal, watching, waiting for his turn at the sunflower seeds. Strutting across the patio is a wren, bold and sassy, loudly demanding her right to the worms.

It's a late winter afternoon. I sit on the couch, my favorite cat in my lap, the sun streaming through the western windows. Fluttering up then down, feathery shadows create an avian ballet across the cream walls of the room, ethereal and beautiful.

Attracted by the commotion a Coopers Hawk alights on the fence. A musical smorgasbord presents itself and he too must eat. Abruptly the yard is silent. The

birds have disappeared. He sits for a few moments, surveying the scene, then gives a frustrated cry, lifts off, and is gone.

Moments pass—a lone chickadee darts out of the bushes. She has the feeder to herself. The ice broken, more return. The yard is a hub of activity again.

I am transfixed, delighted—addicted—all because my grandfather fed the birds.



Bryant Smith

Visitation

White horse, red birds, and black dogs

My Aunt Betty's favorite animals, she'd say
In a wood-paneled sitting room filled with trinkets
Each creature immortalized in painted ceramic

My Aunt Betty's favorite animals, she'd say
As we sat sticking to the vinyl couch
Each creature immortalized in painted ceramic
Watching us while we made small talk over the blaring TV

As we sat sticking to the vinyl couch
Will this be me someday?
Watching us while we made small talk over the blaring TV
My apathetic offspring

Will this be me someday?
Talking about nothing to fill the time
My apathetic offspring
Watching the clock and eyeing the door

Talk about nothing to fill the time
In a wood-paneled sitting room covered in trinkets
My apathetic offspring:
White horses, red birds, and black dogs

Love Is Wasted On Lovers

Love is wasted on lovers –
Those childlike and selfish satyrs and sirens
Traipsing lackadaisically through the gardens of man
As the world burns around them.
Obsessed with their lusts and their feelings;
With their watered-down vision,
Prettier than fields of flowers,
Stronger in their moment than venerable oaks
And dumber than a dog
Who drowns fighting his own reflection in the lake.
Smiling their smiles of reciprocation and satisfaction,
They tapdance on the hearts of the rest of us –
Unknowingly, uncaringly:

Us mere mortals who have never felt the sting in the heart
From the pluck of the bow
And those former lovers who fell to the ground defeated
And never got the lucky breaks
To strap the gloves back on
And step into the ring one more time
For a rematch with romance.

Dominque Williams

Visitation

Your spectral presence haunts my slumber from time to time.

Weaving slowly in and out of my cerebral labyrinths, you appear as a shining example of someone whose blemishes I once held dear.

I sense admiration and all our unspoken words quietly unravel in dormancy.

You have maneuvered a complicated route to find me. Don't you know I would have gladly given you proper directions had you asked?

Or was it I who was guilty of evasion?

I no longer remember.

Sanctimony explodes as stardust bathing us in mutual exoneration.

My movie begins and concludes in seconds, the celluloid film strip exhausting itself as I awaken to unsettled disquiet.

Gratitude overwhelms.

And painful recollections dissipate,

Burning.

Ebbing with the tide.

Drowning.

No more languishing; it seems I have captured something of you.

Don't ever withdraw from my thoughts.

Remain in my illusions; our only hope for rapprochement.

And let bittersweet evocations transform into absolution.



Waves

You hold your ground through a tidal wave of thought, rushing, pounding, drenching you, and you said you wouldn't ruminate, wouldn't fixate. That you wouldn't stare into the water, searching until your forehead burns and your mind is mush and all you know is impulse. Because impulse tells you to cup your hands and let the water pour over them, and you check it, examine it, decode it—turn it over in your mind as you try to scour an ocean of water for the tiny speck of sand that will finally tell you what went wrong. But the sand tells you nothing, sand is only sand, and thoughts are water, so you stop and breathe and take your hands out of the ocean, because you're drenched but not drowning. You're building dams, digging ditches, learning to direct the water away, to put it to use. That's good mental hygiene, that's brushing your teeth and washing your face with soap and water, but not with the tidal wave because all you can do is let it flow around you. You let it go. You stand steady until the wave sinks again, only as high as your ankles. Only then do you cup your hands and splash yourself and let the coolness soothe the burning in your head.

Secrets

Walking in the foothills,
together, you wearing that wide-brimmed,
floppy hat, which cost you dearly when you
flirted with what amounted to a salesboy,
right in front of me, as if I were your cuckold,
and you were my hotwife, even though we
were never married.

Step by step, stride for stride,
we negotiate the path, with wild grasses
marking our way, grey clouds overhead
like boats without sails, drifting: the day
a circle, your tenseness palpable,

the wind blowing by us like someone we
can't remember, like you with your secrets,
and your thinking about things you think
I don't know.

On Your Leaving

Things end. Except for those that don't.
Like the serpent's circle or parallel lines
that never meet.

