

COMPLETE ISSUE 9: PART TWO POETRY

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DICHOTOMY and Hallucinations

By Ember Carroll

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...* Carroll offers us a one-trick poem. I just love it when someone showcases their work rather than sends a survey of this-and-that, expeditiously fishing in a taster's-choice-test derby. The rest of the editors don't get anthologies of short stories or screenplays with half-a-dozen sequels...it's left to the one with the least appreciations and most ancient credentials. Ember is white-hot, liquid-light (Note the punning and well-worn phrasing?). Okay, go! "She was sitting. A hard, reupholstered satin-covered chair. / She was riding. Dragon scales scraped against her thighs. / The chair groaned, or was it a roar?" ...Don't you just love the longma dogma already? Men-loving-women-loving-horses—never venture behind either of them...(or at least stay out of cow-kicking range). "...Your nightmares have bled into the daytime." Carroll[s] enjoys 'tabletop roleplaying games' and asked for 'feedback.' Well, this is the first poem that I have read in my tenure here that has ever made me cry. Not because it was so sad, but because it was so moving...in a longing for universal communing. No sense reading any more of me—where is the incentive in highlighting something that's flawless. Ember and Carroll can write in anytime. And I genuinely, most sincerely, (secretly) hope they do... "The world is a mirror. / I'm trapped in the glass."

Dichotomy and Hallucinations

She was sitting. A hard, reupholstered satin-covered chair.
She was riding. Dragon scales scraped against her thighs.

The chair groaned, or was it a roar?
She could feel the heat now.
Surely, it was a dragon.

"You're hallucinating. Your nightmares have bled into the daytime."

I can't be.
Can't you feel the wind?
I'm flying.
I must be.

I have to be.

"If you take these pills, it will stop."

Take the blue pill.
Take the red pill.
They all leave poison on the tongue.

He lied.

He said it would stop.

The world ripples.
The world is a mirror.
I've lived in the world of glass for eighteen months.

I've seen selkies, nymphs, sirens, dragons.
Things I've always known to never be...real.

I've seen the world bend and sway.
I've seen

words
drop
off
pages

like water dripping off leaves
and I've been trying to tell someone what I see.

No one listens.
No one comprehends.

I'm alone.

People touch me and my skin falls off.

My wife stares in horror.
I don't know how to tell her that if someone touches me, I will break.
I don't know how to describe the pain of being completely alone in a world of glass.

Reflections trick me constantly.
I can't figure out who keeps standing in my mirror.
That's not old me.
It's not new me.
I grasp and pull at the face in the mirror.
My face hurts.

That's not my face.

The world is upside down.
Take the red pill.

The world is sideways.
Take the blue pill.

The world is askew.
I didn't take my pill.

The world is right side up.

"Such a blessing."
Why?
Because the world looks right?
Because the world doesn't bend, flow, ebb?
The world was the moon, a mirror.

The world is right now.
I am not.

The face in the mirror frowns back at me.
I keep trying to grab their hand.

I keep trying to tell them

“it’ll be okay.”

I don’t know how to talk to someone in a mirror.
I don’t know how to touch flesh, all I touch is cold glass.

My brain says that’s me.
People say that’s me.

That can’t be me.

I’m a walk-in appointment at Super Clips.
I ask for the one man to cut my hair,
to the stares of old women.
to the frowns or disappointed looks of the women stylists.
I get a faux-hawk.
I dye my hair green.

I try to find the person in the mirror again.

My hair matches theirs.
My nose matches theirs.
My glasses match theirs.

I touch part of my reflection.

I step out of the mirror the first time that day.

I’m back inside.
I wonder when it will be safe to come out.

I want to come out.

The world is a mirror,
and nothing looks right.
Nothing has looked right for a long time.

The world is glass.
It ripples around me,
enveloping.

“I have to grieve who you were.”

“That’s not your name.”

“What’s your birth name?”

“What’s your legal name?”

“You have to use your birth sex for medical reasons.”

“Ma’am?”

“Miss?”

I want to rip apart everyone’s throats,
so they can’t say the name of the child who

screamed
cried

begged
pleaded

when everyone did what they wanted to her.

when everyone used her and broke her.

when she was used as a sex toy.

when all she wanted was a mother or a sister or any woman to love her.

My name is Ember.

"I won't remember that."

"That's a weird name."

"What's your birth name?"

"I won't call you that."

I'm nonbinary.

"You're confused."

"Why does everyone have to be a special snowflake these days?"

"Can't you just be a woman?"

"You were born a woman."

"No, you're a woman."

I'm genderfluid.

"What the hell's that?"

"You're a freak."

"See? Told you, you're a woman."

"You can't be anything any given day."

"You're just a tomboy."

"You just like wearing men's clothes."

The world is a mirror.

I'm trapped in the glass.

THE POET SPEAKS... *I have always drawn inspiration from personal experience, muddled with my educational experiences (college, high school, etc.) and my love of the world around me. I have always been told I am too much, too dramatic, too bold, too loud. I'm a queer, leftist, GNC person and I live in the Bible Belt. Writing lets me express my true inner self, it is the only way to be authentic due to where I live. I have been influenced by confessional poets, most notably Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton.*

Dichotomy and Hallucinations was inspired by my experience during the pandemic. I was a victim of medical malpractice, and have been living the last eighteen months dealing with constant panic attacks, hallucinations, dissociation, memory issues, sickness, and gender dysphoria. I was finally able to get some of the health issues resolved and after "seeing the light" of reality, I was inspired to write this piece.

AUTHOR BIO: "Ember Carroll is a reference librarian and technical writer. They are also a published poet in two literary journals, Peaches Lit Mag and The Voices Project. In addition to pursuing their education, they also enjoy tabletop role-playing games, board games, creative writing, and making art. They currently live in Missouri with their wife and two guinea pigs.

They believe that the key to healing from trauma is to tell the truth, and to never silence themselves or others."

Three (3) poems poems poems

By Gerald Wilson

WHY I LIKE IT: *Guest Editor JOEY SCARFONE writes...*

Gerry Wilson writes with profound sincerity, going from a personal attempt to understand everything to a humble acceptance of the human condition. His images are surreal and simple at the same time. They capture my imagination and make me think that everything is the way he is saying it is. Spiritual would almost be a superficial way of describing his work. It is deeper than that. It makes me feel that everything is OK even when the world around me is in chaos.

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...*

Gerald Wilson is busting through the door, knocking you on the floor, top drawer, high score. Doubtless first choice for poetry editor at Fleas, if only he had deigned to do so. "The journey to the self seems the only one: the river of / inherited genes and cultural dreams, the blind spot of / self-interest and survival at any cost..." In stars and cards one skeptic always beats a full-house worth of cynics. "A face / you saw yesterday turns into one you knew long ago. / Swirling circles of conversation spinning you dizzy." "You are empty enough to listen / to the stillness." Lo and behold; as above, so below. Skeletal remains rising: "looking like trees / with leafless white branches.... need for belief no longer served them... a / certain sorrow seeped into our spirits, making us feel dales, / perhaps thinking we had not loved enough,..." Stay sweet, Gerald, our undeclared, ascetic-aesthete laureate. (To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. Scroll down.)

Five stars

(These three poems are from 'Swirling in the Stream', published by Jugdish Publishing, Sault Ste. Marie, ON, 2020)

THOSE AWFUL ARMS

The journey to the self seems the only one: the river of inherited genes and cultural dreams, the blind spot of self-interest and survival at any cost, the endless movies

playing those popout robotic programmes, a shifting collage of connected contingencies assembling and disassembling, an underground whose invisible roots extend far below into deep intricately woven fields. A face you saw yesterday turns into one you knew long ago. Swirling circles of conversation spinning you dizzy. Added strings tie a story together with you, as the hero, the external craver. If you are lucky to sit quietly, if you don't fall asleep, if you realize you've been lost for not sure how long, a sweet release comes, a retreat into the higher eye, the tangled loops loosen. You are empty enough to listen to the stillness. You are not your thoughts, but countless witnesses to countless stories of which most pass except the persistent ones whose arms grab you into doing what they want you to do, no matter how much running, running trying to escape them, as if you ever could.

A HURT BIRD MY MOTHER FALLS

Beyond the duality of earth and sky, my mother seems gone. Now and then, I see her hovering above the rafters until she hits something and falls to the ground. Weeping, I bend down to pick her up. She knows what I am eager to hear from her. But not a word.

WHO KNOWS BETTER THAN THE DEAD

The earth shifted as the dead in unison, began to move their bones. From their dark graves, they broke open the earth, clawing their way up into the air, looking like trees with leafless white branches. Living among us, they walked the streets, looking all alike: men, women, young and old. Their blank stares looked beyond our superficial differences, through our illusions, our desires for food, sex and money. Our need for belief no longer served them. Their lack of facial expression told us they felt no fear and no happiness. As for us, every time, we passed one, a certain sorrow seeped into our spirits, making us feel dales, perhaps thinking we had not loved enough, letting those so many moments of our lives drift away like smoke.

THE POET SPEAKS... *The map is not the territory. The world is not the thing. From that perspective I am suspicious of the thinking, writing process: it's limitations and contradictions. What I think about anything frequently doesn't match my actual experience. So what I say and I think is a sort of façade, a deception. So I hesitate to say much about the writing. Or if I do it's with a lot of caution because I know it has a falseness, a spin, a bias—plain, not the truth. This view in itself is a bias. So what is one to do? What is the truth anyway? Living and writing involves uncertainty, a mystery in which I live. I accept that and surrender to it. Enough said: let the poems speak for themselves. P.S. I write in longhand.*

AUTHOR BIO: Gerald Wilson was born in Sault Ste. Marie (ON) where he now resides. He has published two previous books of poetry. Ten of Gerald's poems were published in **Issue 7**.

GUEST EDITOR'S BIO: Joey Scarfone lives in Victoria, BC where he owned Lazy Joe's Vinyl Emporium—a store devoted to classic vinyl. He devotes some of his time and all of his interest to poetry and music.

New York Summer & other poems . . .

By Christian Cheng

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...*

So, Christian is a high school junior in New York City. Along with an avid interest in insects, he reads and writes poetry. My first instincts and envious nature suggests to me that it is an imposter's biography. I know you people are heaped with imaginative minds and we're all hoped and hooped-up on the prospect of notoriety. My, now, not so secret uncertainty is that he's a faculty member in some department of English at either Columbia or Cornell. The academic tenure track, as an incentive, is a gateway to suspicion and deceit—just as any prestigious appointment or position of status might be. But for now, we'll give Christian the benefit of the doubt. Cheng's works have a refined cadence, adept imagery and deft diction. "Imperfection / Wrapped carelessly / into a ball of perfection" "Grasping for words to form feeling / For words to capture light and dark" "What can I see that your eyes don't define" "Even the thirsty weeds / Seem to shy away in disgust" There's no denying they're inspiring. Christian, you know I'm only (half) kidding, right? (To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. Please scroll down.)

New York Summer

Blue light up above

Matched with the grey of asphalt

Cracked and filled with weeds

Maggots

Candy wrappers

Imperfection

Wrapped carelessly

into a ball of perfection

Life spirals in heavy chambers of smoke

Lifting up from heavy steel buildings

Anchored by so much responsibility

And decades of trust

The blue expanse

Millimeters away from

Touching iron and glass

The connection between heaven and earth

Between the asphalt weathered

By a million steps

And a carefree monotone sky

Words On Paper

Strange and melancholy, I feel a peace extending through my body

Extending like my fingers reaching away on the keyboard

Grasping for words to form feeling

For words to capture light and dark

Day and night of my mind

Words which, ultimately are just words

Illusions with no substance

But yet

Are able to trick our minds into delusion

Delusion that procures feeling

Feeling that procures light

Star Extinction

Star

Shining in the night

Do you see why I watch your dazzling light

Why I grasp your picture in my mind

Even as it fades away in time

Star

Star

Trying to be bright

But fading away so soon in the night.

Alone in your eyes

Yet close to others in mine

What can I see that your eyes don't define

Rainy Day

I look to the sky
And wait
A moment of silence
In anticipation of its touch
 I open my mouth
As it begins to descend from the heavens
Drifting gently to concrete
But It tastes bad
Body sweat from clouds on a bad diet
No one ever waits for raindrops here
Or gazes nervously
In anticipation
Even the thirsty weeds
Seem to shy away in disgust
And in weak whispers
Tell me it's my fault
But I stare up to the sky
And hold out my tongue
In hopes that a drop
Might taste good for once

THE POET SPEAKS... *I have always been interested in poetry. It is a beautiful art form, and acts as a way for me to convey a deeper message through structure and metaphor. In addition, I really appreciate how Poetry's unconfined structure gives you an opportunity to truly write about whatever you want however you want. Poetry allows you to express an abstract feeling in a way that is completely unique. I feel it is difficult to do this with spoken words, but I can convey these feelings through writing poems.*

In my poem New York Summer, nature represents the relationship between all forms of life, both human and non-human. I tried to exemplify this relationship in my poem, where even the smallest maggot wriggling in the pavement manages to coexist with tall men in big skyscrapers. I also wanted to write about human ambition, and the eternal desire for a connection with the heavens (much like the Tower of Babylon). In New York Summer, the skyscrapers are always striving for perfection and reaching for heaven's paradise. They inch closer and closer to heaven but never quite reach it, and as a result, never taint the blue sky.

In Star Extinction, I tried to evoke the wonder one experiences when looking at a cluster of stars, while balancing it with a sense of loneliness, isolation, and the realization that stars are

a lot farther apart from each other than you might imagine. I tried to describe stars with an ephemeral quality, as they seem to fade out of existence when day comes. Lastly, I tried to question how each individual sees or thinks about these things. Also, does a star know that it exists and is surrounded by others like itself? Does it know that we can gaze upon the night sky and see the light from millions of other stars?

For Words on Paper, I wanted to capture the actual feeling of writing. The title is a little bit strange because I describe the process of writing on a computer, not paper, but to me, it still represents the same process as putting your thoughts onto paper and turning nothing into a tangible reality.

AUTHOR BIO: Christian is a junior who attends high school in New York City. He is particularly keen on studying insects and reading and writing poetry.

Duel of the Poets 000

By Brenden PoNtz

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... If perchance you have a penchant for Robert Service's, 'The Cremation of Sam McGee,' 'Sir Smasham Uppe' by E.V. Rieu or even Lennon and McCartney's 'Rocky Raccoon,' Brenden Pontz is pure gold, with a dream-team-theme. It is profound, lyrical and brutish—what could be better? And the finale is theodoraably, seu-prisingly b'geiseling. (Couldn't resist the gibberish, hope it doesn't spoil it for you.) No sense quoting from it, you will want to read it over and over. As for me, I just may have it blown-up to poster-size and have Pontz recommend an illustrator...(Spacing is poet's own).*

Duel of the Poets

By Brenden Pontz

It began in a classroom, with two English teachers

Who were discussing writing and poetry for leisure.

When one asked a question, sure the other would know it

“Who do you think was the world's greatest poet?”

Now this question, you'd think, would be forward and straight

But among them it caused the most vicious debate.

The teachers' discussion turned spiteful and sour

And they found themselves arguing for hours!

So to settle for good who was greatest in rhyme,

They built a machine to travel through time.

Plucked from time in a flash of light,
The greatest poets of all were assembled to fight.
From Wordsworth to Wilde, together they stood,
Armed with quills, pens, and pencils; oh this wouldn't be good!
For the poets would soon take some notes from Macbeth,
Like erudite gladiators, they'd fight to the death.
With no hesitation, Shakespeare plunged his pen
Into the chest of Walt Whitman.

Then as Maya Angelou beat T.S. Elliot into the ground,
Langston Hughes slammed a chair into Ezra Pound.
In shock and horror, the teachers looked on
As the classroom morphed into the Octagon.

Around them, the chaos continued to grow
As Robert Frost punched out Edgar Allen Poe.
Frost broke his nose, and Poe cried "Nevermore!"
Then he slumped unconscious onto the floor.
Frost proclaimed his victory, stating he was the best,
Only to be tackled by Homer, jumping off of a desk.

Ralph Waldo Emerson fell, stabbed in the spleen
By a pencil wielded by Shel Silverstein.
Shel's weapon of choice was as sharp as could be,
And carved from a limb of the Giving Tree.
Yet it couldn't save him from being beat
Over the head, with a book by John Keats.

The shouting and punching grew rather loud,
And soon, the commotion drew a large crowd
A gaggle of teachers, who began to fret
And a handful of students, who commenced placing bets.
It was the most epic battle they had ever seen,
Until Chaucer pushed Dante into the time machine.

Dante hit the machine with his shoulder
Causing it to crash and fall over.
The power core ruptured from this forward motion,
And Dante was burned in a fiery explosion.
Soon Dante's inferno consumed the whole room,
Slaying most of the fighters in a fiery plume.
The crowd of spectators had to stop looking on,
For the flash was as blinding as a nuclear bomb.

As the explosion ended, though now apprehensive
The uneasy crowd got ahold of their senses.
And what did their ringing ears happen to hear,
But the last standing poet strangling Shakespeare!
With his victim passed out, and his fury let loose;
The winner faced the crowd, it was Dr Seuss.

He turned to the crowd, wowed by his combat
And gave a dramatic bow, like the Cat in the Hat.
Then Seuss walked away, his triumph complete
They say to this day, he haunts Mulberry Street.

As for the teacher's question; well now, you know it
The answer was found in the Duel of the Poets.

THE POET SPEAKS... *Satirical humor is a large influence of mine when I write poetry. I'm a dedicated fan of sites like The Onion, and TV shows like The Simpsons, and I strive to capture their sense of madcap hilarity that manages to be both weird and smart. I'm a firm believer that poetry (like all writing) shouldn't be taken too seriously, and poets should be allowed to have fun with the works that they shape. I've never really subscribed to the idea that true art should be dark, angsty, and excessively deep. Reading a good poem is like listening to your favorite stories; it should make you laugh, cry, and get you to think a little all at once.*

To me, poetry is a unique way to entertain readers, and play with the conventional formats of writing. As someone who writes both poems and fiction, I try to give my poems a plot while still adhering to a meter, rhyme scheme, and other poetic elements. Though it can be challenging, it is certainly a fun challenge to bring a poem to life.

AUTHOR BIO: I'm a college student from Connecticut who's a trail runner, science fiction nerd, and aspiring writer. I enjoy writing quirky poetry and all forms of strange fiction. I'm currently a history major and wish one day to teach professionally.

DE-PARTURE & other poems

By Jack D. Harvey

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...

Jack D. Harvey is a yowling, comical caution—you know that light everyone speeds up at before they see red? ...well, it is time to slow down and intersect with greening genius. He is the new playground in my mind. He is light-hearted, diverting and erudite, wise, witty and waggish—but he does go on... Nor is there shame in that, his words ‘Sing [as] Heav’nly Muse’ in a paradise all his own. I can only imagine his “rictus” facade with tongue firm to cheek—and what a cheeky, twisted tongue ‘tis. If wordplay were a Pro-Sport he’d be deluged by recruits, picked first in a draft, made millions, declared bankruptcy, commentated in techno color and inducted on-the-walk before his time: No quotes here, he is the ‘Whatever’ in what is sure to float your boat—Oops, can’t resist, the man’s a feast: “peace, rest, surcease from ceaseless movement;” And on the ribald side, “the doves eat luscious / Daisy Mae alive; / I wouldn’t mind a bite,…” He leaves me contented to be conflicted, covetous and contrite—but mostly green with envy. Spread your jalousie blinds and take a peep at Jack—(To maintain poet’s spacing each poem is on its own page. Please scroll down.)

Departure

Drowned palaces,

faery imaginings of yore,
flights of fancy
brewed up in a posset,
but he will not drink
from that cup.

Suffering from his own doom,
one way or another
he will not live entombed;
the willing earth,
Antaeus' myth of
mother strength
not sustained for him;
in his despair
he needed to get free of it,
scale the heights and plummet
down like a rock.

The only mountains at hand
in this Goliath of a city
the Chrysler Building,
the Empire State Building
and such like; there he is
on one of them,
a man standing on the edge
of a parapet, teetering,
buffeted by the wind;
couldn't carry the weight anymore,
the hardships of his life,
the daily frustration and heartache,
the particulate of
boredom and disorder
wore him down;
life's a stage or Samson's agony
made no difference to him,
the difference unconsidered and
known only at some remote
pole of his universe,
long lost and forgotten.

Far above, above the crowd,
above the city,
in the steel girders, concrete heights,
he seemed to be in another world;
Olympus below,
below the city,
below hell,
below pity,
shadowless he stood,
looking beyond
the beck and call of life;
his face not noble, not fearful,
but gentle in repose,
no anger of defeat,
no rictus of terror,
sadly he looks down

at the gathering crowd;
a moment gone,
sudden his fall,
swift and heavy,
like a ball
with no life in it.

And we down below
who control nothing,
who have no vantage point,
who weep for ourselves,
who scuttle and grub about
in the daily clutter, in turn
nervous and content with our lot,
observe his smashed body,
his protoplasm
plastered on the sidewalk
and somehow consoled
that we are not him,
go our separate ways.

No end to this kind of despair,
his and ours,
no end to sorrow that maims and kills.
Like ducks we paddle in it,
forced to dive to its
pernicious beckoning depths
for a morsel of god knows what,
peace, rest, surcease from ceaseless movement;
mostly popping up again
on the world still there,
serene and benign;
sometimes in the weeds
stuck down below forever.

Even the witnesses of this sidewalk wreck
walking away, in their waking and dreaming
sometimes sense the talons of
some terrible bird of prey
swooping down, filling
the peaceful empty daylight,
the quiet obscure night,
with a terror they already know,
the horror of a pattern they
can never know, alone and afraid
in an armed and indifferent universe
unfolding, expanding,
ever mercilessly appropriating,
taking all and giving nothing;
its Janus gates always open,
by no morality or human love suborned.

Playing With Fire

In the hills and dales
of some southern state
the doves eat luscious
Daisy Mae alive;
I wouldn't mind a bite,
but I'm not there.

The gorgeous belles,
attentive at Sunday church,
later in downtown hotels
develop tremulous leaks of sound
getting poked by their beaux;
the pampered fairways of Heaven
lapse back to brambles,
closed for the duration,
but I don't care.

I'm bored as hell,
looking for something to do,
something to kill the time.

In the midst of discovery
I crouch over an ant hill,
magnifying glass in hand,
watching the orderly hysteria
of the ants.

Science, my eye,
I want to kill.

Magnified out of proportion
by my thick round lens
the ants move on their correct paths,
oblivious to impending doom
focused in a deadly point of light.

Unalterable law, my foot,
under the ranging roaming needle
of searing heat, random as Roderick,
they burst out of instinct and
blind against the fates,
spread out against me
in black perimeters;
unconcerned as a Lucretian god
I burn legions of them to a crisp.

Unafraid and afraid
of divine vengeance
I walk on.

What a heartless
sadistic story this is,
telling on myself a nasty tale;
the grasshopper, the ant

and the *tertium quid*.
A timeworn fable becomes
destructive and horrible;
pharisaical morality
against the grain transmuted
and to the ants' sudden dismay
the grasshopper's fiddle
sounds a fearful woebegone note.

If winter comes,
and it will,
it comes too late
for ants untimely dead
to get off a line
at the grasshopper's expense;
lost forever the cruel retort
in the sun's concentrated rage
brought to bear
by a bored colossus.

Sometimes that's how it goes
and best to go along with it
and rightly so; learning
what we really are from
the bare bones
of a tale unadorned
with humanity or compassion.

The Ancient Builders

Too much style in architecture
c'est la môme,
said Frank Lloyd
and he was right.
The ancient builders,
with some success
before there was
an England, a France,
a Middle Kingdom
and all the rest,
tried to stay away from it;
they did their business quietly,
building to a brightness,
a fullness of simple design,
beyond the spired beauty
of the Taj Mahal.

In the hinterlands
of human history
and beyond, from Giza,
Machu Picchu, Stonehenge,
Shi Huangdi's Great Wall,
they built simply,
finely, in stone,
in baked brick, close-fitting,
trued to the thinnest of lines,
stone against stone,
brick to brick,
not a fingernail's width.

Towers and walls of grace,
mocking today's overblown
rhodomontade of skyscrapers,
the crazy miscellany of edifices
angled exquisitely equine
to catch the frenzied
contemporary pace;
not one refinement of style
in that armory of bad architecture
flowering all over the place.

And the incipient horror of
a city hardly started,
Hitler's Germania,
a maniac's massive nightmare,
dreamt to turn a city
to a monstrosity of horrible order;
a harbinger of things to come.

But back before all that,
back then, in the dim ages,
dedicated to some god
the simple temple
on the foreshore, astounding

labor of love and patience,
clean and sharp
the chisel shaped the marble
and there it stood,
a lovely shape made against
the sea and mountains.

The ancient builders,
with spool and line,
caliper and compass,
sifting and measuring
the rows of stone at Carnac,
the heights of Babylon;
we see them still,
frozen forever in time
these ancient builders,
caught in poses
stiff as sticks
on the walls of tombs,
stiff as sticks
on the temple walls,
trapped forever in the city ruins,
forming an almanac of an art,
a memory of the first order,
lifting us and along with us
human structure upright
above the natural horizon
the natural limits
of the indifferent permanent earth.

And now, these ancient builders,
their messages
propaganda of the past,
long-forgotten and no more.

THE POPET SPEAKS: *What inspired these poems? In the first place most writers, including poets, find it difficult to talk about their work and the generation or creation of their work because it is such a dippy process, (with a bow to Richard Feynman) involving as it does, the gnomic, cryptic, ambiguous, incantatory, discontinuous, oracular and accidental nature of creation of language, the putting together of words. There is no question that some of what I write is not some conscious creation, like putting Legos together, but involves the muse itself in some form, coming in from outside and I am not talking here about "automatic writing", taught and pursued by William James, Hugo Münsterberg and Gertrude Stein or some kind of reductive Freudian id-scape. The first lines of both the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" invoke the muse -- "muse, tell through me the rage of Achilles" (Il. 1) and "tell to me muse, of the wily [may also be translated as "of many wanderings"] man" (Od 1). The first poetry (including the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey") was recited from memory by the poet or rhapsode and constituted a kind of compendium of societal and cultural practices, carrying and preserving information vital to the existence and continuance of the society. Hence all the fixed expressions in early Greek poetry and the kennings in Anglo-Saxon [now referred to as Old English] poetry, used, inter alia, as mnemonics. Any poet who claims to be an authentic poet is a Parryist at heart. I use all forms and wear as many masks or personae as I need to to do what I have to do. If you strip away the masks to the bare face of the poet, you will find that his own face is nothing*

more than a mask and that is as it should be. If you have any competence in your craft, your voice is always there, no matter what persona you assume. "Cleave the rock and I am there." The simple answer to what inspired these poems is that I have no answer.

Regarding the creative process itself, I don't know if I can add anything more to what I have already said. I have no established means of luring the muse and, as I said earlier, the process of writing creative prose or poetry is a dippy process. I have no idea how it works, but, in my case, there is no question that the creative process takes place, at least in part, at some lower level of the conscious or comes from outside- maybe there is really some sort of Jungian kollektives Unbewusstes, "collective uncounscious." Or maybe poets are all lunatics, despite what Freud said. According to Horace, Democritus would only admit crazy poets to Helicon-excludit sanos Helicone poetas Democritus.

As far as the importance of content vis-à-vis music, you need both and you need balance with both, but when it comes to "needs must when the devil drives," I would choose music every time. That is the heart and soul of poetry. In the two simple Anglo-Saxon words from Beowulf, "wordum wrixlan," word-braiding or word-twisting is, to my mind, the core concept of poetry. This is something that is lacking in most of today's poetry, which is too focused on "relevancy" and the passing fads or injustices in society and not enough on language and music. There was a big flap a while back about some poem that was published in The Nation and aroused the ire of the PC police and the black community because it was written by a white man who used some version of what he thought was black patois to write about how a poor black woman should beg for money on the street. Tout court, the poem is a piece of crap, but there was no discussion of this obvious fact and in the end, the two young female editors had to issue an abject apology for publishing the poem. Disgusting weak behavior on their part.

As far as influences, back in the fifties, when I was in my teens, I spent summers in Gloucester, Mass, where my parents had a summer cottage. I had the good fortune to meet a poet called Vincent Ferrini and his friend, the better-known poet, Charles Olson. Vincent lived with his wife and kids up the street from our place, in the house in which Rudyard Kipling wrote Captains Courageous. I remember many a night at his house with Vincent and Charles and their wives (Peg Duffy, Vincent's first wife, was a very intelligent, highly educated woman) and others, talking about everything from poetry to politics to the local fishing industry, to cabbages and kings, and it was through Olson's suggestion that some years later I eventually met Achilles Fang, the polymath and polyglot, when I was in college. At that time, he was teaching and studying at Harvard. Vincent encouraged me to write poetry and was both supportive and critical. Alas, Vincent, Charles and Achilles are long dead. In any event, that was how I started and I have been writing poetry ever since.

As far as stylistic influences, I would say Ezra Pound, Dante and Horace were major influences on my poetry, but there were many others, developed over a lifetime of reading poetry in a number of different languages.

Pound, whatever his pretensions to such, was no philosopher or economist, but his ear was unerring. As he said somewhere, poetry has to be closely tied to music -- when it isn't, it degenerates and, in turn, music has to be closely tied to dance (he meant tribal, ritual or communal dance) or it degenerates. Too many "poets" these days chop prose into lines and call it poetry, based on some kind of expectation that sentences chopped into lines will yield/deserve some kind of special pleasure and significance. I try to avoid that and follow Pound's advice.

As far as I am concerned, poetasters like Amanda Gorman and Cleo Wade should be indicted for crimes against the English language and for causing irreparable harm to the craft of poetry. A few brave souls have pointed out the utter atrociousness of their writing, but these critics have been buried under the weight of the "awakened," always quick to jump on any bandwagon. These girls' cause and subject matter may be timely and just, but shitty writing is

shitty writing. Gorman's inaugural poem was an embarrassment, a Schande. Jill Biden, who doesn't know any better, likes her and her work and Gorman is the right color these days and so she gets an undeserved push and an undeserved platform for her chazerei. Still, "performance poetry" ain't echt poetry and depends on the performer's presence and presentation as much as the words. If the poetry can't live flat on the page it is not real poetry.

