

Exotic Passion Flower



Emela McLaren

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August 2023

Rings of the Moon

\$6.00



by Allen Field Weitzel

Poets' Espresso Review

Poetry/Art/Photographs

Volume 14 • Issue 5

edited by Patricia Ann Mayorga
poetsespressoreview@gmail.com



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1949 MGTC at the Fair

by Robert Austin



March Promenade



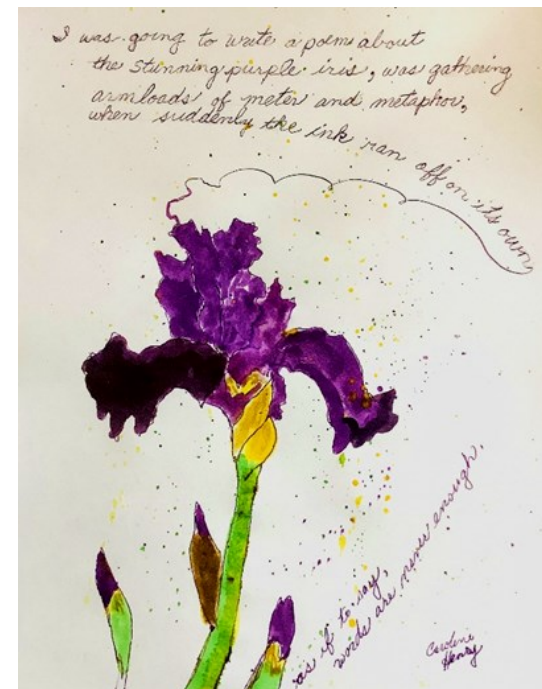
by Lisa Seligman

Steps
by
Patricia Ann Mayorga

*Walk gently
and you will feel
the pulse of the earth.*

Dawn: Lake Lytle, Oregon

by Lisa Seligman



by
Caroline Henry

Patricia Ann Mayorga
Scribed

She held the loneliness,
hung it on the branch of
her Oak. The faeries
perched while she wedged
herself safely.
Hours of tree songs
resonated.

Her smallness held
in a little seat while
learning a language more
difficult than those of
her Oak friends.

She held quietly, her timid
voice in hallways of
confusion, terrified
that three minutes
would not be enough time
to get across
a campus...

not nearly as efficient
as perfectly placed
branches from one
limb to the next.

In the quiet of her world,
her voice spilled across
silent lines where a key
locked her secrets
kept safely in a diary,

like the air faeries
lined on her Oak
singing stories
to the breeze
where her secrets gathered,
saved for later...

a time to share them
with the River.

Her words penned
in scattered journals,
one dried Oak leaf lies
in a small dish
set on lace next to a
few gathered acorns
found by the creek
in the quiet of an
old Native cemetery,
past her valley
in the countryside
where she sat on a
stump and wrote
while the breeze
lifted her stories...

and the ink spilt them
under the quiet of an old
Oak.



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Poets' Espresso Review would like to welcome our new writers, **Steve Brisendine (KS)**, **Karen O'Leary (ND)**, **Rishan Singh (S. Africa)**, **Seanain Snow (CA)**, **Søren Sørensen (FL)**, **Karen Thompson (GA)**, and welcome back **Christina Tabaka (DE)**. Thank you to all contributing

writers and artists for continuing to share your talents with *Poets' Espresso Review*. Please consider submitting black and white as well as color art and photographs for possible publication.

Thank you, Allen Weitzel for sharing *Rings of the Moon*, for the cover of *Poets' Espresso Review*. *Rings of the Moon* is a past oil painting of Allen's. Later he combined the piece with digital art photography. *Exotic Passion Flower* by Emela McLaren captures the intricate details of the delicate life within a flower. Thank you to both Robert Austin for sharing his acrylic piece *1949 MCTC at the Fair* and Lisa Seligman for her inspiring nature photographs, *March Promenade* and *Dawn: Lake at Lytle Oregon* featured on the inside and back inside covers of this issue. Throughout this issue the artwork and photography of talented artists and writers enhance the beauty of *Poets' Espresso Review*.

Thank you, to *San Joaquin Delta College* and the *Writers' Guild* for the partnership that keeps *Poets' Espresso Review* in print. In a world led by digital enterprise, it is important to have a collection of fine poetry and art bound in a small book that we can hold and set on our night table.

Thank you for all those who continue to contribute monetary donations that helps to keep *Poets' Espresso Review* in print. We have had to limit publications due to the continued economic impact on printing and mailing costs. Donations are appreciated and can be mailed to Patricia Mayorga, 1474 Pelem Ct., Stockton, CA 95203. Please address checks to Patricia Mayorga.



Thank you, Donald Anderson, for your continued dedication to our poetry journal that is available on line thanks to Donald's technical knowledge and support. It is the efforts of teamwork that keeps our poetry journal viable.

Website: poetsespressoreview.com

Sincerely,
Patricia Ann Mayorga
Editor-in-Chief
Poets' Espresso Review



Table of Contents

Simon Says, Line Dancing, Minimalist, Autobiography by Marty Walsh.....	1
Progressive Infusion, Grounded, A Portions of Success by John Zedolik.....	2-3
Untitled by Donald Anderson.....	3
Dear Mother by Seanain Snow.....	4-5
Choir by the Wayside, Through the Dragonfly's Eye, Argosy by Edward Fisher.....	6-7
Ideas from God by Allen Field Weitzel.....	7
Instead of Writing My Stupid Novel, Meditation at Twin Peaks by Brad Buchanan.....	8
Grandma, Aging, The Grand Canyon, The Path by Ann Privateer.....	9
White Leather Jumpsuit, Continental, The Bedside Book of Rain by Glen Armstrong.....	10-11
Spring Haiku by Linda Amos.....	11
Christina Rossetti Takes Chamomile, Standing in the Forest for the Tress, An Audubon-Guided Aubade by Deborah H. Doolittle.....	12
Donkeys and Double Bubble, Jumping into the Stanislaus by Daniel Williams.....	14-15
Winter Carnival, Star Watcher, Christmas Bells, Winter in the South by Maura Gage Cavell.....	16-17
Movements, The Snow Man by Millard Davis.....	18
Return to the Forest, Message from a Temperate Climate, Love is a Wild Wind by Michael Fraley.....	19-20
No Tears, Just Quiet Reflection, Aching with Loneliness, Haiku 49 by Linda Amos.....	21
Sharecroppers, Footfalls by Frank De Canio.....	22
Leatherwood Falls, Animals by Brenda Kay Ledford.....	23
An Optimistic Outlook, Onto Her Eyes, Birth by Mikel K.....	24
Queen Anne's Lace, Mother Tree, Faeries in Utero by Karen Thompson.....	24-25
Eighty-Six, The Good Old Days by C. David Hay.....	26
Chain, Resilience by Allison Grayhurst.....	27
Dandelion, Grief, Elegy for Lady Valerie by Cleo Griffith.....	28-29
Granny's Teapot by Caroline Henry.....	29
The Sunrise Draws Me, A Seagull's Sensibility, The Cold Climate by Marc Livanos.....	30
The Healing Place, Twilight Kiss by Josie Beaudoin.....	31
East 9, Winter Fugue by J. E. Bennett.....	32
Her Story, Delving into the Darkness by Ann Christine Tabaka.....	33
Zillo, Yellow by Søren Sørensen.....	34-35
Love Her, Love Her Dog: For Helen Qi Hong by Yuan Changming.....	36
Liberty by Harris Coverley.....	36
The Road of Scattered Debris, The Process Goes On by Bruce Levine.....	37
Breakfast with the Armadillo at the Commercial Street Diner, The See of Delia, Kansas is Vacant, A Fruitless Labor by Steve Brisendine.....	38-39
Wintry Bouquet, Blue Your Eyes by Joan Mc Nerney.....	40
Two Untitled by TWIXT.....	40-41
Derma, The Fezzan by Jeanine Stevens.....	41-42
Untitled by TWIXT.....	42
Something Else by Jeanine Stevens.....	43
Abstract by Emela McLaren.....	43
At the Escritoire, Morality, Patterned by Sanjeev Sethi.....	44
Fishing, Breeze Rising, Diver/Driver, Surrendered Fence by Diane Webster.....	45
My Best Love, How Did I Do, Where Will You Find Me, by Allen Field Weitzel.....	46
Four Corners by Patricia Ann Mayorga.....	47
Sobbing So Much, Joy Breathing, Reading You by Ahmad Al-Khatat.....	48-49
Arabella TippiToes, The House of the Lord by Susan Greenberg Feltman.....	49-50
Octavio Paws, Rain in the Foothills, Haiku by Michael Meinhoff.....	51
The First Song I Remember Hearing by Cassi W. Nesmith.....	52

Millard Davis

A Furthering Stream

In the stream there lay some boards held together
By nails so rusted you could hardly tell them
From paint, if there had been any there.
Except the water had washed that away
And made of a cart something that would carry
Not lumber or hay or even a driver except one
Who was there right then, one with a tongue
Wide enough to handle all rain sent its way.
The boards were soaked through and through
But still held their own in sunshine and storm.
I figured, though, that they were departing
And not letting us know day by day as if they
Had some thought other than ones we know.
It is a language we will never find out
But will give us entry to the fact it exists,
That there is something besides us here
And has been getting along with us all along--
Maybe more than just getting along
But setting a current leading us farther away
To places we don't really know anything about.
We really should decide to trust that stream.

Allen Field Weitzel

Perspective

When does
a fiddle become a violin,
a dream turn into a vision,
a friendship expand to love,
a moment swell into eternity,
sorrow drops to regret,
missing you becomes loneliness,
yet having you near becomes bliss.
Cameras, poems, or memories
can't freeze that instant.
But you and I
give this world
perspective.



Patricia Ann Mayorga

Whispers

The Earth became still,
traffic stopped.
Songs in the breeze
could be heard.

Butterflies came in abundance.
They had spread the word
about the stillness of the
two-legged foe.

Dragonflies came too,
they danced in circles like
ribbons decorating the clear
indigo heavens.

Air faeries sang and splashed
in the bird bath.

I sat quietly by the ivy
in the courtyard
sipping tea with
nowhere to go.

The squirrels came,
and the honeybees, and
tiny air flies;
the yard kitties sat quietly...
like the lion and the lamb.

The threat was gone.
The air cleared.
Many died, but not the
creatures who were likely
here first.

I heard that the deer and
mountain lions were
roaming freely in the city
by the water.
Perhaps they all thought
the land that was once theirs
was being given back.

The fog cleared a river path
in the sky and I think I heard
Angels singing,
“Hallelujah, Hallelujah.”

The pulse of the earth
took a breath,
the waters cleared,
the fish came to the surface,
and the crickets chirped.



Deep in My Couch by Michael Lee Johnson.....	52
Goats and a Photograph by Jerome Berglund.....	53
Beauty Parlour by Lynn White.....	54
I Have a Telling in My Garden, Mountain Sounds by Dylan Mabe.....	55
Haiku by Diane Webster.....	55
For the Truest of Treasures, There Is Still Heavy Hope, Yet, The Slap Seen All Heavenly Temples and Towers, Giants, Yourself in Another Giant City, A Flying Saucer by Yuan Hongri.....	56-57
Adjacent Lot, The Meat Cuber, A Man & His Cat by Ryan Quinn Flanagan.....	57-58
One More Decade by Benjamin Bennett-Carpenter.....	59
Haiku by Diane Webster.....	59-60
To Certainly Conquer a Somber Yonder, I Am Mini, Yet Most of the Cosmo by Brady Spicer.....	60-61
Porch Pirate, Golden Girl of Ghana, Warp and Weave by Gary Scheinoha.....	61-62
Afterglows, Fade in Silence by Wayne Russell.....	63
The Birth of Spring, by Michael D. Johnson.....	64
Crimson Scones, The Child by Rishan Singh.....	64
Blessed Is the House by Celine Mariotti.....	65
By the Taco Truck, Early Yellow by Jennifer Fenn.....	66-67
Of One Song by Karen O’Leary.....	67
Welcome Back, A Songbook of Flies, Elbows, Barley by Andres Leung.....	68-69
Haiku by Michael D. Johnson.....	69
See-through Wings, Fantastic Messes by Cassi W. Nesmith.....	70-71
Authors’ Biographies.....	72-80
Artifact Publications Opportunities.....	81
Haiku by Michael D. Johnson.....	81
After the Last Tornado, How Life Began, To Be or Not to Be, Exploring Rosebuds, a Delicate perfume of the Day by Milton Ehrlich.....	82-83
Advertisements and Announcements.....	84-85
Mama Baked a Memory by Betty Jo Ramsey Riendel.....	86
The Culprit by Julie Jose.....	86
No Playground Today by Susan Greenberg Feltman.....	87
Whispers by Patricia Ann Mayorga.....	88
A Furthering Stream by Millard Davis.....	89
Perspective by Allen Field W.....	89
Scribed by Patricia Ann Mayorga.....	90



Rings of the Moon by Allen Field Weitzel.....	Front Cover
Exotic Passion Flower by Emela McLaren.....	Back Cover
1949 MGTC at the Fair by Robert Austin.....	Inside Front Cover
March Promenade by Lisa Seligman.....	Inside Front Cover
Steps by Patricia Ann Mayorga.....	Inside Front Cover
<i>Dawn: Lake at Lytle Oregon</i> by Lisa Seligman.....	Inside Back Cover

Black & White Blossom



by
Emela McLaren

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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*Majorie Banks, Deborah H. Doolittle, Edward Fisher, Michael Fraley,
Celine Mariotti, Stephen R. Mayorga, Laura K. Spicer, Jeanine Stevens,
Sherry Tipton, Marty Walsh, Allen Field Weitzel*

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Mail submissions to Patricia Mayorga at 1474 Pelem Ct., Stockton, CA 95203 or email submissions to poetsessorview@gmail.com. Submissions can include **poetry**, **artwork**, and **photography**. All material must be appropriate for most age groups. **A two to four line biography is required.** A photograph of the author is optional, a return address, phone number and email address must be included.

Susan Greenberg Feltman

No Playground Today

It's a typical mid-summer day, big puffy marshmallow clouds filling the sky, stately ships sailing on a gentle summer breeze.