It is said that the Buddha experienced
a hundred-thousand past lives the night
before he attained enlightenment, and that
we exist within an infinite past that is behind
us and an infinite future that is in front of us.

You may believe that something is over,
but truly, that may not be the case. I ask,
what can eventually cease that never really
began?

Your leaving was like the autumn leaves
that have fallen to the ground, and have been
covered up by the first snows of winter,

waiting for the thaw to be revealed.



Contributors

Syed Raian Abedin is an avid learner in all things pertaining to art and literature. He is one of the founders as well as an Editor-in-Chief of *Kitchen Sink: A Literary Journal*, the first online journal in Bangladesh dedicated entirely to poetry.

Peter Aronson writes, “I am a former journalist and attorney and now I write short stories, children’s books and essays. My most recent book, *Mandalay Hawk’s Dilemma: The United States of Anthropocene*, a middle-grade novel about kids fighting global warming, was published in December 2021. (For more info about my books, please see www.peteraronsonbooks.com.) My short fiction has appeared in *The Coachella Review*, *Shark Reef*, *Potato Soup Journal*, and *Bright Flash Literary Review*.”

Joe Baumann’s fiction and essays have appeared in *Phantom Drift*, *Passages North*, *Emerson Review*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Electric Literature*, *Electric Spec*, *On Spec*, *Barrelhouse*, *Zone 3*, and many others. His debut short story collection, *Sing With Me at the Edge of Paradise*, was chosen as the inaugural winner of the Iron Horse/Texas Tech University Press First Book Award, and his second story collection, *The Plagues*, will be released by Cornerstone Press in 2023. His debut novel, *I Know You’re Out There Somewhere*, is forthcoming from Deep Hearts YA. He can be reached at joebaumann.wordpress.com.

Margot Block has been writing since the age of fourteen and has been published in *Zygote Magazine*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *Juice*, *The Collective Consciousness*, *Voices*, *Grub Street Literary Magazine*, *Bakwa Magazine*, *Cholla Needles*, and the online journals *BlazeVox*, *Kaleidoscope Online*, *The Bombay Review*, and *Kritikos: A Postmodern Journal of Cultural Sound, Text and Image*. She participated in the high school mentorship program with the Manitoba Writers Guild, working with Canadian poet Carol Rose. She won first prize in a poetry contest sponsored by the Writers Collective and an honorable mention in a poetry contest with the Lake Winnipeg Writers Group.

Leah Browning is the author of *Two Good Ears* and *Loud Snow*, flash fiction mini-books published by Silent Station Press. Her stories have been published in *Harpur Palate*, *Four Way Review*, *Flock*, *Necessary Fiction*, *The Petigru Review*, *Valparaiso Fiction Review*, *Newfound*, *Watershed Review*, *Superstition Review*, *Parhelion Literary Magazine*, and elsewhere.

Jakima Davis writes, “I made my debut in 2000. Published three chapbooks and a broadside. I’m working on a haiku manuscript, and expecting a full volume soon. I’ve been published in underground publications. This is my fourth appearance in *Big Windows*.”

Holly Day’s writing has recently appeared in *Analog SF*, *The Hong Kong Review*, and *Appalachian Journal*, and her hobbies include kicking and screaming at vending machines.

Richard Dinges, Jr. lives and works by a pond among trees and grassland, along with his wife, two dogs, three cats, and ten chickens. *WINK*, *Green Hills Literary Lantern*, *SBLAAM*, *Roanoke Review*, and *Home Planet News* most recently accepted his poems for their publications.

John Dorroh continues to write poetry about dreams, snippets of conversation, deaths of his dogs, being a nosy neighbor, and other unexplained things that pop into his head. Three of his poems were nominated for Best of the Net. Others have appeared in journals such as *Feral*, *River Heron*, *Shark Reef*, and *Selcouth Station*.

George Freek’s poetry appears in numerous Journals and Reviews. His poem “Written At Blue Lake” was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His collection *Melancholia* is published by Red Wolf Editions.

Joe Giordano’s stories have appeared in more than one hundred magazines, including *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Shenandoah*, and his short story collection, *Stories and Places I Remember*. His novels include *Birds of Passage*, *An Italian Immigrant Coming of Age Story*, and the Anthony Provati thriller series, *Appointment with ISIL*, *Drone Strike*, and in June 2022, *The Art of Revenge*. Visit Joe’s website at <https://joe-giordano.com/>

Melinda Giordano is from Los Angeles. Her pieces have appeared in *Scheherazade's Bequest*, *The Rabbit Hole*, *Lazuli Literary Group*, *Vine Leaves Literary Journal*, and *After The Art*, among others; she was also twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She speculates on remarkable things—the secret lives of the natural world.