The real problem is that people don't read any more. Most of what they absorb comes from TV and the talking heads on cable TV. And, again, as Harold Bloom said, there has been and continues to be a dumbing-down of the culture. The latest studies from leading universities indicate that the cultural level of the average "man or woman in the street" here in America is equivalent to that of a five year old chimpanzee. This is a huge problem for the serious writer; there are no or few serious readers. As a matter of fact, there are few readers of books. The few books that are read by the lumpen are junky "young adult" books like Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Behind or Strictly From Hunger Games.

Why does poetry matter and why do I read and write poetry? Poetry matters in this age of iron where language and especially the spoken word are degenerating at a rapid pace. Poetry makes mythology and mythology is the third eye for all of us, opening our minds to possibilities beyond the daily bread of our lives. This is important.

Nevertheless, poets these days serve at a ruinous shrine and we know it. Yet, I do not despair. At my age it is unbecoming. If I were a reductive Freudian, I would say that my writing harnesses or displaces some deep-seated neurosis in a positive way. As Freud said, "Artists, like neurotics, flee a reality that is hardly satisfactory to them and take refuge in a fantasy world, but- unlike the mentally ill- are able to find their way back." So I say I persist writing poetry because writing poetry to me is like breathing- I can't survive without it. And perhaps for some of the reasons Orwell sets forth in Why I Write.

AUTHOR BIO: Jack D. Harvey's poetry has appeared in *Scrivener, The Comstock Review, Valparaiso Poetry Review, Typishly Literary Magazine, The Antioch Review, The Piedmont Poetry Journal* and elsewhere. The author has been a Pushcart nominee and over the years has been published in a few anthologies. So what.

The author has been writing poetry since he was sixteen and lives in a small town near Albany, New York. He is retired from doing whatever he was doing before he retired. He once owned a cat who could whistle "Sweet Adeline," use a knife and fork and killed a postman.

His book, *Mark the Dwarf* is available on Kindle. <https://www.amazon.com/Mark-Dwarf-Jack-D-Harvey-ebook/dp/B019KGW0F2>

'Til We Get Sick of It

BY Sayeda Ghazanfar

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... *Ms. Ghazanfar, I can only imagine, both suffers and profits by being 'so bizarre.'* Get this: "a queer, sultry summer / silent telephones..." Her lack of punctuation does not daunt me—I'll stroke it as I see it, "damp spots / ceiling textures and yellow-haired girls..." I'd give anything to do this as a living, if I got minds, all the time, like Sai's [heaving sigh]. Perhaps, someday, she'll explain what she means by "counting the blocks beneath my breath" it absolutely eludes and astounds me. But that's nothing new for me. She's is delightful, I'm twice her age and never been published either. (Spacing is poet's own.)

'Til We Get Sick of It by Sayeda Ghazanfar

a queer, sultry summer

silent telephones bedside reading lamp

fake eyelashes and giddy jewelry

the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs

fashion magazine gushers damp spots

ceiling textures and yellow-haired girls

little gilt box with a mirror on the side

the cracks, the colors young ladies

not smiling, not sober

stubbing out my cigarette counting the blocks beneath my breath

feet only slightly swollen my fault for not wearing stockings

THE POET SPEAKS... *I enjoy writing poetry because it helps me put things into perspective. Sometimes, I'm an awkward individual and not very good at expressing myself verbally. Writing is my medium. It always has been. My style of writing is inspired by Bukowski,*

Vonnegut, and Plath. In fact, this piece is inspired by The Bell Jar and the misadventures of Esther in New York City. It is a found poem that I very much enjoyed piecing together.

AUTHOR BIO: Sayeda is a first-generation Afghan American writer, poet, and editor residing in San Diego, California. She has been awarded by the Journalism Association of Community Colleges for a feature story for Viewpoints Magazine at Riverside Community College. She is currently studying Literature & Writing at California State University, San Marcos.

4 (four) poems poemS poems poeMs

By James Fowler

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...

'Thanks for the look.' Fowler says proffering his work. You know you're in trouble when a lecturing Professor-Fellow goes colloquial-rogue on you. And for once, I was right. It's not easy resisting genius when it's causally tossed in your lap. Get a load of this guy. It's hard to imagine that he's tethered to a tenure-track. I know I've seen all the same 70's movies, but his first work distills them—he's a bonspiel of spellbinding toe curling. (I just love when institutional thinking collides with a rebel angel possessed with original thought.) If you don't love Jimmy, you've cliqued on the wrong e-rag. Prepare to be cerebrally hijacked. I'm not even sure the lines I have captured are the ones I love best, "...Most lives just / ripple the surface, / and angry neighbors hear / I've called them gravel / in life's rock quarry." Why do the next lines echoing so callously cavernous: "Some guy with his last name / takes up a whole bookcase shelf." If you're on some schedule to sharpen a jar of pencils or sift the kitty's litter box, skip him, don't take my words for it...I'm just another one of those "lit-crit hyenas" attempting to "tickle." (To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. Please scroll down.)

1. It's a race to the bottom between New York and New Jersey scumbags.
2. The blonde bombshell is actually a brunette named Angela who's cagey enough to slip the closing dragnet.
3. Every third garbage-strewn block has its stripped Ford. Expect a foul smell from the trunk.
4. After flashing a badge, street Santa chases the junkie/pimp/hood into an alley and threatens to go to town on his ass if he doesn't start talking. The junkie/pimp/hood swears he *don't know nothin'*, but he always does.
5. Havoc erupts under the El or down in the subway.
6. Chances are someone's cousin will pick a fight at a wedding reception or birthday party.
7. The divorced narcotics detective is on a liquid diet, keeps a squalid apartment, and spends a good portion of each day beneath flickering lights of a greenish cast.
8. Look: here comes Bundled Woman with Headscarf and Glasses, perpetually pushing her handcart down the sidewalk.
9. All main characters left standing will report to the abandoned warehouse or dilapidated factory for the ceremonial spraying of bullets.
10. Closing credits scroll to the sound of a desolate, knowing trumpet, preferably one that has been pawned several times.

Tension

It is a problem poem.
I teach it primary colors,
and it finger paints the cat.
Acquiring language quickly,
it prefers code talking
to plain speech. I catch it
whispering secrets and lies

to the garden gnome.
Born with one name,
it calls itself another
it refuses to divulge.
Willful misconstruction
soon proves its métier.
I say, *Most lives just
ripple the surface,*
and angry neighbors hear
I've called them gravel
in life's rock quarry.
I spend ever more time
cleaning up its messes,
checking its headlong plunge
into free association.
Let's talk about roses,
I suggest, and off it goes
on sub-rosa resistance,
Rilke, and Sarajevo.
*You hardly know your
own mind,* it sneers.
Hijacker! I accuse.
It can scarcely wait
to be free of me,
free to muddy my
most crystalline sense,
shove all meaning into
the slough of uncertainty.
Outlive and undermine,
its adolescent plot.
Decades down the road,
how it will squirm
to find admirers
tracing family likeness
in its singular features.

Waiting for the Monsters

They knew to work the shadows,
wrap themselves in fog, lurk beneath
the surface. Until closing minutes
you only got a stray claw or tentacle.

Otherwise, it was all eerie theremin
and victims' horrified recoils.
When the dodgy thing did finally
slouch forward, it often disappointed,

itself a victim of tight budgets,
short on curdling power, not grotesque
or novel enough to justify
the teasing, commercial-laden grift.

These days we still brace for
the ghastly strike, now from

berserkers wearing common faces
but lunging from underworlds yet.

The *Terror Theater* of childhood
that spiced dull Saturday afternoons
has opened its doors, spilled its guts
into public paths and spaces.

Closer to home, we count the hours
until that most secret ambush
distorts loved features, thickens
the tongue, and turns confident stride

into halting lurch. How horrid
we'll feel for recoiling then.
Adults must have kept from us
that the monsters keep coming.

An American Original

Disintegrating by easy stages,
life work practically finished,
he putters around the canal-backed yard,
tending almost year-round hibiscus.
He likes their brazen red, recalling
the ruby blood on his father's hands
as he pruned *the goddam holly*.
The subtropic is his reward:
modest boat at the slip,
sea bass or sunfish whenever,
happy hour 5-7 nightly on the patio
joined by his main squeeze,
common-law by now he supposes.
After their combined track record
neither stands on ceremony.
That line applies: perfection of life
or work; choose. Wife one bailed
when full of his Mailingway b.s.
(turns of phrase her chief attraction).
Spouse the second preferred half
the property to all his love,
minus a small percent on the side
she and her lawyer never discovered.
If anything, these Solomon chops
made him more productive, determined
to replenish the counting house
as if no blow could floor him.

Always the instinct for what would sell
and tickle the lit-crit hyenas.
Yet now he bristles at autographs
and treats his agent rudely,
a case of professional prickly heat.
Some guy with his last name
takes up a whole bookcase shelf.
Last week at a gallery he nearly
snatched a mask off the wall
for a crazed banshee dance.
In mockery of his image he wears
a floppy sunhat and white powder
on his nose (a rich shift there).
White, glaring white, bones-at-noon
white, this place's answer to snow.
He doesn't walk the same beaches
as the bronzed immortals;
still, his orgasms and aura
stack up nicely next to most.
The next minute the breeze drops
and his old man's brag goes limp.
Better to nurse wounds quietly.
Swirling a Manhattan, he conceives
an out-of-character piece about
this chump who's haunting himself,
though it's likely been done before.

THE POET SPEAKS... *If these four poems have anything in common, it is the employment and send-up of masculinist grit. Sometimes that quality can produce worthwhile artifacts, like the hard-hitting crime dramas of 1970s American cinema. It runs the risk of becoming a toxic caricature though, as the novelist in "An American Original" has come to realize. Boys may have an appetite for the safely grotesque and violent ("Waiting for the Monsters"). Mature men, however, properly socialized, keep a check on monstrous egoism, aware that human afflictions are brutalizing enough without the added burden of homicidal aggression. Even the problem poem personified in "Tension," with its drive to achieve complete postmodern freedom from authorial control and defined significance, may ultimately be self-defeating in its perpetual adolescent rebellion.*

As for influences, I appreciate the melancholy-tinged larking of Donald Barthelme, Max Apple, and Billy Collins. That said, any writer's influences are legion, extending beyond the literary into other arts, or even reaches of existence not thought artful at all.

I've spent much of my adult life engaging with poetry, as author, teacher, and editor. Here the tensile, lyrical, resonant possibilities of language are at a premium. I imagine that what a poet feels in crafting a sound poem is not unlike what a luthier does in constructing a tonally rich acoustic guitar. These instruments then pass into other hands for ongoing play.

AUTHOR BIO: James Fowler teaches literature at the University of Central Arkansas. He is author of the poetry collection *The Pain Trader* (Golden Antelope Press, 2020). His poems have recently appeared in such publications as *Futures Trading Magazine*, *Transference*, *Cave Region Review*, *The Poetry of Capital*, *Elder Mountain*, *Lullwater Review*, *Aji Magazine*, *Evening Street Review*, *Westview*, *Glimpse*, *Cantos*, *U. S. 1 Worksheets*, and *Dash*.

My friend has no idea + (4)

By Kate LaDew

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes* ••She lives in Graham, NC with her cats, Charlie Chaplin and Janis Joplin (who could resist a mew-lodic pairing like this? And can't you imagine her calling them in at night?). Kate is uniquely endearing "and we smile at each other, plaster in our hair" This is the last line of her first verse...explore what you're in store for preceding/before...What could possibly distract from smiling back. [Bye-the-way, K. thank you for inserting your name in front of your entry-attachment, it assists the outstanding standing out. And, stating the number of lines in each piece boards on stupendous for one stupefied, surrogate editor. What caused you to do that? I find that people who give rather than take are offered so much more...] It is a privilege, for me, to read your (et all's' [sic]) thoughts. (As it is, I have never been able to anticipate what anyone is about to say next—even when they're finishing my sentences)...Read on as LaDew gets incidentally metaphysical: '4. I put on my turn signal' // "say out loud to the car behind me that means you have to stop / because two objects can't exist in the same place at the same time" This lady can even make road rage raspberries digestible. One more, for my sake: '5. I believe people sink into walls' //... "and if you dug your fingers / into the softness of a chest, you would pull back love" What if the human race, and humanity at large, had the sense to embrace her words? She is our best chance to advance...(Spacing poet's own.)

1. your hands grasp the top of the door frame,

tensed, as if you're holding up the whole house
I've never seen you relaxed, not once
and I want to poke you in the belly so your arms fall,
I do, and your grip loosens
making you step back, surprised.
as the house falls down around us,
your palm flattens over where I touched you
and we smile at each other, plaster in our hair

2. we're going to hang out

for the first time in a long time
and it rains

of course it rains

as we sit under the umbrellas of the coffee shop

legs tucked criss-cross apple sauce

on damp wooden benches

I say, *did you know, there's the same amount of water
on earth now as when the dinosaurs were here?*

you don't say anything, but I can see inside you

you're imagining triceratops in aviator shades

velociraptors rocking chuck taylors,

brontosauruses with scarves wrapped around and around

did you know they're real? I say

and you look at me,

brontosauruses, they're real, they did exist

they used to think, I lean forward, drops of rain ghosting past my eyelashes,

they were a mistake, just more apatosauruses,

but it's not true, they're real,

I touch my fingertips to the inside of your wrist, press, soft,

as real as you or me

your eyes sweep down, and our pulses sync

I'm glad, you say, a smile in your voice

and we look out at all of the everything

3. a friend of mine has no idea

about a monumental thing
that has just happened to the country
and I am incensed beyond all reason
that one could have no knowledge of this thing
that had kept me up at night,
the articles I've read and reread,
the frantic texts, can you believe it?
pictures everywhere, everywhere
bloody faces, heads bashed in, eyes gouged
that one could not know,
people died, I repeat to myself, they died
and she does not know
asks what happened and why
the world fell apart, I want to shout
it's fallen apart and keeps falling
and I do not know why anymore than you do

4. I put on my turn signal

say out loud to the car behind me *that means you have to stop*
because two objects can't exist in the same place at the same time
I turn into the cemetery even though it's raining
even though sitting in a car outside surely can't count as being outside,
not the 20 minutes a day we're all supposed to be in it
based on a study that asked some people somewhere some time
if they felt better or worse for breathing air in an open field
instead of an office or an elevator or an airport
and almost everybody said better
you have to think the few who said worse
felt like being contrarian in that moment

might tell friends somewhere inside with a drink in their hand
and get this, I said worse
it's people like that
who've kept me from spending 21 22 30 47 minutes outside at a time
when I might've seen anything, felt anything
but on a day like today I'm grateful 20 minutes in the morning,
watching dead stone over dead people in the rain, feels like enough
but what about tomorrow or the next day?
you're supposed to live in the now
but tomorrow is what makes you put up with today
I squint my eyes through the rain as it carves circles in itself,
patterning my windshield and remember yesterday my dad told me it would rain
I'd forgotten and it was only a little while ago
how much else has slipped through my fingers?
momentarily inconsequential things that become important
once they can no longer happen anymore
I read the name PLOTT in big block letters on the back of a tombstone
and think, that's funny

5. I believe people sink into walls

leave what was inside them inside
I believe every person who looks
finds the last person who looked
I believe all the memories of all the memories
are part of the air, and if you dug your fingers
into the softness of a chest, you would pull back love
I believe every thing that every one has ever lost
is stacked under the earth, waiting
but do you believe in god? you ask me again
I close my eyes, keep them closed
isn't that what I said?

THE POET SPEAKS... *All of my poems were inspired by seeking a 'return to normal' after I was vaccinated for COVID 19. Most of my family members, though not all, and most of my friends, though not all, have been vaccinated. During the beginning of the pandemic it was jarring to see people in masks and now it's jarring to not see people in masks. I still wear one indoors, though I have been to the movie theater twice in the past month and thought, me and at most five other people in a very large room? It'll be fine and went maskless. I'm still not sure if it was the right thing to do and am fairly confident in the vaccine, but— I remember the months and months of anxiety and stress as I struggled to keep myself safe and somehow*

continue to have a relationship with people whom did not share my views. I even have to admit to feeling annoyed that while I went out of my way to stay away from people and lived a very sheltered, anxiety ridden existence for almost a year and a half — and did not get sick — a lot of my friends and family took no precautions and did not get sick. It's not that I wanted anyone to go to the hospital but I wanted something to happen to prove I was right and they were wrong. And maybe that's an unkind way to look at things but it's how I felt.

The poem 'my friend has no idea' is about a conversation I had where someone I'm close to had only a vague of what the Capitol Riot was and why it happened. She thought it had 'something to do with a podium?' and I was so upset by this I didn't speak to her for a week. When I resumed texting her she honestly had no idea why I'd gone silent. I end the poem by pointing out that she doesn't know why bad things happen and neither do I. Is my anxiety over it helpful in any way? Would it be better to stay ignorant of events if I can do nothing to change them? I'm honestly not sure. In the end, the people in my life who cared about keeping others safe during the pandemic, who followed the rules, watched the news and its daily death tolls ultimately lived through the worst part of this ongoing pandemic and so did the others who still don't understand why any of this is a big deal.

The poems "your hands grasp the top of the door frame and "we're going to hang out" are both about how the little interactions you have with people are what you ultimately remember. Not being able to just go to a coffee shop or even be in the same room as my friends and now suddenly both options are open to me made me realize how much I missed them.

"I put on my turn signal," and "I believe people sink into walls," both deal with death and how we come to terms with the fact that we and every person we know, along with every person we don't know, will die. Every morning I go to the cemetery a few blocks from my house and walk. I started doing this during the pandemic because it was the only place I could be sure I would be alone. At first I just looked at the trees and the sky and after a few days started reading tombstones. I was struck by how I could read a person's name, the day they were born, the day they died, how the presence or absence of flowers and upkeep might tell me something about their family and yet that little dash between the dates would always stay a mystery.

I read a lot of poetry as well as fiction and unfortunately don't seem to keep up with the names of each writer as well as I should. I can remember almost word for word a poem I really liked and will have no idea who the author is. This year I've tried to read more poetry by woman and people of color after I realized the names I did remember invariably belonged to dead white men. Currently I'm reading Crazy Brave by Joy Harjo.

Poetry helps me to make sense of the world. Whenever there's been a crisis in my life, big or small, I've taken time to just sit and read and that reading almost always inspires me to write. I've written more consistently during the pandemic than I ever have before. It's a way to order things and help the day make sense. I always feel as if something is missing if I haven't written at least one poem. Maybe nothing else of importance will happen during that 24 hour period but I can feel as if I've accomplished something by reaching into my mind and finding something worthwhile to commit to the page.

AUTHOR BIO: Kate LaDew (she/her) is a graduate from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a BA in Studio Art. She lives in Graham, NC with her cats, Charlie Chaplin and Janis Joplin.

...or not and (&) Other poems

By RC de Winter

ornotandotherpoemsornotandotherpoemsornotandotherpoems
ornotandotherpoemsornotandother or not & other poems-s-s-s

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...Ms. deWinter is delightful, delicious and de-lovely. 'playing the line' delves into the delirious dilemmas of d-dating: "all the dashing men / – or so they think –" "dangling secondhand emotions / on rusty hooks" "the maw of emotion / stoppered with a stone" On to "too late for apologies / i bring nothing but plastic words" Can't you imagine getting all dressed up for the gala affair, donning your 'Infinity Capris' or 'Medicated Choir Leggings' only to find she isn't there? (And all those hushed whispers so as not to upset the hostess 'the party won't start until deWinter arches in.')* "my tongue furred with straw / in the murky voice of insincerity" "but mostly it's only the ghosts sewn to my shadow / who pay attention" 'Spaghetti Western' is likely her very best. It's transcendently sardonic, so I won't even speak upon it. Ahhh, just read 'em and gleet (Well it's in the Scrabble dictionary...) Mores the pity you-all missed her salutation introducing herself, submitting her works, "Greetings from Paradise (snort)," Who could resist—Oh, RC you sleigh me... I'm just a cat's-paw for a man-hater with a rapacious sense of humor. ...come with me to the Casbah...(To maintain poet's spacing each poem is published on its own page. It's 'HOTS!' in action. Please scroll down)HS

...or not

too late for apologies
i bring nothing but plastic words
anywhere and everywhere i go
invited or not

my tongue furred with straw

in the murky voice of insincerity
i mumble pliable lies that tremble in the slightest wind
interpretable to suit the ear of any willing listener
or passerby who overhears them

but mostly it's only the ghosts sewn to my shadow
who pay attention

they never argue
not even with my most outrageous excuses
only snicker as they hurl insults and tomatoes
that explode against my skin
splattering their bloody juice in random patterns
staining me in the liar's baptism
as harsh and unforgiving as any penance
delivered by a man of the collar

i accept this condemnation
knowing sins must be atoned for
though my atonements are nothing but
the unwieldy fabrications of a poor carpenter
for whom there is no forgiveness

playing the line

all the dashing men
– or so they think –
come out to play
in the wading pool of shallow

armed with rods and reels
dangling secondhand emotions
on rusty hooks
flycasting for the catch of the day

i'm an anchor
dusted with crystallized tears
glittering in the sunshine
of their words

unimpressible
the maw of emotion
stoppered with a stone
jesus couldn't roll away

but i smile
pretending to listen
all the while knowing
the larceny in their hearts

weather eye

there's a disturbance in the cosmos

the weather can't make up its mind
it's acting like a dizzy distracted
five-year old who can't decide
what to wear to a party
trying on one thing after another

it's a mirror of my life

there's a disturbance in my soul
to be perfectly honest i rarely know
who i'm going to be from day to day
hour to hour minute to minute
i make it up as i go along

sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't
if you're coming to visit
pay no attention to the almanac
take your best guess
and wear a raincoat
you can always take it off

Spaghetti Western

Inner harbor Baltimore – muggy hot,
even for May. Sitting with a man I knew
I couldn't love, eating pie for lunch.
Telling the usual lies dragged out for
times when there's nothing else to say.

Oh, cowboy! For all your rugged bulk
you were a small, cheap man cheating on
the wife cheating on you, and I was the
self-destructive fool breaking my own rule.
by poaching the already-owned.

When we finished the pie and ran out of lies
we started drinking. Beer, to quench the
humid thirst of throats tired of talking.
Then back to the hotel, where you, uninterested in
anything but sleep, undressed, collapsed onto the
unmade bed and sailed off to the dreamworld of
the unmanned man.

Where every woman slavered for your attention
and everything worked properly regardless of
blood alcohol content. I sat in an unseasonable
velveteen chair in that darkened room, watching the
thin flesh of your eyelids skitter as you frolicked in
Everyman's playground. And out came the camera.

Long after the awkward phone call during which
we ended what should never have begun I took out
those pictures, admiring my own handiwork.
Wondering how I managed to make you look so desirable
when in the flesh every weakness was on full display.

Then I took the brush and captured you forever

on a canvas full of shadow, with just enough light to
show off smooth skin from neck to thigh, disappearing into
the artful ripples of an unmade bed. There you lie,
forever somewhere between limp and stiff, immortalized
as the eye candy you never were.

reality tv

goodbye to a tired dusty day
forsaken
evaporated to parts unknown
perhaps playing somewhere on a screen
in another dimension
to the delight and
amazement of our former selves

always playing catchup
living in reruns
magpies rewinding time stretching out
the feelgood
picking out the best bits to enjoy
again and again not caring that
we could be dead

but now the awkward world is
on the other side of the door
and here you are
alive undressed
wrap me in your
glossy wings
kiss me dizzy up and down
as we slide into another episode
xrated

THE POET SPEAKS... *All of my work is an amalgam of real life: personal, history, current events, science, politics, what I had for dinner, etc. and fantasia: dreams, hopes, fears, things that walk in the night, the voice of the sea, the smile of the moon, etc.*

AUTHOR BIO: RC deWinter's poetry is widely anthologized, notably in *New York City Haiku* (Universe/NY Times/Rizzoli, 2/2017), *Nature In The Now* (Tiny Seed Press, 8/2019), *Coffin Bell Two* (Coffin Bell, 2/2020), *2020 Summer Anthology: a Headrest for Your Soul* (Other Worldly Women Press, 6/2020), in print: *2River, Adelaide, Event, Genre Urban Arts, Gravitas, Kansas City Voices, Meat For Tea, the minnesota review, Night Picnic Journal, Prairie Schooner, Southword* among others and appears in numerous online literary journals.

Screw Most, if Not A!!! MFA Programs

BY pm FLYNN o o o

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Patrick Flynn's verse courses like a secular canticle, a mantra in psalm. The repetition of words ebb and flow like waves reaching the shore and receding as the next recurs to take its place as if it were not another at all but a resetting of time played over and over in mesmerizing, monotone monotony: "between pages of emptiness" "You bathe the world in mediocre thoughts," and "microwaved time in the garbage-fed stream of evening news;" Flynn flams lento, adagio like the sound of an LP record once the needle has round the end: cha che-che—cha che-che—cha che-che... "...one second away / from white marble angels standing in the stone-cold moonlight."* (Spacing and font size is poet's own).

Screw Most, If Not All MFA Programs

"And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken to pieces: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust." Matthew 21:44

I close my eyes to moonlight,
to days trained by suns setting,
after each day is traced by more suns,
as every shadow turns to stone,
where I am a stone of empty space,
as I become a sword again:

a white sword of empty space,
the bright white sword
between pages of emptiness,
between the empty lines of your emptiness,
the thin space of lines between empty books
filling your dusty, wooden shelves,
in books once flesh and blood.

You bathe the world in mediocre thoughts,
in the clean, running water of mediocre thinking;
in swirling,
draining water
falling into unclean holes,
mediocre thoughts running to unclean exams.

I rise in the yeast of heartbeats:

in heartbeats between your legs, behind each breast,
and in breasts beating with the illusion of time's full breasts,
time's broken breasts toasted in crisp moonlight;
microwaved time in the garbage-fed stream of evening news;
of evening fat chewed during the evening news;
of bacon fat chewed each morning, noon and night.

You chew and swallow heartbeats like breasts; like porn;
like chicken fingers swallowed whole; with porn-dipped sauce
licked from chicken fingers between sips of fine-ground coffee.

You chew imported eggs with instructions seated at a diner
in moonlight, where moonlit students serve bacon and eggs
in all-night diners until they close their eyes to mediocrity.

In closing my eyes to the moon I remember all moonlight
and forget the same moment of breath taught in school—
the living, breathing, dying breath of recess, of red rubber balls
bounced against wire-glass doors, steel inset
with giggling, wire-glass moonlight, of red balls kicked
into the outer space of wire-glass stars picked first in hallways
where death never runs and always walks single file;
red rubber balls sent to orbit just outside the rusted steel doors
of the last day before Christmas break.

Christmas starlight spins on frozen trees, on Christmas,
in Christmas tree darkness once I hit the ball, and run each base
from here to there with my dad chasing me; racing the moon
and back again.

Now, only black shadows of red mica dirt cling to my shoes,
to the bottom of my black, low-cut All Stars,
squeaking black tennis shoes squeaking on polished tile floors,
my impressions digging into the sparkling red clay like pollen,
like pollen filling the unglued bottom of gray soles,
like untenured, gray souls waiting for the free ride through time
and space, and every yard in between a gray and white sidewalk
of every afternoon alone.

Putting on new shoes I close my eyes to midnight
and walk the straight line back to school:

before midnight when I remember the short span of light years ahead
and leaving one second after midnight;
to have one second more to dance and spin
and leaving one second after midnight;

to have that one second back,
to have one second more to spend looking back at one second more,
looking back just one second more;
to have eternity looking back at one second after midnight;

to have exactly one second more before you say
the one second after midnight is the same as the one second
before a morning sun rises and any day becomes another,
at dawn,
and not before;
and not one second more;
and not one second before I stare into the white fire of the sun
and not look away;

and not look away from the bright white stone of eternity one second away,
and not look away from the bright white light of eternity one second away;
one second away from every wish you've ever made:

one second away from white marble angels,
one second away from white fire made from black flint;
from white light; from white light one second away,
one second away from white fallen angels, falling angels
made of white light falling into black holes at the end of every star;
of every eternity for black holes falling into themselves forever;
one second away from white fire exploding; one second away
from white marble angels standing in the stone-cold moonlight.

PM Flynn

THE POET SPEAKS: *Describing one specific image inspires most poems I write and, hopefully in the process, accurately capturing the inspiration. Sometimes I hear a line that will eventually find a place somewhere in the poem in one of the usual 10 drafts. Several years after I graduated from East Carolina University I journeyed to Edgar Allen Poe's home in*

Baltimore. While his drug inspiration was unnecessary his writing is clear, specific and impactful. Nothing earth shattering happened and I kept on writing weak poetry and stories.

Living in a small town, I don't have access to much live poetry. So, I rely on social media when I get in the mood. I usually buy a printed copy of any journal that publishes one of my poems so I can read what's current, in relation to what I've just done. In reading other poetry (and in my own writing) I look for the elusive something underlying the surface images and literal meaning of the words, the eternal/spiritual; what speaks to my soul. Most poetry treats subjects like they are essays and not something transitional, living beyond the literal, with some spiritual/eternal context. I'm always looking for what is deeper than what can normally be explained away rationally.

This poem is an exception. I was irritated with writers with master degrees in English or teleporting somewhere across the literary gamma belt of MFAs; the people who normally write the magazine articles and publish the books. I have a "safe" B.S. English degree, which suits me perfectly. I took as many poetry courses as I could in college so I would read about great writers and their writing. For many years all I did was eat, drink and sleep poetry until it didn't suck anymore. Still, I didn't like my poetry for a long time, but knew something real was always there.

"Screw Most, If Not All MFA Programs" is emotionally charged, raw, which is not my usual subject matter. And I didn't use any cuss words. While some of the images are crude, the message should be clear, written between the lines; not something someone would read in church.