Safe inside your temperature-controlled house, you watch as the black asphalt driveway dances shimmering in the heat.

The sidewalk capitulates to the sun, 180 degrees and counting, almost boiling, hot enough to burn little hands and knees. No playground today.

The air is smoky yellowish-gray, filled with gritty bits of burned Canadian forest, an unwelcome gift from our polite northern neighbors.

You ponder whether it's worth going out, whether to hopscotch from the house to the car, to the store, and back again, darting from one man-made refrigerated ecosystem to the next, while outside the earth shudders as another glacier slides crashing into the sea.

Ocean levels are rising, the bees are disappearing. One after another, animal species are quietly going extinct.

And over it all presides the sun, bright symbol of cheerfulness, mother of all life here on earth. She has become our adversary, relentless, scorching, unforgiving.

The crops in the field already know this. Row after row, they stand sentinel, dejected and sad, yellow leaves barely stirring, sorrowful apologies for the vibrant food supply we somehow still take for granted.

The ecosystem perches unsteadily on the edge of a razor blade, poised for a great rebirth that will not include humans, while you blithely check your Facebook page for the twentieth time today, to see if your friend liked your funny post.

"Huh," you say, sipping your iced coffee,
"Somebody should do something about that."

Betty Jo Ramsey Riendel
Mama Baked a Memory

During the hot summer months, Mama rarely used the oven. Dinners were cooked on the stove top; sometimes in an electric roaster out in the garage; or the occasional treat of hamburgers, French fries, and milkshakes she picked up at Sno White on her way home from work. If she did bake in the summer, it was almost always early in the morning. The bedroom my sister and I shared growing up was across from the kitchen and I loved waking up to the smell of her baking.

A little memory brought to mind on this early July morning as the smell of someone baking nearby found its way through my open front room window.



Julie Jose
The Culprit

Anger came into the room
much to my dismay
He visits in the heat of day
with intent to slash and slay

Get out, get out - I say
Shaking my fist into the night
You've killed the scented flowers
You've waned the waxing moon
You've stilled the oceans' voices
Nothing left but dismal doom

I look beyond the silent room
My hands know what to do
to kill the Sadness Anger brings,
I arm myself with pen and ink.

Marty Walsh
Simon Says

A black-and-white
Color photo of boot
Treads across moon grit.

Simon says you may take
One small step for man,
One giant leap for mankind.

We came, we saw,
Were overcome
By what we saw...

Earthrise huge
And blue and misty
On the lunar horizon.

A glance back
From the first stepping
Stone at earth
From sea to shining sea.

And boot treads
Across moon grit--

Stepping off into the stars.

Marty Walsh
Line Dancing

A pair of boot cut jeans
and a floral print skirt
line dancing on the clothes-
line in the breeze
while two crickets fiddle
an old timey two-step
and the leaky outdoor
hose faucet under
the kitchen window drip-
drips on a kid's Frisbee
like a toe tapping fan keep-
ing kind of hit or miss time.

Marty Walsh
Minimalist

The spider's
a minimalist
setting the table.
Its place mat,
a sketchy web.

Then it waits.
And waits.
And waits,
without once
impatiently
taping its foot,
for a fly
to drop by
for dinner



Marty Walsh
Autobiography

I've wasted my life
writing poetry
so that I didn't
truly waste it
doing something else.

John Zedolik

Progressive Infusion

The cold tea at the trending
restaurant in the Embarcadero
was of chrysanthemum and its intrigue,
and, in little time, the waiter
deposited a glass apropos
for *vin blanc* in whose liquid
floated a single, shaggy golden flower
whose effect of old cigarettes
the patron now imbibed, noted
the flat, dust encumbrance
of ash tray on the tongue
now part of the meal, and addition
to the appetizer, appealing as the price
and barn-wood of the tables, whose grain
and lacquer, at least, they would not taste.

John Zedolik

Grounded

The way lies across the fresh black
asphalt that might still hold dear
the lower gray whose scars
the steamroller has healed—
pressure and heat the curatives
for this affliction of age and use
since this route is under—as all
real roads must be—so probably
keeps the memory as inscription
to dispel the fiction that this street
is untrodden, its dark the oblivion
of the sightless pristine.

Congratulations Jeanine Stevens for her recent publication

No Lunch Among the Day Stars.



In this collection, poems relate to the environment, cosmos, life span, art, science, lost knowledge, travel, and ancestry with the overall themes of resilience and endurance. Poems emphasize reciprocity or sharing of important ideas that were pulled from literature, film, history, prehistory, and culture. “Continent’s Edge” reminds us that the Wakamatsu Colony is still a presence in the foothills of the gold country. “Coffin Ship” details the perilous escape from Ireland’s Potato Famine. Glimpses of artwork include “Woman in Blue”, acorn hulls and spiked leaves replicate visible strokes on the canvas. The title comes from the poem, “Wind Chimes with Birds” about the resident hawk, a never-ending source of wonder as he surveys the entire valley perched high in the redwood. Published by *Cold River Press*. www.coldriverpress.com.



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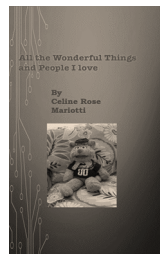
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\$40 for a page. Positions in the *Poets' Espresso Review* are first come, first serve basis. Approximate distribution is 150 copies every four months. Please consider supporting *Poets' Espresso Review* with ads or sponsorship so that the voice of poetry can live on!



Congratulations Celine Mariotti for her recent publication of *All the Wonderful Things and People I Love*.

Celine Mariotti's new poetry book *All the Wonderful Things and People I Love* include poems of her love of music, her guitar and banjo experiences, and poetry of the songwriters she admires such as Tom Jones, Paul Anka, Barry Manilow, and Frank Sinatra. *All the Wonderful Things and People I Love* is filled with the poetry of her love of family, friends, her collections of stuffed bears, as well as the entertainment of soap operas and the world of television. *All the Wonderful Things and People I Love* is an eclectic collection of poems where her words spill over to the New York Giants and the universe beyond herself.

The purchase price is \$12.95 plus \$4.50 postage and sales tax. Celine can be contacted at celinem@aol.com.



John Zedolik **A Portion of Success**

I chose the wrong trail
while ascending Angel Island
so missed the summit in my
parsed-out time though I did
glimpse the top where those
eponyms take flight or alight
whom a pilgrim might see
if in the correct loft of mind
even upon a false path, a fire
lane, only circling the crown
like a tonsure in reverse,
the eucalyptus massing
dark and dream-thick on each
side to confound the climber
on a sweating quest to the apex
commanding the attendant bay,
where near-heaven meets earth
at a sharp final edge, a port
for destinations down and up
whose node will bestow
a blessing even upon the hooper,
head befuddled and point unachieved.



Donald Anderson **Untitled**

The moment is a fragile diamond of the
morning sun bringing peace before the
rush of the world awakes. Listen.
Embrace lovingly the moment and awake.

Seanain Snow

Dear Mother

This piece was inspired by "The Thing Is" by the poet Ellen Bass.

You hold her in the palm of your hands —
you hold her with care and tenderness,
with awe, with joy.

You find the feathers she has left you,
the bright jewels they are,
on the forest floor, after she has
nourished coyote with scrub jay's flesh,
and you rejoice for all creatures
in the web of life.

You see the explosion
of coral-hued flowers atop
the Eleanor Roosevelt Jr.
geranium, and you celebrate —
the first lady's niece
had a garden nearby,
and this tremendous plant being
was named — if informally —
in her honor.

You move a pot
from one place in the garden
to another
and discover a thick, fleshy slug,
and you stand in awe
for this creature's stealth residence
and blackest of black
tentacles as they slowly, slowly emerge
to swirl around and sense you,
in your amazement.

Milton P. Ehrlich

To Be or Not to Be

Growing old, I'm haunted
by this question, and realize
my death would not be tragic,
maybe just a life well lived
that should be celebrated
for lasting such a long time.
Going to sleep every night
should I dream of not waking up?
And why this recurring image
of a bullet hole in my head?
How will I die and when will I die?
I will surely be the first to know.
Staring at my hands, I know I
could have done more with my life.
Letting go of all thoughts, I discover
stillness.

Milton P. Ehrlich

Exploring Rosebuds, a Delicate Perfume of the Day

As soon as I can learn how to
step out my old broken body,
I will flap my brand new wings
and fly across every blossoming
garden in an unstoppable search
for you and your perfumed self.
Like Napoleon once advised his
wife, Josephine, when planning
a visit home after a battle, he said,
"Please do not bathe so I can fully
enjoy your exquisite flowery scent."



Milton P. Ehrlich
After the Last Tornado

Sweet Emma
can be heard
everywhere.
There was no
more near or far,
and all you had
to do to find
the path out
of loneliness
was to feel
the softness
of a tulip's skin
to awaken you
to what you're
missing. Human
intimacy now!

Milton P. Ehrlich
How Life Began

During the night ladybugs
patrolled the cobblestone
roads of the village placing
signs advising everyone to
be here now; be here now
is all that matters, except
for the three rules: First is to be kind,
second is to be kind, third is to be kind.
When everyone awakened, they gave
the ladybugs a round of applause and
a hearty breakfast for working all night.
Strings of licorice candy was distributed
to all the young children. Later, fireflies
assembled in formation to let everyone
in town learn what happens next on the
way to finding genuine rapprochement.

Continued **Dear Mother**

You see Phoebe arrive for dinner.
She swoops in for a flying meal,
in every sense of the word —
she is, after all, a flycatcher,
she dines on winged creatures
while darting through the air.
You admire her jaunty black cap,
her endless acrobatics,
her striking beauty.

Whatever else you do
this day, and the next,
and the next day after that,
may you take our Mother
in the palm of your hands,
in the depths of your heart,
in the tenderness of your soul —
our Mother and all her beings,
even the human ones —
take them all up
and love them now,
love them tomorrow,
love them again.



“Don't bend; don't water it down; don't try to make it
logical; don't edit your own soul according to the
fashion. Rather, follow your most intense obsessions
mercilessly.”

~Franz Kafka

Edward Fisher
Choir by the Wayside

Lying on my back on matted grass
And pine-needle thatch in the Deep South
Time's gypsy weed on a dusty back-road
Where fingertip tendrils and climbing leaf
Ivy the mind...

Ghost-flowers growing over gray gravestones
Over hallowed ground, in a triptych of light,
Hum a hymnal only the church mouse hears—
A honeycomb heaviness in the shape of the heart
Like a Beggar's song...

The glory of morning on Solomon's lips,
Jack-in-the-pulpit in his Bishop's cap,
Up Jacob's ladder on rainbow rungs;
The sweet scent of apples in Adam's kiss
On an Adder's tongue...

Between the lines of a verse-turned lyre
Forbidden mandrake and Devil-bits
Venus's looking-glass and Queen Anne's-Lace,
Choir by the wayside in a sacred place
On Mount Parnassus

Edward Fisher
Through the Dragonfly's Eye

Lurking behind the colors of the day,
Behind the surface stillness of objects—
Silence and white noise in wavelengths of light.
The dwelling place of the old gods replaced
By hydrogen giants and white dwarf stars
And the mind at home on a falling planet.
The broken projects of the lost and found
Revealing the dark narrative of the heart
And the meaning of dreams, empty of symbols.
The mirror-world of the dragonfly's eye,
The phenomenal realm of a fragile web,
The reality of a drop of water
And the rainbow snake flaking off scales.
All join in one eternal, mortal cry...

San Joaquin Delta College

Get Published in ARTIFACT NOUVEAU

Artifact Nouveau Guidelines

Artifact Nouveau is a magazine of works by students, faculty, alumni, and employees of San Joaquin Delta College published by the SJDC Writers' Guild. Works by writers and artists unaffiliated with Delta College may be selected for publication for up to 15% of the overall content. Artifact Nouveau is currently accepting literary and visual art contributions. All genres and mediums are welcome.

Literary Submissions

- **Poem Length May Vary**
(Limit 10 submissions)
- **Short Stories: Max 1500 Words**
(Limit 2 submissions)

Visual Submissions

- Colored/Black and White
- JPG Format at 300 DPI
- Limit 10 submissions

Send Submissions to artifactsjdc@gmail.com

For Questions Email: sjdcwritersguild@gmail.com



Michael D. Johnson
Haiku

winter's freeze uncorked
bubbly brooks freely flow
spring celebrated



Karen Thompson is an artist, a storyteller, a dreamer, a follower of mystery and imagination. She commissions art, teaches private lessons, and meditative art in her senior community in Decatur, Georgia.



Marty Walsh lives in Winterport, Maine. His poetry has appeared in *Atlanta Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Freefall*, *POEM*, and *Poets' Espresso Review*. He is working on a second collection of poems tentatively entitled, *Eating Over the Kitchen Sink*.



Diane Webster resides in Colorado. She enjoys drives in the mountains to view all the wildlife and scenery and takes amateur photographs. Her work has been published in *Eunoia Review*, *Illya's Honey*, *The Hurricane Review*, and *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Allen Field Weitzel mentored under Michael McClure and Rod McKuen. He sold his first poem in 1965. Weitzel retired in 2012 after a 45-year career in the amusement park industry. Allen's poetry has been published in *Poets' Espresso Review* and is the author of *Flash Dream, Art & Poetry* (Amazon.com, 2021)



Lynn White is from North Wales. Her poem *A Rose For Gaza* was short listed for the Theatre Cloud *War Poetry for Today* competition, 2014. Lynn has been published in *Poets' Espresso Review* <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Lynn-White-Poetry/1603675983213077?fref=ts> and lynnwhitepoetry.blogspot.com



Daniel Williams, a poet of the San Joaquin and the central Sierra Nevada. He was born in Stockton, CA. He was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in poetry by the College of the Redwoods. His poems can be found in Yosemite's time capsules and on the MAVEN Martian Atmosphere Explorer. He is a sponsor of the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation in Carmel. Daniel has been published in *Poets' Espresso Review*.