Stephanie L. Harper lives and writes in Indianapolis, IN, where she earned her MFA from Butler University. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *Red Wheelbarrow Literary Magazine*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Vox Populi*, *The Night Heron Barks*, *The Dodge*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Resurrection Magazine*, and elsewhere.

A. J. Huffman is a poet and freelance writer in Daytona Beach, Florida. She has published 27 collections and chapbooks of poetry. In addition, she has published her work in numerous national and international literary journals. She is currently the editor for Kind of a Hurricane Press literary journals (www.kindofahurricane.com).

Tim Kahl [<http://www.timkahl.com>] is the author of *Possessing Yourself* (CW Books, 2009), *The Century of Travel* (CW Books, 2012) *The String of Islands* (Dink, 2015), *Omnishambles* (Bald Trickster, 2019), and *California Sijo* (Bald Trickster, 2022). His work has been published in many journals in the U.S and abroad. He is also an editor of *Clade Song* [<http://www.cladesong.com>]. He is events coordinator of The Sacramento Poetry Alliance. He builds flutes, plays them and plays guitars, ukuleles, charangos and cavaquinhos and touches on many other instruments from around the world. He currently teaches at California State University, Sacramento, where he sings lieder while walking on campus between classes.

Peter J. King was born and brought up in Boston, Lincolnshire. Active on the London poetry scene in the 1970s as poet, editor, performer, publisher, and organiser, he returned to poetry in 2013 after a long absence, and has since been widely published in journals and anthologies. He also translates poetry, mainly from modern Greek (with philosopher Andrea Christofidou) and German, writes short prose, and paints. His currently available collections are *Adding Colours to the Chameleon* (Wisdom's Bottom Press), *All What Larkin*

(Albion Beatnik Press), and *Ghost Webs* (just out from The Calliope Script).
<https://wisdomsbottompress.wordpress.com/peter-j-king/>

David Lipsitz started writing poetry 50 years ago. His poems have appeared in *The Big Windows Review*, *Washington Square Review*, *From The Depths*, *Chaffin Journal*, *Cape Rock*, *Main Street Rag*, and other poetry publications.

Stephen C. Middleton is a writer working in London. He has had five books published and been in several anthologies. He was editor of *Ostinato*, a magazine of jazz and jazz-related poetry. He has been in magazines worldwide, including in the US, Australia, Canada, the UK, & mainland Europe.

An author, journalist, and father, **Kushal Poddar**, editor of *Words Surfacing*, has authored eight books, the latest being *Postmarked Quarantine*. His works have been translated into eleven languages.

M. A. Schaffner lives with spouse and pugs in a house built cheaply 110 years ago in Arlington, Virginia. Their work has recently appeared in *The MacGuffin*, *Illuminations*, *The Writing Disorder*, and the anthology *Written in Arlington*. Earlier appearances included *Poetry Wales*, *Poetry Ireland*, and *The Tulane Review*. When not avoiding home repairs through poetry, M. A. wades through the archival records of the Second United States Colored Infantry (1863-66) with a view toward compiling a regimental history.

P. C. Scheponik is a lifelong poet who lives by the sea with his wife, Shirley, and their shizon, Bella. His writing celebrates nature, the human condition, and the metaphysical mysteries of life. He has published six collections of poems. His work has also appeared in numerous literary journals. He is a 2019 Pushcart Prize nominee.

Kaelin McGee Shipley is a writer from West Lafayette, Indiana. She has previously published short fiction and essays in *The Persimmon Tree*, *The Northwest Indiana Review*, and *Litbreak*, among others. Odd moments, interesting conversations, and unusual situations inspire her work.

Bryant Smith is Associate Professor English and Spanish at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana, USA. He is a lifelong learner and recently completed a graduate course in poetry. Various poems and a reflective essay resulted from this course.

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

Dominique Williams is a native New Yorker who holds degrees in Illustration and Interior Design. Her poetry has been published in *The Dark Sire*, *Detour Ahead*, *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *Better Than Starbucks*, *The Big Windows Review*, and *The Voices Project*. Her blog, www.dgsinteriors.blogspot.com focuses on interior design, art and architecture. Dominique is a member of SAG-AFTRA. She lives in East Harlem with her husband and rescue cat.

Catherine Yeates is a writer and illustrator. They received their PhD in neuroscience and create writing and art on themes of cognition, perception, and identity. They can be found at cjyeates.com.

Neal Zirn writes, "I was born and raised in the Bronx and I am a retired chiropractor. My work has appeared in numerous publications in the U.S. and Canada including *Blueline*, *Mudfish*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *Concho River Review*, *The Dalhousie Revue*, *The Big Windows Review*, and *Shot Glass Journal*. I have placed seven times in the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Contest and my chapbook, *Manhattan Cream*, was published by MuscleHead Press."