AUTHOR BIO: PM Flynn is a North Carolina writer. He holds a B.S. in English from East Carolina University. His writing interests extend to poetry, fiction novels and screenplays. He roasts organic coffee house with his wife, for their online store. He has self-published a book on Creativity and Reason: THE PURPOSE OF LIFE; and co-wrote and self-published ASSASSINATIONS: THE WORLD'S CLANDESTINE KILLER ELITE with Bob Chapman. Patrick has been published in many fine print and online anthologies, newsletters, and literary magazines and reviews including Helen

Chronic TO Wn# 20 and oTher p0ems 000 000 000

By Glen **A**rmstrong

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Glen Armstrong has s fascinating sub-textual affect on me. If I had a most adored trope, it would have to be a dissimile: Cabbages and kings, hawks and handsaws. How many beans make five? Knowing yellow is tubular; and not knowing if it's Piccadilly or Wednesday. I just love this Shinola. Ideasthesia and synaesthesia (one a concept the other a condition?), I can only surmise, appears to appeal to a contrarian nature. Enough of my limping preamble, Armstrong hits one out of the park, straight out of the gate (mixing sports metaphors): "Handcuffs and oysters. / I am unsure." Happy daze, here's a mind worthy of dissection. "I eat lemon pie sometimes / and cancel the days / on the calendar..." "I learn to summon demons that glisten and burst like soap bubbles." "...that becomes elastic when remembered." If you admire Armstrong as I do, it may be either time to check out or get checked out. (Spacing is poet's own.) HS*

Chronic Town #20

Handcuffs and oysters.
I am unsure.

If this is defeat.
Or a much-needed rest.

I am pretty sure.
That when Michael asks where.

The war is.
He does not really want.

To know.
Showtime approaches.

I will hold.
Your place in line.

Lemon Pie

Sometimes I ask a dog.
Sometimes I ask a shoe.

I don't trust

teachers
and recruiters.

I don't ask at all
when I don't want an answer.

I eat lemon pie sometimes
and cancel the days

on the calendar
with an

X

which is a kiss.
Sometimes I cancel my hand.
Sometimes I cancel

the lady fidgeting

with her tank top
in the magazine.

House of India #7

The House of India puts out its own fires. It never confuses that which is ancient for that which is rare. A silver fork and a pear. A silversmith and a box of silver parings.

She ignores worldly purpose, never hurrying. Her every step gives me time to improve myself. I memorize and recite an epic poem about a whale and the barefoot girl who loves him. I learn to summon demons that glisten and burst like soap bubbles.

The words, the musical phrases that the epic poet pared away, remain as vapors. I breathe them in. I spin.

Are there daily specials? The waitress nods her head and recites what she learned by rote earlier in the day: *good parenting; some sort of onion-like event, cut into rings and fried; my feet hurt in these shoes; our soup of the day is a place, far from home, that becomes elastic when remembered.*

THE POET SPEAKS... *There's a certain finality to a story that I can never quite achieve. Narrative seems so damn sure of itself, and that's most likely why I lean toward the lyrical. The fragmented and broken still matter, still hum. Certain rhetorical patterns accessible through verse remind me of my birthplace, Pontiac, Michigan, where there are scraps of the past in the streets too forsaken, too interesting to focus on a rebuild.*

Some sort of need or desire, however, must have built that city in the first place. I like a poem that sets up a system, a logic, a theorem, a bookish nugget of some-such and melts into beauty and mystery, that outwits the book by foregoing wit. I see such movement in the poems of John Ashbery, Dara Wier, Fred Moten . . . I don't see the about or the lamp in a poem about a lamp; I hope to better understand light and the strange shades of emption that it allows when I turn on a poem.

AUTHOR BIO: Glen Armstrong holds an MFA in English from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and teaches writing at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. He edits a poetry journal called *Cruel Garters* and has three current books of poems: *Invisible Histories*, *The New Vaudeville*, and *Midsummer*. His work has appeared in *BlazeVOX*, *Conduit*, and *Otoliths*.

Gord downie' S Mother & other poemS

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WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...Oh my goodness, every one of Flanagan's works had a profound, upside-down, Asperger's half-Angel/ half-Devil's food cake recipe-redolence for me—chocolate and strawberries...he's like laudanum on the page, a tall tincture of tonic in print...Inkblots à l'Orange: curling swerving and dervish-whirling words hot out of a Gestalt roaster with a Rorschach glaze—here's your table for two...best seats in the house, you might have to duck, right down in front, don't miss a set—'no one has never not stayed 'til closing...' at least that's what the maî-tre d boasted (Poems are published on separate pages to maintain poet's spacing. Scroll down.) HS*

Gord Downie's Mother

It was her main job during college.
At this rescue home for poor mothers and children
that had nowhere else to go.

A converted mansion in downtown Kingston.

Providing basic services and lodging.
For those in town for medical appointments
at Kingston General Hospital
a few streets away.

And she worked with Gord Downie's mother.
Long before his illness.

Such a sweet woman!
she told me.

Which just made her love The Hip
even more.

You can get that in small town Canada,
I remember telling her.
*Everyone is a rock star until you work
with their mother.*

Everything is so small and connected here,
she said.
I really enjoyed working with her.

We never talk about the illness.
Just enjoy all that music left behind.

Flagellants Are Just Flatulence with Whips

I'm not going to run myself raw for you or anyone else,
flagellants are just flatulence with whips,
mules beating themselves silly to impress some backwards
bottom line boss man who never takes notice
and if you find me looking skyward, it is at the clouds
and for no other reason, I assure you;
that's gonna leave a sting, Brother Browbeat,
what a beautiful shade of black and blue!
Your screams are probably a turn on to the adult film people,
there is a market for everything these days.
Your discount bin pain may be straight to VHS,
but the pain is still yours I assure you;
if scars make the man, you must be over half
the human race by now.

Lurking is My Life

I hear the sizzling of meat
and head downstairs.

That smells good,
I say.

That's the onions and garlic,
she answers.

When I walk into the kitchen,
she is pouring out a side salad
and laying out some tortillas.

I stand right over the frying meat
and smell loudly.

I thought you were writing,
she laughs.

What is writing?
I say in a monotone voice
as though I have been brainwashed.
The lurker is here.

Oh good, I love him!
she jokes.

I knew you'd be happy the lurker was here.

Go write!
she implores me.

I can't,
I say.
Lurking is my life.

Awwww,
I hear her say.
Like she is pretending to
feel bad for me.

But the smell!
The sounds of sizzling meat!

I walk over to the window and see some redneck
walking up the middle of the street.

In a head-to-toe grey track suit.
Yelling at a fresh skiff of snow on the ground.

See anything good?

she asks.

I turn around and head back upstairs.

The smell of fresh garlic and onions

all through my clothes.

Hipster Santa at a Beverly Hills Mall

This woman in Beverly Hills
raves on social media about how nice
it is to finally see a slender more fashionable
Santa at the mall for once.

Even has her picture taken with the kid.
A young hipster Santa in red designer suit
and matching red skinny pants.

Santa is about 20 years her junior.
A perfectly quaffed beard.
Dyed so there is not a single strand of white.

And that man bun tied tight and poking out
from Santa's hat.

Santa sure looks different out in Beverly Hills.
I guess all the kiddies will be getting specialty shop
vinyl for Christmas.

I feel bad for the kids in some strange way.
Like they are being cheated out of something
even if they are not.

I search the background of the picture
for some ethically sourced, fair trade reindeer.

There aren't any.

A Steady Brown Stream

This young kid in rags rushes up
to the end of the next drive over
bends over and vomits.

A steady brown stream.
His feet positioned far apart.

This one is a pro.
Knew it was coming.
I have used the same technique myself.
Many times.

Then he steadies himself,
wipes the sleeve of his hoodie across
his mouth before stumbling on.

A passing car steering extra wide
around the kid.

A few crows picking at old garbage.
Dead silence and a windless sky.

It is almost peaceful.
I close my eyes and enjoy
the simple darkness.

Majinder Stopped By

The bar of soap was subletting its last cleanliness
and he said Majinder stopped by to borrow a light
and since I didn't know who Majinder was
and I didn't believe in the light,
I just smiles as a child's stuffed toy might do
which seemed to be enough which was of great relief
to a man with nothing left.

What to Get for the Woman who has Been Nowhere

Such clumsy skate park dalliances were never meant
for cyber café USB ports,

what to get for the woman who has been nowhere,
never left the intellectual homestead of her mind, not once,

you'd think 47 years of curiosity would creep up on you;
departure times, carry-on luggage because no one ever leaves
themselves easily,

that lovingly imperfect way the broken siding on
the first home your parent's ever called their own leaves you,
old Polaroids of cavorting kittens no one can remember
the names of, even terse scratch marks long gone;

the last time anything drew blood that mattered,
you were fighting with a borrowed rescue inhaler,
bringing potted soup to boil,

your dead grandfather's rusty boy scout knife
inscribed simply with the year: *1874*.

Drugs Are There When You No Longer Want To Be

We got into the car
and my friend Shane was driving.

I was falling apart in the backseat like a silly laughing leper.
On a head full of mushrooms and beer.
Having apparently just been on a date with
some woman I couldn't remember.

At this pool hall that kept its few snooker tables
in the back because they were too difficult.

And we had to drop his girlfriend Catherine off first,
I remember that.

Covering my mouth, knowing that they would never last.
That they wanted the exact same thing
by far different means.

And how I sunk down into the seat
like a wilting umbrella under heavy rains.

How I was told by some disembodied voice
that I would have to sit up and "look normal"
according to the preachy seat belt clique
that never saved anyone.

And next thing I remember,
I was sitting on the basement toilet
back at my apartment.

Watching the flowery wallpaper
pulse and open up for hours.

Calling the only other mushroom head I knew
to ask if she was seeing half the things
I was.

I don't even remember who dialled.

Just that both our voices were there
and that all the others had gone
somewhere else.

After my Uncles Death

everyone came
together.

My aunt settled his estate
from Shanty Bay,
had a commemorative bench

placed outside the Barrie Public Library
in his name.

While my father
had the meagre inheritance
spread equally among
his offspring.

I don't know where it went.
Probably bills.

From the man who had
the very same walk
as me.

Wanted to be alone
as I want to be alone,
but a little more.

On the street
since the age of nineteen.

Wanting out
in the very same way
I have always dreamed of.

If you think you know me,
you don't.

We are coming and going
all the time.

Not even close to space.
A stranger in time.

She Died in This House

so it is perfectly respectable
to expect that her ghost will still be here,
hopefully not haunting, that is always the hope
after all these years, that she has passed on or at least
does not hate the all the changes, some of those fine finishings
that can seem a little blingy to the newly deceased out of time,
that hopeless colour splashed across the walls like a graffiti artist
just starting out; she died in this house, right there
where you positioned your marital bed;
do not be surprised if she is watching your
disappointing sex, in this very same house where she
could put her legs behind her head and break a half dozen
transformers along the aging power grid
like no one's business.

THE POET SPEAKS...*My poems are usually (but not always) inspired by everyday events, people and places and various situations along the way. Not straight journalism, but to imbue such things with a little magic I may find or either infer in them. I have many stylistic influences such as: Frank O'Hara, Richard Brautigan, Charles Bukowski, Franz Kafka, e.e. cummings, Al Purdy, John Fante etc. Some for their everyday moments captured and still others for their irreverent humour or creative neuroses. Lastly, poetry is important to me as a vehicle of expression. It helps me see the world in my own way and gives me a way to express how I experience the world. If I did not have this release I'm afraid it would be a rather unfulfilling existence.*

AUTHOR BIO: **Ryan Quinn Flanagan** is a Canadian-born author residing in Elliot Lake, Ontario, Canada with his wife and many bears that rifle through his garbage. His work can be found both in print and online in such places as: *Evergreen Review, The New York Quarterly, Lothlorien Poetry Journal, The Dope Fiend Daily, Red Fez, and The Rye Whiskey Review.*

5 (five) poems poems poems

By Mark DuCharme

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... DuCharme is engagingly antithetical, what appears spurious is deceptively perceptive and evocatively thought provoking—lying, lazing and lolling in a reverie of irony. Here's a taste: "Pray that no one listens," "Something you will almost find / We're not all what we say we were" "Like a history just acquired / Faded / Not yet strange" I suppose an epigram is in the eye of the beholder as DuCharme is beholden to no one. Here's another tender grade A couplet: "By rotten peasants, who'd soon festoon / The youth with brutal music—" And my favourite: "...there's too much / Miasma in Acapulco, & my / Future is at hand."* I confess I always like to occasionally, mostly, always publish works I don't entirely understand. When I find minds' that burn too brightly, I seek shade and return to my shadows. (One thing that consistently persists in my existence is being routinely confounded; I find misunderstanding, coupled with an overwhelming inability to take instruction, frees up a great deal of my time.) MD is, at times, an enigma to me and I feel all awash in yesterday's dishwater. Perhaps the long awaited summing-up can be best stated by an obscure, appropriate quote comparing poets to critics: 'Some run the human race at lightning speed, in meteoric rise, and reign like lions. / As others amble, lumber stumbling, and impede, in leaden metaphoric chain leg-irons.' Maybe not, here's one last Mark, "In the torch that wasn't there" ... (To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. 'HOTS' in action!) HS

Body

The eye follows the line of thought
The body moves when it is all of us

There is only one poem
You are in it

Can you make art out of suffering?
Do losses pile up?
If you're trapped at the edge of a wilderness
Will no one listen when you fail to come home?

Home isn't always where one sings
Pray that no one listens
Accept the limits of lost speech
Things are interchangeable

Mostly, some of the time
The eye follows the line of desire
The poem moves when it is all of us
From what source does midnight bleed?

Image-Driven

In winds we sing like ghosts
Like lovers' truths
On pillows
With songs no more
Inhering

The songs you'll know
Are all time-stamped
In limited allure
Something you will almost find
We're not all what we say we were

In breccia of the nonessential
Whose ghosts are heard in outmoded cries
Figments of convenient traffic
A grayscale ravaged, amplified
By those downwind

Until we are lost, & time
Is just a process you had to
Endure
Only once, bearing fruit
For the ravished, who'll continue

In wicked usurpation, the
Image only breaks
What you'll allow it to
As yellow fruit neither
Lost nor singular

Birtherd of night
Before death in breath or mirage
Like a history just acquired
Faded
Not yet strange

Fuel

The 'you' you are was never here
Earth speaks joyously
Here is what the thunder feels—
How do you retrace ice with loneliness
Or else listen to psalms
On the AM
While refusing to conceal?

+

Fieldwork or dislocation?
Yes, the thunder isn't rare
We move under gauche trademarks—
Vital scarecrows who may yet live
In fear of you
After curfews howl
In battered urgency

+

The inchoate archangels hadn't been processed yet
By something less grand than the bland shopping visors

It was easy to spin
& Groove on the monotypes

Until tomorrow, where there's no known cure
& Tight-lipped attendees budge

With what you're wearing, at least while under their belts
Or eyes, which get so excited

By rotten peasants, who'd soon festoon
The youth with brutal music—

With summer's lost ghost fuel— with midnight's
Barren cries—

The Careerist

Locusts arrived to discourse on the troll.
He never felt moody or old.
The time had come to take the visors
Down. On a clear day, you can unroll the fences

& Ladders to an eyeroll. It was juicy, she said, but then
You flew
Back to those carefree days of
Barges full of soap

The long way down. It was great
Stuffing the plans carefully into
Bowls hidden for the others to
Discharge

A window for a goldmine, until ice begets
A zest for youth & infrastructure
Even when we are still bedeviled with fortune
Or so it seemed to Nan. She stuck to it

On a hill by the foundry with crazy
Roads diverging: "I hear you write poetry"—
Just a fleck of
Blood to the

Lips. It all came back now—
Crazy rumors, idle slipcovers
Jounced in manic
Perturbation;—

She lost it. It was trite as
Petals, something lent to her
Sister, the one with the deformed
Earlobe. "I'm sorry to have to

Decline your
Invitation, but there's too much
Miasma in Acapulco, & my
Future is at hand."

Reverdy, Not Reverb

Certain images
Admit the
Sun

The truth of love is
Vagrant

Can people learn
From a thing they install

Whatever else it is that they
Contain, despite warnings

Your rhetoric may not equal
A perfect example

(This is anthropological sampling
Of a discourse community
Filmed in love, not follow-through)

Begin colloquial fan fiction
Vomit in the faint
Hereafter

Nuance of digressive weight-loss enjambment
The killing floor depends on your
Noncommittal acquiescence

Wind is not driving
Me to meet you this
Month

Were I an abortive salesperson
& You, my unfaithful parking attendant

The heat goes down
To you not here

There is, of course, the grayscale
Photograph. There is always a
Grayscale photograph

Even if it is not quite gray
Even if it is not quite to scale

Let go
My heart caged

Equally elephantine & overtime
Yet still not such a
Polymath

The time to go will let you know

In the fake mirth of birth narratives

In the torch that wasn't there

THE POET SPEAKS... *I dislike discussing what inspired my poems. For one thing, isn't it enough that I have written them? Must I account for them too? For another, if something seems interesting, or inspired, or maybe even brilliant in my work to you, would it really help you to know what my perhaps trivial inspiration was, or would knowing merely dull your ardor? The question also presumes that I would be a truthful and fastidious "scholar" of my own artistic process, which is preposterous if you know anything about the history of art or poetry. No, I think it best if my inspirations, whatever they are or were, remain a bit mysterious.*

My stylistic influences are many & varied. In a fairly recent [interview](#), I had this to say on the subject:

Frank O'Hara was an early, important influence. Thus, Ted Berrigan, Ron Padgett, and later Joseph Ceravolo became key influences as well. Other poets whose work I admire and have been informed by include (in no particular order) Clark Coolidge, César Vallejo, Pierre Reverdy, John Ashbery, Robert Creeley, Alice Notley, Gertrude Stein, Guillaume Apollinaire, Emily Dickinson, Barbara Guest, Lorine Niedecker, Arthur Rimbaud, Charles Baudelaire, Jack Spicer, Jackson Mac Low, Bernadette Mayer, Stephen Rodefer, Michael Gizzi, George Oppen, Mina Loy, William Carlos Williams, Maureen Owen, Anselm Hollo—I could go on.

Lately, I've also been reading more Kenneth Koch, Amiri Baraka, Marjorie Wellish, and (gasp!) Wallace Stevens. And I just realized that I, quite unjustly, excluded Federico García Lorca, Lyn Hejinian and Jack Collom from the list I cite above! No doubt, there may have been other inexcusable oversights. Such is the nature of statements like this.

The above, I should hope, answers all you need to know about reading. No one is a poet who does not also read, and read both widely and narrowly, according to his or her interests and passions. Self-expression is a seductive fiction; one cannot express what one has not imagined, and one cannot sharpen or tune the imagination if one contemplates only one's narrow corner of awareness, one's trivial & fleeting perceptions.

Why poetry is important to me is both a simple and profound question. If I tried to write a book about it, no doubt I would leave some layers unraveled. When I was a novice poet, it occurred to me that the project must be to make of my body a conduit for poetry. (Breath comes from the body, and, like Olson, I believe that breath—or perhaps a better word is melody—does or should shape the poetic line.) The great difficulties of creating a life for oneself in poetry aside, I cannot imagine why anyone would not want to do that. I cannot imagine, in other words, a more interesting use of time & mind.

AUTHOR BIO: Mark DuCharme is the author of *We, the Monstrous: Script for an Unrealizable Film*, *Counter Fluencies 1-20*, *The Unfinished: Books I-VI*, *Answer*, *The Sensory Cabinet* and other works. His poetry has appeared widely in such venues as *BlazeVOX*, *Caliban Online*, *Colorado Review*, *Eratio*, *First Intensity*, *Indefinite Space*, *New American Writing*, *Noon*, *Otoliths*, *Shiny*, *Talisman*, *Unlikely Stories*, *Word/ for Word*, and *Poetics for the More-Than-Human World: An Anthology of Poetry and Commentary*. A recipient of the Neodata Endowment in Literature and the Gertrude Stein Award in Innovative American Poetry, he lives in Boulder, Colorado.

a boy named **GL—U E** et al

By brian rihlmann

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...‘A Boy Named Glue’ is a truly beautiful expression of a love that died, or lives on un-revived. Reminiscence is a negotiable instrument paid in advance. Like Confederate money after the last retreat, reduced to a value for collectors of antiques: “stiff cardboard pages / seem reluctant to turn,”...“the two high school sweethearts / standing before the minister,” “to reveal the now gaping chasm / of the initial fissure”...“all the angry faces / a frantic and angry world / driven by something / I have never understood,” “the rub always lies / in the wanting” If you have any remnants of a past that needs reconciling, Rihlmann’s your revenant, haunting, piercing and beguiling. Yet, hilariously diverting as a dishwasher or cat...Whatever you do don’t miss the second two: “but if you grab at my tail / you’re gonna bleed” They’ll leave you in stitches.(To maintain poet’s spacing each poem is on its own page. ‘HOTS’ in action! Please scroll down.) HS*

A Boy Named Glue

in packing to move
I found it again
nearly forgotten
she gave it to me
perhaps a decade ago
now I thumb through it—

clingy cellophane
stiff cardboard pages
seem reluctant to turn

the two high school sweethearts
standing before the minister
the lifting of the veil
the kiss
dodging the shower of rice

and after—
the drive to Myrtle Beach
the honeymoon suite
her lounging on the bed
with seductive eyes
holding a glass of wine
him standing in the bathroom
in his fruit of the looms
face half-shaved, laughing

they said their forevers
it lasted a quarter century
two years of empty nest
was all it took
to reveal the now gaping chasm
of the initial fissure

I was just 21
it became my excuse
to stay drunk that year
as if I needed one

it's probably been my excuse
for much more
than that

A So-Called Normal Life

for me, was not to be
I knew it early
shuddering at the grind of routine
school, sports, homework, bedtime...
nauseated at the sight
of manicured lawns
behind white picket fences
traumatized by visits
to friends' houses
with large, rollicking families
appalled at the sound
of screaming toddlers
perpetually overwhelmed
by the chaos of everything—
traffic jams

crowded shopping malls

all the angry faces
a frantic and angry world
driven by something
I have never understood

yet you wish to point me back
toward the impossible
insist I could've had a great career
been a wonderful husband and father...

if only I wanted it

the rub always lies
in the wanting

just whose wanting
is it anyway?

A Work Of Pure Fiction

she finally agrees to meet
and over drinks she says
how educated I seem
then asks if I always wanted
to be a dishwasher
and I say Yes, yes of course
It's the profession of choice
for we intelligent but unambitious types
Well I'm glad your dreams
came true then, she says
I thank her and ask
if she's ever been fucked
by a dishwasher
Why no...no I haven't
and I take her back
to my dingy rented room
get her wet, first,
with my rough dishpan fingers
then give her a blue collar ride to remember
and send her home smiling
to her fat fuck, limp dick,
six figure ambulance chasing husband
who asks—
What are you so happy about?

And why are you walking like that?

I'm Just A Cat

I've finally figured it out—
I'm a cat—a cat disguised as a man
the reincarnation
of some rough alley beast
I'm sure that's it
the shrinks missed it, but
it explains all my misunderstandings
with my fellow humans—
I like to nap...a lot
sometimes I lie on the floor in the sun
I'm lazy as hell
but boy can I move, too
when there's a bird I crave
I sneak in and out through the back door
stalk prey silently and unseen
hide in odd places—
rooftops, abandoned corners
top of the fridge, if I could
I watch you people with bemused contempt
and a different kind of love—
a wary kind that burns cooler
and more distant than yours
I acknowledge that you feed me, yes—
but I can also hunt...and I hunt alone
I don't want you stroking my fur—
most of the time
I don't want to be bothered
by your baby talk and bullshit
ask me stupid questions
and I won't even reply—
I'll just look through you
with my yellow inhuman eyes
keep on rambling and I'll pad soundlessly

out of the room
leave you there alone
muttering to yourself, thinking—
how rude! but no...
a cat's just gotta be a cat
don't ask me to change, man...
and, by the way—
I usually keep my claws in
but if you grab at my tail
you're gonna bleed

THE POET SPEAKS...*My poetry is almost always inspired either by my own life and struggles, or the lives of others I see every day. I tend to notice the most unfortunate among us, the ones others have forgotten, the loners and outcasts. I've been influenced by more small press poets than I can name here, and also by the heavy hitters I read in my youth, Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, Camus, etc. Also by the lyrics of hardcore and heavy metal music which has been my everyday poetry since I was in grade school. As far as why poetry is important...well I used to think that the best poetry was the confessional sort that would let me off the hook for being human. I used to think I could write myself out of my own hell. Maybe I do, sometimes. Briefly.*

AUTHOR BIO: Brian Rihlmann lives and writes in Reno, Nevada. His work has appeared in many magazines, including The Rye Whiskey Review, Fearless, Heroin Love Songs, Chiron Review and The Main Street Rag. His latest poetry collection, "Night At My Throat," (2020) was published by Pony One Dog Press.

Remembering **SANTA** ...

By Connie Woodring

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... I adore Ms. Woodring premise. She strikes me as a soldier of fortune telling, inciter of the intuitive, combating the cognitive with conjuring; and prefers feeding her imagination with provocative thoughts rather than filing her taxes and sorting her socks. An as-wise woman once explained to me that we have untold, unexplored senses other than our sorry few five...What's worse, we salt are food, hold are nose, speak when we could be listening; and now we wash are hands whenever we can't avoid touching anything...Time to embrace a few more non-senses...Read Constance's 'Remembering Santa' and get her drift.*

Remembering Santa

How does Santa get into houses that don't have chimneys?

How does Santa have enough time to get to all the houses in America?

Does Santa go to houses all over the world where Christians live? Like in Iraq?

How does he know where all the Christians live?

His sleigh doesn't seem big enough to carry toys for millions of kids.

Does he go back home to re-supply?

These (and so many more) are questions I, being an un-inquisitive child, never asked.

Life was magic to me because of Santa, and that was fantastic enough for me.

At the ripe old age of seven, my father gave me the news that there was no Santa, tooth fairy or Easter bunny.

That meant there was no magic in life. I knew henceforth I would live a dreary, mundane, empty life.

In fact: life was over for me.

I would struggle with telling other children younger than myself the tragic news, but I didn't

want to be cruel like my father.

As an adult, I discovered to my ecstatic delight that life is full of magic after all.

Vowing to never be fooled again, I ask hundreds of questions.

Why was it that at 6am on 9/11 I awoke with the word DEATH written in white on a black background rushing toward my eyes?

I'm not schizophrenic, so why did I hear a commanding voice say to me, "Look out the window."

I was intrigued, and so I pulled back the curtain of my office window and saw an old friend I hadn't seen for 15 years walking across the street toward my office building.

Why did I have a vision of two puppy hound dogs walking down my driveway with leashes dragging behind them two days before that happened?

For that matter, how did fish, insect and animal camouflage come to be?

What came before the Big Bang?

And the proverbial: "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?"

I'll never forget Santa because he is at the heart of all unanswered questions.

THE POET SPEAKS... *The inspiration for 'Remembering Santa' was from a conversation I had with my husband about our childhoods. He wasn't the least phased by the grim news that there was no Santa. Although I haven't used 'wonky-ass' formats of late, I love e. e. cummings and the beat poets. I'm very old. A certain kind of poetry is important to me—the kind that raises our consciousness, takes us out of ourselves or helps us remember our buried past.*

AUTHOR BIO: I am a 76 year old retired psychotherapist who is getting back to my true love of writing after 45 years in my real job. I have has 37 poems published in over 30 journals including one poem nominated for the 2017 Pushcart Prize by *Dime Show Reviews*.

Postcard & other poems

By Bill Rector

postcardpostcardpostcardpostcardpostcardpostcardpostcardpostcard

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... 'Postcard' is subtly unassuming and uproariously funny. I can only describe it as a brilliant piece of nonsense portrayed as an earnest account of Allen Ginsberg standing naked on a stranger's doorstep under an exclusive cloud of slanting rain. "...Happily, Allen Ginsberg / doesn't make a sound." Rector hits the mark again with 'Wanted: an artist' except for the few who'd deal Martin for Lewis. Here're a couple more irresistible lines to give you an idea what you're in for: "Secretly, though, he hopes to be conked on the head / by a piece of the Sea Of Tranquility." And, "The fake beard is tougher than a chin whisker hunkered in a dimple." No need to buy a ticket to Mars, we have Bill right here at home.(To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. It'd 'HOTS' in action. Please scroll down.) HS*

Postcard

Don't get the wrong idea.

The man has absolutely nothing against Allen Ginsberg,

except that Ginsberg has, without warning,
shown up at his front door. Worse, Allen Ginsberg
is as naked as the day he was born.
Behind Coke-bottle thick lenses, Allen Ginsberg's
eyes are enormous. His vacant expression
doesn't reassure. The man has barely read Allen Ginsberg.
Have you? Be honest. And yet, Ginsberg
seems familiar. The man worries that Ginsberg
will begin to recite from *Howl*.
Or just start to howl. What would the neighbors say?
The police? The National Guard? Paratroopers
from the 82nd Airborne? The man
could be beaten senseless or tear-gassed
and led away in handcuffs, weeping and crying
to a crowd of expressionless onlookers that he did nothing
to deserve the fate that has befallen him,
nothing at all... Happily, Allen Ginsberg
doesn't make a sound. He holds an umbrella above his head,
the way Liberty does her flame. The fabric's frayed.
A rib pokes out. Rain is slanting down,
but only on Allen Ginsberg.
The mailman shoulders his leather bag
and disappears in a crowd of purposeful, fully-clothed
people going about their business in sunshine, indifferent
to the minor weather disturbance at the man's door.
The man figures that Allen Ginsberg
was misplaced in a sorting bin or cobwebbed
in a corner of the Post Office for fifty years.
The raindrops slanting down are cancellation marks

made on the 2-cent stamp. But why, out of all
the Current Occupants in the world, has Allen Ginsberg
been delivered to him?

Wanted: an artist

to frame the Condition of Man in a new and interesting way. All applicants are welcome, unless your name is Jerry. The man has never known a Jerry that he liked, starting with Jerry Lewis. Jerry Lewis acted like he'd cry or go crazy if you didn't laugh hysterically at his sorry act. The Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon? A big shakedown, the man calls it. On-duty firemen at roadblocks held big rubber boots to your car window, demanding that you fill them with money. How many houses burned to the ground because of Jerry Lewis? How many women gave birth in the back seat? On Labor Day, no less. You want more proof? The French love Jerry Lewis. They think he's a comic genius! Which tells you all you need to know about the French. Which is why the rest of the world laughs at them. Paris? The man's never been, and he's not going any time soon. Just a bunch of waiters who sneer because you can't read the menu. No snails for this man, *mon ami!* So if you apply, and your name is Jerry, he's here to tell you, Nobody cares.

A minor misunderstanding

To his surprise and disappointment,
the man discovers that most moon rocks are counterfeit.

Maybe all of them. Moon rocks
don't exactly come with certificates of authenticity.

Even those under glass counters at the collectibles store
or labeled *Certified* on eBay.

The man was given a piece of the moon as a boy,
a crescent of gleam he kept under his eyelids.