John Zedolik is an adjunct instructor at Chatham University in Pittsburgh. John's poems have been published in such journals as *Abbey*, *Aries*, *The Chaffin Journal*, *Eye on Life Online*, *The Journal* (UK), *Plainsongs*, *Pulsar Poetry Webzine* (UK), *Straylight Online*, *U.S. 1 Worksheets*, *Poets' Espresso Review* and in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

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Edward Fisher
Argosy

Above the cadence of the waves
questing for food
 gulls catch the pale light of dawn
 staining their bellies and wingtips pink,
 their crazy-leg argosies
 in chevron shapes
crisscross over the breakers...

 Veering off over chimney and roof
they trace out their grace notes—
 a haphazard argot of sea spray,
 a zigzag alphabet
of cryptic characters,
 a crooked calligraphy
 littering the cove...

 where a solitary man
 walking his dog
 traverses the strand
 tossing sticks in the surf;

 At her window
 a lonely figure stands
 watching boats at the wharf
 haul in their tackle and nets

as the great master work of the waves rushes in
 like subtitles
scrawled in the sand at sunrise



Allen Field Weitzel
Ideas from God

Never said they were all mine.
One or two maybe, but most are odes
to your smile or simple ideas
from God. Never one to
let words be wasted.

Brad Buchanan

Instead of Writing My Stupid Novel

instead of writing my stupid novel
I should get my treatments more often
I should try a new medication
I should ask to be forgiven
I should be more present for my children
I should do my stretching exercises
I should cook my meals instead of Doordashing
I should fold down my driver's side mirror
I should Swiffer my sticky floor
I should make phone calls for social justice
I should compose the perfect love poem
I should take better care of my cat
I should ride my bicycle
I should take glucosamine and chondroitin
I should do another load of laundry
I should take out all that recycling
but these are my ways of procrastination
the main character needs a deeper motive
and I should try to give him one

Brad Buchanan
Meditation at Twin Peaks

if this body were as light
as free of pain
and grave unease
as I woke up today
wishing to be
it would be blown off
this steep dirt path
and would never find
its own way back
to this foggy point
of origin
I would fly lifeless
as a leaf
in a hurricane
I cherish the burdens
that keep it safe
the path that erodes
its friable feet
the twinge in its knees
that separates me
from a leap to death
at this headlong height

Rishan Singh is a South African poet. He received the Thekwini Municipality Library Award in 2014, together with a Los Angeles Honorarium for the poem "Octavia's Brood" in 2017. He resides in Durban, South Africa, where he is involved in many activities. rishansingh18@gmail.com.



Seanain ("Shannon"/she/her) Snow is a poet who lives in the Putah Creek watershed, within the City of Davis, CA. She gains inspiration for her poetry by studying the veins of leaves, the whiskers of cats, and the movement of clouds across the sky, among other gifts from this amazing earth. She is a plants woman, chemist, soap maker, fiber artist, and, most important, daughter, sister, mom.



Søren Sørensen is the pen name of a physics professor and an occasional poet. Sørensen's poems are existentialistic, despite the absurdity of human life and the hostility of the external world. Poe, Frost, Apollinaire, García Lorca, Camus, Kafka are some who have inspired Søren's poetic voice.



Peter Specker (TWIXT) is the mononym-onym of Peter Specker; he has had poetry published in *Amelia*, *Art Times*, *California State Quarterly*, *Confrontation*, *Epicenter*, *First Class*, *Margie*, *Pegasus*, *Poets' Espresso Review*, *Pot-pourri*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Quest*, *Rattle*, *RE:AL*, *Subtropics*, *The Iconoclast*, *The Indiana Review*, *Tulane Review*, and *Writers' Journal*. He lives in Ithaca, New York.



Brady Spicer was born and raised in the Pensacola, Florida area. He is a graduate of Pensacola State College with an associate degree in general education and the University of West Florida with a Bachelor's degree in General Studies and a minor in Art. He enjoys writing poetry, watching movies, and collecting comic books. Brady has been published in *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Jeanine Stevens latest publications: *No Lunch Among the Day Stars*, (Cold River Press, 2022), and chapbooks, *Ornate Persona* (Clair Songbirds Press, 2022), *Tea in the Nun's Library*, (Eyewear Publishing, UK 2022). She is the recipient of the MacGuffin Poet Hunt, WOMR Cape Cod Community Radio National Award, The Ekphrasis Prize, and The William Stafford Award. Jeanine has been published in *Chiron Review*, *Evansville Review*, *North Dakota Review*, and *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Ann Christine Tabaka was nominated for the 2017 Pushcart Prize in Poetry and for the 2023 Dwarf Stars award of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association. She is the recipient of Spillwords Press 2020 Publication of the Year.



Ann Privateer is a poet and artist. She began writing poetry in Ohio inspired by nature walks, moved to California where this practice continues. Her poems have appeared in anthologies and journals including *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Betty Jo Ramsey Riendel is a lifelong resident of Stockton, California. Betty Jo is a married mother of one daughter. She has been a Registered Nurse at San Joaquin General for 41 years and gives her sincere appreciation to Patricia Mayorga for her words of encouragement. Her poetic story telling has been published in *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Wayne Russell is a creative writer, world traveler, graphic designer, former soldier and sailor. He is the founder and editor of *Degenerate Literature* (2016-2017). His poem *Stranger in a Strange Town* was nominated for a Pushcart Prize and he was nominated for Best of the Net as editor of *The Abyss* in 2020. *Where Angels Fear* is his debut poetry book published by Guerrilla Genesis Press (2021) and he is a contributor to *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Heather Sager lives in Illinois. Her poetry has most recently appeared in *Fahmidan Journal*, *Magma*, *Poets' Espresso Review*, *Red Elf*, *The Bosphorus Review of Books*, *Shabd Aaweg Review*, and *The Orchards*. She recently contributed fiction to *The Fabulist*.



G.A. Scheinoha is a poet and former columnist/literary journalist whose work appears *Hummingbird*, *Poets' Espresso Review* and other literary magazines.



Lisa Seligman is a Pittsburgh-based portrait and nature photographer specializing in imagery that engages the eye and inspires the soul. Lisa has exhibited in numerous groups and solo shows; her work has also been purchased by private and corporate clients including PNC Bank, Lincoln Investments, and Allegheny Health Network. Lisa's photography has been published in *Poets' Espresso Review*. Website: lisaseligman.com, Instagram: [@lisaseligmanphoto](https://www.instagram.com/lisaseligmanphoto)



Sanjeev Sethi is the author of five poetry collections. His poems have found a home in more than 375 journals, anthologies, and online literary venues. Recent credits: *Erbacee Journal*, *East Stand Magazine*, *First Literary Review*, *Outlook Magazine*, *Poets' Espresso Review* *The Lake*, and *The Recusant*. He lives in Mumbai, India.



Ann Privateer
Grandma

calls me to play
splash in the tub
our very own party
we giggle, pretend
pour tea until
it overflows
watch each other's
expression
her wet hair curls
my back aches
from sitting on the floor
drinking tea.

Ann Privateer
Aging

Arduous rain
Buttons the penumbra
calls the powerhouse
dances in the corner
elevates prayer
resists passivity
glides and never hides
isolates I from we
jostles what is
knows what is not
likes and remembers
ignores what comes next

Ann Privateer
The Grand Canyon

Is the chest of drawers
in the universe that
dances at your sight
when the engine ceases
to roar and you behold

Ann Privateer
The Path

Tangles through under-
brush
It weaves and turns
In complicated ways
Like a violin contemplat-
ing
S
The fallen leaves, the
timid

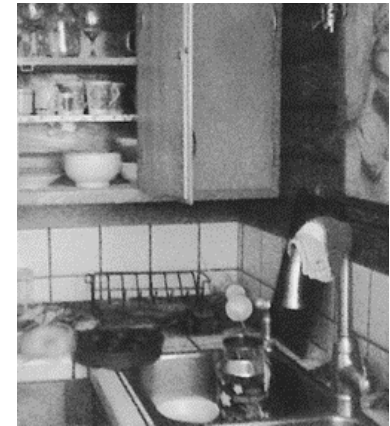


Photo
by
Ann Privateer



Glen Armstrong

White Leather Jumpsuit

I hear its squeak
but never find it.

Cathedrals sway.
I take the leap.

Wheels spin,
and motors sputter.

Another patron
asks for marmalade.

Sister loves
her leather jumpsuit.

Father hates
his purple thumb.

These underthings
are all on sale.

Days gone by
leave streaks.

Glen Armstrong

Continental

The light disperses
through dust unevenly.

Meanwhile the sea,
like my daughter,

is clueless regarding its charm.
She makes everyone believe

that she communicates
with Picasso's ghost.

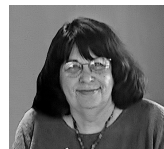
She tears the loaf of bread
open with her hands.

There is nothing here clean
enough to eat off,

but she and her friends
are hungry.



Patricia Ann Mayorga, Editor-in-Chief of *Poets' Espresso Review* resides in Stockton, California. She is a retired educator and the author of *Days of Thirst*, (Watermark Press, 1996). She is the editor of *Flash Dream*, *Art & Poetry* (Amazon.com 2021), and *BEGIN AGAIN, Words of Transformation* (Tuleburg Press 2021). Patricia has been published in anthologies, *A Tapestry of Thoughts, Beyond the Stars, Sun Shadow Mountain, Moon Mist Valley*, as well as *ARTIFACT NOUVEAU, Poets' Espresso Review, ¡ZamBomba! and The Record*, Stockton's daily newspaper, and *BEGIN AGAIN, Words of Transformation* (Tuleburg Press, 2021). Patricia is a member of the National League of American Pen Women and Phi Delta Kappa.



Emela McLaren resides in Manteca, CA. Em serves on Manteca Mayor's Art Committee and was the recipient of the "Artist of the Year" award in 2006, "Best of Show" 2014 San Joaquin County Delicato Photography Contest. Her philosophy is "There is always a picture to be found within 20 feet of any direction one looks." Publications include *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Joan McNeerney from New York has been published in *BlueLine, Camel Saloon, Dinner with the Muse, Kind of a Hurricane Publications, Poets' Espresso Review, Poppy Road Review, Seven Circle Press, Spectrum, Three Bright Hills Press Anthologies*. Joan has been nominated three times for Best of the Net.



Michael Meinhoff lives on twenty-five acres in the Sierra foothills near Yosemite National Park, where he and his wife enjoy solitude and closeness to the land. He is a graduate of the University of Oregon and the University of Hawaii. His poetry has appeared in *The Aurean, Brevities, Plainsongs, Poem, Poets' Espresso Review, Song of the San Joaquin*, and *The Chaffin Journal*.



Cassi W. Nesmith is a poet, writer, and writing workshop leader living in the San Joaquin Valley. She recently attended "The Yeats International Summer School" sponsored through a fellowship from *Tuleburg Press* and the *Sligo Scholars Program*, in Sligo, Ireland. Cassi lives with her husband, teenage daughter, and two rescue dogs. cassiwnesmith.com.

Karen O'Leary is a writer and editor from West Fargo, ND. Her publications include *Hedgerow, Haikuniverse, Frogpond, Setu, Fine Lines, Atlas Poetica* and *Quill & Parchment*. Karen edited an international online journal called *Whispers*. <http://whispersinthewind333.blogspot.com/>



"We have to continually be jumping off cliffs and developing our wings on the way down."

~Kurt Vonnegut



Brenda Kay Ledford's poetry has been published in *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Journal of Kentucky Studies*, *Pembroke Magazine*, *Poets' Espresso Review* and *ARTIFACT NOUVEAU*. Brenda is the author of newly published *Red House Plank*.



Andres Leung attends Sonoma State University as a literature major. His writing has been published in *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Bruce Levine is a 2019 *Pushcart Prize* Poetry nominee, a 2021 *Spillwords Press Awards* winner and the featured writer in *WestWard Quarterly* (Summer 2021.) His works are published in *Ariel Chart*, *Founder's Favourites*, *Halcyon Days*, *Literary Yard*, *Poetry Espresso Review*, *Spillwords*, and *Tipton Poetry Journal*. www.brucelevine.com



Marc Livanos has been published in *Ceremony*, *Emerald Coast Review*, *Creative with Words*, *Feelings of the Heart*, *FreeXpression*, *Jerry Jazz Musician*, *Poets' Espresso Review*, *PKA's Advocate*, *The Legend*, *The Pink Chameleon on Line*, *The Poet's Art*, *Shemom*, *Westward Quarterly*, and *Zylophone Band*.



Dylan Mabe is a native of Big Stone Gap, Virginia. His poetry has been published in *Bluestone Review* 2022, *Explorations* Spring 2019, *Little Somethings Press* 2021, *Poets' Espresso Review*, and *Scifaikuest* February 2018.



Celine Rose Mariotti has been published in *Atlantean Publishing*, *Conceit Magazine*, *Creative Inspirations*, *FreeXpression*, *Frost Fire World*, *Pancakes in Heaven*, *Lone Stars Magazine*, *Tigershark Publishing*, *Pablo Lennis*, *OMDB*, and *Poets' Espresso Review*. Her published works include *I'm Too Young to be President* (Clayborn Press).



Robert L. Martin resides in Pennsylvania. He has written three chapbooks, *A Sage's Diary*, *In Reverence to Life* and his latest publication *Wings of Inspiration* (Cyberwit.net). Robert has been published in *Alive Now*, *Mature Years*, *Free Xpression*, and *Poets' Espresso Review*. Robert is the recipient of two *Faith and Hope* awards from "In His Steps Publishing."

Glen Armstrong
The Bedside Book of Rain

When what covers Jaazaniah
 is both love and claustrophobia
 and the sky becomes that which flies,
 I realize my grandmother
 never distinguished the biblical rain
 that lingers in children's books
 from the rain that moistens
 and chills my skin.

I spend the hours jumping
 puddles and revisit
 other ways of filling this afternoon
 with archaic song.

I look for an opening
 more like a grand event's
 first night than a loophole:
 a narrow escape,
 a blushing and fading
 under precarious light.