Ahead, a space-suited Neil Armstrong was always
poised to take the next Giant Step --

Enough daydreams!

The man sets himself a goal of collecting
all of the counterfeit moon rocks on the planet.

Once this is done, it doesn't take long,
he bulldozes the counterfeit moon rocks into great heaps
and blasts them into outer space on giant rocket ships.

Probably some real moon rocks, too. Mistakes are made.

Needless to say, the man doesn't succeed
in collecting all of the counterfeit moon rocks on earth. Only a few...

The bulldozers, the giant rocket ships? Well...

The man in the moon, who has a dark side of his own,
soon becomes fed up with the disenchanted fellow on earth.

Counterfeit moon rocks rain back down.

Probably some real ones, too. Mistakes are made.

The man shakes his fist at the moon.

Secretly, though, he hopes to be conked on the head

by a piece of the Sea Of Tranquility.

All made up

For Halloween, the man pastes a fake beard on his face. His friends don't recognize him. They call him, *Mystery Man*. Go ahead, he tells them, tug on it. When they do, their chins hit the floor. It's you, they say. We knew it all along. The fake beard loves the attention. It refuses to come off. It starts to grow. It grows like crazy. This wasn't in the plan. Actually, there wasn't a plan. Maybe there should have been. The fake beard is tougher than a chin whisker hunkered in a dimple. It deflects tweezers. Dodges the razor. Defies the mincing shins of the nail scissors. The

Halloween beard reaches the man's knees. Tangles his feet. The new man who rises has only a stubble of soil to disguise him.

THE POET SPEAKS...*I have recently become drawn to the poetry of the absurd. I would call Russell Edson my principal influence. See in this regard his wonderful interview with Peter Johnson, founder of the journal, The Prose Poem.*

<https://digitalcommons.providence.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1596&context=prosepoem>

Right now, the "I" is dominant in poetry. And its theme is usually a grievance. This can be a tiresome combination. Who isn't an "I?" Who doesn't have a grievance, however legitimate?

These poems are about an anonymous individual, "what man." His burdens are important to him, even existential, but to us, they are preposterous: the sudden appearance of a nude Allen Ginsberg at his door, counterfeit moon rocks pelting down, a paste-on beard that won't stop growing...

I could go on and on. And plan to do so

AUTHOR BIO: Bill Rector is a retired physician. He is former editor of the Yale Journal of Humanities and Medicine. He has published a full-length volume of poetry, bill (Proem Press), as well as five chapbooks: Biography of a Name (Unsolicited Press), Brief Candles (Prolix Press), Lost Moth (Epiphany prize-winner), Two Worlds (White Knuckle Press), and Hats Are the Enemy of Poetry (Finishing Line Press).

a__L-I-N-E__from *Friedrich Engels* & other__poems__

By Mark Young

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...Young's poetry slices right through the center, extracting the nectar discarding pistil, stamen and stigma...and letting the pedals fall. He is searing, seasoned and salty, but too light-handed to be severe. "I've frozen my eggs, applied / scented lotions to my body. / Now I wait for the arrival of / the magical/mythical powers" "...the presence of a President who doesn't / understand most of the words he uses." "The cabin crew were diabolical. They / played the movie backwards..." While a clear blue sky might be thought to be most desirous, one scattered with billowing, cottony, cauliflower, cumulous clouds rivals its irresistibility. In this same way, Mark offers both drifting clouds and warming sun with enigmatic clarity.(To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page.)*

A line from Friedrich Engels

I've frozen my eggs, applied
scented lotions to my body.
Now I wait for the arrival of
the magical/mythical powers

that have been promised me.
Such is the thrill of being
young. Such is the naivety
that comes with it. I am off

to the family's cotton mills in
England tomorrow. My brother
is collaborating on a book
which he hopes Luis Buñuel

will turn into a film next century.
Meantime he's off to fight in the
Gallic Wars. *Gallia est omnis
divisa in partes tres* he tells me.

An / idealized approach / to describe phenomena

Her hypothesis was that the reason
short-ranged attractive colloids have
received renewed interest in terms of
their semantic metadata can be put down
to the presence of a President who doesn't

understand most of the words he uses.

That makes him an ideal control, & also a window through which scientists can determine if there has been any significant change in IMPF in 3-week K-depleted rats.

geographies: Clermont-Ferrand

The volcanoes of Auvergne
congregate in the evenings
at a bistro in the Rue du
Séminaire to discuss the day
just passed & whether any of
them has heard anything
new about their recent petition
to be allowed to stand for the
municipal council. "Only a few
rumblings," said the oldest of
them, "& most of those were mine."

Cottage Industry

The local luthier is a
potent free-radical

scavenger who has
really effective filters

to block all those
colors in visible light

that are influenced by
film noir or tragedy.

A / couple of / random eye movements

The cabin crew were diabolical. They played the movie backwards, pointing out that many trimorphemic words are structurally & semantically ambiguous, that though the eye might be able to follow what was being shown, the mind will be able to process only a very few parts of it. It seems to go in waves. A sophisticated search mechanism has been employed to undertake a final proof-edit

in response to various complaints. Preliminary results suggest that many passengers think they're seeing a man in a comatose state about to be intubated. Most of the remainder think that what they've been watching is an animated version of a Salvador Dali painting — some plump for *The Persistence of Memory*, possibly because the melting watches are all they know. The more sophisticated claim it's *The Burning Giraffe*.

A line from Kellyanne Conway

Ahab's whale gambols in the Oval Office — that's where the color of the building comes from. Otherwise, yellowbrick is the bread &

butter of the city. It was a consequential decision. The app for Telugu movies is an exclusive feature which, apart from my

gender, my lack of fluency in the language doesn't qualify me for. Looked for other opportunities, didn't realize what was being said,

nodded. Only afterwards was it made clear that the turmeric monopoly was being offered in return for certain political favors. But once the

market was satisfied, & there was surplus stock remaining, other uses had to be found. We faked an economic boom. New buildings. Turmeric-infused. Yellowbrick.

THE POET SPEAKS: *Take a couple of words, Google them, search the initial page for a sentence, a phrase, a few words, even a single word, that catches the eye. Copy & paste the results. It's sometimes a good idea to repeat this on this first screen in order to provide a slightly wider range for the next search.*

Pick a couple of words from the results. Google them & repeat the procedure. Repeat until there's most of a page of extracts to build from. Occasionally the search may start looping, especially if software or gaming or scientific words or products become incorporated. Occasionally the search may end up in a desert. In those cases, go back & pick another couple of words.

The above comes from a talk, later turned into an essay, from about ten years ago, but it's a technique I still use much of the time. The complete essay can be found on the AngelHousePress site. http://angelhousepress.com/essays/mark%20young%20-%20stochastic%20acts_the%20search%20string%20as%20poetry-1.pdf

AUTHOR BIO: Mark Young was born in New Zealand, & currently lives in a small town in North Queensland in Australia, but his books have been published across the world, from Scandanavia to the U.S.A. He has been publishing poetry for over sixty years, & is the author of around sixty books, primarily text poetry but also including speculative fiction, vispo, creative non-fiction, & art history.

Recent visual &/or text work has appeared or is to appear in Word For/Word, Die Leere Mitte, Home Planet News Online, SurVision, Marsh Hawk Review, Hamilton Stone Review,

Utsanga.it, & BlazeVOX, among other places. New books scheduled for imminent publication are *from 1750 words*, from SOd Press; *sorties*, from Sandy Press; & *The Toast*, from Luna Bisonte Prods.

teLling a StRanger...ger...ger...ger

By Sean Fitts...Fitts...Fitts...Fitts...

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Sean spawns a delightful interior monologue, here, before our very eyes that Fitts “you in a formulated phase.” Along the lines of J. Alfred P’s: “...for decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.” Oh, do not ask, who is Fitts? “Let us go and make our visit.” (Yes, it is sad when the poetry editor is found out to be nothing more than a vulgar punster.) But not Fitts: Feast your eyes on the phrases he fashions without the aid of punctuation: “great danes with the names of gods / walking independent of their owners” And the courage he musters ‘Telling a Strange’ “the pleasure it brings me to part / that long hair like curtains and / take each nipple between my lips...” it rivals being Fitts-Rated. However, he becomes gentler, less familiar (almost discreet) and more conversational in a wonderfully discretionary, discursive and digressional, rhythmically meandering sort of way... “and there will arise a moment / you distrust my judgment / even scold me for my generosity”*
(Spacing is poet’s own.)

Telling a Stranger

If I had your ear
what would I tell you
clear statements about myself
would come first you
do not know me you
have never stood beneath
shoreline stars along the eastern
coast foreign smoke coughing
the throat right out of you
great danes with the names of gods
walking independent of their owners
at the water’s foaming edge
what would I tell you
I would tell you I believe
in magic in the mind
because it is as easy as believing
in God

you do not know me so you
will laugh
I would tell you what attracts
me to a woman the way
long hair falls in front and
covers her breasts complete
the pleasure it brings me to part
that long hair like curtains and
take each nipple between my lips
one at a time
you will tell me I've become
too personal and perhaps
you are right perhaps
but you are such a good
listener so eager that I would
have no control over my
own privacy
you will apologize but there would be
no need
so I would tell you the last
time I'd cried I'd cried because
my plans had been ruined
that I had felt cheated
when I should have felt secure
and you will place your palm
over my sadness kept just
below my elbow
I would tell you rain
is not unpleasant to me
that I often wonder if the first
to notice a sunset had feared
the sun would never rise again
light never shine again
only a world of darkness would remain
I would tell you the story
of my mother the story of my
father how they'd met in New York
City studying acting how neither
had made a career of their art
you will tell me
now that so much time has passed
now that you have grown
more comfortable
more at ease in your
position as listener that I am keeping
secrets from you
things I'd rather you not know
and perhaps

you are right
perhaps
so I would tell you of my friends
this quiet conversation will lead
us to them
of their successes and failures
of their habits and addictions
some have married
some have raised children
and there will arise a moment
you distrust my judgment
even scold me for my generosity
a scolding of ten thousand words
of two thousand gestures
I would tell you my name
you will not have asked
I would not have offered
I would tell you I appreciate the shortness
of my first name my middle name
belonged to my maternal grandfather
my last name rhymes with scores
of misfortune I would tell you
death is the next part of our passage
a story a hallway a highway
to be read to be walled to be driven
you will have questions I will let you
ask them
I would tell you I am too young
to know
if I am afraid
to die
you will recognize a naïve man
and perhaps you are right perhaps

THE POET SPEAKS... *The first draft of “Telling a Stranger” was written on an airplane a few years ago. The plane was small, and my ticket placed me on the side with only one seat per aisle. With no one seated next to me, I wrote a poem about what I might tell a stranger if there had been a seat to my right and a stranger filling it. “Telling a Stranger” is as much a daydream as it is a poem.*

I took stylistic influence from Beat poets, ee cummings, and Kay Ryan. I neglected punctuation for two reasons. First, it lends to the stream of consciousness effect I wished to create, giving readers (I hope) the sense of rushing water, an open faucet of language. Second, I like that it affords readers the opportunity to create their own stopping points, their own complete sentences, perhaps allowing them to derive new intentions. Perhaps.

The importance of poetry has been undeniable throughout my life. It’s acted as both a form of sustenance and meditation. It encourages me to read slowly, to read once, twice, ten times, to mentally bathe in a poet’s carefully selected (and placed) words. Writing poetry is a divine mixture of pleasure and frustration, of emotional outburst and stylistic control. While

writing can sometimes feels like an unnatural act, I'm certain it will continue to play the role of necessary outlet for years to come.

AUTHOR BIO: My name is Sean Fitts, and I am 34 years old. Throughout my life my poetry has been published here and there, and I've given a few live readings. While I haven't submitted my work with as much regularity as I'd like, the engine that keeps me writing has never ceased.

Ripples s s s s

By chukwu chisom

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Chisom has a fluidity of language that makes sadness joyous; still a love of poetry cannot be confused with the vicissitudes of love poems themselves. And what new love is not irresistibly accompanied by a lustfulness of re-freshened faces, as all the while we disguise to distinguish them. "For the thought of failing comes even before my trying" "we are two sides of coins that can't face each other"* Even her expressions of a most abominable act echoes more poignantly by the searing phrasing she chooses, 'Trust Me' (Spacing is poet's own.)

Ripples

Endless

Surrounded by loud cries of laughter, yet lonely.

Trapped in a cave of isolation

Seeping through my veins and bones

Gnawing at the very core of my skull

Are dancing masquerades limbs in my very soul.

Still I sought for a company

Shouting loudest as halos of joy encircles

My thoughts and dreams.

But reality plays a different game

Of which I constantly lose even at the verge of victory.

And so I drew up my knee to my bosom

For the thought of failing comes even before my trying

Yet the constant bangs to be that I dream

Drums against my limbs. As much as I try to grasp,

It just fizzles right before my eyes:

An endless triad of becoming which never comes.

Ghost Love

I saw the markings of Love on his face,

Read the lines of desire in his deep dark eyes,

But his parted lips reminded me of my first kiss under the mango tree,

The first time I had sucked the succulent fruit of the tree

He called my name in a language so distant but assuring

Told me how 'Obim' meant my heart in Igbo

And took me down the light of his heart which swims with tiny crystal balls of rainbow colour

He told me what they meant but hushed me to keep it as a secret.

All these I saw through his other eyes when he held me close as his nostrils breathed hot

Embers of desire on my flesh.

I wanted to swim in those ocean of wholeness

But he moved away so fast from me, like my fingers are the fangs of the heinous vampire

That sucks human blood.

I tried to use my tongue, he shrieked like it were made of fire

I tried to pushed my body and his in an embrace but he held me and screamed

' Let go! We aren't meant to be'

' But why?'

He tried to speak but ended up muttering something I couldn't hear .

' I thought love conquers all? I asked with tears streaming down my cheeks like a falling wall.

' I thought so, but...'

'But what?'

' we are two sides of a coins that can't face each other'

Trust Me

'Close your eyes, you will taste an ice'

'No Uncle, I want to touch the skies

And plant my print on the cloud'

'Then trust me to take you there.'

'Trust you?'

And so I trusted with closed eyes,

Till I felt a moist. Oh no! Another mouth right on my mouth.

It's tasteless. Not like the ice.

It burnt my breathe.

I opened my eyes sharply. Blinking hard:

To see uncle K's mouth drawing maps on my lips.

I pushed him off.

But his arms chained my waist like a cage,

And his lips sucked my mouth, so fiercely,

Like a hungry child does to a lollipop.

I lost my breathe. Gaspd for air. But he still held it, till I strutted:

' U...n...cluu...

He withdrew, my lips felt free yet so heavy

Like a sore, quivering speedily till I felt a drop_ of tears.

'Trust me' again he said.

I felt my heart drop in my stomach

For the first trust me rusted me.

I made to run, but he held me. And pulled my skirt,

And used his hands to squeeze my orange

Till I felt a shiver down my spine.

He place his lips on my lips and sucked deep

Such I could not shout till he thrust through.

And then it flowed. Down and Down from me

And shot a thrust to my soul.

THE POET SPEAKS... *As a poet, I draw inspiration from quietness and tranquility, because when the faculty of the mind enters deep silence that the eye of the soul can open to deeper reflections in which the invisible becomes visible and the unheard becomes the loudest voice the soul hears.*

My style of writing comes basically from the way the words shaped themselves as they come to me. Also, the poems seek a kind of home to project itself because the indented stanza (s) or words shows their insistence to speak even in silence, just like a woman about to give birth, the baby is in her but seeks to come even through the tiny hole in her.

Poetry becomes the rhythm the soul beats in words, coats with emotion and produced in its finest outcome. I love reading poems because it speaks to my soul, writing them gives me the joy of a mother with her new born child. I cherish my poems because they are much alive, they speak and they touch anyone that comes in contact with them thereby leaving an edible mark that reminds a reader of a great encounter with something and not just anything

AUTHOR BIO: I'm Chukwu, Chisom Loretta. A young aspiring writer and an undergraduate student of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; precisely in the department of English and literary Studies. I have a poem published in the Muse, the oldest surviving journal of poems and critical works in West Africa.

Six (6) PoeMs (poems poems poems)

By Askold Skalsky

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves / Did gyre and gimple in the wabe;' In my opinion (and it may already be self-evident by these critiques), Gibberish is woefully underrated—has gotten a bad name, in the pejorative. Skalsky may be one of the humble few who agrees with me “...shun [by] / The rumious Bandersnatch!” Charlie Dodgson got so good at it he optioned to adopt a pseudonym to avoid being trampled and trounced by trowels in his allotment. I certainly prefer nonsense speak to speaking nonsense. Speaking nonsense is widely practiced but nonsensical language can exercise and enrich the imagination. Why just last year the Lexicon Overlords added: Ecoanxiety, Freegan, Hodophobia, Sharent and Helacious. Amirite? (It's rumoured that as many as a thousand new words are added to the dictionary every year.) Askold eases us into his alluringly aberrant reflections: “her pursy pear-breasts, tight-lipped aureoles / ... haunches / like sleek salamanders on a leash...a crotch of velvet” ...I couldn't resist this as an exposé. Shock and value are a delicate balance. The genuine gibberish doesn't start 'til the “plode” prefixes and ensuing suffixes. There is way more in store for you, but I talk too much... Askold Skalsky scales our skies like an asteroid... ‘Logic has been omitted for the sake of clarity’ (ancient quote from a legend of an Aussie friend of Christopher Dunn's). (To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. Please scroll down.)

DO NOT ENTER

I should have read the signs
of that articulate, wordless flesh,
clearly displayed, enunciated by
her pursy pear-breasts, tight-lipped aureoles,
and pretty, spider-freckled hips, haunches
like sleek salamanders on a leash.

Jesus, I thought, a crotch of velvet

and spun gold, and sent her afterwards
some sonnets ripe with iambs and a few
slick metaphors thrown in, erect
like my old Schwinn handlebars
propped on the grass and schwelled

beyond the 32nd parallel with the
schwung and schwill of her bright thighs
like a shiny silvery schwann
on cool water, its berserk wings
folded for the night—O lovely lume,
O Ulalume, loomed and lumined,

a not-quite ruined dream.

STRESSOMATIC PARAPLOSION

Last night you sent me good advice. Not to implode.
But what else can I do? Explode? There must be a form
of such device that implies bursting sideways, yaw-ways,
up or down ways. Very nice. How about transplode?
Outplode or displode? I'm holding up, just fine. But if
I think about it, I should have retroploded yesterday
round eight or nine. Can one deplode or contraplude,
you think? Turn it all backwards like a clogged sink
or a stark reel run back amok? Alack! Regoad the lode
until it stings, unloads its tensile episode? I like that ode.
Why complicate things? Just plode. Plead for a plodelet.
a plodoclysm or plodoclast. a circumplusive mega-blast.
Pardon this sorry pllosion of my ramblingness. Ah, pressure,
stress! What sins are committed in your dark recess.

THE IDEOLOGY PILL: A PRAYER

Give me a techno-science supertruth
for our dear youth to swallow
and our elders to wallow in super-
verity, in every uncouth and befuddled
cavity, a sur-truth megavere of splendo-
clarity, a hypertruth awash in over-
truths of actuality, forsooth and verily.
Let hyperology and hyperlogue
clear up the hiding fog of a tautology
from every potential supralogue
and its tetralogy. And may the hyper-
ologist my guru be, and gurulogue
and long *studee*, a low-cost technific
megaverity of logo-ism and hyper-
savvy megatruth-severity. Out of this
mythoplasm I can create the mytho-
plastic universe of scoff and fulsome
trough of mummery's perverse and
nauseating bombinate, a morosoph
head-deep in one's morosophy, the truth-
monger's mongering minisophistry.

WHITNEY'S BREASTS

I pay homage to her breasts that
once I spied in their high tower
at first glint of sunlit spring,
their swelling tops rounded in a spate

of gush-blown flesh, transilient, pendulous,
drawing my eyes with vamps of vigor,
torso fresh and spilled between unbuttons
of her open blouse, flounced as she sat,

fruit-billowed in the fondling air,
my breath in tow, stopped in its tact,
tracing her cleft of supple white,
dune-whelked, glad-blossomed

like a willow curve, her shoulders'
slender latitude, an atlas, rich and bouffant
like a fetch of froth across her body's
deep Atlantic sinuous flow,

two archipelagos of pristine land.

ANGELS OF FULLMENT

The seraphim are harnessed
the cherubim yoked

holy beasts waiting
on our pleasurement
fanning our wantness
pale-handed, invisible
with no knowledge
beyond consolation

if we didn't know better
we'd call them elementals serving
the weed-infested sabbaths of backyards
to make us blissful with another brood
of nerve-bound flutterment—

sprites, gnomes, lower-order elves
on the prowl through the ransacked
auras of the possible

bloating us with satedness
shudders of rhapsodic beautiment

weekend goblins
swordless and tormented with their
pumpkin smiles

wanting a worldness
where we grow interminably light

magic horn of self
filled with funness

richment foodment
plenteous sexment
excrement

A CUNTICLE FOR QUEEN KUNTI

The Oriental Great Goddess as Cunti, or Kunda, the Yoni of the Uni-verse ...

The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets

Con me with your ken
and can, your wisdom
genus, gnosis-genitaled,
genetic one; engender me
with cunning, the gully
dome of your wet cunny-
vent, cuniculose, sweet
kenning-haunted gnosco-
goddess, cunnus cun.
I seek you, suck in every
culvert gash and groove,
every cunicled and crevassed
crack in your cunina cranny,
mad cunabula and cradle-
clefted col and cack.
My love ditch, my cunette
and cony gap, down on
the soft veldt and vug
of all your sissure-sacred
ruts, engulf me, gulp me
with your slinky gorge,
the moist furrows of your
quainted tongue between my
cantos, my cuntic homonyms,
Oh cunctipotent, cuniform.

THE POET SPEAKS... *There is an obsession to express something in passionate words, grasp a piece of felt truth, go beyond the very real sense of daily limitation, a clench through which I perceive myself as a shrunken halo of awareness, peeping out, bewildered, through the grid of a vulnerable body and a wandering mind and tangled in all kinds of conventions. This state is what the spiritual teacher Adi Da Samraj describes as the universal "self-contraction" of the separate ego-I that we presume we are and that keeps us from Reality. For me, poetry is one way of achieving that release from separation, a jab at delight with subjects high and low and in heightened language and its possibilities. Then it passes, and I start over, the clench always returning, unless something totally new can enter, beyond all poetry and every concern.*

AUTHOR BIO: Originally from Ukraine, Askold Skalsky is a retired college professor living in Frederick, Maryland. His poems have appeared in a numerous magazines and online journals in the USA as well as in literary publications in Europe, Canada, and Australia, including *Notre Dame Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *The English Chicago Review*, *Tellus*, and *Poetry Salzburg Review*. A first collection, *The Ponies of Chuang Tzu*, was published in 2011.

Rant o o o (*rant*)...

By Emil **Y** De**A**ugustino ooooo

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Here we find Emily launching herself into the air without a pole. Her poem 'Rant' is both vaulting and revealing, "I grew up with a hastily sewn up heart" "Boundaries being trampled, dreams being crushed" ...wonder if you see what I hear in this poem? "Only a womb, a place to heal and then be torn to shreds." I am fond of it with hopes that it is cathartic. (Spacing is poet's own.)*

Emily DeAugustino

2/27/21

Personal poem

Rant

can you please leave me alone, I'm tired...
Once I wore the mom friend as a badge of honor
I was a saint, a martyr with a smile upon a stupid little halo
A mother before the age sixteen with boys and girls crying in my arms
I chased after them, healing wounds while ignoring the festering wounds of my own
It was alright, as long as my children were alright

Can you leave me alone?
I grew up with a hastily sewn up heart
One that was ready to burst forth at any moment
I'd break down in front of the ones who wanted to feel strong
Tears flowing of embarrassment and anger. So. much anger.
I resented that anger, why was-am- I angry?

Please leave me alone,
Oh. Now it's starting to come back
Boundaries being trampled, dreams being crushed
Guided by those with stupid excuses
Broken boys grew into men who searched for an empty heart and womb
To fuck and fuck over
Only a womb, a place to heal and then be torn to shreds
A sanctuary in the Queen city

Leave me alone.
So. I leave New York after spilling my secrets, only for people to cross me again
Are you okay? Make better choices!

Over and over they bombard my phone-!

Hi

Hi

Wyd

You up?

Hey

Leave me the fuck alone!

I'm done being nice

And giving advice

I'm not your fucking mother

Or your baby

Or a charity case

So do me favor

And leave me the fuck alone.

THE POET SPEAKS... *To be honest, I did not think this was going to be picked. This was a poem that I wrote for a class assignment in which I had to rant about something. Well that something turned out to be triggered by a snapchat message: Hey. It was a simple message honestly. Just "hey". Well, it pushed me over the edge. Every day I had been bombarded by text messages from men who just didn't know when to shut up. Seriously, I moved away to college to get away from people who had no idea what my boundaries are! They would text me over and over and ask me to hang out, which isn't a bad thing, but when it is constant, and weirdly sexual in nature, and constantly infantilizing me, constantly trying to be the white knight, constantly trying to be the "nice guy" it really drives you up a wall. So, I wrote a poem about it. I channeled all my anger into that poem, and I tried to replicate the slow decent into anger as my patience and boundaries were worn down more and more each year. That's why the sentences get shorter and shorter, it's replicating my shorter and shorter patience span.*

Poetry is a way for me to get my feelings on the page in a way that prose just can't. Prose to me must be somewhat refined, but poetry can get all the messy bits, soaking and bloody and it's okay to do so. In terms of inspiration, I like to say the performance poetry of Button poetry on YouTube is a big one for me. I love how the written works translate when spoken, so I try to make my poetry flow in a similar fashion.

I think poetry is important because it connects us. Poetry and language allow us to communicate abstract thoughts and fleeting experiences onto a piece of paper and allows us to share our experiences with others. It's a wonderful thing that will never go out of style.

AUTHOR BIO: My name is Emily DeAugustino I'm a sophomore at Queens university of Charlotte, studying creative writing, journalism and poli-sci. During my free time I launch myself in the air using a fiberglass pole as well as being on the marketing team for my school's literary magazine

poppies

By Brad Sears (Sears...Sears...Sears....)

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... I find an objective correlative confounding, like a jumble of illusions—allusions are apt to elude me. So when I attempted to interpret Sears', 'Poppies,' it was not without trials and trepidation. But I love the way 'mud' pervades each stanza: "tomorrow's makeup," "dirt buried," "caked mud" and "the sludge of my muddled life." Yet what really caught my attention was the couplet, "I remember her face as I entered her. / A torrent of exultation reflected in glass eyes..." I have often wondered if those glassy eyes attested to rapture, distance or absence. (Spacing is poet's own.)*

Poppies

9

A surrogate parody
throwing me across the room
kicking childhood from my chest in
blossoming, hemic, sputters and gasps.
Turning to my mother, helping
apply tomorrow's makeup with shovel hook fists.

20

The dirt buried in contorted red valleys
on my best friend's face
as he realized I'd fumbled
the clothing off of our friendship
and laid it bare in the stale motel air.

23

I remember her face as I entered her.
A torrent of exultation reflected in glass eyes
washing away caked mud from her pale figure.

Present

I lay face down in the sludge of a muddied life.
Across my scars I feel a slight nudge, seeking.
A red poppy has embraced, blooming
in the stale grime, bringing vivacity to this waste I call life.

THE POET SPEAKS...*This poem is cathartic for me. I use writing, especially poetry, to work through past trauma and current emotions I may be feeling. When I was involved in social work, we would often talk about metaphorical toolboxes. There are many tools to work through trauma and uncomfortable emotions. My biggest tool happens to be writing. Another tool I'm fond of is reading. If writing is the wrench, reading is the pliers. The idea that someone has gone through similar trauma, grief, or anger as I have has always given me strength to drive forward. It's a small comfort to know we are not alone.*

I like poetry specifically because its easiest for me to get out a short burst of emotion. While emotional writing is possible with any genre, poetry seems to be the most suited for explaining how I feel now. I was reading a lot of Plath when I wrote the initial draft, and I think some of the tone of her writing influenced this piece

AUTHOR BIO: My name is Brad Sears. I live in Jefferson City, Missouri with my wife, 5 cats, and 2 rabbits. I have a degree in English Literature from Columbia College out of Columbia, Missouri. My favorite poets are Wilfred Owen, Marcus Wicker, and Ocean Vuong. In my spare time I garden, ride my motorcycle, and play video games.

all human brain activity
does not cease at once
the moment a body is
pronounced dead

when your heart stops pumping blood
the EEG flat-lines
your brain stem reflex arrests
but all your cerebral cortex cells
do not instantly go dark

you may briefly know
that you have died
you might even hear a voice
“Okay that’s it.”

Say you are lying on an operating table
and you didn’t make it 2:19 p.m.
precise time noted for the certificate

a cluster of your *thinking* cells
have not yet collapsed
ten seconds, maybe twenty
you know that you have died.

You might startle: am I really dead
or think damn I’ll miss my meeting
or my flight to Hong Kong

So what might flicker
across my dimming brain
perhaps *hey I get it* but I can't
shout it out or whisper it or weep
or perhaps I'll recall a line
of Mary Oliver poetry
or Ecclesiastes a time to be born
and a time to die
or perhaps
no words
a visualization
Eve
me as Eve
rising
in
my
lush
perfumed
garden

*

THE POET SPEAKS... *To the oft-asked question about fearing death, I might answer that I'm not wild thinking of not being here (how would I know what happens tomorrow?) Now an octogenarian, and losing loved ones, thoughts of illness and death are circling. In a variety of forms and colors. Some of my work has been deeply sorrowful, writing while sitting near my husband's grave (with a spot for my plaque next to his). I read poetry aloud there, too, because what else can one do at a graveside visit? However, glad to mint wit, an internet research*

article about the brain set me considering what one might think in that small yet poignant last moment of 'life.'

My writing reflects the emotional person I am. While I admire glorious poetry of nature and spirituality, like that of Mary Oliver and Yehuda Amichai, I lean more towards the work of Dana Gioia, Billy Collins, and Tony Hoagland. I need to write about people, families, relationships, conflict, irony, being the outsider. . . the other. As I wrestle with feelings, I am mindful of the universality of emotional struggles. It's a bonus if readers can say that my expressed feelings or experiences resonate with them.

AUTHOR BIO: Nancy is author of thirty books for young readers, and due to life-changing necessity, a reinvented writer of poetry and creative nonfiction. In addition to her poetic narrative, *MOMENTS OF DAWN* (Conflux Press), a decade caring for her husband with Alzheimer's, she has had work published in numerous journals, including *Rat's Ass*, *Panoply*, *Voice of Eve*, *Jewish Literary Journal*, *Constellations*, *The Copperfield Review*, and elsewhere. An anthologized essay, "Online Dating in the Golden Years," was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

5 (five) (5!) poeMs poems poems (5)

by Alāna Rader

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...

Alāna recites words like warmly whispered sounds, softly trumpeted, on a brassy sunset in perfect embouchure. She's a breezy sultry symphony of ember notes, simmering to crisp; too long-playing for the sullied, unseasoned top forty...here she is; rant, rave and outrage, Ms. Rader is taking the stage...still your heart, she'll steal you away. I'll get you started "The alchemy inside of me is stretched out thin / see-through / like damp paper." "It anchors me / in a sea of could be, should be, might be..." Well my note's blown...

Something New
by Alāna Rader

The alchemy inside of me is stretched out thin
see-through
like damp paper.
Inside the tiny porous holes,
I see the sunshine
peeking in,
fuzzy at first.
It anchors me
in a sea of could be, should be, might be,
I catch a glimpse of
little vessels filled with hope
in every corner.
Add in layers of grief
steeped in sorrow
a hollow reminder of what was.
But tomorrow whispers..keep going.
Weaving in weary optimism
stitches of joy
embroidered into my
emerging landscape.
building
planting
nurturing seeds
watered with tears and bliss,
longing and gratitude,
culminating—
in faith.
That lingering question mark
resides in the dark

asking...
Are you enough?
My soul cries out- yes.
The story, incomplete
read and re-visited
some chapters have more ghosts than others
you can't edit your story
that would mean going back
tipping the hourglass of time
the looking glass staring back
pointedly asking...
Are you enough?
My heart cries out-yes.
Mirror, mirror on the wall.. nah, wrong story.
These former chapters
remain
stains and all
the ink is permanent
the only choice is to not read ahead
but keep writing
the answer lies in the not knowing
like a cavernous lake
dark but inviting
water and wind can heal
once you learn how to wield them
the weather pattern changes
like my cells
each new chapter tells
me to keep going
the rise in conflict
ebbs and flows
while I'm in flow
knowing
every sunrise marks a chance
for renewal.

Ember
By Alāna Rader

An only child
lone wolf
stoking the embers of imagination
excavating ideas
like pebbles on the playground-
limitless.
Was the flame too hot
too bright
too much?
A red-orange glow lurking beneath
a flicker of knowing, growing
smoldering at the surface.
Her face
threatening to erupt, disrupt
abrupt...but not.

It was coming
a reckoning.
But then, the silence.
an inner violence against herself
shut up! she cried
and just like that,
she shrunk
retreating within
a masking, hidden away
she stayed for years
the fire out, extinguished.
Her shell grew hard and cold,
The quiet anguish,
pressing.
Is this what they want,
what they like,
who they like...
was she good...
enough?
But those who fear the fire never feed it,
or fan it.
She's never good enough.
They stomp out her ember, smothering
until...
until...
Was that a spark?
A stark glint in the dark.
She sees it.
Recognizing it
like an old friend
familiar face,
tracing it back to
then?
Remembering embers
tending the tinder
sweet surrender.
The flame so small
but hungry for more
a little air,
some kindling,
our inner nurturing begins.
Hands trembling
she covers her ears
drowning out the noise
of the boys and the bosses
the misses and losses.
She struggles and lashes
springing forth from the ashes
evolving/revolving
she fuels her fame
reclaims her name
asks herself a question
holds still
and listens
for the answer.

The Art of...
By Alāna Rader

Like a child holding tight to a balloon
floating
arms outstretched
reaching towards yes
hoping for maybe
propped up on my Pop's shoulders
so tall
peering over a sea of heads
the waves of people
waving their arms to the music
fluid acoustic sounds
while my heart pounds
the stage in the distance
the expanse
I felt I could touch the sky
a mosaic of pink, blue and indigo
every sunset brings a new day
while we are carried away by
the blanket of night
tucking us under its clouds
shrouded in darkness
a quilt of silence
the alliance of stars
co-conspiring in our slumber
hitting the reset button
on our little life
like an alarm
charming us into dreams
sewing the seams of possibility
stitching and knitting in each little flicker
like a hint of hope or
a flash of faith
or a glint of gratitude
these possibilities
grow, marinating
unspoken,
steeping in the teacup of your soul
the parts do not surpass the whole and
the incline is always steep to the summit
but once lifted
every vantage point exposed
each note composed
like an epiphany of synchronicity
on the precipice of transformation
formed from years of perspiration
our inspiration built from the blocks we stacked
to the pencils we held
the art of possibility is less art
and more work
a labor from the heart

bound by dreams in the ink
thinking beyond, reaching out
a magnifying lens
won't bring us closer
if we hold others
at arms length
this scrutiny in mutiny
your creativity
feeds, fuels and satiates
allowing us to radiate
love
grow and swell
a reflection of our soul's song
distant, resistant to change
yet hope lies within range
it takes strength and skill
to embrace
and will to sustain
what remains in our brains
not to turn out that light
but illuminate
our innate ability
and responsibility is to keep the windows open
breathing in possibility
don't close a door when you already have
the key

The Song
By Alāna Rader

There once was a girl
homegrown in the woods,
planted in trees,
riding the breeze,
watered with milk
and sweets.
Her ears heard a different song,
buzzing and long,
yearning for honking horns,
buildings and lights
so bright, they hurt your eyes.
The expansive skies
from her youth felt stifling
Her small town seemed to shrink around her
and the song grew louder.
Escape was imminent.
When she first set foot
on the hard concrete,
she felt complete,
a sharp contrast
to familiar fields
her feet felt grounded.
The pace was exciting

even if the space was confining,
the energy contagious.
Was this home?
She hustled and bustled,
alone,
the way city folks do
the country mouse once timid,
now coming into her own
she followed the song
to stages
wrote pages
for what seemed like ages
chasing Holly Go Lightly, Carrie and Daisy
almost crazy in her pursuit.
The song decrescendo'd
a trope, worn and cliched
but she stayed, defiant.
It changed tunes and styles
while she walked for miles
pounding the pavement,
her heart pounding less but she persisted—
chasing.
Then something inside her grew
a small seed
germinating, generating
a fleeting thought
like a bird
not yet ready
to take flight.
“Explore” it seemed to say.
She found a hand to hold,
a shelter so safe,
she began to unfold.
Taking off to search and see
the mountains, Paris, Italy.
Her world expanding
arms outstretched,
she'd grown.
Her heart, now her own,
grew too.
And songs heard new
with older ears
her mother's hands
long nails to match
her mood
pale skin
cloaked in mittens.
She continued to listen
and follow her instincts
experience shifting
her city scape changes
but the song played on
high atop mountain ranges
whistling through rivers,
it murmured
“Don't Stop.”

While wandering with wonder
her eyes shone
brighter than the blinding lights
ever could.

Recognizing the tune,
realizing the song...
came from her, all along
now that she was ready
to hear it.

Imagine anew
By Alāna Rader

In a world where I can't see the sky
no windows
my living room a blank slate of blue and clutter
muttering to myself
hoping to create
invigorate
open your mind
open mine
seeking to connect
not reject
my buffering zoom screen
muted
camera off
I scribble
and type
grasping for something
that feeling when
that moment of...
release
this piece
new and scattered
what matters when the world's turned off
can we hit restart or refresh?
I feel nothing and everything all at once
sick of the scroll
the trolls
the lies
the highs and lowest of lows
sick of being clever
I endeavor to
raise you up
like levin or levity
the brevity of
baking and making
like a small ball of clay
today..
I will create
and motivate
illuminating a
stagnant pool
dormant and dark
not ready
to start
steadying my breath

I reach inside my imagination
trying to discover or uncover
my mask
a task in
ideation
a train pulling into the station
remember the subway?
remember friends and connection?
zoom cannot replace sharing a room.
our energy infectious, laughter
collaboration
I miss it
my brain foggy
feeling soggy like a wash cloth hung out to dry
will the sun come out this winter?
the cold
hindering my hope or faith
this complacency can't last forever
is this the dip or a rip in my heart
irreparably there, a tear
trying to fight the good fight
remember the reason for the season
is gratitude
embrace this place
you are healthy and here
the fear speaks loudly and carries a big stick
but it's not real
a figment
you feel it then set it free
healing synergy
conjure love
summon light
expand and align
attach a patch to my wounded heart
then start
and begin
anew

THE POET SPEAKS...*I am inspired by so many things and strangely, I think my mind often thinks and processes feelings via poetry. I'm always interested in exploring nature as well as the creative process. The poem "Ember" was inspired by Glennon Doyle's beautiful memoir "Untamed." "Imagine Anew" was definitely a quarantine-induced creation and the other pieces deal with the abandonment and/or re-discovery of self. This past year has been one of quiet reflection, mourning and acquiring a deeper understanding of myself as a writer. Poetry is one of our highest expressions of Art. A poem can capture a moment or memory, preserving it in the basement of your soul. I continue to be influenced by and in awe of the poets E.E. Cummings, Maya Angelou, and Mary Oliver.*

AUTHOR BIO: Alāna Rader is a Brooklyn based theatre maker/poet and speaker. As a singer and classically trained trumpet player, all of her writing has an innate musicality to it. She finds comfort in words, sounds and language. Alāna recently had a Haiku digitally published with the Nick Virgilio Haiku Association. www.alanarader.com @lanaenchanted

SiX (6!) pOeMs (6)...(6)...(6)...

By yours trulY, the happy recluse

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...

And now for 'yours truly'. My first impressions were that Kenny P. covets COVID. He finds pandemics pathetically pacifying—he is our 'Happy Recluse,'—this issue and last, because he is that good. (The Corona con-sorts prefer the longneck bottles for tilting, tipping and sipping with scissor-fingers.) Still, I'm sure there is no shortage of you-lot basking in the thoughts of not having to be anywhere either—likely (speaking softly) you're all quite clubbable, if you could only stoop to conquer the company. Andale andale arriba, arriba, let's catch up to Speedy G, "GodFace has color / it's where a toms' are empty . . . / unseen/beholdingly : radiating / brainbow prisms / liberatingly : self-recognized." Good gracious, could "clarity" collide with austerity? "(unstained linguistically):"? (To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. Please scroll down.)

color one

If GodFace has color
it's where atoms are empty . . .
unseen/beholdingly : radiating
brainbow prisms
liberatingly : self-recognized
where I AM is one color : clarity

(unstained linguistically):
self-meditative effortless deLight
that's not lazy—
empty-atom field
Garden E stability:
unexpelled by ego-stuck
dust-to-dust destiny,
GodFace color *clarity*
undammed by scenery;
beautiful or ugly mind-mirrors reflect
stainlessly : sudden-access quality
in-hearing silently : thought-free
secret mantra
understanding edgelessly : entering
GodSpace so fast it's I AM already:
I AM actually, clear through egoity.

So why say 'enter' at all?

It's [your] discovery : color one embracing
GodSky/mindcloud(s) centrally—
where it's *clarity* it celebrates diversity
(each one intimately) 'tween the temples
GodSpace color of
no post or pre : deLight
dry as GodSun now
immersing five-sense sea.

the catch

Right now necktop lampshade KnowGlow
source lucidity : is aware of

as

unglued to 3D scenery...

immediacy guaranteed to glow
eternally.

What's the catch?

You must provide direct discovery.

the only thing to fear

To restore stable GodGlow unstuck to
pre & post, the only thing to fear is
bondage to bioshell ghost—
an all-too real thing,
cling of which gives
 doomed down
 dust to dust
 its deadly sting.

any god-dam now?

Free from death deLight glows now
clear through mortality—

Thanks, mind lampshade, for revealing source lucidity.

What dammed it before?

Brainbay blind to shoreless GodSea.

Any god-dam now?

Clinging to joyous ecstasy!

Let go—
joy enhances to familiarity.

Known in spurts?

At first & then uninterruptedly.

humble bow

Creator of the universe
(*created's* tense untrue)
has something in common with what
witnesses through you.

What's more
intimate than one's authentic
I AM view?

Externalizing it as *Thee* promotes idolatry,
internalizing it as *me* nerve-nets egoity.

Actuality of it
transcends mentality,

Constant/Presently : bliss so super serene
Power makes love to Mercy.

Trying to describe it
never gets it directly...

for that I bow to your front door to
GodSky treasury.

last words of a friend

deLight closely watches,
closer than mindshell(s) can be...
faux-surrounding GodSpace focus
pinpoint openly—

where 'bound by body' dies
wisdom-eye's pure serenity,
self-meditatively sustained
don't wait to die to see!

THE POET SPEAKS...

Where GodSky is most alive
it stainlessly reflects: all
mind-mirror detects, but
who Views (GodSky itself)
centers all edgelessly---
approaching it dissolves
in self-aware intimacy.

AUTHOR BIO:

'yours truly, the happy recluse' spends his timeliness
enhancing meditative ecstasy into familiarity, a process
free from post & pre. The Cleveland scenery around him
surrounds stainlessly...much like any mirror reflects
whatever imagery.

frog M.U.S.I.C(!)... & **O**ther Poems 0000 000

By Buff Bradley-*W.H.I.T.M.A.N*

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... I find Whitman-Bradley consummately charming. It is so contenting, appealing and pleasing to rove and roam where Buff's words take us...drifting through his imagery. He is pleasantly pastorally winsome; subjects replete with substance, transforming talking-points into exquisite listening pleasures...certainly worth reaching out from...(To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page.)*

Frog music

Despite their natural exuberance
And their unmatched vocal virtuosity
In performing the masterworks
Of the great Jurassic composers
The busking frogs in the inundated bog
Cease their performance
As I approach,
A thousand voices braking simultaneously
On the same dime,
Reminding me
That there is an immemorial music
Humming and thrumming
Through the biome
And audible to us as the calls of birds
The howls of wolves
The electric whine of cicadas
The countertenor descants
Of the frogs eyeing me now from the mud
And refusing to resume their oratorio
Until they are good and ready,
For they sing only to praise the life within them,
They do not sing for me.

Another memorable performance

Whenever I get out of a chair
These days
I pause for a moment or two
To acknowledge the attention
Of the inner audience
Waiting breathlessly

To see if my various joints
Will successfully execute
The complex maneuver
Necessary to take me
From sitting to standing
Without a catastrophic collapse
And when it becomes clear
That I have delivered
Another memorable performance
Then modestly I nod and wave
As I swan along the boulevards
To wild applause

Beside themselves

In the large ceanothus out front
Entirely covered with small purple blossoms
And redolent with a beguiling fragrance
Of distant lilacs
The bees are beside themselves
Unable to pause
For the merest instant
As they pub-hop from flower to flower
To drink themselves silly
On the season's finest draughts.
And watching their boozy frenzy
I can't help but wonder
What it will be like in the hive
When they return home tonight.
Will each one grab a partner
To mazurka and jig and fandango
With utter abandon
Into the wee hours
While their patient queen mother
Oversees the wild goings-on
Smiling to herself
That bees will be bees?
Or filled with flagons
Of the joy juice of spring
Will they sink into sweet stupor
And dream of the siren ceanothus
With all her lascivious wiles and delights
Beckoning them
To buzz on over to her place for a drink or two
First thing in the morning.

Listen

When I was a boy in Nebraska
The grownups used to say
On summer nights
That you could hear the corn grow.
I listened and listened
But all I could hear
Were the crickets and cicadas
Pleading under the stars
And the occasional *thunk*
Of a moth
Smacking into a window screen
In a desperate attempt to get to the glow
Inside the house.
And yet I told my own children
When they were little ones
That at night you could hear the grass grow
In the back yard
To which they responded
Oh, Daddy.
But I hoped they would listen.
I hoped they would hear with pleasure
The crickets and cicadas
And the poor, crashing moths.
I hoped they would imagine with pleasure
The faint rustlings of summer grasses
Growing taller in the moonlight.

In touch

I am hoping that whichever of us
Departs first
For the undiscovered country
Will have the presence of mind
To bring along a mobile phone.
Whether I'm the dead one
Or the living
What would I do if we couldn't discuss
All that we talk about every day –
What is being done about climate change?
Is there any progress toward reparations?
Who's really behind the coup attempt in XYZ?
Will the grandkids be spending the weekend?
Are there radishes yet at the market?
Did the dog eat the checkbook?
Unbearable, unacceptable, to think those conversations
Will ever come to an end.
So we should head to the mall right now
To purchase two very smart phones
Brainy enough to connect us to each other
Wherever in space and time we might be,
And then let's cross our hearts: No matter when
No matter how, no matter what
We'll always stay in touch.

THE POET SPEAKS...*I find Whitman-Bradley consummately charming. It is so contenting, appealing and pleasing to rove and roam where Buff's words take us...drifting through his imagery. He is pleasantly pastorally winsome; subjects replete with substance, transforming talking-points into exquisite listening pleasures...certainly worth reaching out from...*

AUTHOR BIO: *Buff Whitman-Bradley's poems have appeared in many print and online journals. His new book is At the Driveway Guitar Sale from Main Street Rag Publishing. He podcasts poems on aging at thirdactpoems.podbean.com and lives in northern California with his wife, Cynthia.*

SALT and Chance

By Frank DIAMOND

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...*

Diamond's on the souls of our shoes—stuck like toilet paper. Complete reversal: If he is writing in verse in 'Anxiety Dreams,' it is tough to appreciate the line breaks; but, you know, it flows. It is a most sacred recitation of the symptoms of separation. (Perhaps, the most touching piece I have ever been invited to read.) "...Whispering it's OK, that I am here and nothing's / Ever going to hurt her. I would save her / That broken promise..." He pulls are heartstrings with this pathos to be hamstrung by his bathos, "As I drag our trash / To the edge of our drive / Orange streaks our dawn / In our fortunate sky..." 'Go find a new partner / the ol' one's not who you long for.' But before you stray, frankly, read Diamond today: "I've grown some foibles, true." Roving romantics either suffocate, or leave you breathless... there's little to choose—"You make me smile / Come lie with me / For just a while" Man-boys are such rogues... still, set your eyes on what he has to say. (To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. Please scroll down.)

Salt

A poem by

Frank Diamond

Oh Modest Goddess
Let's spill the tea
Kick up them tunes
Dance close to me

Oh Godless Goddess
Don't make the bed
Our culture's caving
Our soul's unfed
Please salt the deal
When you have time
I salt the still
You salt the vine
I salt the well
You salt the line
I salt the how
You salt the why
I salt the scream
You salt the sigh
I salt the scene
You salt the high
Oh Modest Goddess
You make me smile
Come lie with me
For just a while

Chance

a poem by

Frank Diamond

I sing the body electric
With whatever soul I've got
I sing of what comes after
I sing of what comes not
Hark! The Herald of the Trite!
Only cash accepted here
Detoured by subjective plight
Around which it's tough to steer
My God does not forsaken
When mourning greets despair
The void that won't be shaken
Is just daring you to stare
And if He doesn't just exist

Then nothing's all that matters
Where marks the stand for martyrdom?
Where marks the dark surrender?
So, let's sing the body electric
That springs from happenstance
Let's sing the everlasting
Let's sing the Lord of Chance

THE POET SPEAKS...

"Salt" was inspired by the excitement of finding someone to love after having been widowed and resigned to never again having that connection to another human being. I was influenced by Leonard Cohen's approach to song lyrics/poetry. The sort of short, staccato sentences that do a lot of the heavy emotional lifting in what's left unsaid.

"Chance" evokes the eternal search for life's meaning. Is life simply chance or is there a design and (by implication) a designer? And if God doesn't exist, does "Chance" exist in a way that we should pay it some sort of homage? Exactly what is chance or luck? "Chance" examines what Walt Whitman celebrates—life—and why it's worth celebrating.

AUTHOR BIO: My poem, "Labor Day," was nominated for a Pushcart Prize Award. My short stories have appeared in *RavensPerch*, *Insider*, *Kola: A Black Literary Magazine*, *Dialogual*, *Madras Mag*, *Reverential Magazine*, the *Examined Life Journal*, *Into the Void*, *Empty Sink Publishing*, *Zodiac Review*, *The Fictional Cafe* and the *Fredericksburg Literary & Art Review*, among many other publications. I have had poetry published in *Philadelphia Stories*, *Fox Chase Review*, *Deltona Howl*, *Artifact Nouveau*, *Black Bottom Review*, and *Feile-Festa*. I live in Langhorne, Pa.

The Speculative Uses Of A H-O-O-p-Skirted Berger

By C O lin James

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor writes... Colin is entirely, absolutely, thoroughly and exclusively obtuse, ♪ in the most delightful way♪ ...It is his habitude, his essence his raison d'être—and, our happy fortune: He is both concise and to the point ...but what makes him so 'delightful[ly]' diverting...I'm not so sure he has one: "Alleyways are stand-ins for tangents,"..."drifting towards the outrageously insincere."*

The Speculative Uses Of A Hoop Skirted Berger

Steps that lead down to the street.
I couldn't possibly meet you
again until Tuesday next.
Alleyways are stand-ins for tangents,
straight laced housekeeping beyond compare.
The provinces remain a possible rendezvous,
some shack in the middle of nowhere.
It was the movies that invented parachutes,
drifting towards the outrageously insincere.

THE POET SPEAKS... *Sex or the lack of it, always has to rear its ugly head. Imagine Little Bo Peep in Paris. You may be thinking innocence, and that too.*

I once heard Basil Bunting read his poetry in London. Hard to top. Philip Larkin and Paul Celan would be other poets I greatly admire.

It took me thirty years to develop my own poetic style. I have been referred to as an obtuse traditionalist, which seems something of an accurate description.....

AUTHOR BIO: Colin James has a couple of chapbooks of poetry published. Dreams Of The Really Annoying from Writing Knights Press and A Thoroughness Not Deprived of Absurdity from Piski's Porch Press and a book of poems, Resisting Probability, from Sagging Meniscus Press.....

10 (ten) poems (5 + 5) poems _____ 10

By Bob Carlton

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... I have, whatsoever, no interest in having or being in control. I prefer the formulae of selfish people. I worry about those who have empathy, show compassion or persuasions of altruism. 'Screw you too! ...' is the mantra that persistently hums om and aum beneath my still distilling, stale, soured, stinking breath, deep within my sallow, sunken, sullied, savage breast. These are just of few of the reasons I like Bob Carlton's "bitter taste / of the static state..." "...my mind / its own tomb..." "...giggles and details / evade" "you spared me / your spread legs" "no matter the tropes / I try." No, I lied, I just love Bob Carlton. (Spacing is poet's own.)*

"bitter taste..."

bitter taste
of the static state
my invisibility
indivisible
in time
my mind
its own tomb
or perhaps
the misted
over moat
that sets the world
with you
apart

"clearly whispers..."

clearly whispers
obscure the day

giggles and details
evade

a child escapes
departs

with knowledge
unimparted

"The days of old..."

The days of old
fashioned odes
are over

the love lyric
lay a lie

the losses of time
I cannot
recover

no matter the tropes
I try.

In a Word

fucked

up and over

with and around

life was never

the right kind of

fucked

Our Toxic Flirtation

you spared me
your spread legs

me for giving
you for giving
nothing

Dark Goddess

Nakedness moving
under the gauze,
musky scent stirring
beneath the perfume,
shudder of touching flesh
crying in the night--

The darkness
at the center
of all radiance--

Warm dreams of
waving savannahs
shimmer in dark

paleolithic eyes

The Middleweight Curse

The Michigan Assassin: murdered.

His father: murdered.

His mother: murdered.

His murderer: murdered.

The femme fatale

for whom the murderer

murdered: murdered.

Man...that's murder.

"Love was possible..."

Love was possible
because that
rottenest of dames
Marie Windsor
was,
was
there to
balance
things out
for us all.

"The world can still..."

The world can still
fill up with wonder

when Myrna Loy
scrunches up her nose

and delivers her line,
the rise in tone

like a question,
as if the words

surprise themselves
even as they're spoken.

“you believe...”

you believe
you are
interesting
you are
not
(I say to myself)
the narrative arc
of Veronica Lake’s hair
has more enter-
tainment value

THE POET SPEAKS... *I'm not sure I can say where some of this stuff comes from. Odds and ends picked up through the course of a life, bits and pieces of phrase and image pinging around in the mind. A thought, perception, or feeling that draws passing material like a magnet. Artifice arising out of unforced, organic encounters between language and the world, however that presents itself in the moment. The capacity of language, "charged with meaning" as Pound said, to embody more than we thought we could say before that instant. When we get that just right, it's poetry.*

AUTHOR BIO: Bob Carlton (Twitter @bobcarlton3) lives and works in Leander, TX.

Fi V e (5) p o e MS

By Gre gg Shapiro

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...* For a guy with a first name with five letters, one vowel and three g's, Shapiro has already suffered enough to be a staggeringly good, deservedly un-struggling poet of well or ill-pronounced provenance, authenticity and quality. (But what's in a name?) "From my pillow I silently count the exaggerated / intake and glottal expulsion of breath, that warps / walls, fogs windows, loosens floorboards, bubbles / dried paint on a consistent basis." Yes, you might likely need to be as OCD as he is to write this well...I have seen it too many times. Here's another symptom near the top of the scale: "I wait for change. Expect it to come. Waving / a flag, ringing bells. Recognizing me instantly. / I pretend to ignore it. Watch it suspiciously..." But no sense celebrating Shapiro's genius at his owned expense. He is, though, entirely delightful if you care to indulge each other...(Spacing is poet's own.)

Seven yawns

From my pillow I silently count the exaggerated
intake and glottal expulsion of breath, that warps
walls, fogs windows, loosens floorboards, bubbles
dried paint on a consistent basis. Louder than any
of his sneezes or snores. More explosive than bombs.
Even the dog, who bravely navigates the hazardous,
gaseous landscape beneath the top-sheet and quilt
has had her fill. Flinging herself off the mattress and
wriggling her way under the bedframe where she can
cover her ears with her paws and dream of chasing
squirrels, peacocks and geckoes undisturbed.

Responsibility

I wait for change. Expect it to come. Waving
a flag, ringing bells. Recognizing me instantly.
I pretend to ignore it. Watch it suspiciously
from the corner of my eye. Call to it under
my breath. This has happened before. Memory

consumes me. I can't fight back. Pummeling
the air like a neurotic windmill. I talk fast,
like a speeding victim. Lips a blur, saliva
shining clear, then silver. Words are vitamins.
I set a trap. Think about animals who chew

off their limbs for freedom. Never look back,
they insist, never look. The second hand
is a constant reminder. Now is not the time
for nostalgia; the future, like a virus,
breathing down my neck.

Homeland Insecurity

First ask yourself, “whose homeland is this anyway?” Be careful not to do it in a way that arouses suspicion. Don’t suddenly start befriending the descendants and assorted kinfolk of native

Americans and other indigenous people. They are not as naïve as you have been led to believe. There is a poet who knows a poet whose relatives, including a few first cousins on his father’s

side, his widowed mother and nonagenarian grandfather, contend that Israel is their homeland. When, in reality, it is the north side of Chicago, the west side of Chicago and a town in Poland that

no longer exists on any map, respectively. Sucking your thumb won’t help. This poet knows a poet who sucked his thumb well into his twenties as a non-narcotic form of comfort and solace.

The prospect of escape from the crippling closet of home, the ever tightening grip of faith and family, the stunted liberation of sexual identity, compounded the addiction, undid expensive orthodontics,

and earned him a distinct reputation in some circles that usually doesn’t make its way into poems about social issues. Then a new leader was elected to straighten out the messes and mayhem

of the immoral old leader. He promised not to do any more harm to the air, the overwhelmed bodies of water, to the fragile surface of the planet or the culture. He knew a poet who knew a poet

who shared the dais on inauguration day and reminded a country drowning in debt and division of the currency of language, the high cost of ignorance and the immeasurable value of words.

Crazy at the Bat

Have you noticed all the turkey vultures? Wingspans wider than a Range Rover. Brazen as republicans, plentiful as evangelicals. Swooping and hovering, hovering and scoping.

They know the end is near, can smell it in the air like a home cooked meal prepared with love and extra spices. Mother Earth has been working out, preparing to flex her considerable muscles.

A tornado shredding Nashville or wildfire devastation in Australia is nothing compared to what she has in store. Having waited long enough, nursing her cancerous sores, she's about to go full Endora

on our irresponsible, greedy and sorry asses. Momentarily entertained by people singing on their balconies, serenading loved ones from a supposedly reasonable distance, the rainbow palette of face masks,

the Florida beaches overflowing with self-destructive spring breakers, mistakenly certain of their youthful immunity. In other words, she's planning to give batshit crazy a whole new viral meaning.

The Right Track

Prisoner of travel, I am between homes. Miles of tracks
ahead of me, spreading out like so many spit out, rotten
teeth. A smile rusted crooked. Scenery changes through
tinted windows. My eyes wander from pages of books,

magazines, taking in the hulking, silent mills and leaning
rows of towering corn. Red-vested men punch holes
in tickets, pass out pillows. I nod at Gollie and Isaac

and Acre Long. No such thing as fear of heights
this close to the ground. I dream of stillness, airless
landscapes. Floating, arms outstretched, feet paddling.
Next stop Pittsfield, then Framingham, then sleep.

THE POET SPEAKS...

AUTOR BIO: Gregg Shapiro is the author of seven books including the expanded edition of his short story collection *How to Whistle* (Rattling Good Yarns Press, 2021). Recent/forthcoming lit-mag publications include *Exquisite Pandemic*, *RFD*, *Gargoyle*, *Limp Wrist*, *Mollyhouse*, *Impossible Archetype*, *wards* and *Dissonance Magazine*, as well as the anthologies *Moving Images: Poems Inspired by Film* (Before Your Quiet Eyes Publishing, 2021), *This Is What America Looks Like* (Washington Writers' Publishing House, 2021) and *Sweeter Voices Still: An LGBTQ Anthology From Middle America* (Belt Publishing, 2021). An entertainment journalist, whose interviews and reviews run in a variety of regional LGBTQ+ and mainstream publications and websites, Shapiro lives in Fort Lauderdale, Florida with his husband Rick and their dog Coco.

S...N...  ...W D...A...Y + 1 (ne)...1!