Linda Amos
Spring Haiku 57

Willow branches flowed
 Like a slow-moving stream
 Slicing through the pasture

Deborah H. Doolittle

Christina Rossetti Takes Chamomile

God must love these little apples, as do
I, treading upon them unseen, but still
detecting their pleasant essence instill
their fragrance upon me, a graceful dew
I will not eschew. By day, the blossoms woo
me, by evening, I am thinking I will
be drinking them steeped as comestibles
in a tea. I perceive no sweeter brew.
Mindful of trudging daily through my life:
Patience is a practice I make perfect.
Weary as I am with my woman's work,
All that washing, scrubbing, rubbing that lurks
behind me through my day. To what effect
a sip of tea makes me good makes me wife.

Deborah H. Doolittle

Standing in the Forest for the Trees

I'm standing in the forest for the trees,
pushing past ferns and shrubs that brush my shins
and my knees, not thinking how my feet are sinking
too much into the mucked-up mulch of last
fall's leaves or what it feels like to be so
rooted in this one place where my toes and
bootheels dig in. What it means to be lean
and green, with fragments of sunlight and blue
sky tumbling through. I have no thoughts at all
except for staying upright and tall while
swaying in this breeze. There's no leaning in
to anything meaningful. I just breathe.



Cleo Griffith is one of many poets fortunate enough to live in the Central Valley of California, where they compete with and encourage one another, all the while inspired by nature's beauty. Widely published, Cleo's work has lately appeared in *Lothlorien Blog Penumbra*, *Poets' Espresso Review*, *Monterey Poetry Review*. She is an editor of *Song of the San Joaquin*.



Dr. C. David Hay resides in Florida with his wife, Joy. He was the first American to appear in the *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in Russia with his poem, *The Arrowhead*. Dr. Hay has been nominated for the *Pushcart Prize* in Poetry and is the recipient of the Ordo Honoris Award from *Kappa Delta Rho*. His poetry includes publications in *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Caroline Henry is a retired English teacher, writer and artist from Morada, California. Caroline is the Chapter President of the Stockton-Lodi Chapter of National League of American Pen Women and is the Secretary of the Nor-Cal Association of American Pen Women. Caroline's credits include numerous awards for her watercolor paintings in the San Joaquin Valley. Caroline has been published in *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Yuan Hongri from China is a poet and philosopher. His works include *Platinum City*, *Gold City*, *Golden Paradise*, *Gold Sun* and *Golden Giant*. His poetry has been published in the UK, USA, India, New Zealand, Canada, Nigeria and in *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Michael D. Johnson lives in the Central Valley of California with his wife and children. He enjoys hiking in the Sierras as well as the inspiring coastal vistas that serve as an inspiration to his poetry. His faith, the beauty he surrounds himself with and his family are his greatest inspirations. Published in *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Michael Lee Johnson resides in Illinois. He is a poet, freelance writer, and amateur photographer. Michael is the Editor-in-Chief of anthologies *Moonlight Dreamers* of Yellow Haze and *Dandelion in a Vase of Roses* and *Warriors with Wings: The Best in Contemporary Poetry* and has been published in *Poets' Espresso Review*.

Julie Jose is an Associate Professor of English at San Joaquin Delta College. She has previously been published in *Begin Again*, *Words of Transformation*, Tuleburg Press. Julie enjoys the outdoors, especially hiking, reading, and writing on the beach. She is currently working on a Memoir.



Mikel K from Atlanta, Georgia has been published in *Hangovers*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *In between Your One Phone Call*, *Indiana Journal*, *Poets' Espresso Review*, and *Subtle Tea*.



Deborah h. Doolittle lives in North Carolina and teaches at Coastal Carolina Community College and is the author of *No Crazy Notions*, *That Echo*, and *Floribunda*. She has been published in *Barbaric Yawp*, *Mudfish*, *Poets' Espresso Review*, *Pinyon*, *Poetalk*, *Shemom*, *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, and *Wild Goose Poetry Review*.



Milton P. Ehrlich Ph.D., an 89-year-old psychologist and a veteran of the Korean War has published works in *Poetry Review*, *The Antigoniish Review*, *London*, *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *Descant Literary Magazine*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, *the New York Times* and *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Susan Greenberg Feltman is a novelist and poet who published her first novel in 2021, at the age of 69. After retiring from her design business in 2021, she is now finally able to devote herself fully to her writing. Susan's poetry has been published in *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Jennifer Fenn is an accounting assistant for a large, powdered milk company by day and a poet by night. Her poetry has been published in *Brevities*, *Monterey Poetry Review*, *Poets' Espresso Review*, *Song of the San Joaquin*, *The Orchards*, and *Time of Singing*. She has self-published *Blessings*, and *Song of the Katabatic Wind*.

Edward Fisher's publications include *Alembic*, *Chaffin*, *Crucible*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Illuminations*, *Leading Edge*, *Licking River*, *Listening Eye*, *Nassau*, *Poet's Espresso Review*, *Sanskrit*, *Saranac*, *The Lyric*, *The Writer*, *Urthona*, and *Wisconsin Reviews*. Articles have appeared in Johns Hopkins University Press, Association for the Study of Play and *The Writer's Chronicle*. He has been a Pushcart nominee and winner of New York Poetry Forum competitions.



Ryan Quinn Flanagan resides in Elliot Lake, Ontario, Canada with his wife and many bears that rifle through his garbage. His poetry can be found both in print and online in such places as: *Evergreen Review*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Poets' Espresso Review*, *Mojave River Review*, *Red Fez*, and *The Oklahoma Review*.



Michael Fraley lives in San Francisco with his spouse and daughter. Michael has contributed to *Poets' Espresso Review*, *Pennine Ink*, *Light*, *The Lyric*, *miller's pond*, *Blue Unicorn*, *The Road Not Taken*, and *Better Than Starbucks*. M.A.F. Press published his chapbook *First-Born*. Tamafyhr Mountain Press published his e-chapbook *Howler Monkey Serenade*.



Allison Grayhurst from Toronto is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Five times nominated for "Best of the Net," she has over 1300 poems published in over 500 international journals. She has 25 published books of poetry and six chapbooks. Allison has been published in *Poets' Espresso Review*.

Deborah H. Doolittle An Audubon-Guided Aubade

Of all the songs, the first one brings
the singing home again. The way
the black bird breaks into the dawn
or the mourning dove excuses
the night. Softly. Gently. So sweet
the chickadee and how honeyed
voiced the mockingbird repeats it
back to them. Not bitter. Not tart.
No malicious or facetious
intent. No ambition to re-
invent what has already been
recreated. A cardinal's
attempt at praise. Look kindly now
on the titmouse's twitter, on
the sparrow's uncertain chirp,
on the warbler's own rendition.
All I have to do is listen.
Even the lowly wren knows when.



"A Word is dead
When it is said
Some say.
I say it just begins
to live that day."

~*Emily Dickinson*

Daniel Williams

Donkeys and Double Bubble

A friend had an extra ticket so
we both went to the Civic Auditorium
to watch a donkey basketball game
it felt like Roman day at the coliseum

Not much fun for the donkeys
seven donkeys on each team
with a runner donkey to move
the ball down the court

Once you saw what happens
when a guy tries to dribble
a ball from the back of donkey,
there isn't much more to see

At half time a guy called me up
to the stage with 11 other kids
for a bubble gum blowing contest
we were each given a piece

A whistle blew and off we went
Double Bubble is the gum of
choice for large bubbles, but I knew
I'd have to work all the sugar out of it

After a while we were given the nod
and everyone began working on a
winning bubble, the trick is to use
your tongue and blow slowly

You have to really focus not paying
attention to the popping and cursing
going on all around you; I worked it
from long experience managed to

Create a bubble almost as big as my
head and held it by breathing a little
air into it, once in a while the audience
went crazy over my bubble and so

I left that night with mixed feelings
I enjoyed the feeling of the crisp
ten-dollar bill I'd won but knew
half of it would go to my friend

I wondered about the donkeys who
hadn't had a thing to eat or drink
for two days in front of a loud crowd
that thought a bubble was entertainment



Jerome Berglund is from the Midwest. His poetry has been featured in *Asahi Shimbun*, *Bear Creek Haiku*, *Cold Moon Journal*, *Daily Haiga*, *Failed Haiku*, *Poets' Espresso Review*, and *Scarlet Dragonfly*. Jerome is an award-winning fine art photographer, whose black and white pictures have been showcased in New York, Minneapolis, and Santa Monica galleries.



Steve Brisendine is a writer and poet from Mission, Kansas. His collections include *Salt Holds No Secret But This* (Spartan Press, 2022) and *To Dance with Cassiopeia and Die* (Alien Buddha Press, 2022), a "collaboration" with his former pen name of Stephen Clay Dearborn. His writing has been published in *Connecticut River Review*, *Flint Hills Review* and *Modern Haiku*. steve.brisendine@live.com



Brad Buchanan's collections of poetry include *The Miracle Shirker* (Poets Corner Press, 2005), *Swimming the Mirror: Poems for My Daughter* (Roan Press, 2008), and *The Scars, Aligned: A Cancer Narrative* (Finishing Line Press, 2019), *Living With Graft-Versus-Host Disease* (Armin Lear Press Inc., 2021), and *Chimera* (Finishing Line Press, 2023) as well as two academic books. Brad is an Emeritus Professor of English at Sacramento State University. His poetry has been published in *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Maura Gage Cavell is a Professor of English at Louisiana State University Eunice. She resides in Crowley, LA. She has recently been published in *Abbey*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Carnival Magazine*, *West Quarterly* and *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Yuan Changming edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Qing Yuan in Vancouver. His credits include ten Pushcart nominations and publications in *Best of the Best Canadian Poetry (2008-17)* and *Best New Poems Online*. Yuan has been published in *Poets Espresso Review*.



Harris Coverley from Manchester, England has verse published in *Polu Texni*, *California Quarterly*, *Star*Line*, *Artifact Nouveau*, *Corvus Review*, *The Oddville Press*, *Better Than Starbucks*, *EgoPHobia*, *5-7-5 Haiku Journal* and *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Millard Davis has published two books on natural history, *The Near Woods* (Knoph, 1974), *Anthology*, (Natural History Press) and *Natural Pathways of New Jersey* (Plexus), a booklet *How to Read the Natural Landscape in Forests and Fields* (National Science Teachers Association) and *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Frank De Canio was born in New Jersey and works in New York. Frank hosts a Cafe Philo discussing philosophical issues in lower Manhattan. Frank's poetry has been published on-line and in *Poets' Espresso Review*.

BIOGRAPHIES



Ahmad Al-Khataat was born in Baghdad, Iraq. He has been nominated for Best of the Net 2019. He is the author of *The Bleeding Heart Poet*, *Gas Chamber*, *Love on The War's Frontline*, *Poets' Espresso Review*, *Roots of Dreams*, *The Grey Revolution*, and *Wounds from Iraq*. He lives in Montreal, Canada.



Linda Amos, from York, Pennsylvania has been an award-winning member of *The Rusk County Poetry Society* and *The Gulf Coast Writers Association*. Her poetry has been featured in *Wild Onions*, and *Poets' Espresso Review*. Linda is retired and is a fulltime volunteer in the York community.



Donald Anderson is the web designer and Technology Support person for *Poets' Espresso Review*. He has been published in *¡Zam Bomba!*, *Blue Moon Press*, *Rattlesnake Press*, *The Collegian*, *A Poem A Day: An Anthology*, *Dwarf Stars 2008*, *Poetry Now*, *Manzanita: Wild Edges 2010*, and *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Glen Armstrong holds an MFA in English and teaches writing at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. He is the editor of *Cruel Garters*. Glen is the author of *Invisible Histories*, *The New Vaudeville*, and *Midsummer*. His poetry has been included in *Poetry Northwest*, *Conduit*, *Cream City Review* and *Poets' Espresso Review*.

Robert Austin is an artist from Stockton California whose paintings have been featured in *Poets' Espresso Review*.



Josie Beaudoin has been writing poetry for five decades. When she was a younger, her work was published in her hometown newspaper poetry column, "Pennons of Pegasus." Her poetry has been published in *Poets' Espresso Review*.

J. E. Bennett has been published in *Paris/Atlantic (Fr.)*, *Orbis (Eng.)*, *Perspectives*, *Upstairs at Duroc (Fr.)*, *The Cape Rock*, *Yemassee* and *Litspeak (Ger.)*. Awards include *Descant's Frank O'Connor prize for fiction*, *Plainsongs' Poetry Award, 2010*, chapbook of poetry: *Strange Voices*, *Other Tongues, 2004*. New work in *California Quarterly* *White Pelican Review*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Spindrift* and *Pinyon*, and *Poets' Espresso Review*.



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Daniel Williams

Jumping into the Stanislaus

My aunt was the first female in our family to get her driver's license, she was the one to set her sister, my mother, and all of us kids free; we all piled into her light green 1953 Chevy filled with water wings and inner tubes, picnic baskets, face masks, and frog's feet; 2 six packs of soda because she worked for Frito-Lay, several bags of barbeque chips which somehow never made it past our mail box to our picnic- 'Don't get crumbs all over my back seat' she'd say knowing full well that crumbs were a way of life for most back seats

And so, one warm day in late spring we set out for a swim at Caswell State Park, the river deep and swift between its bluffs, but we didn't care, an entire tribe of natives running through the sage, the wormwood, the paint brush, the dozens of early wild flowers and shrubs couldn't have been happier than we were that afternoon, all of us children taking turns leaping into space from boulders to be engulfed and giving ourselves up completely to something coldly alive with an energy much larger than ours

That night in bed I tossed about badly sunburned and with river sand in my sheets, a tiny snippet of wormwood on my pillow giving the day's events an appropriate incense; as I relived them in my mind, a tiny flood of warm water broke from my ear just before I fell asleep and dreamt of brackish water streaming over my head and the chill of stones caught in a matrix of sand at bottom as I pushed off them with my feet my arms reaching up to touch a fierce hot blossom waving gently over everything

Maura Gage Cavell

Winter Carnival

The carousel and Ferris wheel
spin in their various fashions
among the tilt-o-whirl, games,
and funhouse magic. Flickering
lights race and flash across game tops.
The young pair on a date enjoy
their play among the rides and games,
throw pretend snowballs for prizes.
Hot cocoa with peppermint sticks
and a walk along a candy
cane path with giant globes snowing
inside of them. Cold chill winds soon
send them on their way home among
elements: nothing to block wind.

Maura Gage Cavell

Star Watcher

This night she is a star watcher.
She places her telescope on
her balcony, turns to the stars
for answers she cannot find on
Earth. Maybe the moon or planets
have answers, maybe she will turn
towards astrological signs
or more occult knowledge such as
astrology or card readings.
Perhaps she will just be happy
to go with the flow or turn to
skylight in wonder. Maybe she
doesn't need to know the answers.
Still, tonight, she watches the stars.

Continued See-through Wings by Cassi W. Nesmith

I don't remember everything she said,
But I remember her asking me if I wanted
Something bigger than me to tear off my arm
as she grabbed and twisted mine.

And that is what wound me up in my room
For the rest of the day, afternoon, and night
Crying for myself...
Crying for the poor ladybugs that could not fly their way home.



Cassi W. Nesmith

Fantastic Messes

It was too easy
To climb over the barbed wire
Into the orchard

We walked between trees
Inhaling almond blossoms
Feet crunching soil

I'd go with boyfriends
Walk under the canopy
Kissing and hugging

I supervised
Drove to the almond orchard
Boys lighting rockets

Brother's friend's brother
Illegal from Mexico
Fireworks sparkle

No fire but
Burnt paper blue orange sky
Fantastic mess

Cassi W. Nesmith
See-through Wings

(In my hot bedroom, me peeking through the window screen at the front yard watching equally distributed freckled, and black puffy haired kids.)

Yesterday afternoon we took three eggs
Scampered just around the corners
Behind the deadly oleanders
Knowing full well it was wrong,
Cracked the eggs on the neighbors' sidewalk.
They did not fry and of course we got caught.

That was not why I was in my room.

We loved to catch Ladybugs.
Curtis Wayne, one of the red-haired ones,
Showed us how to take their wings.
He'd grab one, open his hand, wait until the ladybug was about to fly away,
Pinch the black see-through wings right off
And the ladybug was unable to fly.

Brilliant! I caught an orange bug and did it, too.

We all wanted the ladybugs to climb on our arms and never fly away.

I was Faith's hero.
Faith with the poofy black hair and freckles.

My mother came out to check on us,
My brother on her hip.
Faith ran and told my mom how wonderful I was with the beautiful bugs
And how I took their wings...

My mother's face turned white, then red.
She gripped my brother tighter against her hip and with Powerful restraint, told me
To come inside immediately.

Maura Gage Cavell
Christmas Bells

Christmas bells ring out all over our city. Trains sound off — distant horns and whistles disrupting all of the glorious bells' sweet sounds, chimes going off in a pattern so melodic it brings joyful notes and flavors in their calls, peals. Here come the clops of horses' hooves down the adjacent street as two riders on horseback are waving. Adding to the mix are those cars with stereos so loud the noise vibrates the windows. After they pass, the trains are gone, just soft bell sounds.

Maura Gage Cavell
Winter in the South

While snow decorates the northern states, winter in the South is warm, Louisiana: seventies and eighties in late December after a cold spell in which we shivered. Still, all over our town at night lights pop on, glowing like bright hope, the pretty and funny delightful designs and features people choose to display, make life more beautiful, dreamy somehow. Angels, candy canes, Christmas bells all over the city, Santa, reindeer, sleighs pointing to heaven.



Millard Davis

Movements

The heartbeat slows, the song dims down,
Field grasses are browning and tilting
So dew rolls off without being noticed.
Only in the skies do we find no differences,
Clouds gathering still and then tipping out
Rain and then snow but without notice.
One listens for autumn to slip into winter,
For that is the new song to cover the fields
And beat down from trees. You turn about,
Like an ice hockey player following a puck
As newness itself gives out with its favors.
And then you look up not wanting to miss
The circling of seasons that's wholly abstract
But more than just clothing and underneath
Is something you've missed up until now.
You want to be there when any door knob turns,
And this brings you out as years like pages
Flip past through fingers holding all too loosely.
The most fun is had when you finger the key
Which can latch the door shut, or at least
Seems right at hand for you to consider.
What difference you might make all unannounced.

Millard Davis

The Snow Man

I hear him in my dreams, scraping,
Scraping, this man with his shovel,
As down the walk and out to the street
He goes, like one who's sailing out to sea.
I see here Gunga Din, a better man
Is he – I owe him something more
Than pay...bothered, he'd only nod and agree.

I hear him in my waking, chopping, chopping,
Breaking down the ice, his pick aloft
And his fingers cold. The wind
Is up now, and cuts with snow
Across his scarfless neck.
That's not play, before dawn or after.
I wish he knew I know I owe him more than pay.

Andres Leung

Barley

I finally made it uncle!
I knew you were always there by my side,
even though I couldn't see you.
I will admit uncle, there were times I wanted to just give up
and forget everything.
I know if I did this you wouldn't be mad at me.
You would simply say, "As long as you are happy."
I know I'm not as "successful" as some other writers;
But I never cared about success.
The only thing I ever cared about was helping those around me.
I know that's what you would want me to do.
Rest easy uncle.



Michael D. Johnson

Haiku

buzzing bees
loaded with nectar
flower crawl

Andres Leung
Welcome Back

Life is so cruel,
The time clock that we live in
does not have the same rules of the tick.
The way I see it you can do two things,
One—you can sulk in your soul and drown,
Two—take it as the lesson of life and do everything for it.
Anything else that tells you otherwise, is telling a golden fairy tale
made to distract the young at heart from the horrors of our
terrible world.
I wish people would stop telling themselves that everything is fine.
Sometimes it's ok to cry tears of a dead man's wish.

Andres Leung
A Songbook of Flies

The pages seem to leave me once in a while.
However, a drink of Satan's blood seems to do the trick.
I open my notebook again.
Lyrics appear on my paper as if they are cursed notes.
The fireplace crackles with laughter as it sees my paper as food.
Objects seem to move from one place to another with my
condolences.
And on the white walls that stain my room,
There it is....
By the heavens, it's a beauty.

Andres Leung
Elbows

If only I knew what was wrong with me.
I only wish one day to find
The cure to my internal plague.
I only wish one day to find
The cure to my internal plague.
Wishing I could have told you
about my problems before I wrote this.
Afraid... of how you would react.
Hopefully, this letter serves as a reminder
of my health.

Michael Fraley
Return to the Forest

A river's deep song
Twisting along an ancient bed
Pulls my inner eye backward.

Back to when it was young,
A stream flowing swiftly
Under a new sun.

Past a bank lined with ferns
Dangling under perpetual mist
That drifts in torn swatches
From the heart of the forest.

Dank scent of jaguar,
Brilliant glare of macaw,
The unnerving screech
Of the spider monkey.

Steps through the maze
Taken warily, one at a time,
Senses taut and primed.

Sudden death to the prey,
And a proud display
Of food to be shared with all.

Firelight at night
In the common shelter,
Bodies together for warmth.

Bright morning sunlight
Reflected from the stream
Triggers a dream of the future,
Leading my inner eye forward.



"The clearest way into the universe is through a forest
wilderness."

~*John Muir*

Michael Fraley

Message from a Temperate Climate

Peeking through patches of melting snow
And the thrill of going without a coat,
That's what I remember of spring.

All day spent in drifting along
On the creek with a leaky canoe,
That's how I think back to summer.

Brown leaves piled high on the ground
And the smell of wood smoke at night,
That's how I recall my autumn.

A snowfall that fell a long time ago
And covered a forest of trees far away,
That's what I know of winter.

Wherever I go and whatever I do,
I live in a calendar outside of time

Where seasons can follow
Their own sense of rhyme

And reason is never allowed to bring down
The scaffolds erected by feelings sublime.

Michael Fraley

Love Is a Wild Wind

Love is a wild wind unbidden that blows
Over a cold, analytical heart.
Where it first came from and when no one knows,
But no one denies it wins from the start.

Love is an ember that burns in the soul,
Biding its time like a tiger sleeping.
Count yourself lucky if life has bestowed
Love's hidden ore to you for safe keeping.

Bring yourself down to the river of love,
Washing away every care you conceive.
Blend into life like a hand in a glove,
Hiding your strength in the ties that you weave.

Jennifer Fenn

Early Yellow

Not even Palm Sunday,
tulips have already shed.
Bluebells shrivel,
unable to ring hosanna.
The once-green hills
holding up the freeway
are now crispy and yellow,
portending eternal brushfires.
Where are the baby birds?
Where is new life?



Karen O'Leary
Of One Song

I hold
hope in my heart
vision that each new day
opens new opportunities
for dreams,
promise,
and rainbow views.
Melding of ideas
from souls blended in harmony
fosters
the goal
of common good.
With a mission of peace,
people join hands seeking freedom
for all.

Jennifer Fenn

By the Taco Truck

My coworkers gather,
talking, laughing, lining up
under bright blue sky.
We pass each other onions,
sour cream, and pico de gallo
before we take our first bites
of hot refried beans and rice.

I grin, basking
in sunshine and conversations.

“What did you order?”

“You like chili peppers?”

“Oh yeah!”

“What are you doing this weekend?”

The mid-March wind kicks up
like the heat of red and green salsas.

Our mouths pucker.

My skirt hem flaps
into the guacamole on my plate
that almost flips over.

I catch the last bite of rice.

My friends snicker with me
at my green-smear skirt.

I warm my hands
on my foil-wrapped burrito.

My first bite spills
bright yellow and orange peppers,
green zucchini, purple sautéed onion,
a rainbow on my plate.



“We are all broken, that's how the light gets
in.”

~Ernest Hemingway

Linda Amos

No Tears, Just Quiet Reflection

No tears, just quiet reflection,
Filled my body and soul,
As I, alone, knelt in this empty kirkyard,
By the grave marker that bore your name.

No tears, just quiet reflection,
As I recalled all the tears
I had shed upon learning
The unexpected news of your death,
So very long ago.

No tears, just quiet reflection,
As I admitted that you weren't here
That you had gone on to a better place
Where neither tears nor hurts
Are allowed to enter.

Linda Amos

Haiku 49

Few covered flowers
Gathered by the handfuls
Beautiful spring bouquets

Linda Amos

Aching with Loneliness

She'd lived alone
For years
She'd curtailed her
Carnal appetites
She'd loved and lost—
And there was
No one to offer to
Or to give her affection to.
No one to give her tenderness too, either—
To laugh with her,
Or to share in her moments of joy.

She'd lived alone
For years
She had an old dog as a companion
But he never kept up
His part of the conversation;
No matter what she said or did!

Frank De Canio

Sharecropper

Because I do not dare turn up again
the topsoil near life's tributary firth,
nor drag its double helix like a chain,

I bear my load along this harsh terrain
as though ordained by overlords at birth.
Because I do not hope to turn again

nor bring to term the longing to obtain
those crops I lost through dreary years of dearth
that link in searing series like a chain

constraining growth, let others gather grain.
Since whether they tend fallow plains or mirth
does not determine if I'll turn again

for good or ill, I won't torment my brain
with calculations of my labor's worth,
augmented with each linkage in my chain.

Because I glean that nothing shall remain
of sun or rain but stir this life on earth
to pain, I hope I won't return again
my burning phoenix to its causal chain.

Frank De Canio

Footfalls

The clues were there for those who cared to look
for them. People we've known so many years
have disappeared. Benign au pairs who took
us on their knees, and wiped away our tears,
now mutely stare from faded photographs,
like weathered sneakers on a polished floor.
Old and jaded, they never seem to laugh
and I don't think we'll see them anymore.
They must have moseyed down the lonely road
that wistful reminiscence visits, and
will not return with their old Buick's load
of memories. Traipsing to the wasteland
of their space and time, they became consumed
with cares for tender sprouts that since have bloomed.

Celine Mariotti

Blessed is the House

Blessed is the house,
We live in...we share
Blessed are our hearts,
Blessed is the time we spend here,
Our love is like an art,

Blessed are the meals we share,
Blessed are the happy times,
Blessed is our life, day by day,
Blessed is the music we play
It takes away our fear,
It brings us joy,
Blessed are the moments when we laugh and talk,
A snapshot in a photo album,
A moment in time.

Blessed are the holidays,
We have memories so dear,
Blessed are the gifts we give,
The love and tender care,
The special way we live.

Blessed are our hearts that beat forever,
Blessed is our love; it is a treasure.



"All that is gold does not glitter, not all
those who wander are lost; the old
that is strong does not wither, deep
roots are not reached by the frost."

~J.R.R. Tolkien

Michael D. Johnson
The Birth of Spring

Winter feeds the earth that brings the
birth of spring,
Which knits fine attire for naked,
blushing trees.
It clothes the bare limbs on which the
perched birds sing,
And adorns green fields for all the
buzzing bees.
Every blossomed flower gives grounded
hearts wings;
The reborn earth is the answer to our
pleas.
In the warmth of the light, shadows
minuet
beneath the leaved tree's boughs
sublime silhouette.



Rishan Singh
Crimson Scones

The heels of her feet are soft,
her tresses are happy,
she dances to the rhythm of the lambada,
she looks at the dance floor.

The dance floor looks into the sky,
his texture is smooth,
he moves to the taps of her feet,
he presses at her feet.

The heels of her feet are soft,
they turn to the rhythm of the lambada;
this isn't for them,
the scones have turned blue.

Rishan Singh
The Child

The child
fights for his life
and lifts his hand for help.

Brenda Kay Ledford
Leatherwood Falls

Like a wrinkle between mountains,
the gorge in crescendo resounds—
a thunderstorm with cloudless sky.

Off the wilderness trail,
spice bush, poplar, black gum, border
Fires Creek that slices

through the S-shaped trough
and blocks all worry;
stress, fear, woe, seem

far away. A water thrush cuts
above the virgin forest
where horses clop over

rocks, tree roots, briars;
scraping flanks, they ascend
the leaf-quilted hill.

Snorting, they stumble
with the riders and heave
over the ridge reaching
a crashing waterfall.



Brenda Kay Ledford
Animals

After Walt Whitman's,
"I Think I Could Turn and
Live With Animals"

I think I could live
with animals, they offer
me gifts of peace.
I could stand

at my kitchen window
and gaze at them all day.
They do not complain,
they do not worry.