By Anne Mikusinski [mikusinski](#)

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Some write poetry while others are truly Poets. I can't help thinking that Mikusinski falls into the category of the later. She has that gift of writing without indulgence and yet leaves the reader utterly indulged, replete—melding universalities with intimacy both vast and drawn. Or maybe I'm just her huckleberry for those withdrawn days of observations and introspection: "When all I want to do is stay / Inside... Reminds me of / Time passed / And all things unrequited / And unfinished." "In searching for placement / For orphaned words / Or scattered thoughts...Before I return / To my solitary avocation." She reminds me of that first sip of wine you took from the bottle you couldn't afford...worth reading over Anne over. (Spacing is poet's own.)*

Snow Day

Something about
Listening to Jubilee Street
On a grey Sunday morning
When all I want to do is stay
Inside
But obligations draw me out
To brave the elements
Reminds me of
Time passed
And all things unrequited
And unfinished.

Especially when the violin chimes in
Weaving its counterpoint among the
Words
Of a story
Containing too much regret.

This Tab Is Playing Audio

A quiet undercurrent
Serves as accompaniment
In searching for placement
For orphaned words
Or scattered thoughts
Recklessly joined together.

And sometimes
A distraction
As I watch
A ragged group
Embracing and embraced
By creative noise
Arms and hands
And legs
Spread impossibly wide
To let their muses in
Before I return
To my solitary avocation.

THE POET SPEAKS...

AUTHOR BIO:

the **Mosquito** buzz buzz buzz

By Lara Dolphin

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... What's the point in being elated if it's not exhausting and when has being exhausted not been elating? You people are astounding. Look what I get to do in my spare time? This stuff comes to me without begging, beckoning, proposition nor solicitation. Lara Dolphin is as precious as she is priceless. One poem no waiting...she is delightfully spiteful. Besides, how could we Fleas deny such backhanded praise for the maringouin? "The Mosquito (updated, revised)" is oddly erotic, to me, not unlike Donne's 'The Flea' and as amusing as Burns' 'To a Louse.' "How can you send so much baseness / Through that tiny proboscis" "Stealth, and the uncanny ability / To sneak up on me at a picnic." "It's your vile little move / You swamp angel," "Supping on blood / ...Such insolence, such sorcery, / Such she-devilry," It is beautifully written but, then again, what isn't here at the intrepid, unflinching FOTD? Lara is our very own Dolphin Oracle where entomology and etymology collide...(Spacing is poet's own. Please scroll down.)*

The Mosquito

When did you start your tricks

Mademoiselle?

What do you walk upon the water for,

In the name of the femur, the tibia, the taurus,

You divine?

Is it so that you shall overcome the force of your weight

And land and bite and leave

Before I know you are there?

I heard a man call you Maringouin

In muggy New Orleans.

You throw me a trinket, and smile.

How can you send so much baseness

Through that tiny proboscis

Injecting saliva into my skin?

Queer, weighing one twenty-five thousandth of an ounce,

How you measure about the size of a paper clip

A zero.

Yet what disease surrounds you

You infectious agent, smuggling a parasite, casting death.

That is your nature, your filthy inheritance:

Stealth, and the uncanny ability

To sneak up on me at a picnic.

But the gig is up now, you beast of prey

Queer, how you stalked the supreme poet

in Ravenna, ensnaring him,

Quartan Queen

Winged Vector.

Settle, on the author of The Ravenna Journal

That hero of Greek freedom, alight

Leaving relapsing fever in your wake

I hate the way you target my ankles

Having been lured by overripe feet

Come then, let us play in Orlando

And see who wins this contest,

hungry chickens or mosquito.

You don't know what comes next, and I don't know what comes next.
Pay attention!
It's your move
It's your vile little move
You swamp angel,
Which stirs my blood flushing full of loathing for you:
It is your tiny instrument buzzing about my face.
Why do you exist?
Surely it is bad design.
Nature says it's not your fault.
If that is so, then I believe science saved the Panama Canal
But it is so amazing to think that nets and mesh and sprays
And removing standing water did the trick.
Liquid, living liquid
Super highway
Delivering oxygen.
I witness your crime
For a moment engorged in stupor,
Indecently carnivorous
Supping on blood
My blood.
Such insolence, such sorcery,
Such she-devilry,
Such delicate offense.
You thirst
As well as you may.
Only your accursed tiny guts
And slight build
Stop the six-pronged attack.
Begone with disdain, no cap
You winged fiend.
Can I not outsmart you?

Are you too quick for me,
Wretched pest?
Or does evolution not work the way we think it does?
Queer, what significant splatter my blood produces
Next to the minuscule smirch that was you!
Queer, what a nasty residue you have become!

THE POET SPEAKS... *Specifically, this poem draws inspiration from "The Mosquito" by D. H. Lawrence. The jumping off point for me was when he refers to the mosquito biting him as male. I thought this interesting since only female mosquitoes bite, and thought that I could rework the poem in light of modern science and attitudes. In general, poetry for me is a creative outlet to process the world around me and to communicate with others. I admire poets like David Lehman and William Stafford who can write a fresh poem daily though this goal alludes me. I believe that poetry deserves a place in the mainstream conversation and hope that more media outlets will create space for new voices. I am also an advocate for Pennsylvania to restore the position of Poet Laureate, which was abolished in 2003.*

AUTHOR BIO: Lara Dolphin is an attorney, nurse, wife and mom of four amazing kids; she is exhausted and elated most of the time. Her work appears in print and online.

be a HUMAN & other poems

By Nathan Porceng

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... To steal an old colloquial, throw-back expression from the late 30's—'Back when I was banging.' And, no-doubt, long before Nathan may have been born: Porceng is the 'living-end.' '[His] reflection is a ghost / a civilian apparition'. Wait, that's not for us—he could have said it, I just must have lucked into sussing-him-out as I surfed for his turf. I can't help thinking, if his works went untold, his stories, either whispered or unshared, would be a loss un-tolled. 'Be a Human' reads like a longer mantra than most, but worth committing to, for those with a thrust for string theory and stored memories. (I'm old enough to know who a Guam is, and Odia references (I mistakenly believe), to an ancient Sanskrit language that dates back to when I was delivering newspapers.) —I just wish trauma could cease to exist for the sake of one's future. I know for a fact, my past was a waste of time and a great weight off my mind. I've grown fat since, and I now know that a waist is a terrible thing to mind...But don't wait for me to finish with a lack of finesse, read Nate, "pissing in [his] pond" soiling himself and poisoning the Well, I just hope his writing and your reading will unite rather than untie (unscramble the boggled letters for yourself). Living North of the 49th parallel, I can't resist this last quote: "myhair Quebecois / brown as my ... " If I knew "Quebecois" was a colour, maybe that might stop our beloved Providence—with all its provenance—from attempting to separated from a country with so-much-less culture...I thought they were fleur-de-lis blue...I am not even remotely political... (I don't even know the true/official colors of each of the opposing Parties (sans a minority)... Except, I suspect, one of them is Green...(Spacing is poet's oen.)*

Be a Human

Fill your days with

Woodland walks

Mammoth fights

And picking shit.

Break a bit.

Bind a stone to stick.

Paint in smear

And trace your hand.

Fuck for the taste of babies.

Guambodia

Today it's the voids,

the space between atoms,

watch snores,

piss drawers,

and quiet.

Topside

calls home,

crossing the Pacific,

cursing the service

granular.

Away,

shipwreck snorkels,

beers at the laundry,

exchange loiters,

and aimless.

Downloads and imports,

logging and waiting,

quiet,

granular,

aimless.

Today it's the voids,

the space between atoms,

the shutdown reactor,

the time on our hands.

I piss in a pond

and play with my hair.

my piss is brown

my hair Quebecois

brown as my piss

my hair from my father

I'm thirsty, polluting

his hair from his mother

this pond is polluted

waving hair

the bubbles look like

Canada.

Seinfeld

“Do you ever wonder about who’s inside the cars you see?

Where they’re going?”

No.

Not all cars.

Not all drivers.

I reserve my contemplation

for those pulling U-Hauls or boats.

The ones that are really going places.

THE POET SPEAKS...*2020 brought out all the writers, only for them to disappear in 2021. Nothing “for the sake of” is worth reading. Forced creation is a waste of everyone’s time. One of these poems was written on a nuclear submarine, one in a public restroom, and two on a couch. I hope you find them necessary.*

AUTHOR BIO: Nathan Porceng is a Washington-based poet, songwriter, and submariner. As part of the band Bridge Out, he won first place at the 2014 Northeastern Songwriter Festival in Brookfield, CT. He firmly believes Joe Strummer gave us all the tools we need to save the world.

It Is . . . it . . . is . . . et al

By Jack Galmitz

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...* Jack Galmitz is lit, safe-cracked dynamite, an acrobat-parallel-universe-pyromaniac—on fire—with a wick not long enough to run from: “Here Are Some Word / You can cross out / or underline” If I should live forever, it is unlikely I could ever, be understood, for what I think is what’s good. I’ll bet Jack’s not an Alpha (most poets aren’t), as he sifts, shifts and surfs through his freeing-associated-wheeling indexed-alphabet. I’m inclined to confess it is the best piece of verse I have read in my unsteady-staid tenure here—there is something for everyone. Except, I would have inserted ‘Oden,’ ‘Odious’ even gnashed in ‘Ogden’ before “Olden”—add your own words—it will be a bored-game in no time. ‘It Is’ is similarly as engaging and evocative. And, ‘Sitting, Standing, Lying Down’ is all about “running”...When gerunds collide with nouns and verbs...these are the times I wish I knew what ‘parts of speech’ were—(Spacing is poet’s own. Our style is HOTS –hands off the submissions. Published as received.)

Submission to FOTD

Attention: Tom Ball

Poems by Jack Galmitz

Here Are Some Word
You can cross out
or underline
Abacus
Alexandrian Line
Border Collie
Border Wall
Borderline Personality
Chronic Cough
Chronicity
Dielectric Water
Dietician
Diuretic
Family
Family Friends
Helios
Jacksonville Florida
Juke Joint
Jacks Set
Lambchops
Lamb Scallopini

Lounge Chair
Menstruate
Men
Nunc
Olden
Pauper
Penis
Queer
Rust
Salvador
Salvation
Tomato
Venice
Venice De Milo
Venice on a Half Shell
Wasted
Zero

It Is

It's a heatwave
It's marvelous
It's wonderful
It's your birthday
It's a holiday
It's a game saver
It's scary
It's our anniversary
It's sad
It's a tie game
It's a romp
It's barbecued
It's streaming live
It's synonymous
It's going to collapse
It's a surprise
It's blemished
It's a trap
It's a trick
It's robbery
It's insulting
It's not funny
It's a riot
It's sold out
It's hysterical
It's bad
It's bad
It's over

Sitting, Standing, Lying Down

running to catch a bus
running to get out of the rain

running a light
running to say goodbye
running to the store
running away from myself
running away from a gang
running for office
running to keep in shape
running the water
running to catch the ball
running to tackle a runner
running to pass a runner
running in a marathon
running a temperature
running from a mountain lion
running from a charging elephant
running up a debt
running for the sake of it
running across the bridge
running from the police
running from the law
running up a bill
running off at the mouth
running an errand
running amok
running short
running on empty
running around
running out of money
running out of steam
running out of ideas
running out of space
running out of time
running an ad
running the air conditioner
running the motor
running to catch a train
running for cover
running the country
running out of excuses
running for it

Okay, Tom. Please give my regard to the team.

Be well,

Jack

THE POET SPEAKS... *As the reader can see, my poems are not self-referential. They are not, in other words, expressions of a self and emotions recollected in tranquility. These poems are generated by being lists, the words included sharing some of the characteristics of being members of a list. This idea is behind the making of the poems and is more essential than the outcomes themselves. I was influenced here by poets and critics Bernadette Mayer and Charles Bernstein, writers who have been associated with the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E School of poetry. Mayer in her Writing Experiments recommends the writer write a poem as a list and so I have done in each of these poems.*

Of course, there are differences in the three poems. Sitting, Stand, Lying Down refers to the basic physical postures human beings take. In each line, the reader is placed in a different position in the nexus of language and in the nexus of physical experiences in the world. The reader might just add their own memories and reflections to this list. Or subtract from it. In the poem It Is, the lines of the poem are all predicate adjectives, meaning the subject's description and defining quality is altered line by line. What compounds the difficulty is the subject remains throughout an ambiguous pronoun, "it," which has no noun to which it refers. This poem examines briefly the relationship of language to world and just how unsubstantiated and subject to flux it is. Again, the reader can have fun here by adding or subtracting or reflecting on how and what the experience of world is to them. In the poem Here Are Some Words, the subject of the poem is language itself, as poems are not just comprised of words but are words. In this poem are the associations of words in a list written alphabetically. They range in meaning and diversity and thereby range in experience in the reader's experience of them. What is important and what is not is entirely within the scope of the reader. The poem is their experience of it.

So, I suppose for me writing is important because it grapples with our experience of structuring our world and our presentation of a self within that structure. It should always be new, inventive, and fun. If it isn't fun and instructive, what is the purpose of it?

AUTHOR BIO: Jack Galmitz was born in New York City in 1951. He attended the public schools and later received a Ph.D from the University of Buffalo.

His poems and stories have appeared in such journals as And/Or, Otoliths, Otata, is/let, Heliosparrow Journal, and many more. He authored a book of criticism on the subject of minimalist poetry, Views, which was widely read in the gendai (experimental) haiku community. He is married and lives with his wife in New York.

10 (ten) Poems 10 (ten) Poems 10 (ten) Poems 10 (ten)
Poems 10 (ten) Poems

Ten (10) poems Ten (10) poems Ten (10) poems The
(10) poems Ten (10) poems

By Josh Crummer

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Josh Crummer will write for food. He resides in the Tri-Cities. The position does not currently exist. Not since 1959...Time for another State Poet Laureate again, in Michigan...No idea if there is a stipend, but he should at least get traveling expenses grazing for leftovers. He sent ten poems in and I was determined to reject at least one...no such luck. Just take my word, Josh is good, Josh is great, He's worth the read. If his titles aren't enough to entice you—skip this gourmet dish and go do a load of laundry...To paraphrase Seinfeld (an old 90's show, about nothing that ran for 9 year—(just check-out Drew's tattoo ;)): 'He's real, and he's spectacular...'*
[Tip: the line had nothing to do with poetry.]—Crummer is busting-out all over...
(To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page.)

Refusal to Acknowledge a Beauty Queen

Miss America. Little Miss Perfect.
Miss Pink Princess from a crystal
kingdom. No-nonsense drama queen.
Miss Primp and Pretty, Pert and Perky.
Pick that salad combo. Pick that pimple.
Peter Piper picked unwisely
pertaining your material demands.
Miss Double-D. Miss Dancing Queen..
Miss Match my brand-name clothes.
Miss knows her man. Miss knows
every man. Miss my meaning? Miss
no hoe but the hoe who wronged you
for stealing your style. Mysterious;
mystify my dreams. Misty the moment
I'm never near. Miss me with your nonsense.

Kangaroo Jack

Back then so much depended
on who dated who that week
so I asked Rebecca to a movie.

Another Attitude Era milestone –
water bottle vodka during math;
“Outside” by Staind on every radiowave;
midnight peeks at Kate Winslet
drawn like a French girl.

When Tony Hawk wasn’t cresting waves
of a pixelated vert ramp
and Goku wasn’t wasting
five episodes charging Spirit Bombs

the villain survived anyway,
us boys dreamt of girls in our grade
with the grace and restraint
of a Jerry Springer brawl.

Last fall we watched two planes
disappear into a building,
are we next the question
keeping us up at night

so it made sense to live the moment
which sometimes meant
flying like Icarus toward a heat
we felt, we had words for,

but couldn’t define aside
from locker room bravado –
At that age, everyone has a plan
until life hits them in the face.

Her Cheshire smile, it’s
fading from my memory now
but the whining locker hinges
between periods, still clear –

and she said yes.

So we saw *Kangaroo Jack*
which I can’t remember well
but I expected more talking animals.

I saw ships dotting the seats ahead
as our eyes drew sails of our own
over the cup holder
when suddenly her lips on mine
again and again
deep breath and again
enough strawberry lip gloss
to quit Pop-Tarts cold turkey
and again and again
and

Down at the Riverfront Park

Leather-skinned lesbians sit and stare
at a budget Ozzy Osbourne
teasing irradiated walleye
while a seagull pecks vainly
at pavilion pavement.

On the opposite shore,
a salty Great Lakes barge
sketches stone mountains into existence
with its craning pencil.
Bicycles hum their ratchet buzz

past rusting cars and pedestrians
as a little boy soars
from his mother's fraying patience
down the sidewalk
while crashing waves of car traffic

spill from the concrete skyway above.
This is where our elderly rest
once their race is done:
white lace curtains,
high-and-tight lawns

frozen as their masters watch
water meander from port
in a steady pickup truck,
American steel
wearing five o'clock shadow.

Don't fear the flags these fishermen fly –
as long as you're not a narc,
the DNR, or worse,
wunnadoze goddamn liberals,
no one will ever know you're here.

I Don't Use This Often

Currently my hair is blue
and serotonin level is low.
Not on here to see your little dicks
and listen to your big ego.
I may be a snack
but I'm no hot Cheeto;
I'm more like a Wheat Thin,
looking for an 11
who wants to kiss my forehead,
looking for a normie boyfriend,
for female partners,
for spontaneous sex and fun.

All bodies are good bodies –
tell me what song you look like.
I'm always wearing scrubs
but I ain't no scrub;
I'm a professional wedding date
daydreaming of cheesecake –
tell me something sweet to get me by.
Talk revolution to me. Smack me
with your best pick-up line. Open with
your deepest secret or your best joke,
but don't get attached.
Want to know more? Just ask.

Live, laugh, fuck. Stay up
all night with me so I know it's real.
Also a job, your own car and place
are key. For heaven's sake,
have all of your teeth.
If you like tacos, beer and coffee
we'll get along great.
Ideal date would be pizza
and crime podcasts.
But if my pup doesn't like you
I probably won't like you, either.
I'm not here to play games.

Bonus points if you can keep plants alive.

My Hometown the Fallout Level

"This place looks like a Fallout level. ...what? It does." – an ex

Here, history is told, not shown;
no wrist-strapped Pip-Boys spoiling what was
underneath these knotted trees and clay.
The Johnsons spent wistful years wishing
Zilwaukee was what Saginaw became;
no three dollar bills from their fledgling bank
circulated; and Kawkawisou's lands
shrank from treaty slice to nature preserve.
Yet beyond the rusted warehouse beneath
our bridge, our brick Consumers building,
windows punched as a time card, life reveals itself –
local-league baseball pennants sealed
in the corner bar ceiling; lifted trucks swarming
the party store, clutching twelve-pack pollen
like so many worker bees;
empty nesters in windbreakers jogging in tandem
along a paved footpath as aluminum boats
start their cross-country swim downriver.
If our annual beard competitions ceased,
the men of this town don't seem to care.

Never in my years did a Mole Rat or Super Mutant
shamble rowdy from the corn rows.
If war doesn't change, neither does peace;
though this land changes hands
from nature to native to white man
to nature, a peaceful life exists here.
A quaint, quiet life, yes, but it is good.

Under streetlamps and stars I walked alone,
listened to working men weave glory days
from memory, watched child-sized shadows climb
metal jungle gyms long uprooted from this earth.
How foolish I was to take you home,
to hear the privilege in your voice
tell my formative years to go fuck themselves.

Do All Your Poems Reference Video Games?

If by that you mean the virtual lands
children explore in parental absence,
the last frontier for NASA's unchosen
to penetrate heaven aboard a reckless white shuttle
then yes, they're in every poem I write,
the same way every poet name-drops

Auden, Knott or Lawrence in their collections;
lip service checkmarked like an Xbox Achievement.
You think they're haunting a library, a graveyard,
some dive bar in Manhattan? News flash, nerds:
They're sitting on my cat-scratched sectional,
flatscreen glow washing our eyes
when we should be sleeping,
joyously picking literary plots apart
in an RPG played again and again.

Introducing: The Chocolate Starfish

While our elders at Monday catechism
threw a Hail Mary at our waning attention
by presenting Creed's song "Higher"
as a Christian song,
a paunch pre-teen boy whispered dirty jokes
to anyone who'd listen,
collecting our giggles and gasps
like a used car salesman.

Four years of stitching
the Word of the Lord
onto the hairshirts woven
by our parents and theirs before
undone by a couple questions:
*You know they mean
by a chocolate starfish, right?
Ever heard of a blowjob?*

I don't remember his name
but his voice –
like he'd been smoking
in the boys' room since birth –
reverbs to this day.
Shaved head giving off
ex-con vibes in middle school –
It was impossible for us
not to follow his words
down the glory hole.

Maybe his parents tracked
the star of religious ed
to our little brick building
wishing he'd stop growing up so fast.
Maybe they dumped him here
while they drank some hot dog-
flavored water of their own
uninterrupted for a couple hours.

The giggle nuance between mischief
and innuendo is subtle
yet easy to distinguish,
and our elders knew they lost us for good.
We never saw paunch Marlboro boy again,
the rest of us carrying
the forbidden seeds he planted
and the next day,
at the lockers,
on the playground,
this strange fruit grew higher
to a place
where

COVID Body

Morning mirror hints a thinner waistline
as wall-shaking steps burst my bubble.
I pass through kitchen portals just fine
but the crawlspace gives me trouble.

I'm not a fat man; more like fluffy recluse
farming cellulite under lucky black sweats,
accruing mass, storing aches in my glutes,
empty pizza box a certain clue of regrets.

Carryout will be ready in 25 minutes –
fuck that noise. Deliver for an extra five.
Call girls charge dunno-what per visit
but Lincoln bribes drivers to see if I'm alive.

More to love. Cake for days. Dummy thicc.
Each new lover has a plan until I get naked.
Thrust a little high and try that peach-eating trick
so she won't spitefully ask *You gonna make it?*

Winter won't evict Autumn. Let's walk, me and I.
Capture colored leaves on my phone if all else fails.
Ten minutes in, two leggings pass my right side
in tandem, in orbit, invisible rails.

I'm not as complacent on this as one might think.
Sometimes, when there's positive influence afoot
I plan to run a mile as morning sky turns pink.
My heart races at the thought. I stay put.

Rubber Soul

at some point
a man must look
deep within himself
and ask
if he truly loved
The Beatles
as a teen,
G-rated jams
about octopi gardens
filling stadiums
with dollars and pounds
stopping traffic
below the rooftop

or was it
tacit acceptance
from parents
and peers,
mistaking tradition
for wisdom
playing *Yesterday*
on repeat
during that hairy,
awkward time
where any god
will do,

wearing habit
like a purity ring
as booty-
poppin' bass,
45 beats
per minute rocked
high school crushes
two-stepping slow
as penguins
in the dark

while his vines
dug deep in
cafeteria walls,
certain the rest
of the world
wasn't as mature

Séance

Once I found balance between scald and ice, my forehead hit the fiberglass,
reddened skin hidden from the reticence and loathing

roaming the world outside while, in thickest steam
and fastened eyes, I conjured paradise from other men's minds –

feather down fields, Tuscan hills, blacker half of the moon –
when from a thousand miles away you found me,

secret entrance pressing my thigh;
lips nesting our shoulders as doves waiting out rain,

fingers tracing our idle palms –
until my eyes open, or water runs cold, whichever comes first.

THE POET SPEAKS... *A fair amount of the poems published in here are influenced by a melting stew of early Tony Hoagland, Eminem, Charles Bukowski, Kim Addonizio and Japanese jazz fusion music. Even bigger influences were from poets that I didn't like – Emily Dickinson, Rupi Kaur, assorted Button Poetry slams on my Instagram feed and more. But you don't learn if you don't give all forms a chance, and this mix has led you to the collection you see here. Many of these poems, however, were born from the ashes of a sudden breakup last summer and written during the most isolating periods of COVID-19.*

The subject matter of my work here – observations on incels, first dates, hometown memories, swipe culture, rejecting Modernism in high academia, getting fat, music fads and sexy daydreams – is all mine. Or, I'd like to say that, but that's not entirely accurate. I feel the moments depicted in these poems are universal in the sense that we've all encountered these feels at one point or another and they're at the root of our experience as young people in the 21st century.

The only solution to preserving the experiences of a generation increasingly skeptical of social media and elder statesmen, yet still trying to capture mindfulness and compassion for their neighbors, is through poetry. I hope these poems resonate with you in some way and encourage you to record your lives through verse while we're all still capable.

AUTHOR BIO: Josh Crummer will write for food. He has survived COVID, a 500-year flood, several economic meltdowns and heartbreak in one year, and he will survive you. (Imagine that in the Merovingian's tone from The Matrix Reloaded).

Selected recent and semi-recent publication credits include:

- Sky Island Journal
- Moonstone Arts Center
- South 85 Journal
- Alien Buddha Press
- Vita Brevis Press
- SPECTRA Poets
- Still Life Literary Arts Journal
- Poets Choice
- Cardinal Sins

Transgenderella + 3 (!) (!) (!)

(!) (!) By Kate Meyer-Surrey

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Meyer-[also]-Curried her favours elsewhere; I'm sorry we lost some of her poetry, she has a delightful verbosity of an embraceable, scathing nature—Perhaps with a little luck, you can find the one's she withdrew in some other publication raking preferred muck—I am a jealous man, not without scared legs-to-stand. Pity us. Alms for the Fleas—sliced, burnt milked and bilked...Here are her residual recitations—frankly these are my favourites...the rest lost in an absentia to some alternate multi-verse. Evidently, we have rivals that do not share my lack of taste. Read 'em and weep, we have four-of-a-kind... In tradition with my devotion and longing-for-floggings (a confessed self-flagellation hobbyist) ...I'm off to wound my licks...just read what's left—But don't cry for me, after the onanistic-inflicted whippings, I'm off to attend to my four-acre, self-sustaining organic vegetable garden, rooted just above a quite opulent, underground fall down-and-out shelter...chock full of objects inviting contemplation and regret. To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. Please scroll down. (Font type and sizes are poet's own).*

Transgenderella

Girl can't lie. Her sisters are ugly and
Mean as rattlesnakes. Kardashians on
Crystal meth. Blended family? Hell no:
Stepmom's a black-widow goldigga
And he's her pay pig. He's just whipped
Digging deep to keep them Goo'ped.
But not for her reassignment surgery:
She's the skeleton in their closet while
Those pageant girls pout and stomp
Down the runway of her family life.
They think she's is locked in the
Basement; like Orphan Annie with
Raggedy street wear. But she's already
Having herses; she's living her Cinderella
Fantasy with re-runs of *Drag Race*,
The only fishy sister in her House of
Home Alone Shark Tank: it's her
Werk room; she's creeping into their
Closets like a peeper; back, back,
Back, again; mopping Spanx for tucking
Panties, up-cycling hosiery into pert titties,

Keeping her lovin' oven toasty with their
Lingerie; she's sittin' pretty in their
Victoria's Secret. Her Rosebud is in full
Bloom, operating her back-door escort
Business; it keeps her pocketbook
Well-lubricated. (She's got a cream for
That, hunty). Just biding her time, as she
Kai-kais with her sewing-machine, making
The magic happen: Fairy GodMaMa Ru's
Gonna see her audition video and wave
Her off to the Ball; 'Category Is ...Dumpster
Diva Eleganza Extravaganza.' Jeffrey
Bowyer-Chapman is her Fairy Prince;
Holding her Manolo as she sashays away.
She only plays bottom for pay; you
Understand, but worst-case scenario,
She's a lip-synch assassin; a super-
Beat survivor, busting all comers until they
Death-drop. Her Michelle Visage is a
Snatch Game legend. A Vogue Cover shoot. So,
When she comes for you bitches, she'll
Stitch you up with her legendary girl-suit.
You'll be nothing but garbage, dumped
In the swamp, wearing one of her signature
Trash-bag gowns.

ADHD Autopsy

Modern-day body snatchers
Wait to cut me down from the
Gibbet of shame. They want to
Get me on the slab and slice
My skull open, to look inside
My brain. They want to see
The source of my difference,
My hard-wired intransigence
In my blood and bones. My
Neurotransmitters that volley
And ricochet like drive-by bullets

But still hit home; my dopamine
Receptors that only relax with
Stimulant input that would induce
Cardiac arrest in others. My addictive
Temperament and volcanic temper
That I have fought all my life. That
I'm a wolf in a world of neurotypical
Sheep. They want to know why I
Have to speak out and cannot
Blend In. A spell in the stocks didn't
Work. I wore the stains like the
Bold patterns I favour. My whole
Life has been a parade of public
Disfavour so why will death be
Any different? I bear no witch's
Mark and host no alien spawn.
If I did, they would understand
I was a demonically-possessed
Supernatural aberration and they
Could exorcise me or drown me
In the pond. No such luck. Even
As they slit me open and weigh
My organs, there's nothing left
To see of my hidden disability
That made me stand out like a
Sore thumb. Their fingers itch
To sew up my lips in case I ask
What they're doing. They close my
Eyelids with relief but I still see
Through them. They slice my brain
Like salami but my synapses are
Still firing off questions. Even as
I'm zipped into a bodybag for
Incineration the bare bones of my
Truth stick out to haunt them. I
Understood myself far better than
They did themselves. They tried to
Kill me with ignorance, but my
Integrity survived intact. Just
Didn't show up on the MRI.

Pink champagne

Crystallized in the roaring arteries of a greedy dragon's heart, you were cooked up to ensnare the unwary with lust for his guarded hoard; you were his spiked fangs, sown on a barren gauze bed, forged by flame into a brain-invading berserker army that cut them down, ears ringing with their clashing weapons: still battle-hungry.

ENCRYPTED TEXT: According to
Blueprints, the optimum egress point
Is under the main witness-stand. You will
Present an insanity plea dressed as Batman:
I will retire to the restrooms for a comfort
Break during recess, emerging as Robin,
In attendance to offer you emotional support.
You will fake an epileptic fit on giving oath,
Describing our relationship and remorse
At abusing me. Paramedics, aka the
Suicide Squad, will transport you to the
Batmobile by ambulance. I will be the
Getaway driver. Despite all my reformed
Self-talk, it's been kinda dull without you
Around, Mr J. You're my crazy and I'm your
Insane. Let's turn reality into fantasy:
Who needs meds, anyway?