I share a kinship
with the creation,
I accept their space,
inhale the same air.

White-tailed deer appear
as ghosts in my yard.
They prance and munch apples,
their black eyes meet mine.

Mikel K
An Optimistic Outlook

If I get old enough
If I live that long.
I will be bald
toothless man.
Bright white big smile
faded to brown at first
before the teeth fall
or are pulled out.
Hair no longer cascading
over my shoulders.
I will be a scary sight
to all but my children
and my grandchildren.

Mikel K
Onto Her Eyes

Onto her I cast
my
blue
first generation
American eyes.
And she told me
that she could fall
into their beauty.
I'm an old man now.
And nobody talks
about my eyes.

Mikel K
Birth

A child is born
and we forget about wars.
A child is born
and we forget about the rate
of unemployment.
A child is born
and we forget about
all the bad stories on TV.
A child is born
and everybody around the
child
is smiling
just as they should.



Queen Anne's Lace
by
Karen Thompson

Wayne Russell
Afterglows

And after forlorn galaxies
implode, and the naked
bodies in collection, collide
And after all rain clouds
disperse, and circles have
evaporated, in wrecked
drunken mind,
The imminent eve of Armageddon,
lays in wake, like a sniper; seeking
asylum from the obituary of demise.
Here woven, and interfacing into
kind annihilation...here looking and
longing for the calm release of
warm cadence from Winter oblivion,
And after the waves of a wrathful
cataclysmic demise has dragged
you down into the morning
undertow where oblivion awaits,
It is only then that you will see.
You had this coming to you all along...



Wayne Russell
Fade in Silence

Just not noticed
all my life
and then
falling upon
deaf ears
and years
drift by
never
good
enough
nor
loved
fade in
silence
misfit
drown
into
a pit.

Gary Scheinoha
Golden Girl of Ghana

In the hour
when night
deepens
across this
hemisphere,
an ocean away
on a darker
continent,
a hot blonde
babe rises at
a time when
I shall be
fast asleep.
Through
social media,
midway our
minds meet---
and in that
moment,
our thoughts
conjoin to
complete
two halves
into a
whole.

Gary Scheinoha
Warp and Weave

I was already
broken at twenty
three, what
woman
would
want
damaged
goods...
like me?
Now at
sixty-five,
they strive,
seek a life
built to
last.
Alas,
all I've
woven
is a web;
wil 'o wisp
words---
whose
strands
unwound
too fast.

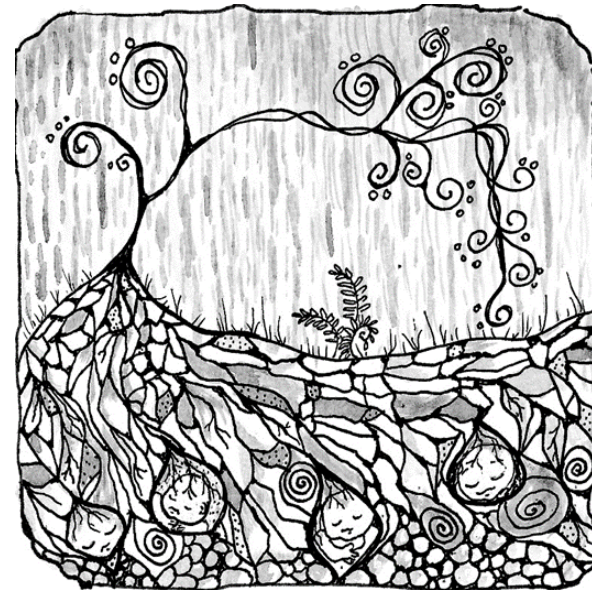


“We are cups, constantly and quietly
being filled. The trick is knowing how to
tip ourselves over and let the beautiful
stuff out.”

~*Ray Bradbury*

Karen Thompson
Mother Tree

She held me, and nurtured me, and rocked me.
That great big Pine with arms that reached all the way to
the ground just so I could climb up onto her tall stature.
I needed her and she needed me.
Way up high I could see for miles
All the rooftops of the neighbors
It was quiet there – no yelling, no demanding, no judging
Just a soft breeze and ever so quiet.
Her roots went deep into the earth
We talked for hours up so high that I felt I could touch
the clouds.
I never wanted to get down from that tree
Sweetly swaying in the breeze.
But dinner was ready and I had to climb down
Down, down – such a long way down,
But she would be waiting for me tomorrow.



Faeries in Utero
by
Karen Thompson

Dr. C. David Hay

Eighty-Six

You can't teach an old dog new tricks,
Especially if that dog is 86.
I've done it all...some of it twice.
Some of it naughty...most of it nice.

And if I could, I'd do it again.
I'm in pretty good shape...for the shape I'm in.
Some of my ventures went sadly wrong,
My life could be a country song.

The years come and the years go
And the journey's done before you know.
We get old too fast and wise too late,
But Father Time just won't wait.

So, ride the bumps and be content
With the road you took and where it went,
And in the end, be you happy or sad,
Thank the Lord for the time you had.

Dr. C. David Hay

The Good Old Days

We talk about *The Good Old Days*
Compared to the present stressful ways,
But were they really all that great
Or do we forget and overstate?

Transportation was skates or a bike,
Hop a bus or take a hike,
Catch a movie if you had a dime,
No video games to waste your time.

No fast food...you had to cook,
Passed the time by reading a book,
T.V. and computers were a fantasy—
Inventions we thought we'd never see.

But things are seldom what they seem,
The past is just a wishful dream.
So, compared to all we never had—
Maybe today is not too bad.

Brady Spicer

I Am Mini, Yet Most of the Cosmos

I broadly boast,
About the cosmos,
Like it was my own.
Like it was sure shown,
To have slowly grown,
From only merely me.
Instead of from Holy He,
Every single slight star,
From my heavy heart,
Shooting like darts,
Mostly apart,
Of every limb,
And tiny tendon,
Every mention,
Of some attention,
Greatly given,
All of me livin',
Boldly bringin',
Silently singin',
As I fly with wings and,
Brightly believing in,
What I have become,
Like a staggered,
Long ladder,
I am rising,
Recognizing,
Every rusty rung.



Gary Scheinoha

Porch Pirate

She was the slyest thief—
didn't snatch a package
off the front
stoop. Once I
gazed deep
into her eyes
as forever, she
mesmerized
and while
under her
spell, jolly
roger'd
away
with my
heart.

Brady Spicer

To Certainly Conquer a Somber Yonder

Seen, but never ever heard from,
He saw that he was a huge burden,
He tended to his great garden,
Like he was playing an organ,
If you ever heard him,
Tending,
Depending,
To sending,
Weeds flying,
The roses he especially loved,
And they were consisted of,
The great and gorgeous Juliet,
It's like a collectable sunset,
That is so hard to forget,
And harder to have met,
It took twenty long years,
And fifteen hundred tears,
To breed,
But the need,
Would supersede,
And especially exceed,
The act of the crossbreed,
But in his mind, it had to be done,
It was the journey of only one on one,
At times it was fun,
Sometimes it was none,
More like to his temple a loaded gun,
One wrong move and it would be overdone,
Like an aperture seen, called a most miserable mock sun.

Diane Webster

Haiku

Old-time rancher's smile
lost teeth whistle in laughter
old fence missing rails

Allison Grayhurst

Chain

The chain is cracked, only
a small tug will break it
and the wall will let down its curtain,
the leech will release its hold, find
a new host or none at all.
I empty my heat on the bed
toss with disorder, too slow on my feet.
But even so, I am carving a future
I can get behind, lift myself onto a plateau
that has many plateaus above it, sure of my growing
strength. It is possible to keep my internal
promises, not like before when the dirty current
rippled through me like a disease,
threatening, consuming
my substance and storages.
Can I say the chain is rusted,
dissolving, no access
to its binding power?
I go for walks. I am grateful
for the open door, one step
forward.

Allison Grayhurst

Resilience

Violet-hue star of mighty purity,
a fixed point, directly overhead, anointing,
a release from the symbiotic purgatory-fold,
from the loop fire enduring coil
and the billowing dead land once before me.
I will build a bonfire and dance
under this eight-billion-year-old star,
no longer held hostage by what I know,
inevitable observations, time turned to stone,
locked in one position, dammed to have no meaning,
no longer trapped in a rippling tremble, continuous
and static state.
I will lean into this bright gathering,
translating the bursting floral mastery
of endless constellations, keeping my height,
keeping my mind, ready to engage
in a divine exchange, discourse.

Cleo Griffith

Dandelion

Such fun to say,
fun to picture:
the brilliant tiny flames
of yellow that magically become
fairy-floating parachutes, dainty,
charming, delicate,

Dandelion
because one can imagine
the bright fluffy flower
as miniature golden feline
with welcoming purr, so tiny,
morphing into a snow leopard,
sending its white fur toward the sun
in ecstatic worship of that god.

Dandelion
because of what it is:
resilient, persistent,
hardy, gorgeous and mysterious.
Of all the wonders of the world,
none are more delightful
than this shape-changer,
this wonderland creation
here among
us mortals.

Cleo Griffith

Grief

is a two-year-old in a tantrum,
kicking rocks in the driveway,
yelling at reason, tearing in rage,
deaf to soothing murmurs,
blind to gentle caresses
upon the frown,
creature of hard rawness,
emotion without brakes,
stirred up from nothing obvious,
frenzied, exhausting itself,
sullen in quiet panic,
fearful, so
alone.

Benjamin Bennett-Carpenter

One More Decade

One more decade is a lot for everyone. It's more than an octave and just beyond one's reach. The Predicament is an *Unasked-for Gift*. Blanks are perfect for projections. They have the advantage of not killing anyone. Supposedly empty surfaces become inhabited with the firing of neurons, waiting for their coffee fix, or other drug of choice such as the runner's high which takes a few miles to get to, you know, running down and uphill and walking, keeping up one's oxygen levels, shooting for the optimal heart rate, wishing it was over but also enjoying the whole process, making pain one's own. Is this good pain or bad pain? "No pain, no gain" depends on the pain and depends on the gain. Get your two-by-two table out. 3-D table: the cube of pain, gain, and valuation. Airplanes fly overhead unless you're in them. Then everything is inside, even the outside. The sender-receiver model of communication happens much faster and more often than at first thought and allows for schools and swarms and mysteries caught by hobbyists. Half centuries are coming. The messages were always with us and we mostly do their bidding, so they keep going. Somehow, we found out about it. We know how we're being used even though there's been little we could do about it, until now! We'll get our sweet revenge one way or another, only humans will be history and those who come after us will think about how quaint and set up a digital archive and museum that can be accessed 24/7. It's a slow download because there's just so much information. It takes 12 or so years to one power or another, specifics determined by the user.



Diane Webster

Haiku

Old-time rancher's smile
lost teeth whistle in laughter
old fence missing rails

Ryan Quinn Flanagan

The Meat Cuber

Somewhere in the 14th arrondissement.
The meat cuber still works from board and blade.

In back of house.
A simple butcher's blood smock,
why do they always start off white?

In love with the boss's daughter.
Those sprawling ringlets of chestnut hair.
That lovely smile greeting customers
at the cash.

Taking their money
and making them feel as though
they are cheating her.

Resentment could grow
like government slush funds,
but it never does.

Just the family and the business.
A stringy distress-damsel wash mop
for all the blood.

Ryan Quinn Flanagan

A Man & His Cat

It is always the same.
Get home from work in the morning,
walk to the kitchen together
to open a new tin of food.
Talk about each other's night,
share a few nose kisses,
then back up to that pillow in the window.
Put on some smooth jazz,
crack a fresh bottle of wine
and sit down to write
some poems.

Cleo Griffith

Elegy for Lady Valerie

Today, as rain hints at its existence,
in this valley so recently baked under brutal sun,
I sorrow for another, for one
more sophisticated, more of the world,
than I, but one just as outgoing,
kinder perhaps, and beautiful.
With recent diagnosis, such fearful noise,
like the universe shattered in falsetto glass,
she must raise an umbrella of defense,
refuse to lie still under the earth slide,
power through the dust, smoke, inadequate words...
I can only wait and watch and ache
and mutter such fallacies,
she who has weathered much
must handle this, too, but not alone,
at least not alone, and yet
always alone as are we all
and I would give anything to help,
will give anything to help,
this lady, this kindness, this beauty
so late in my life, yet like permanence.



Granny's Teapot

by
Caroline Henry

Marc Livanos

The Sunrise Draws Me

The dance of light
playing out in the sky
cerulean and crimson
slowly warms the blooms.

In the sultry sun,
blue jays cajole,
squirrels frolic,
crickets fiddle,
tree frogs bellow,
roses glimmer,
hibiscus blossom,
pine cones cling
as branches shimmer.

The dance of light
awakens the harmony
that exists amongst
everything and myself.

Marc Livanos

A Seagull's Sensibility

He swoops across
slanted sunbeams
head cocked, eyes scouring.

Befuddled by rows of noisy, honking,
rushing beasts that hug the ground,
he swoops even higher in his search.

Spying branches with a nest,
he purloins their eggs. Belly full,
he heads home to roost.

Stress is not the ruler of his life.

Marc Livanos

The Cold Climate

Live one day at a time.
Morning tea, then do whatever
needs to be done.
Supper's when evening comes.
Night garnishes many smiles
and the fun will now have begun.

A Flying Saucer of Giants

Translated by Yuanbing Zhang

Day by day the lightning in my body is waking and flying to this mortal world that is dark night, like iron, seeking the devil's head to make him a skeleton of hell and repay a gem time.
That python's body will become a golden bridge towards a giant city of tomorrow standing out against the sky, like the clouds rising and gathering, an interstellar spaceship on my palm, like a flying saucer of giants, flashing miraculous brightness from an extraterrestrial galaxy.

天外之星系的闪烁灵光之巨人之蝶

我体内的闪电正在一天天醒来而飞向这个黑夜如铁的尘世
寻找魔王的头颅让他成为地狱的骷髅而偿还那一枚时间之宝石
那巨蟒的身躯成了一座黄金之桥而通向明日之巨城矗立于天际云蒸霞蔚
而我手掌之上——一轮星际之飞船犹如来自天外之星系的闪烁灵光之巨人之蝶



Ryan Quinn Flanagan

Adjacent Lot

I have always felt most uncomfortable
standing right here beside myself—
silence mistaken for weakness,
forever out of place:
friends, family, teachers,
no one seemed to ever understand
salty peanut brittle shoulders
and this adjacent lot full of spaghetti curls
and wanting whiskey browns
that have always been searching for things
that were never there if you didn't want them
to be; amble arms climbing backyard trees
for the first time, staring into arguing sun-soaked
afternoon bedrooms that had
fallen out of love.

Yuan Hongri

Heavenly Temples and Towers

Translated by Yuanbing Zhang

I rode a heavenly camel toward a desolate desert, a jade bottle
poured the sweet dew of the Kingdom of Heaven and converged
on a lake of springs that never dries where the giant trees in pre-
historic times grew.

Their branches and leaves rippled like the garden of phoenixes
and birds, and the song of birds sounded like music, which
made the clouds in the sky intoxicated.

And the colorful and transparent grits grew into the huge jewels
and the dreams even grew into heavenly temples and towers.

一座一座天国的殿宇楼阁

我骑一匹天国的骆驼来到一座无人的沙漠
一只玉瓶倾泻天国的甘露汇成永不枯竭的泉水之湖
于是生长出史前的巨树枝叶婆娑宛如凤鸟的花园而鸟鸣如乐时光醉了天空的云朵
而一粒一粒五色透明的沙砾在梦境里长成巨大的宝石长成一座一座天国的殿宇楼阁

Yuan Hongri

Giants, Yourself, in Another Giant City

Translated by Yuanbing Zhang

The gods who delight and smile in your body, much older than stone
and much younger than the morning, bestow you with the nectar of the
kingdom of heaven and make your bones become much more
transparent with each passing day.

So the light of the soul wakes up in your head, then you hear a ballad
from an outer world.

In the labyrinth of time, you see giants, yourself, in another giant city.

那另一座巨城的巨人的自己

在你体内欢喜微笑的诸神比石头更古老比早晨更年轻
他们赐你天国的甘露让你的骨骼一天比一天透明
于是灵魂之光在头颅里醒来你听到一曲天外的歌谣
在时间的迷宫里你看到了那另一座巨城的巨人的自己

Josie Beaudoin

The Healing Place

When all my woes come bubbling forth
and fear is all I feel,

I go into a wooded glen
and find a place to kneel.

The shafts of sun enfold me
in a firm and warm embrace,
and feathered friends don't mind it
when the tears slide down my face.

It's a special place of comfort
that other eyes can't see;
where words spill into rivers
of healing just for me.

And all my woes and worries cease
when victory is won,

For I know that Jah is with me
when my prayer is said and done.



Josie Beaudoin

Twilight's Kiss

Rise, my love, but don't be fast,
let's linger while this moment lasts.
Hold me as the sun moves through
the shadowed forms of me and you.

Let me know your dear caress
before you rise—before you dress.
Let the morning slow your step
so tenderness can intercept.

Rise, my love, if you must go
but speak of love you'd have me know
and I shall lie in utter bliss
'til you return with twilight's kiss.

J.E. Bennett

East 9

Running east from Eden
to points beyond Nod
the road takes its turns
by its own subtle whims.

It runs on and on
by its mean reputation,
its perverse directions
its rubber dance of going on
its bumps and ruts
its bent for harrying
weary hearts and souls.

Life on the road
comes and goes
by the twist of the steering wheel
by a passing glance
a raised eyebrow
a tongue in cheek remark
or a somber grimace
and business as usual
in spite of the easy
or rough going
the smooth paving here or there.

What's ahead may be
mere droning ennui
a momentary stint of elation
but more often
another bad dream
or another failed scheme.

It makes no difference
to the last innocence
we've left behind
or the guilty binge
each of us must face ahead—

Though the questions yet nag
till there are no
satisfactory answers,
the end is the same.
whether east or west.

32

J.E. Bennett

Winter Fugue

Winter is memory
and blowing snow
in the panes
of one window
and wet blotches
from melting snow
on a dry sidewalk.
I huddle inside
myself, warmed
at a cozy fireside
sensing an absence
yours...thinking
thoughts stirred
by abstract
reflex—Why
this calm? Why
these echoes?
This remorse?
A crackling ember
rankles
with a spark
of context.

Dylan Mabe

I Have a Telling Flower in My Garden

A sieve for innumerable memories in the ground,
The steward of those who laid their backs against the curve
of the earth,
Where my mother buried her lost teeth for good luck,
And laughed so loudly that someone told her to quiet down.

It began speaking to me,
As small as I would ever be,
A burgeoning dust in the enormity of it all

He learns to eat, sit up, speak;
And he forgets the entire world
Until now, as he presses his ear to the ground
And hears his future in his mother's past.

Dylan Mabe

Mountain Sounds

Mountains rise and fall,
flowing through each other,
into each other,
as the earth ruptures with their maelstrom.

Fire, mud, and dark diamonds spill.
The mud, blood, and earth slip through our fingers
and we reach for riches between the crevices
of those with hands bigger than ours.

The soot piles on those sleeping
and the sun shines past the loving mountains
We have never been more awake,
than in the midst of grasping for solid ground.



Diane Webster

Haiku

Wind on lake surface
ripples reflections blurry
grandmother's wrinkles

55

Lynn White
Beauty Parlour

Step inside my parlour,
my pampering parlour.
You will be remade, reborn,
stroked and smoothed,
petted and prodded,
cosseted and curled,
given the attention you deserve
as well as a new face
and shiny new hair.

In Pampers Parlour we'll
recreate you.
We'll reboot your confidence
and give you a new chemistry
as we gloss your hair and lips,
as we shape your face
with new shadows and glows,
as we apply layer upon layer
of chemical shit topped by
nose retching fragrances.
You won't know yourself
when you step outside
dolloed up to perfection,
protected in your new mask.

And what then?
Will you go home
and comb it all out
and wash it all off,
preferring,
after all,
the person,
with the old skin
and fresh air colour
to the new robotic doll.
The pampers product is
designed to be disposable,
after all.

Or will you keep it
as long as you can..
Try not to move your new
face. Try not to upset your new
hair.
Place a 'Do Not Disturb' sign
on your forehead.
Keep it as long as you can.
Even if stinky and crusty,
you'll still have your face on.
You feel
so bland,
so pale,
so wan,
exposed
without it
on the journey back
to the beauty parlour.



Ann Christine Tabaka
Her Story

Previously published in *The Closed Eye Open*, July 2021

She was a story
she was never real
she played with paper and strings
building cities on mountaintops
cardboard skyscrapers reached the moon

She was wisdom
or so she thought
carrying dreams in a bag of green silk
woven with tears from the lake
that she walked upon each day

Telling her visions
to all that would listen
she believed the words that she spoke
floating down from the precipice
that she built
she faded into herself

Ann Christine Tabaka
Delving into the Darkness

Previously published in *The Siren's Call*, June 2021

He was lost.
Trapped inside a world
of his own making.

I sit observing him
battle his nightmares.
Trying to grasp the containment
of a tormented mind.

Illusions and dreams ruled his day,
as anguish ruled his night.

Looking through thinly veiled truth,
grasping at frayed hope.
He limps along a well-worn path
searching for righteousness.

Many have trod this way before,
delving into the darkness that resides within.
Few have found the key
to open the cast-iron door.

Søren Sørensen

Zillo

I miss my summer days in beautiful Bradillo,
my grandma's village on the slopes of mount Gravillo,
its wide wheatfields sparkling with gold and yellow,
its watermill and the spring at the chirping rivulet below.

Summers were hot, apples and pears were ripe and mellow.
I enjoyed leisure days with my friends Blaise and Marcello.
We swam in the creek, despite it being brisk and shallow,
gathered wild blackberries uphill from my grandma's bungalow.

There was a small woman with a big hump, named Zillo;
she carried water daily with a copper jug, as big as a cello.
Kids would tease her regularly, yelling "Hey Zillo, Zillo,
why don't you marry me? I'm a real good fellow."

Once I saw Zillo sitting all alone in the shade of a willow,
like weighed down by her hump. I approached and said "Hello,
Zillo." She turned, then frowned, her eyebrows resembling the
wings of a swallow. Zillo said nothing, yet I was certain she was
ready to bellow.

It was many years later when I revisited Bradillo.
I asked my grandma - all grey-haired now - about Blaise and Mar-
cello. They both had left the village, she said, then I inquired about
Zillo. "Zillo died last year," she gave me the bitter pill that was hard
to swallow.

I didn't cry, but deep inside I felt a big hollow.
What my grandma said next, I was unable to follow.
Memories of Zillo were full of remorse and sorrow.
Had she left forgiveness for me, I would gratefully borrow.

Oh, you poor hunchback woman, my dear Zillo,
you come to my mind every time I think of Bradillo,
why did you refuse to utter the simple word "Hello"
when I tried to talk to you under that old, weeping willow?

Jerome Berglund

Goats

likes his face and voice,
does not follow too closely
what railing against

lady matador
strives to keep practice alive -
so empowering

dress their children
like tiny fancy British people;
Barnum's general

not being paid to think
supervisor contends -
speaking truthfully

lot of names...
chicken hawks don't read them
claim bad eyesight, small print



Photo by Jerome Berglund

Cassi W. Nesmith

The First Song I Remember Hearing

My Grandma Mae sang the first song I remember hearing,
She sang it every time I sat on her perfect grandma's lap
Soft, fluffy, lilac, and musk...
a secret only I could hear,
She would whisper the song in my ear

The Old Hootie Owl

Hooty hoots from above

It's Cassi, It's Cassi, It's Cassi, I love!

Years ago, in a children's piano lesson primer,
I stumbled upon the song, it's an old children's standard:
"It's Tammy, It's Tammy," the sheet music said,
But I know for sure, that is not right,
Because I heard

The Old Hootie Owl

Hooty hoots from above—

It's Cassi, It's Cassi, It's Cassi I love!



Michael Lee Johnson

Deep in My Couch

Deep in my couch
of magnetic dust,
I am a bearded old man.
I pull out my last bundle
of memories beneath
my pillow for review.
What is left, old man,
cry solo in the dark.
Here is a small treasure chest
of crude diamonds, a glimpse
of white gold, charcoal,
fingers dipped in black tar.
I am a temple of worship with trinket dreams,
a tea kettle whistling ex-lovers boiling inside.
At dawn, shove them under, let me work.
We are all passengers traveling
on that train of the past—
senses, sins, errors, or omissions
deep in that couch.

Søren Sørensen

Yellow Leaves

Yellow leaves blown by late October wind,
drab sky obscured by frosty, tedious rain
drearly drumming on the windowpane...
they bring back memories I thought were bygone.

Let the wind blow and the rain fall,
the past is gone once and for all.

The bench under the old weeping willow,
you and I, and the evening, the moon's timid glow,
"Will you come tomorrow?" you pleaded gently seeking reliance.
The wind responded with a soft whistle, then there was silence.

Let the wind blow and the rain fall,
the past is gone once and for all.

Now I am dreaming that it was today
and that tomorrow was one midnight away.
Alas, it was yesteryear before yesteryear before yesteryear.
Time does not cure; memories will never be wiped away by years.

Let the wind blow and the rain fall,
the past is gone once and for all.

What I lost one evening is revisiting me on a rainy day.
I should have known, real things come seldom, they come only once.
The void cannot be filled by belated regret.
I wish someone had told me: *You can lose easily but will not forget.*

Let the wind blow and the rain fall,
the past is gone once and for all.



Yuan Changming

Love Her, Love Her Dog: for Helena Qi Hong

As Far as Near

You are as far as beyond the whole Pacific
There's no doubt about it

But when my thought cannot reach far enough
To grasp you in my hands
From Zhuhai

You come as near as within
The heart of my heart, where my selfhood
Cannot break off from you
Even for a single moment

Are You Aware

There in Zhuhai, each rain droplet falling
Upon you is actually a dew from my dream
About you

Here in Vancouver, each
Snowflake is a letter signed with your name
To melt into the palm of my hand as I try to
Catch you like a floater



Harris Coverley

Liberty

Beyond Lockdown

a guy pisses against a bin in my left ear
distant chatter echoes in my right
my hands are like the winter's dead rose thorns
I am alone
and the beer burns my throat

but it's okay—
I am a bird
freed from a cage
who knows to be wary
of the window pane.

Michael Meinhoff

Octavio Paws

out of nowhere
a gray cat walked
into my house the other day
just pranced right in

and set up house in *my* house

I named him Kitten Kabudel
but he corrected me
saying if that were his name,
which it isn't,

I would be obliged to call him
Mr. Kabudel – he refers
to himself as Mr. Paws –

I dare not call him Octavio;

I suppose I should be thankful
he hasn't tried to chase me
out of what used to be

my house ... well,
not yet!

Michael Meinhoff

Rain in the Foothills

When I awoke this morning,
fresh grass had grown over
old walking paths.

When it's my turn to be gone,
my footprints will also
seemingly disappear

overnight. Fact is, they're
already becoming
a little faint.



Mr. Paws

Michael Meinhoff

My thoughts stare up
into the Yosemite foothills,
my eyes a thousand feet higher
than my shoes.

Susan Greenberg Feltman

The House of the Lord

When all of the prayers had been said,
And all of the songs had been sung,
He looked upon their dear faces,
And holding their hands, closed his eyes.
Exhausted, he breathed in deeply one last time and
Like diving into a pool, he slipped away.
And then there was nothing.

Except that he was thinking that there was nothing.
And if he was thinking...well, then that's something.

Cautiously, he opened his eyes.
He was quite alone, sitting on a grassy hill, breathing in the
perfume of an impossibly beautiful rainbow of flowers,
looking down into a velvety green valley.
The sky was azure, the air sparkly soft and sweet.
An enormous, sprawling brick villa filled the valley and beyond,
Courtyards and covered walkways, stone carved benches,
Lemon trees and murmuring fountains stretching off far and
away. He sat for a moment, or a day, maybe longer, filled with
wonder. Finally, he bowed his head and prayed from his heart.
"Lord," he pleaded humbly, "there's only one thing I want.
Please let me find her."
And then there she was, sitting next to him in a white cotton
summer dress, her hand in his, her eyes shining bright with un-
shed tears.
"I've been waiting!" she cried, as he put his arms around her.
"I will never let you go," he said, and meant it.
As one, their hearts beat together, together, together.
"What is this place?" he asked finally.
"Let me show you!" she said, and they started down the grassy
slope, her long brown hair shining in the sun, his arm strong and
steady around her slender waist.
Just for the joy of it, they decided to run.