THE POET SPEAKS... *My poems are inspired by experience and observation from life and work. In ADHD Autopsy I use body horror to examine my own condition, based on reactions to it. Pink Champagne describes my escape from the dragon's lair. Transgenderella comes from my love of 'Drag Race' and scoring 100% in an online quiz about the show's vocabulary.*

I've always been an avid reader of poetry, fiction and non-fiction. My grandfather, Ralph Nixon Currey, was a WW2 poet and taught me to write. I have something of his formal approach in verse and adopt an observer's stance. I'm also a listener and enjoy spoken language, idiom and dialect.

Poetry is literally my life blood. It allows me to live other lives from different perspectives but keep my own voice. Anything I see or hear can set me off. I draft in my head or on paper, depending where I am.

AUTHOR BIO: Kate Meyer-Currey was born in 1969 and moved to Devon in 1973. A varied career in frontline settings has fuelled her interest in gritty urbanism, contrasted with a rural upbringing. Her ADHD also instils a sense of 'other' in her life and writing. She currently has over forty poems in print and e journals including Not Very Quiet, Mono, Granfalloon and Poetica Review.

'Gloves' recently made top 100 in the UK's 'PoetryforGood' competition for healthcare workers.

Her first chapbook 'County Lines' (Dancing Girl Press) comes out later this year.

THE MUSEUM OF NOTHING + 2

By Psycho Kanev

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...

'The Museum of Nothing' is composed in hauntingly beautiful language, "Lost memories of the moon's dust / and singing bones" "I am walking slowly through rooms made of screams" "That's where the heart / wants to drop down. Among the ambiguities." And on: "I used to dance with the ill-lit sunflowers / under the broken streetlamps on sick nights." "The / clock is winding from long ago, / pages keep falling on the calendar's floor." "Wait, "My DNA is / intertwined with a wolf's:" "... "Barking of dogs in the distance / and my umbilical cord twitches." "I am / everywhere. Like rust, / like the presence of emptiness," Kanev writes like a man possessed—

The Museum of Nothing

It contains everything. Lost memories of the moon's dust
and singing bones. Native songs are rising higher like smoke
and fill the incomplete space, ashes goes back to flames to

wood. I am walking slowly through rooms made of screams
and pain. Someone falls into a coma as I reach for the edge
of the horizon, the mortal eternity.

See the digs: mammoth skeletons, royal crowns, unshed
tears. I am walking slowly through sunbeams like sticks –

the EXIT sign blinks. This is the direction. That's where the heart
wants to drop down. Among the ambiguities.

And Do You Even Remember the Beginning?

I dreamed once
and woke up in my dream.

Saw the quiet tree outside,
motionless and mute in the storm, a statue of the wind.

Did I die before I fell

asleep? Of course not. It happened in the middle.

I used to dance with the ill-lit sunflowers
under the broken streetlamps on sick nights.

The future was hidden in the past.
Darkness burned with the flames of youth.

Now everything is the other way around –
the sleepers wake up before they fall asleep,

and darkness continues. *So what? We are still
dancing, right?* No, we're just shaking.

Apocalyptic light in the color of despair covers
all memories of tomorrow, even the unfulfilled.

The clock is winding from long ago,
pages keep falling on the calendar's floor.

And I remember everything that will happen.
There.

The Terrible Child

My DNA is intertwined with a wolf's:
lonely white nights,
dancing until midnight,
a very sharp knife.
Barking of dogs in the distance
and my umbilical cord twitches.

I open my arms
and I embrace everyone in both worlds -
the living and the dead.
The moon is asking me:
*Can you tell me
what exactly are you?*

Nothing. But I am
everywhere. Like rust,
like the presence of emptiness,
like a howling pack.
Graves after graves and after that
only my blood.
The night prepares to fall again
like a guillotine.

THE POET SPEAKS... *I write because something in me wants it to be written. Or something outside of me. My poems are inspired always by my life. I can do many things, but what I do best is writing. That's why I write. I did not choose writing. It chose me. And to read, of course. Very often reading is much more important than writing. That's why I read constantly. And I live to write.*

AUTHOR BIO: Peycho Kanev is the author of 8 poetry collections and three chapbooks, published in the USA and Europe. His poems have appeared in many literary magazines, such as: Rattle, Poetry Quarterly, Evergreen Review, Front Porch Review, Hawaii Review, Barrow Street, Sheepshead Review, Off the Coast, The Adirondack Review, Sierra Nevada Review, The Cleveland Review and many others. His new chapbook titled Under Half-Empty Heaven was published in 2019 by Grey Book Press. He has several nominations for the Pushcart Prize

3 (three) Poems 3 (three) Poems 3 (three) Poems

By Roger Singer

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Is there any other way to say it? Roger Singer's works are "scrumtrulescent" (stolen from Will Ferrell playing James Lipton). He writes splendidly: 'REVEALING' "we are / red brick walls, / chalked with names"... "suffering / between / prayers and demons / and a diary / written on a / paper heart," Next, 'NIGHT CANDLES' "street lights, / weak and bland, / exposing those / browsing / and / those desiring"... "shadows following / to the next / light / where hearts wait / to be wanted" Singer is ' ONE WINGED ANGEL' "stained glass images / receiving the / departed spirit," Exquisite, celestial...sublime. (To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. Please scroll down.)*

REVEALING

we are

red brick walls,
chalked with names
by the mercy
of the open hand,
releasing the
pulp of a story,
unraveling
smoke and words
from the roots
of our youth,
where they are
tightly
secured within
deep waters,
as we
walk under
a half moon,
suffering between
prayers and demons
and a diary
written on a
paper heart,
revealing
nothing at first,
then something

NIGHT CANDLES

street lights,
weak and bland,

exposing those
browsing
and
those desiring

god's and

goddesses
loitering,
bending into,
leaning away,
guarding carefully
hushed exchanges

they walk
and turn,
shadows following
to the next light
where hearts wait
to be wanted

ONE WINGED ANGEL

I sat in the back,
observing the
serious solemnity
as the organ player
with dark rimmed glasses
stirred out sad notes
while three people
in the first pew
sat stiffly, dressed in black,
the priest in white,
separated by the
centerpiece of a
flag draped coffin

a bright sun
illuminated to life

stained glass images
receiving the
departed spirit,
while eye dripping
alter candles
wept with emotion

THE POET SPEAKS... *For me, poetry is a form of abstract painting with words. My inspirations come from one word, or a combination of words i have written on numerous pads of paper.*

AUTHOR BIO: Dr. Singer has had over 1,200 poems published on the internet, magazines and in books and is a Pushcart Award Nominee. Some of the magazines that have accepted his poems for publication are: Westward Quarterly, Jerry Jazz, SP Quill, Avocet, Underground Voices, Outlaw Poetry, Literary Fever, Dance of my Hands, Language & Culture, The Stray Branch, Tipton Poetry Indigo Rising, Down in the Dirt, Fullosia Press, Orbis, Penwood Review, Subtle Tea, Ambassador Poetry Award, Massachusetts State Poetry Society. Louisiana State Poetry Society Award. Readers Award Orbis Magazine 2019. Arizona State Poetry Award 2020. Mad Swirl Anthology 2018, 2019.

The Reflection/ehT noitcelfeR + 1 (one) (eno)

By Tamizh Ponni VP

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Tamizh is enchanting, bewitching, a fascination—just hoodoo is her favour in 'THE REFLECTION' "grandeur and glamour were all it rendered." ... "Predicaments have evolved / Priorities have shifted" ... "Something wicked from the unknown realm" "...dark as the vast abyss / A camouflaged narcissist!" "...mirror and its muse / were beyond repair and forever scarred." And hold on to some handles for Ponni's, 'MOON GIRL' "Her imperfections looked flawless from afar" ... "concocted with worthless words and bogus emotions" "Pride consumed her long ago." "there's no one to stop this radiant shrew." "airily asserting to the whole lot, / "I am the only precious thing you've got." "Mmmm , Tamizh Ponni, I recommend more than a passing, piquant glance if you care to be caught-up in your own fancy.*

THE REFLECTION

This day began like all other days
Taking a long hard look
at the magnificent piece of polished metal
Both the subject and the object
broken and losing their sheen.
Neither a fabricated expression
nor a vinegar, soap water spray
could restore their lost elegance.
Years and years ago,
grandeur and glamour were all it rendered.
While squandering all the precious hours
when the only mess to fret about
was a lonely zit on his swarthy chin.
Times have changed
Predicaments have evolved
Priorities have shifted
Lessons were learnt
Now there's just one disappointment
standing as a sombre visual
running over the rococo's surface.
Something wicked from the unknown realm
sneered at him unkindly,
'What a pathetic travesty of youth!

Just a shadow of his former self.'
He is weak, empty, craving for care
But dark as the vast abyss
A camouflaged narcissist!
As the cracks of the fractured glass
branched out to bedeck the boring plane
perfecting his diabolical facade,
the world will never get to know
one frightful naked truth
that he mirror and its muse
were beyond repair and forever scarred.

Tamizh Ponni VP

MOON GIRL

Her imperfections looked flawless from afar
Though bonded against her will
to the breeze and black clouds.
She glowed under the borrowed light
Truly sun-kissed
The lone orb of the night
Earth's solitary satellite
When lonely hearts yearned for closeness,
they gazed up to her and the stars
in the stillness of the angelic night
thinking about their first and last,
calling to mind, their bittersweet past.
She became the transmitter of
hackneyed phrases and lovelorn messages
concocted with worthless words and bogus emotions
at least for the most part.
Oceans,Mountains,Peaks and Valleys,
Shelters and streets,big and small
were embellished with her silver glaze.
Darkness played a primary part
Appearing quiet and queerly nonchalant,
it didn't need her acceptance
for she's busy basking in her vainglory.
Pride consumed her long ago.
Although it's an acquired beauty
with distance and luminescence
concealing her greyish grotesque craters,
there's no one to stop this radiant shrew .
Through periodic manipulative reshaping,
her beauty takes different forms

like an oriental dancer's curves
shimmying to the Arabic tunes.
A perverse version of Hide and seek
remains to be her preferred pastime.
She rides and rushes through the skies,
disregarding the world below,
airily asserting to the whole lot,
"I am the only precious thing you've got."

Tamizh Ponni VP

THE POET SPEAKS... *The inspiration for these poems are my personal experiences and the wisdom I have gained through reading a truckload of poems. The works of poets like Shel Silverstein and Brian Bilston have taught me the power of writing poems with simple words laden with humour and profoundness. Though poems aren't as lengthy as a piece of prose, the beauty lies in the art of conveying ones emotions and messages using the perfect words precisely. It's challenging, cathartic and enjoyable at the same time.*

AUTHOR BIO: Tamizh Ponni worked as Design Facilitator in an International School, Bengaluru, India. She has a Bachelor's degree in Computer Engineering, an MBA in Human Resources and a Masters in English Literature. She is currently pursuing her M.Tech, PhD integrated course in Data Science. She has worked as a Professional Development Coach and as a Tech Integrationist. Tamizh believes that the best thing in being an IB educator is that beyond teaching there's a lot of deep learning involved in the process. Tamizh sees learning as a never-ending process and with technology integration, it gives her an interesting dimension to knowledge acquisition and skill-building. Tamizh spends most of her free time painting, reading, writing articles, stories and poems, playing keyboard and watching documentaries/movies.

Baby says... & other poems

By Hannah ... Wagner

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...* My Goodness, Hannah Wagner, is good. How does this silly little magazine manage to attract the best poets on the planet? "he wants to go to the jungle / and I know just what he means / he wants no concept of time / one day that goes on forever" "I rub Baby's temples..." It just gets better from here. "...I could slash his tires anytime / says he wouldn't mind being stranded" Wait. "a forest of black curling vines" Hannah seems so happy, I wonder if she has a sister? I was a middle child, but firstborn male, so it was an elevating experience "You've been a shapeshifter all your life / like water against stone you grind into yourself" 'New Sounds' "At night we turn the heat down low and the silence burns / I long for the comfort of a buzzing fan" "I laid down roots in tumble / weed streets..." "In the quiet moments before bed where we / whisper about aliens, how the universe began, / what we want for breakfast" Lucky us, it makes me blush-with-bliss, Wagner is here and published...(To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. Please scroll down.)

Baby says,

he wants to go to the jungle
and I know just what he means

he wants no concept of time
one day that goes on forever

I rub Baby's temples
while he thinks of how to get us there

Baby says I could slash his tires anytime
says he wouldn't mind being stranded

I could follow his eyes
down a never-ending path

sink into Baby's chest
a forest of black curling vines

his locks have grown long enough to grasp
now we can swing across any branch

In the jungle Baby wants to be a god of hunt
it's not always something sexual he tells me

Baby says, not to waste my mind in the gutter
if I want to stay at the top of the food chain

when Baby puts on an oven mitt and
stands in front of the stove in his underwear

he's never looked more like a god to me
I wrap him in warm sheets from the dryer
I say to him, Baby this is our cocoon

and no one can take that from us

New Sounds

The radiator shakes this house
and opens like a threshold I must cross over

At night we turn the heat down low and the silence burns
I long for the comfort of a buzzing fan

You don't question me
you simply provide

Once I had nothing to call my own but a curtain
that doubled as a bedroom door

My broken bathroom fan use to mimic

an aircraft landing I watched youtube until it was fixed

I laid down roots in tumble
weed streets in empty floorboards

home:
 a place that the light touches
 where I can grow

when is the prescribed time
to uproot make room for another

I tire myself out
 opening drawers, dusty boxes
 chasing the shadows away

then there is the joy in leaving
the bed made when you come home

In the quiet moments before bed where we
whisper about aliens, how the universe began,
what we want for breakfast

in the morning as our bodies curl together
light spills in from the bathroom window:

home

THE POET SPEAKS...

“There is a quote from Thornton Wilder’s iconic play ‘Our Town’ that goes like this,

“Do any human beings realize life while they live it? Every, every minute?”

“No. Saints and poets maybe, they do some.”

She likes this thought, she likes it very much.”

AUTHOR BIO: Hannah Wagner is a resident of Salem, Massachusetts. She graduated from Salem State University. She is also an actor and can be seen in many productions across the North Shore. Her work has been featured in The Broke Bohemian, Mass Poetry's Poem of the Moment, Door is a Jar, Soundings East, Twyckenham Notes, Still Point Quarterly, Incessant Pipe, Sweet A Literary Confection and others."

THE **Blues** MAN (!) & other... poems...

By Pete Madzellan

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... *Pete Madzellan is prolifically poetical, stringing words like cords. His pieces are beautifully written but I can help thinking his words would have more resonance spoken. Here's a sampling: "Suddenly, he breaks off a chord change that rattles the ground and has / me dangling off the guitar's low E string." "The cook works the flat top grill / whirling a spatula / like a gladiator's weapon." "The land is a dry throat, desolate and parched / unable to imbibe the inertia of bloated / clouds" "And now me, with a multitude of like strangers, / sip bourbon and memory" Madzellan is a narrator extraordinaire. (To maintain poet's spacing each page is published on its own page.)*

The Blues Man

The Blues Man sits, plays within a trance that cannot be understood. His fingers strut a sashay along the guitar strings. Suddenly, he breaks off a chord change that rattles the ground and has me dangling off the guitar's low E string. It sends a grinning grimace of satisfaction up the shaded side of his face that no law officer or overseer could ever touch with all their gaudy authority. I watch his fingers, listening as chord changes turn back the pages of time, rippling a gusty breeze through this no breeze day. I listen and watch, seeing history unfold in blood and bleeding. Feeling the trapezius heat from a Delta sunset at climax time. Feeling it burst, running streams of sweat across the legacy's brow, then down into twig baskets and cotton bags draped over nameless shoulders through the saliva lust of lynching and the peonage of sharecropping. The Blues Man's playing comes to a sudden stop. He removes his sunglasses. His staring expression falls into another world. He sings a cappella, "The blues always been. The blues always be."

Minimum Wage Grill

The cook works the flat top grill
whirling a spatula
like a gladiator's weapon.

With a grunt, an inarticulate exhale;
he flips burgers molded by hand
not perfectly rounded.

With finesse, an agile click of the wrist;
he flips a pair of eggs over easy,
landing perfectly, ready to burst a flow.

With frenzied motion, spatula blurring,
he minces already diced onions.
The onions are translucent,
looking like crystallized diamonds sizzling
as steam rises a mist of sorcerer's heat
from the flat top grill.

Burgeoning sweat bubbles
explode in a salty binge
from the cook's forehead,
dripping an annoyance upon his cheeks
running penniless down his neck,
plastering t-shirt to skin like molasses glue.

The cook grinds on as minutes become hours,
continues cracking eggs and flipping burgers
in numbers only his sweat could calculate.
He continues mincing onions, though the onions
have lost the allure of crystallized diamonds.

He will do it today, as he did yesterday,
and will do it again tomorrow,
even if another faceless compadre
is holding the greasy spatula.

Heatwave 2021

The heatwave is unblinking,
is called extreme; a climate emergency
where the Arctic warming has picked up the tempo
while here, the temperature hits 100 before noon;
sweltering flames of stagnant air
strangle escape routes to nowhere,
sticking upon the black top's tongue
as governors plead residents to pray for rain.

Outside, on a bench of time,
an old man holds his sweaty head

in the cupped palms of his hands,
wishing to cash in his chips for a cloud burst.
And then, the rain came, a drizzling wisp of drool,
a throwaway spit, all clammy and thick.
Didn't do a damn thing to alleviate the heat,
while here, in this home,
the AC's evaporator coil said adios.

Outside, streets are melting,
motorists are flummoxed by the huge hummock harvest
while crops wilt in a Dust Bowl rewind;
the drought has taken up permanent residence,
shows no sign of letting up,
reservoirs and rivers are gagging, drying up;
the fear of wildfires has increased,
livestock and wildlife are suffering,
birds fall dead from the sky
as people wobble and faint;
heat-stroke victims are packed in ice.

While outside, on a bench of time,
an old man holds his sweaty head
in the cupped palms of his hands,
as the dog days tiptoe between
tar bubbles and perpetual burning,
encased in an earthen frying pan
where the fat is sizzling.

Waiting For the Rains

Waiting for the rains...

The land is a dry throat, desolate and parched
unable to imbibe the inertia of bloated clouds
searching for direction, looking for a home
like a barn swallow needing to build a family nest
searching for a patch of mud only to find
that mud has become a lost companion;
a lost companion waiting for the rains to thunder,
guillotining the lumped throat of maybe
to flow into arteries;
into the intestines of the land.

Still waiting for the rains...

Wildfire Sunset

A plume of smoke and ash
scribbles the daily news
across the dry desert sky:
Wildfires blazing from state to state,
being shot-gunned by high winds.

At twilight dusk, the tumbling sun
is a ball of burning white heat
too hot for a prolonged stare,
but eyes stare nonetheless,
noticing a thin golden glow
circling the sun's perimeter
like a lavish necklace
full of pulsating life, throbbing—
giving birth to an array of reds,
shades of crimson and blood
are tossed into forever,
radiating the darkening sky,
bleeding a river after another day of fury;
another day of flame and smoke,
where the land has been stripped to the bone;
charred and weeping in a place where rain—
has become an orphan left lonely
with long forgotten dreams of youth.

Dusk fades with a despondent sigh
followed by a deep canyon inhale
of toxic carbons —the unending
scent of smoldering smoke;
the sun's golden halo of white heat
brightens a glaring adios

with its western descent,
promising nothing
during these days of flame and smoke.

Harbor

Riding rapids through the deep rivers of my mind,
tasting the slap from white water veins,
leading me to the hush of a quiet harbor
beyond the touch of this landlocked state of mind.

I'm not sure how to describe this tranquil sea of emotions;
this strange muffled moan of my repose
in this place that my mind is touching?
Where is this place? It could be most anywhere,
or it could be nowhere at all.
The hush of the quiet harbor and the tranquil sea
of emotions tell me the choice is mine to make.
Maybe it's south of here, along the Mexican Bay of Campeche
before the offshore oil rigs of modern man,
back before that, back in time to when the Olmec civilization
called this place—this place in my mind home.

In truth, this place is not back in time, it's now
with a slant of gliding light
stripping it bare to the bone; the glide
soothes with the sun's elegance
pouring its bleeding embers of contentment
with slow, ever slow deliberation,
spreading its wonder before
the genuflecting eyes of shrimpers,
tying up their boats then heading for a beer
and maybe, just maybe
a ruby scented wink masking the truth.

Along the quiet harbor, a young couple kisses
beneath a moon so bright with possibilities
that they have forgotten the wonder of sunset.
Gazing towards the stars,
they see moonbeams and diamond rings.
Farther down the harbor, an older couple holds hands
beneath a moon so bright with stories,
still remembering the wonder of sunset.
Gazing towards the stars,
they see stars, so many stars sprinkling the night sky
above this quiet harbor that is
beyond the touch of this landlocked state of mind.

Songs Became Like a River

—for John Prine

I hear him singing,
“I remember everything, things I can’t forget.”

We, me and the singer, talked one night
in the Earl of Old Town,
a Chicago bar along Lincoln Avenue.
It was only for a few minutes
but that scant slice of time
became years of songs; became like a river,
flowing through the canyons of my mind.

I remember everything from back then
from listening to albums
on a broke down stereo
to sniffing the scent of morning coffee,
percolating on a gas stove-top
of that old northside apartment.

And now, during the spring of a bad year,
the news was delivered on late night television
that the singer was gone,
leaving no forwarding address,
only lyrics—words to his songs
are things I can’t forget.

Songs that brought a twirling shimmy
to a pair of dancing boots
worn during life’s calendar seasons,
a roller-coaster ride of ups and the downs,
when the singer’s words were needed rest stops
along the tunnel of time,
and I remember everything.

And now me, with a multitude of like strangers,
sip bourbon and memory
with the stale haze of closing time;
a slow waltz of chairs turned over on table-tops
lingering long after last call,
shaking a fist at circumstance
waiting for the red dawn,
hoping that day’s opening licks
strum a familiar song; a three-chord melody
to resonate in the mind; to become like a river,
to flow through my canyons
right down to what are now
a well-worn pair of dancing boots

I hear him singing,
“I remember everything, things I can’t forget.”

Between Drinks

I finish my drink and turn
to see who is behind me.
There is nobody there,
only a moon without stars
illuminating a puddle—
reflections beyond transparency
mirroring what was ravaged
on the way to this circus
where a band of gypsies
slipped coins into the jukebox
of history, tinkled in the past currents
of a forever dusty parking lot.
Again, I turn to see who is behind me.
There is nobody there,
only the image of myself
on this moon dot night
illuminating like a diamond,
sinking into the fat

of a mired lagoon
somewhere out there.

Hope, Awareness & Simple Living

Hope also nourishes us. Not the hope of fools. The other kind.
Hope, when everything is clear. Awareness.
—Manlio Argueta

Hope is simple living, where you smile
at a songbird's heart at dawn
chirping melodies of winged hope
upon your window sill—being aware.

Hope is simple living, where you stare
eye-to-eye into the salmon hued breath
of the setting sun without blinking
then bathing within its spawning.

Hope is simple living, where you speak
face-to-face to the moon's dark side
while listening to the faintest whispers
from ribbons within the Milky Way.

Hope is simple living, where you listen
to the desert's bare-boned rhymes
blend balance with the coyote's serenade
through the dry canyons of time—being aware.

Mist Beyond the Rapids

...raining.

I saw the images as I sat in winter:
rum and tea served
with a never felt Caribbean breeze.
Alone—sixty-watt bulb
lighting the thorns in the room,
searching through self-vacuums
as a bright moon is
lighting human sorrows draped on the dock,
searching through someone else's declarations
for one ideal
that has been seen within the mist
but missing since the flood.

I still saw the images as I sat in summer:
rum and coke over melting ice,
witnessing in my glass—
the dying sycophant
reproducing in reverse
vanishing like a politician's words.
I wanted to call warning
but was not a seer
and in the end, it did not matter

I woke to the sounds
of Corinthian temple bells
ringing in my night time mind.
I knew it was time to seek the mist.
I left in haste,
catching the current of yesterday
searching for something—
moving slowly over whitewater rapids
guided by ancient rocks
whose eyes were empty sockets
until...

...washing onto a South American shoreline

with sixteenth century ocean spray in my face.
I reach for the hand of my guide—an unknown Inca,
following through the Andean Highlands of Peru,
touching yesterday's mud-brick walls and terraces,
mesmerized by the empire's wealth.

Lead to Cajamarca,
and two ransom rooms of gold and silver
collected to save the hostage, emperor Atahualpa:
 saw Francisco Pizarro baptize him for God
 saw Pizarro strangle him for Glory
 saw Pizarro rob the wealth for Greed.
Giving birth to servitude,
seen in the death mines of Potosí
into an everlastingly nighttime strained
within the depths
of their sanctuary Vilcabamba.

Truth in a mist beyond the rapids,
twisting on the vines of time;
culture crying horrors—
people lost in a valley of melting ice.

It was time to leave...

...traveling north into sixteenth century Mexico,
where a holy man, Bartolome de Las Casas
introduced me to Hernando Cortés—
 one hand raped the land
 the other hand held a cup;
 the blood of the Black Legend, *La Leyenda Negra*,
 running down his chin.
Las Casas told of the suffering,
then pointed my way
through the desert dust of centuries
to revolutionary fire of the early twentieth century.

In a barroom, music played off-key
as I looked for my guide.
There!
Beyond the misty haze
was senorita Adelita—
heart of steel in her rebel cause;
still soft in her caramel beauty
saying, "*Esta lloviendo mucho.*"
She then whispered in my ear,
directing me to Cuautla, 1919,
where I dined under the afternoon sun of April
on tortillas, beans and piss warm beer
while communicating with the passionate eyes of a farmer
whose bullet belts crossed his heart.

Suddenly—
the air smelled like
a cold betrayed death.
The farmer disappeared.

My mind realized backdoor escape
before my host, Guajardo,
asked me to stay for eternity.
I mumbled, "*Hasta luego*,"
as mythical hoofbeats began
echoing through the Mexican landscape,
taking me back in time;
stepping back—to step forward.

Truth in a mist beyond the rapids,
twisting on the vines of time;
culture crying horrors—
people lost in a valley of melting ice

escaping...

...to North America,
arriving in July's heat seventeenth century
to see the Hudson River red
from the Jersey side,
running wild with Hamilton's blood,
flowing south from Weehawken into the Atlantic,
where waves pumped the shoreline
into the twenty-first century.
The waves ebbed, leaving—
delivering a treasure chest of legacy
filled with jewels and stories
from the pages of time.

By noon, the chest had been ravaged
by modern day grifters and speculators,
who pocketed the jewels,
whitewashed the stories—
discarded native bones;
claimed amnesia to the shackles of slavery.

With the larceny accomplished
these depraved tongues of political persuasion,
distributed counterfeit currency,
calling it truth and justice
to a ne'er-do-well caravan
willing to carry the chest up the streets
into the side alleys of distress
where the treasure chest of legacy,
once filled with jewels and stories
from the pages of time,
was abandoned—empty.

The journey was to continue
but night rains fell hard on the land,
sounding like the clash of boulders
upon my roof, and castanets outside my door.
Night time in the valley of time,
where truth is still in a mist beyond the rapids,
where the empty socket eyes of ancient rocks
lay with ice melting under the heat of rum and my grip

with me thinking that *afuera sigue lloviendo...*

Notes:

Cajamarca—Peruvian city where Spanish conquistador, Francisco Pizarro first encountered the Inca leader, Atahualpa, in 1532.

Potosi—location of silver mines, where Incas were enslaved.

Vilcabamba—The Inca's last sanctuary against the Spanish conquest.

Las Casas, Bartolomé de—Dominican missionary, who held the Spanish responsible for Native mortality.

Cortéz, Hernando—Spanish conquistador.

Black Legend (*La Leyenda Negra*)—Spanish committed genocide of Natives.

Adelita—Woman revolutionary 1910-20, depicted in a photograph by Mexican photographer, Augustin Victor Casasola.

Cuautla—Mexican town where Emiliano Zapata was murdered.

Farmer—Emiliano Zapata.

Guajardo, Jesus—the man who was paid to murder Zapata.

Hamilton—reference to the 1804 duel between Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton, held at Weehawken, New Jersey.

THE POET SPEAKS... *I write poetry for the same reason that I read poetry. It's to nourish the echoing ache inside of me which mimics the moan of a blues song. When nourished, it resonates—touching everything from daily habits to working; from observing the planet Venus in the black dawning to a morning cup of coffee; from walking along a river trail to being mesmerized by the glide of a red-tail hawk; from listening to the sounds around me to the silence of solitude.*

Simply put, reading poetry is special. There's a connected communion with the writer, who has opened his or her heart on each page. You can feel its pulsating rhythm from each line; from each word. Writing poetry is the same. It exposes your heart, and begins with the initial relationship with a blank page. But that blank page is never really blank. It's alive with a thousand thoughts communicating with a thousand tongues, hoping to come together.

History and current times played leading roles in these poems. As usual with me, they began as scribbled ideas written on that blank page in a notepad or maybe a cocktail napkin. Anything, so the thought wouldn't fly away come morning. Through personal experience, observation, and listening, I've attempted to convey the ordinary spirit of the everyday; of life & hope, attempting to give visual imagery to the words. I studied history in college, and the subject never left me, constantly pulling me into stories of time and place. The historical poems here are rivers with many tributaries, realizing that time isn't linear. That the past and the future are happening now.

Living in the Southwest has gifted me an appreciation and awareness for the spiritual nature of the land. This awareness is an ongoing process of discovery that easily finds its way into my writing. Now, the land finds itself in serious peril from the tight-fisted new normal—a never-ending drought, the constant fear of wildfires and excessive heat. The fragileness of the environment cannot be ignored. Though, I suspect, some of our limp leaders will do just that.

There's a poem here to John Prine, who passed during those early dark days of the pandemic. Prine and fellow songwriters like Bob Dylan, Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt and way too many others to mention, have been influences on me. Striking a chord with their storytelling. Listening to the way they construct a song; listening to the unique crafting of a line or a phrase has often turned my head around, and it doesn't matter how many times I've heard it, the response is the same—I get quivering shivers.

Poetry books are always within reach. Poets have been stylistically influential—being both inspiring and thought provoking. Reading poets like Carolyn Forché, Joy Harjo, Simon Ortiz and Lucy Tapahonso, will find me doing what I always seem to do. Pausing for a moment to absorb their words, cadences and nuances. Attempting to grasp the gracefulness; the evocative force of imagery. And then, I read on...absorbing the way their wisdom and insight depict the contrast between poignant beauty and haunting despair. It's absolutely stunning—breathhtaking. They and other poets are always within reach, just an arm's length away.