Bruce Levine

The Road of Scattered Debris

The road now focused
Clouded by the mist of the future
Former dreams of glory
Mingled in a stew of uncertainty

Revolving patterns of past and present
Undermining the path
Like tree roots under a sidewalk
Creating broken fissures of pavement

An earthquake of emotions
Turning the soul to liquefaction
And where once was solid turf
Now resides a heart turned to quicksand

A road once gleaming in the sun
Paved with love and hope
Turned to a nightmare collision
And scattered debris

Bruce Levine

The Process Goes On

Time stands still
As the process continues
One after another
Proceeding through the alphabet
Opening windows
Sometimes already closed
And yet the process goes on
Forever unfolding
In the hope of reality
Forever seeking
The next enlightenment
A new generation
Longing for expression
As the process continues
And time lingers on

Steve Brisendine

**Breakfast with the Armadillo at the
Commercial Street Diner**

for Jason Baldinger

Reading road poems in a
smalltown diner, with a broken
Kansas autumn sky waiting to
greet me afterward –
who could blame me for an-
swering the call to long high-
ways?

Steak: chicken fried

Eggs: up

Toast: rye

Browns: hashed

Calories: enough to

(with one more cup of tallgrass
rancher-strong coffee) fuel me
across six state lines if the family
didn't have the car, out scouring
Sutherlands and the Dollar
General for this or that Black
Friday bargain; interstates all the
way, though I'll have to keep an
eye out for marked units on the
hunt. This is a black-ink
weekend for them, too, and
they're not too big on refunds or
exchanges. I have the address
on this manila envelope: nine
hundred and fifty miles from
Gravel City to Iron City.
Fourteen hours; midnight it is,
then, and what poet sleeps at
that hour?

Come on, brother, I'll say.

Pack a bag while

I make a pit stop.

I know a place where

breakfast is so big

*they have to put it on
two plates, and there's
sausage gravy on the
chicken fried steak.*

*We'll get fueled up and
hit the back roads until
we catch William Stafford's
ghost out thumbing
a ride, and we'll stick
him in the trunk until
he spills all his secrets.*



Ahmad Al-Khatat

Reading You

I smoked and drank
another bottle of wine
in my hotel room.
by myself.

I recall a body that
taught me to suffocate
in love for all the cities
we torched on fire.

We sing in hopes.
We flow in illusions.
Before the blue skies
unveil a sad nest,

because the planet is
no longer a secure place.

I scream your name
because I'm drunk.

You are moving toward
serenity. To read you like
a love poem, I am now
clearing my throat.



Susan Greenberg Feltman

Arabella TippiToes

Arabella TippiToes,
Tabby cat with silver toes,
Bright green eyes and tiny nose,
What do you do all day?

Long gray whiskers, sharpest teeth,
Silent, padded little feet,
In the hallway when we meet,
You smile and walk on by.

When sofa bound, book on my knees,
You leap with great alacrity,
Front legs outstretched to land on me.
I hold you close, my friend.

Ahmad Al-Khatat
Sobbing So Much

Why am I sobbing so much?
Is it for the country I referred
to as my "homeland," Iraq?
Or is it for "Baghdad," a city to
which I felt a sense of belonging,
but never actually did.

Why am I sobbing so much?
Do I miss caressing her hands,
kissing her soft cheeks, comforting
her scented body or is it that headache
that turns into a woman.

Why am I sobbing so much?
Who can guide me how to evacuate
from the world and its suffering.
I offered my heart; it has suffered since.
My spirit was given, it is now an orphan.
I surrendered my body, now it is a widower.

Why am I sobbing so much?
Even though I am not the only passenger in
the bus travelling beneath the lunar eclipse,
I cover my face when a tree outside the window
starts to bloom with green leaves. I need
to slaughter the unfinished alphabets off my madness.

Ahmad Al-Khatat
Joy Breathing

Every day I'm embarrassed to walk
for hours on end with injured feet.

My heart has become an ashtray,
with smokes bursting in my lungs.

I'm not sure if death is a desired
wish or if I should return home.

They make no apologies for their wrong
doing. Yet, they urge me to be courteous.

Closing borders may be challenging.
But it is the only way I could breathe joy.

Steve Brisendine
The See of Delia, Kansas is Vacant

Michael I, and so far, the only
who spoke in a soft Okie twang,
called himself the rightful pope
and once invited Orlin and me
into the Vatican in Exile on a late
spring day in 2005,

has been dead almost six months
now with no sign of a successor,

smoke still rises in the Kaw Valley
northwest of Topeka, but only from
fields renewed by fire; this holds its
own holy significance.

I wonder if the faithful took relics
to join the teeth, the bits of bone,
the splinters of wood he kept next
to the board games in his parlor,

even reluctant antipopes want their
nieces and nephews to have fun
when they visit, after all,

or whether his vestments rest in
some consignment store, waiting
for another attic conclave, one
more lonely fisherman saying,
"Here am I, send me ..."

Steve Brisendine
A Fruitless Labor

age is a string of
smears, pink-red on patchy green,

where the lawnmower's
blade chewed through mock
strawberries

freckling the back yard...once, I
would have stopped to pluck

and devour all I could find,
despite the thin bland

tartness that shames their color,
but dusk comes on so quickly

Joan McNeerney
Wintry Bouquet

This December
during wide nights
hemmed by blackness,
I remember roses.
Pink, yellow, red, violet
those satin blooms of June.

We must wait six months
before seeing blossoms,
touch their brightness,
crush their scent
with fingertips.

Now there are only
ebony pools of winter's
heavy ink of darkness.

Dipping into memory of
my lips touching petals
tantalizing sweet buds.
My body longs for softness.

I glimpse brilliant faces of
flowers right before me as I
burrow beneath frosty blankets.
Bracing against that long, cold
nocturnal of wind and shadow.

Joan McNeerney
Blue Your Eyes

Blue your eyes
this edge of snow
in silent sky.
Brown eyes soft
tree bark patterns as
yellow flicks
sparkle in wintry sun.

And now it seems
your eyes are green
green as spruce
turning to grey eyes
glancing across as if
from a mountainside.

Your eyes two violets
hidden beneath frost.
Close your eyes
as sleepless stars
glide through night
in aerial ballet.

Black coal eyes
glowing on fire
red flames leaping
out of eyes burning
blue your eyes.

Patricia Ann Mayorga
Four Corners

The drought swallowed the valley,
the forests, the breath from the
yawn of Spring.

Winter appeared to have been
a season only to be remembered.

I yearned for its chill, its frost, rain,
even its angry bellowing winds.
Then he woke.

The gales came, the rains
soaked the thirsty earth,
the dams filled and the
rivers rushed toward the sea.

The geese flocked clapping
in song across grey skies...
something hungered for—
prayed for.

Green shades of nourishment
painted hillsides,
scarves wrapped...dancing ribbons
draped loosely over shoulders
as dampness freshened the land,
and quenched the thirst of our souls.

A season of hope,
the fourth corner put
back in place.

Spring quietly smiles
as she tiptoes past Winter.
She tucks him in,
freshens his den
with the scents of rebirth.

A sweet bouquet
of benediction.



TWIXT
Untitled

Some folk have fallen out of the picture
they may be in a background admixture,
they may even be gone altogether.
They have stopped short where stopping is a sin,
gave up on what they intended to win.
Something distracted or erased their aim.
They deserve all of what they've yet to earn.



Allen Field Weitzel

My Best Love

My best love has been by the sea,
or when I think about it.
Letting your feet get caught in the tide,
letting me catch you.
Allowing love to capture us.
Do you remember where
the ocean's edge took us?
The ocean and I are friends.
We talk about the times that
we both held you for a little while.
Me, a little longer, because I
didn't need to wait
until the tide came in.

Allen Field Weitzel

How Did I Do?

How did I do?
Chased you in and out of the
Winter storm waves, taking your
foot prints away from me. We
tossed a hundred sand dollars away.
Watched California Gulls thinking it
was feeding time. Not
for them, but for me.
Your mouth on mine.
Drinking in moments we
may not know again.
God brought you to me.
Rewards for a well-worn good deed
done long ago. Did
I give you enough memories to
take away and keep you
warm for later years when Winter waves,
or cold hearts, tear at the paths
you wander without me?
No matter how I did,
I did it for you.

Allen Field Weitzel

Where Will You Find Me?

Where will you find me?
Not sure I know anymore,
where I am, or
where I've been.
My paths are laced with
those I've known and loved.
Find them; they will
lead you to me.
Mostly I'm here....
Waiting.

Jeanine Stevens

Derma

Skin...first universe, tough hide
we live in, bargain with.
Skin as landscape: shoulders
as hillock, tears as waterfall,
hair a tangled thicket, dry heel
the cracked Mohave,
long shank—Coast Redwood.
Aerial photographs reveal hidden cities,
earthworks, yellow snow, quicksand.
What is our exterior plot plan?
Too much smut watching,
novel reading, discoloring pigment?
Goose bumps fear the clutching
spine, the scalp, the crown.
Take care and skin will give you
a full night's sleep, no twitching,
no prickle, eyes clear to distinguish
the freckle from the mole,
crow from the raven.
Warm stones on the lower back—
always a good idea.
Marrow bone soup for aging,
navel pit, craggy jaw.
Skin as threshold.
The illustrated man.



TWIXT **Untitled**

Paired, sometimes flocking, acrobatically
impossible and aloof aloft
I caught this morning the rookie ravens
untaught, instinctive, free of thought, but wise
to the wind in ways beyond displays.

Jeanine Stevens

The Fezzan

Equinox: a riot of color excites.

I spread arms wide
a nervous artist casting thick pigment,
a master gardener spreading tough seeds.

The garden painted again,
fetching foxglove, Swan River Daisy,
clove-scented Sweet William.

All night, heat crept in.
I threw off flannel sheets
embossed with red snowflakes.

Putting my notebook aside,
part of me seems elsewhere—outside,
over that hill
near a clump of blue oak.

As she walks away, the mule deer
flicks her tail, then looks back,
a foreshortening of form,

much like the giraffe carved
in the rock face
took one more glance—
The Fezzan, North Africa.



TWIXT
Untitled

Lighter than the invisible spectrum
of wavelengths superior and speedy,
free thoughts I originate seek the words
that operate at the human level
an oscilloscope might record as sines.

Diane Webster

Fishing

A fallen tree branch
looks like a scorpion
rearing up on its hind legs,
pissed at being wet
at the edge of the lake.

Trout glide between
the tree's limbs enjoying
the scratch of bark
against their rainbow flanks.

Fishing line and tackle
dangle from the scorpion's
raised pinchers,
and missing anglers
tell no tales
about the big one
that got away.

Diane Webster

Breeze Rising

Wind creates chaos
in the tree branches;
leaves jumble
for balance
like hearing a garage door
rumble upward
in early-return surprise
to two people
grabbing, gasping, running
with remnants of orgasmic giggles
into the bathroom and bedroom
to appear nonchalant
and in place when the front door opens
like a breeze rising
among leaves tickling anticipation.

Diane Webster

Diver/Driver

The diver bends his knees,
readies to spring from his
perch
and plunges into the pool
with a rip of splashlets
rippling around his heels.

A vintage car's hood ornament
leans into the wind
ready to lead the way
and air splits
around the chromed figure
diving head first
across the roadway.

Diane Webster

Surrendered Fence

The wooden fence surrenders to
the wind
in startled fling of hands upward
as it falls in dust swept
away in a debris whirl
where leaves brush away evidence
except for the solid remains fallen
open like a gate with one final bang.



Sanjeev Sethi

At the Escritoire

Previously published in *Leaves of Ink*, Oct 2016

In this stillness, I can see my silence
serenade my sight which beckons smell!
to dip into this draught of feelings,
resulting in a rash of rhythms --
autograph from forces I have no control over.
Hieroglyphics of hate try to discombobulate.
I have no space for surgeons with insidious
operations. This vow of words is a serape
I wrap myself in. It makes me serene like
in a séance: my Hippocrene.

Sanjeev Sethi

Morality

Previously published in *Erbacce Journal*, Sept 2021

Those who're in concert with all schools of music
are with none in a go for broke sort of way. Or they
are paltering. Excellence dwells in exceptionalism.
There isn't one definition of privilege. It is a pivot
of the panorama. Brusque interjections by the self
to a well-thought-out spiel on future grooves leave
me irate. It's like theodicy: it hurts no one except
those who are in line for it.

Sanjeev Sethi

Patterned

Previously published in *Outlook Magazine*, Jan 2022

Excess in the footsteps of future
slip and spill as the cut glass of
feelings inhale and exhale.
Your toe on the slate of my foot
scrawls alphabets I can't infer. My
body molds me into an ink slinger.
Carrying the candies of childhood
to our parleys delivers some distress:
allyship of a certain actuality.
Lulled by love? You probably are
acquiring another tongue, preparing
for another podium.



Jeanine Stevens

Something Else

With all the racket, stop and go traffic,
jets overhead, marching bands,
it's difficult to hear silent spirits bearing gifts.

Take notice, maybe a sigh, someone
moves the birdbath? A heavy step breaks
loose the oily scent
of the pendulous hummingbird sage.

And another, something of curry,
turmeric, good food. As afternoon breezes
ruffle Pricilla curtains, I sip lemonade,
note how oxygenated air sweetens the taste.

We must sense beyond hearing,
the body never silent: the pulse throbs
in the temples, flip flop of leaky heart valves.

I gather creeping thyme, dark and pungent:
this side of musk.
Spirits enjoy displacement; turn over
the bed pillows, release
lavender sachet from the netted pouch!

Was that your Jovan aftershave
and also something else?



Abstract

by
Emela McLaren