AUTHOR BIO: Pete Madzellan is a writer and photographer who lives with his wife in New Mexico. His works include a novel, *Blues From the Mirror*; photography exhibits in Albuquerque: 2017 Shades of Gray Photography Show and 2018 Annual New Mexico Photographic Art Show. His writings and photography have appeared in *Sky Island Journal*, *Bellingham Review*, *Blinders Journal*, *The Boiler*, *Cargo Literary Journal*, *Four Ties Lit Review*, *Foliage Oak*, *Gravel*, *New Mexico Magazine*, *Off the Coast*, *Photography Center of Cape Cod*, *Poydras Review*, *Reservoir Literary Journal*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Switchback*, and many others.

STORIES from the **HEARTLAND**

By Ned Eckhardt

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...Ned Eckhardt poetry has a hauntingly loving spirit. His 'Stories from the Heartland' are riveting, their rhyme schemes exquisite. "It's a quick, hard ride, my friend / From the Res to the Stone Hotel. / Thick bars and angry brothers / Riding the wind that blows through hell" and, or "Time is the hungry demon / That eats our tattooed lives. / Tight walls and jangled nerves, / It's the beast The Man swears by" 'Slippery Spark': "Too many nights we meet / When the whiskey spins my mind. / Down a long, dark hall of hurt, / She helps me to unwind." "My leather jacket's ripped, / Don't wear it much these days. / The patches fading slowly, / I'm a Nomad in decay" The 'The Logger and the Lady' maybe my favourite but it is hard to chose, "Daybreak is the sweet time / Of my Emma Rose's day / We watch the sun rise up / Before we're on our way" What's yours? ...and to think he submitted his works on the very last day... mostly the "katydids" did it for me...Ned's another one for the ASMR meter—(Spacing is poet's own.)*

Stories from the Heartland

Stone Winds

*Can the Spirit hear me singing
On my Turtle Island stone?
My wolf howls to the sunset
Beat the drum for Crane and Loon*

It's a quick, hard ride, my friend
From the Res to the Stone Hotel.
Thick bars and angry brothers
Riding the wind that blows through hell

The beer in the mornin'
Drove up my big mistake.
The Judge said fifteen long ones
Redbones get no special breaks.

But music rides that dark wind
Casts a Redbone singer's spell.
Can it keep me breathin', brother?
My song that blows through hell?

Time is the hungry demon
That eats our tattooed lives.

Tight walls and jangled nerves,
It's the beast The Man swears by

I'll play a song that digs
Down deep in your chest and cell.
I'll pluck my Juice Card strings
Chasing the wind that blows through hell.

*Can the Spirit hear me singing
On my Turtle Island stone?
My wolf howls to the sunset
Light the fires for Crane and Loon*

I see the broken lives.
Eyes that stare and do not see.
Forgotten fires and pow wows,
Tough guys longing to be free

Nobody did the crime
That bought us all this grief.
Walkin' circles round your mind,
A half-breed they call thief

This life bleeds out both souls.
It's a truth I can't ignore.
Sweetgrass for Goose and Bear
On my smokey lost Lake shore

*Can the Spirit hear me singing
On my Turtle Island stone?
My wolf howls to the sunset,
Play the pipes for Crane and Loon*

My music carves a notch
In the endless yard patrol.
Someday I'll get the Keys
To free my angry soul

I'll check out soon, my brother.
From the cold, damp Stone Hotel.
Is there life for a lost Ojibwe
Riding the wind that blows through hell?

Slippery Spark

Too many nights we meet
When the whiskey spins my mind.
Down a long, dark hall of hurt,
She helps me to unwind.

We were always rebel lovers,
Out of bounds in trailer parks.
Was she ever mine, I wonder,

How'd we lose that slippery spark?

We cruised the roads all night.
Two crazy outlaw kids.
Then lay in the sand and grass
And pinched the Katydids

*Her eyes saw life on fire.
Her smiles were my last hope.
..... Slipping away in the Jack.
Lost in a drifting smoke*

We wore our favorite colors,
Back warmers woven tight.
Can I forget the love
We caught those wild, wet nights?

Just one more long, cold taste,
Single Jack on the rocks.
I feel her breath behind me,
When I turn, her face is lost.

She was always one step faster,
So I never made the grade.
Didn't have the life she needed.
I knew she'd never stay.

*Her eyes saw life on fire.
Her smiles were my last hope.
..... Slipping away in the Jack.
Lost in a drifting smoke*

One day the bed was empty.
I was lost for a while. In pain.
Waited ten years on the hope
She'd show up high again.

But all I got was whiskey
In my cold, damp trailer park.
Bike's been broke for weeks.
Can't chase our slippery spark.

My leather jacket's ripped,
Don't wear it much these days.
The patches fading slowly,
I'm a Nomad in decay

Where are those outlaw days?
Why'd our good times hit the skids?
The sand and grass were ours
But we lost the Katydids

*Her eyes saw life on fire.
Her smiles lit the trailer park.
..... Slipping away in the Jack,
I need our slippery spark.*

*But there's only whiskey dreams,
Down a long, dark hall of hurt.
I turn, she stares for a moment,
..... Then lost in a drifting smoke*

The Logger and the Lady

Daybreak is the sweet time
Of my Emma Rose's day
We watch the sun rise up
Before we're on our way

I'll slip my hand in hers
Put a kiss inside her lips
She'll smile and squeeze my heart
Love can't be more than this

But the times are rough and ready
Jobs seem to come and go
We still back down the wolf
But gettin 'ahead is slow

*Sometimes I hear her laughing
Sometimes I see her cry
Sometimes my heart spins wildly
My love will never die*

My Emma Rose smiles softly
She'll make it through the day
I've got some loggin' work
She'll clean a house for pay

Daybreak's still a memory
That quiet golden time
We dream of cars and Katydid
We'll touch our lonely minds

The chainsaw runs my life
Notches drop the giant pines
The mill eats logs for breakfast
Chipper's always on my mind

My Stiehl's been bucking hard woods
Shag bark hickories on the skids
The jig cart never stops
Double ax is on my mind

My Emma Rose is strong
Leans hard to clean the floor
The beds and towels need changin'
She scrubs the dirt hardcore

It's hard to stand the smell

Those chemicals burn deep
Her hands are raw and red
Her nails are cracked for keeps

She'll polish all the silver
Shine the windows. Do some chores
The sofas need deep cleanin'
But at six she's out the door

*Sometimes I hear her laughing
Sometimes I see her cry
Sometimes my heart spins wildly
My love will never die*

We're beat when day is over
Sometimes we'll share a beer
Two worn out smiles remind us
Daybreak will soon be here.

Her hair slides through my fingers
And I pray we'll be OK
I hate to chase the money
But that's life another day

The nights are short and fast
Been doin' this too long
We crawl into the covers
The one place we belong

Fresh Daybreak lights mornin'
Opens up our weary hearts
Puts life back into sadness
Gives love a brand new start.

Emma Rose's gentle touch
A quick kiss Then we're out.
I chase the slabs and boards
She scrubs the floors no doubt

We find our time together
Spin gold out of yesterday
Our Daybreaks bind us both
It will always be that way.

THE POET SPEAKS... *"Tales from the Heartland" emerged from a desire to capture the thoughts, feelings, and frustrations of folks whose lives unfold in obscurity. These are the people who don't have a voice in our larger mediated world. There is nobility in grinding a life out of low-paying jobs, prison time, motorcycle romances, trailer parks, auto body shops, and dangerous work.*

There is beauty in the lives of folks who live in abandonment in rural America. People who don't live there call it the Heartland. The people who do live there are usually too involved in survival to step back and see a bigger picture. These hard scrabble folks: farmers, tradesmen, cleaners, homemakers rarely have a voice. Country, folk, and gospel music try to capture their lives, and many times do.

But poetry offers more. It allows you to be part of the experience. A poem is a two-way street where it's easy to wrap the poem's world around yourself and feel recognized. When I write about these forgotten Americans I feel their pain and their pleasures. I've met many of them and honor their struggles and successes.

But poetry on the printed page digs a little deeper. It draws you into your own life. Poetry let's you add your experiences and feelings to the story. Then leaves some time for reflection.

The three poems here are simple in form. The rhyme scheme is every other line, the meter mostly iambic. No big words or tangled thoughts. But the gateways to deep feelings are there. Can I hear music with words? Sure. Hope you hear your own music as you read these tales of the Heartland.

Stone Winds

Native Americans have a special bond with nature. It's in their genes. Their history is tragic and living on reservations is unfair and numbing. But the Ojibwe in Stone Winds is enduring. His music and memories carry him through the boredom and terror of prison life. The fact he can see the larger picture where his life will someday fit somewhere helps him carry on and gives him hope. Prison life rarely gets a poem.

Slippery Spark

Everyone's been jilted. Lost their love because something went wrong. In the rural Heartland the teenage years are often the best. First booze and first loves. Motorcycles and freedom. But then life usually closes in and those first loves slip away. But no-one ever forgets a first love. Especially when whiskey triggers the memories. Even though you live in a trailer park, your bike is broke, and you're drinking too much, the memory keeps you going....

The Logger and the Lady

For this couple the best part of the day is the early morning. Daybreak. That's when they feel the strongest and most passionate. Once the hardscrabble work day begins it takes everything you got to push your way through it. In the evening they're beat. Not much energy left. But the morning is their time. Logging and cleaning houses are two of the hardest jobs out there. It's nice to celebrate their love for each other. Their shared life is challenging, hard, and beautiful.

AUTHOR BIO: Ned Eckhardt is a documentarian and writer based in northern Connecticut. He began his writing career as a playwright in New York City and created a successful career in the writing, teaching, and visual arts.

Recent Highlights

Feature Films and Television

He has recently written a series of Feature Film scripts, one of which, *Redbone*, has won Best Script at three film festivals: Woods Hole Film Festival (2016), London International Filmmakers Festival (2017), and Canadian Diversity Film Festival (2016).

Redbone has also been adapted into a pilot episode for a TV mini-series, *Backroads*.

Another Feature Film script, *Porky C*, has been adapted into a full-length play that is currently being considered for production by Independent Theaters and Universities.

Plays, Librettos, Lyrics, and Music Videos

He has written lyrics and edited music videos for many musical groups (*Pretty Poison*, *Faces of Pictures*, *The Blenders*, and *Golden Spike*).

Recently, he has written the book and lyrics (23 songs) for a full length, musical stage play (*IMP*). He is on the waiting list for the Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild Artists Residency where he will work with a composer on the score for *IMP* during the summer of 2021.

He has also written librettos for arias with four composers at the Spicy Opera Institute's Mezzo Showcase (2020), and a 10-minute libretto for The Boston Opera Collaborative (2020).

He recently was selected the "Playwright of the Month" (January 2021) by the *New York City Playwrights Association* for his One Act Play "Love Me Back." The play was featured and published in their January 2021 blog. Another monologue "Buttercup's Non-Gucci Makeover" was featured on the theatrical website Loud Voices. Silent Streets.

Books

He has published two books on Documentary Film Production: *Documentary Filmmakers Handbook*, (McFarland Press 2012) and *How to Make Documentary Films and Digital Video* (Southern Illinois University Press 2016).

Atlantic City Film Festival

He has been a member of the Board of Directors for ten years. (2011 - 2021). This small Film Festival has been the showcase for over 300 emerging and independent filmmakers, as well as hundreds of writers, actors, critics, and producers.

dAnCe *SpiriT spirit...spirit... et al*

by **ben mcnair** ben mcnair ben macnair ben mcnair

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... So much poetry, differing so much, so subjective, so seductive...Theodore Roosevelt once either said or wrote, "...comparison is the thief of joy." How could I deny the joy I receive by not forsaking original thought in such varied abundance? How could Teddy have known, he might have been made less historical, usurped, even elliptically eclipsed, by a nephew who would have rather waited out a war than led the charge? And, what if the same thing happened to De Niro's father, as McNair points out? Yet, all our lives are burdened and divided by regret and temptation. If you're reading this, what would be the chances you just might be a word-junkie? Well, McNair's your new candy man here's where you get your next dopamine hit (The needle went all the way to the right and broke the glass on my ASMR meter.) No need to try to hook you with quotes on this entry, but you might want to reconsider what's hanging on your walls...(Spacing is poet's own)*

Dance Spirit

Some scientists don't believe in ghosts.
They say that there are areas that capture energy,
and play it over and over again,
like the groove worn into an old,
well-loved, well-played record.
Maybe that is what they are.

Maybe a ghost is just a shadow,
caught in the emotion of dancing,
and every time music with a good beat,
or a mood or a sense memory is played,
that is where the ghosts are.

And so it is that when we play our favourite songs,
put on the music that we used to dance to,
Waltzed to with lovers,
Or played with bands,
Sang in the pub and around campfires.
It always takes us away to somewhere else,
with all of the shadows,
and the ghosts
dancing in remembrance of things past.

How to own a Matisse (Fibonacci sequence)

If
you
have the
space on your
wall, choose the painting you
live with, knowing that friends and strangers will
judge you, perhaps unkindly for the colours you like, the images you want,
the subjects you like, and the impression that you want to give to the world, and friends who
pass comment on
something so personal to you, it will be like your choice in a lover, only sometimes more
permanent, more long-lasting.
Your Matisse could be Woman Reading, or an abstract nude, an undefined line, or
something untitled, waiting for you to give it
some meaning, because sometimes it
seems that is
all there
really
is.

Robert De Niro's Painting

Years before his son had uttered the immortal line
Are you looking at Me?'
Robert De Niro painted.

Whilst burning his legend into Celluloid,
Bobby Jnr would walk the Mean Streets,
become a Taxi Driver, play the charismatic thief,
the cantankerous Father in Law,
and act with a cartoon Moose.

Still, his Father would paint,
be spoken of with such names as
Pollock, Rothko, Motherwell.
His scenes would capture the eye,
before his audience's attention
moved to the artist's name.
Improvising scenes, as his son did,
carving their careers out of the air,
using their skills and talents to the best effect.

Sea-Glass

A saltwater wash.
A deeper blue.
A thousand different pieces.
The original liquid it contained,
only drops in an ocean,
battered by time, and the cruelty
of nature that lives by her morality.

The rubbish from ships,
or too many romantics looking
for answers in a message that nobody will read.
A love letter consigned to memory,
all of the little things
that were never really meant to be.

A benign sun and an indifferent moon,
guiding the tides that pull the ships to the shore.
The glass, created in the fire, broken by distance, is carried
for mile after relentless mile, until it is beached,
washed up, and disposed of, a kind of beauty
missed by anyone looking for perfection.

And we, like the glass, are buffeted by
Human nature, we all live by our morality,
and though time and life may have broken,
scattered what could have been,
leaving only fragments,
those pieces have been rubbed smooth,
have their worth, to be treasured by anyone
who knows where to look.

Symphony

The ambient noise of cars,
the atonal honk of impatient drivers,
rushing to work, until

March 2020.

When the Skies became clearer,
the Roads, quieter,
the deadlines, the timetables, simply

Memories

The Birdsong,
the rhythmic tarmac strike of pedestrians,
a Symphony.
The Quiet third movement of a Concerto,
and at the end,
only one sound,

Blackbird music.

THE POET SPEAKS...

There are three main prompts to my poems.

- 1) Real lived experience*
- 2) Researched writing*
- 3) Things overheard in the street on public transport.*

During 2020 and 2021, 1 and 3 weren't really available as they had been, so number two came into play.

*Dance Spirit
How to Own a Matisse
Robert De Niro's Painting
Sea-Glass
Symphony*

Dance Spirit took its inspiration from the memories we associate with music. I have spent time as a professional musician, so I have a technical understanding of it, but there is always music that makes us think about something or makes us remember someone from our past, or just makes us move.

How to Own A Matisse is a Fibonacci poem, but instead of using syllables, which is the traditional form, I used words.

Robert De Niro's Painting came from Wikipedia, with a bit of fiction and supposition added in, and I looked at the relationship between acting and painting, taking the raw materials, and creating something completely new out of it.

Sea-Glass was inspired by an art piece I saw, whilst Symphony came from a walk, and hearing silence, for the first time in a long time.

Writing doesn't always finish where you think it will, and sometimes it starts and wants to go somewhere else. It is up to us to guide the reader through the meaning so that they can see something new in it.

AUTHOR BIO: Ben Macnair is an award-winning poet and playwright from Lichfield, Staffordshire, in the United Kingdom. Follow him on Twitter @benmacnair.

S (ix) poems 6 (!) six poems

six poems 6 (poems) **six...**

By Kate Clemm (!)

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...*

'Never has there ever been a bottle of wine not served just in time.' Ms. Clemm somehow reminded me of this ol', golden-rule rhyme. She's Sublime. Kate's bio read: 'Just started writing within the last six months, and am as yet an unpublished writer' ...Where ARE you people? And WHY are you HIDING from US? It's a Stupendous stew of pensive broth and sustenance; sideways thinking, lateral thought my favorite herbs and spic...and she is twice-thrice so romantically motivated in here readymade recipes: "Leaving me just enough time to introduce myself / And ask for the next dance." "The whiskey poured is top shelf /Single malt... I take a sip and talk a little louder." Guaranteed to lift the spirits of the loneliest of hearts, with headspace to spare; what she has to share will keep you in a deepest depth of gratitude—our greatest grace—don't you think so? "Solitude, the sea, and [we]..." (To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. Please scroll down.)

Actor on the Beach

Solitude, the sea, and me

Make for a companionable trio.

Solitude feeds me like the sun activates chlorophyll,

The sea provides the music to dance by.

I am the actor here.

Joining us, the salty breeze spurs me on

I dance and speak my lines.

Solitude graciously tolerates my voice,

The sea drowns it out;

I choose to waltz with the starfish

That the sea spits out and jealously sucks back in

Leaving me just enough time to introduce myself

And ask for the next dance.

My Late Uncle's Garden

As I stroll through the garden

I look up at the trees

Their branches crossing

Like a vaulted cathedral.

The gazebo needs a coat of paint.

The fishpond a desert of algae,

Monkey grass whispers along its edge in the breeze

Of many happy hours spent in companionship

Champagne in hand.

The pansies a deep purple memory

Peonies a pink flamboyance in my mind's eye.

There's no one to tend or worship now

The years of loving care and attention

Have run out.

The lone magnolia has lost its bloom

And I will leave the garden one last time

With memories locked safely away

A gift from my uncle.

Musings at Sea

Alone and the sea is calm
I stand my watch from astern
As the screws turn
And the ship leaves its wake,
I can see the sky's plentitude of stars
Where city lights cannot bleach them out.
Orion's belt, Andromeda, the Dippers, Big and Little
Are all there for the eye to behold
Just as for Ptolemy
And the Chinese sailors of yore with their compasses.
In another age,
Sextant in hand,
Nautical Almanac conveniently open
The mate could pinpoint with an X to mark the spot.
Ha! Satellites with their busy signals
The ancient Art supplanted
By Sputnik and
A man on the moon.

In the Night

Stardust clouds my vision
Nighttime closes in
Even in revision

*It knows the place I've been
In blindness I'm careening
Like a boat without a sail
It steals all the meaning
From the whiteness of the whale
An object of obsession
A door completely closed
Denied overt possession
The night will stand opposed
Where it all will take me?
A mystery, like the weather
But all the things it cannot be
Will tie me with its tether
Oh, the soundless night
Longing for the morning bright
Habituate the daily plight
The blind, the deaf, the endless fight.*

In My Glass

The ice tinkles in my glass

(I'm not such a purist)

The whiskey poured is top shelf

Single malt

A bit of the Hebrides in my glass

I take a sip and talk a little louder.

Some savor, I toss back

The whiskey in my glass.

Hime (Japanese Princess)

Silence and obedience

Mark the lady of high birth

Blackened teeth

Her badge of refined womanhood

Skin pale beneath the moonlight

She awaits her betrothed

In tremulous anticipation

Silk rustles with every movement

Cranes fly overhead

'A good omen' her mother says

The Princess lowers her eyes in deference

A good match

The Daimyo approves.

THE POET SPEAKS... *Nature, the ultimate muse, is most inspiring to me. I love to hike and wander in the woods, or in public and private gardens; I went to a maritime college and love to be at the ocean or on the water. The art of guiding a ship holds a deep fascination for me. Stylistically, I always return to the 19th century Romantic poets for inspiration. Many of them loved Nature too and wrote of bird song, the stars, trees, and bodies of water as well. Reading and writing poetry gives me great pleasure. I find poetic imagery a beautiful form of expression. It can be playful; I like the economy of language possible in a poem, the pleasure of the rhythm, the internal logic holding together a sort of Impressionist painting with words.*

AUTHOR BIO: Originally from New York City, currently live in North Carolina. Just started writing within the last six months, and am as yet an unpublished writer of short story fiction, flash fiction, and poetry.

Jambalaya (+) Tw0 (2)

others

By Gerry Fabian

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes.. G. Fabian just might be one of my favourite H. Sapiens. "It begins with a mutual recipe. / An amorous respect of the ingredients...You as shrimp, me as chicken - / becoming an atmospheric Andouille sauce." Next: "Several solemn / shameless sisters...swallow sunshine / speaking slaughter... sucking swollen / sticky secrets." And that is just the half of it—"pretty poison." And, just read 'Exhorting Exaltations,' no sense me quoting the whole thing...(Spacing poet's own.)*

Jambalaya On Venus

It begins with a mutual recipe.
An amorous respect of the ingredients.
Heat the pure pheromones in a vessel
of hot oil and perfumed sofrito.
The sulfuric rings spice sensation.
You as shrimp, me as chicken -
becoming an atmospheric Andouille sauce.
Season with aromatic spices.
Simmer - simmer - simmer.

Actual Artifacts

I.

Several solemn
shameless sisters
desire driven
dealing dirty;
swallow sunshine
speaking slaughter
dancing danger
drinking dead dreams

II

Several solemn
shameless sisters
sucking swollen
sticky secrets.
Devil daughters
dripping darkness
dashing desire
driving demons

III

Several solemn
shameless sisters
I've ingested
pretty poison.

Exhorting Exaltations

Like the televangelist
on the Sunday morning channel
or
the raging southern Baptist
humid July tent preacher.
the woman in the apartment
next to mine
praises the Lord
with such unabashed fervor,
I've gained a grudging respect for
her
husband.

THE POET SPEAKS...

The poem "Jambalaya On Venus" was inspired while I was watching a cooking show about New Orleans' cuisine. As I watched, I realized the ingredients could be metaphors for the elements of love. The actual writing of the poem was done rather quickly but the title eluded me. I tried several before I hit on the idea of Venus which would render this love as interplanetary.

"Actual Artifacts" started out as an exercise of playing with "S" and "D" words. I suddenly found a theme developing and knew exactly how I wanted to end the poem. I went through a lot of word combinations before I found what I was searching for. The addition of the writer in the third stanza gives the poem authenticity. I try these writing exercises when I am blocked. Eventually I find something that interests me as a writer.

The poem, "Exhorting Exaltations" is an attempt at mild humor based on the actual experience of living in an apartment building with very thin walls. My next-door neighbors were very plain and rather standoffish. However, late in the evening they "let their hair down" so to speak. I believe I am not the only person to experience this. It seemed like a good idea for a poem.

AUTHOR BIO: Gerry Fabian is an internationally published poet and novelist. He has published four books of his published poems, *Parallels*, *Coming Out Of The Atlantic*, *Electronic Forecasts* and *Ball On The Mound*. In addition, he has published three novels : [Getting Lucky \(The Story\)](#), [Memphis Masquerade](#), and [Seventh Sense](#). His web page is <https://rgerryfabian.wordpress.com>

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He lives in Doylestown, PA

The CROWS ... CAA! Caa! caa! caa!

Caa!!!

... By Joey Scarfone

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...*

A best foothold lies on the shakiest ground—it is what escape-goat's cloven-hoofs cling to. Scarfone did not send ten poems for survey evaluation...he send 196 words... [So I know, in my hart (extending a herding metaphor so long as you're not listening to lines unheard), they must be good—I was not mistaken, thankfully, just this once. As it happens, of coarse they are.] No sense me wasting your time; unless you don't want to blow your mind. Consider it done, words and images just roll of his tongue ...caps and bushels exist without congruity but you have got to get over being under either. Joey's 'THE CROWS' would hang on a wall at the Metro or Muse of Modern Art in En' Why City except his brush is stroked with a pen (or pencil for all i know—packet of crayons?) Rave on to Scarfone—he'll get you hooked on fonetics with a PH balance... as if most Poets of his caliber possess (nor embrace) his unshared, abashed Humility....tip your lips, I'll start you off: "they sit on the hydro wires like punk rockers / in the cheap seats at a concert." Here's my new mantra: ""pick on the spotted owl, stick it to the bald eagle / but don't mess with us crows...we are here forever."ahhhhh, lost but not forgotten—no sense droning, when you could read Sarfoning...it in. (Spacing is poet's own.)

Five stars

THE CROWS

they sit on the hydro wires like punk rockers in the cheap seats at a concert

fashion isn't their thing
no pretty coloured feathers or sweet songs
they wear black leather and black leather only
their song is a raunchy blues....
with a smoker's cough

that's why I like the crows.....no pretenses

you won't see them gliding up to some silly bird feeder
like those social climbing sparrows
they'll eat left over pizza from last night's hockey game

no wonder they don't have the energy to migrate

instead, they brave the winter in their skinny jackets
huddling together like street smart ethnic gangs

body heat is all they need

i admire crows.....they're tough
they can survive in the city or the jungle
same difference, it's just survival

we'll never see a crow immortalized on a coin or a stamp
there won't be a portion of wetland set aside for their preservation
because they don't need the advertising
they're already famous

refusing to become extinct they dictate their terms to evolution
“pick on the spotted owl, stick it to the bald eagle
but don't mess with us crows
we are here forever”

THE POET SPEAKS: *I don't think crows get the credit they deserve in the bird kingdom and yet their survival skills are second to none. They're not exactly good looking either. They just keep on keeping on and being who they are with a total disrespect for everyone. If they were students they would be expelled for their terrible attitude. I just love that.*

AUTHOR BIO: Joey Scarfone lives in Victoria, BC where he owned Lazy Joe's Vinyl Emporium—a store devoted to classic vinyl. He devotes some of his time and all of his interest to poetry and music.

Plastic—

C and...gasoline ET AL

plasticplasticplastic plastic plastic plasticplasticplasticplasticplastic plastic
gasolinegasoline gasoline gasoline gasolinegasolinegasolinegasolinegasolinegasoline
&otherpoems&other poemsotherpoems other poems

By Cathy ShaNg

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Cathy Shang is bedazzling. No sense not blurting her first two lines in this blurb, times a-wastin' with my words:
"Bombsarejustplasticandgasoline, / andyouand Iarejustcarbon andbad timing." Whoa Cathy!
(Even an economy of word-spacing which tends to make my aged, dimming eyes slow to even more ever-unsteady contemplations.) While I prefer some distance in all things, Shang's unbreakable text tends to invite an effort to dissect, maunder and muse. But don't try this at home unless you are this good. "Suddenly I regret not what i was in the past, / butwhat I will never now be" "I've learn nothing, but that maybe, just / maybe[]
"forever"wasreservedformemoriesandnotpeople." "...Iwon'tleaveyouundered bystorms," I just put fresh batteries in my ASMR meter and Shang has drawn all their charge—I'm spent too.(Spacing is poet's own.)JHS

Plastic and Gasoline

Bombs are just plastic and gasoline,
and you and I are just carbon and bad timing.

Them, Them, Us.

What am I,

But the sacrificial other?

What are you?

A hero or their demanded sacrifice?

What are we doing,

letting ourselves be defined?

Feline

My mother has always roared like the tigress she is And
I have only ever learned to walk silently at night, meek
and tamed in the wake of her roar

Regret

Suddenly I regret not what i was in the past,
but what I will never now be

in the future.

Irony

A little boy asked me why I wrote things down.

“Why do you quote everything down?”

I don't know, it's quite obsessive of me.

Maybe because I want to remember

every time someone made me laugh so hard I cried.

“Why do you write so much?”

That's a good question, I'm not sure.

Maybe because it's easier to write than to talk.

“Why are your poems sad? Are you ok?” That's a
bit funny, isn't it?

I guess the cliché is all 'poetry is sad'

Though I think it's based partially in truth. I

suppose if I grew up perfectly happy,

I wouldn't be writing at all.

It's Useless Anyways

Oh, but what could I of done beside scream my grief into the night?

I've learn nothing, but that maybe, just maybe "forever"
was reserved for memories and not people.

“Free”

Property of ignorance

Property of hate.

Anxious Girl

There are callouses

on the tips of my every finger. Sometimes,

hands aren't calloused from burdens of rough work.

Sometimes,

hands callous from the burdens of the heart.

Gently, Soundless

When I go, I hope I go quietly.

Like a wisp of smoke I
vanish into the night.

I'll sing with the ghosts, and fading with the light.

Like seashells on the shore

I am pulled back into the sea.

I'll lie beneath the waves in my restful sleep.

When I go, I hope I go quietly.

Like water slipping through our fingers, the
hurt I wouldn't leave,

I'll be forgotten, as if I was but a dream.

Only skin-deep wounds, too shallow to scar
won't leave you sundered by storms,

only wondering

if the winds may have shifted.

When I go, I hope I go quietly I
can not bear to see you weep.

Givers

I could never say I was a light that burned on evermore
could never stay for quite so long

I could not say that I was a seed meant to pass through fire

And I could not say I would last.

And I could only guess that I was a match

For I could not help but strike myself upon this world.

THE POET SPEAKS... *Growing up an introverted child with few friends, I was constantly brimming with untold stories and things I was too afraid to say out loud. I eventually turned to poetry because I was deeply afraid that if I do not tell my own stories, who will? The urgency that I always felt seemed to be like a phantom wind, pushing me forwards to record what I thought to be important before the moment is gone and lost to the long roads of memory lane.*

From the age of 12, I became attracted to the Japanese Vocaloid genre of music. It was beautiful in language and was focused around the sorrowful parts of the human experience. This crucially shaped my style of writing and what I chose to write about, as I became less afraid to discuss horribly vulnerable topics and the trauma I've experienced in my life. I want to go on telling the stories of my life and the most raw bits of being alive.

AUTHOR BIO: Cathy Shang is a sophomore studying in Shanghai. She enjoys creative writing, drawing, filmmaking, and is very active in parliamentary debate.