

Third Wednesday

Vol. XII, No. 1



Third Wednesday is a literary arts magazine published by Gravity Presses (lest we all float away) Inc., offered in the traditions of several Michigan artists, writers, publishers, and editors. Although we manage the publication from Michigan, we welcome submissions (and certainly subscriptions) from all over the world. Financial assistance is gratefully appreciated at: *Third Wednesday*, 11316 Farley St. Redford, MI 48239.

Check us out on the Internet: thirdwednesday.org

Find subscription and submission information on the internet at thirdwednesday.org

Cover art: "At The Summit", - Jude Dippold, Concrete, Washington

Third Wednesday Logo: SofaKingHappy Graphics

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1729 Plymouth Road
Ann Arbor, North Campus Area

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Editor's Notes for Winter 2019

Here is the first issue of volume XII, representing our entry into another year of publication. Happy New Year. In this issue you'll find the results of our "Second Ever One Sentence Poetry Contest". You'll also find new work from the famous, including Ted Kooser, Marge Piercy, Dan Gerber (with a couple of excellent examples of one sentence poems), Jack Ridl and Robert Haight, as well as from lesser known writers familiar to *Third Wednesday* readers - Sheryl Clough, Lisa Timpf, Jude Dippold, Leslie Schultz and Buff Whitman Bradley. These are just a few of the writers who form the backbone of Third Wednesday and we're happy to share their work with you again.

Our web presence continues to grow and become more refined with a major upgrade to a new website at <http://thirdwednesdaymagazine.org>. For now the old site will continue to work or will automatically redirect you to the new site. The switch includes a new blogging platform so that we can take advantage of increased visibility and expose the magazine to a still wider audience. Visit the new site soon you and can download a free issue of *T.W.*

Submissions for our annual poetry contest are now open. We're pleased to have Robert Fanning judging this year's contest. The deadline for entry is February 15, 2019. The results will appear in the Spring Issue of *T.W.* Three winning poems will be awarded \$100 each. The entry fee is just \$5, but every entry will receive a PDF copy of the contest issue so the net cost of your entry is \$Zero.

At the conclusion of this contest, we'll open submissions for another round of one sentence poems, a feature that has proven popular with readers and writers alike. We're hoping to see more short-form poetry in the contest. It's seems a natural for you Haiku, American Sentence and Tanka writers. Keep in mind when writing traditional Japanese forms that we are less interested in slavish devotion to arbitrary syllable counts than we are to the spirit of the form, but all poems are welcome.

Happy reading (and writing),

David Jibson, Co-editor

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Augury

I found the corpse just above Salinas
on Route 101 in some tall scrub grass,

nearly intact, at the edge of the highway,
and stepped into a realm of the sublime,

even the *swoosh* of the trucks driving
past was muffled, as I saw the owl's

breast feathers blowing in the back draft.
I wanted to pick up its body and take it

with me, put it in my pack, but
that would have disturbed whatever pact

I might have made at the time with
what is sacred. Not even ants had made

their way into the relic of its body.
It must have been flying at night

and was blinded by headlights, struck
a windshield, and bounced off, just

beyond the breakdown lane. Looking
at its perfect body, as I leaned over it,

from where I was hitchhiking,
it appeared that I was able to see into

my own life, barely twenty, with its own
destiny of beauty and sorrow, the women

I would love and lose, the exigencies
that moved me toward the calling

of the spirit, the eventuality of my being
alone as an old man, all there

in the black and white speckled feathers
on its breast, bordered with russet ones;

the tufted ears, and the open eyes
that looked into the reliquaries of forever.

Wally Swist
Amherst, Massachusetts

Special Soap

After your work cutting and fitting pipes,
we follow you down to the utility sink,
watch you wash your hands with special soap.

We use bars of Ivory for just about everything else,
but the man of the house
deserves a good scrub at the end of the day.

You turn the water on,
roll up your sleeves,
and we listen to the day's stories—
pipes bursting, the boss you are trying to like,
how you couldn't wait to get home to your girls.

Sometimes, sent to the basement
to retrieve a broom,
I pump a stout round of your orange soap
onto my second-grade hands,
feel the bits of pumice
between my fingers
and the comfort of being close to you,

making, even then,
this long line of light,
this little love poem
I got up tonight to write.

Sarah Murphy-Kangas
Bellingham, Washington

In My City

Trees sway a slow dance
To the leg song of the chicharra
To the long stretched acordeón
To the hiccups of 2am taco truck party-goers

Tlacauches maraud at midnight
With handy footwork across lawns
Grappling the humidity, eating away at
The molding bananas and lettuce offerings left out in a bowl
as a thank you for snacking on mosquitoes and cucarachas

Dogs bark at barking dogs that bark at wolf
moons and the incoming fog, at wobbly tire
passing cars, stray cats and late night chatter
from insomnia-stricken artists burning the midnight oil

I pass by a home with a chandelier hanging from a branch,
another with a year round yard sale, and several with red doors
with scattered leaves from anacua trees confettied across their
lawns

The people in this city move about like ants,
carrying the weight of life and hard work,
grackles stretch their song in long verses like the summers here,
I set my car on cruise control over the expressway and park

on a lot to see airplanes descent while scraping the syrup
top off my chamoyada raspa

I look at my phone and my friend just posted another
photo of palm trees under the hashtag #rgvpalmas,
On Sundays we choose barbacoa or tamales
Or menudo for the cruda after being rattled awake by the neighbor's lawn mower

I've been stretching my bones across the RGV,
from San Benito to Mission and in between
But longed to settle in McAllen, where my poems
Found their muse, and my dog ages at my feet.

Edward Vidaurre
McAllen, Texas

Lost at Sea

the orca bears a burden
she can't bring herself
to release—
her dead calf
breathless
no matter how long
she holds its head aloft

not ready
to let it slip away
she mourns
for the many
and her sorrow sounds
a deeper grief

Lisa Timpf
Simcoe, Ontario

Salish Breath

Like a pod of humpback whales
spouting cloud-shaped spurts,
rounded blue landforms rise to brush
cumulus overhanging the Salish Sea.

These bulky landforms abound with life:
eagles, deer, wild bunnies, cedar
and madrona, tiny wild strawberries,
and skunk cabbage in soggy gardens.

Sub-surface, the sea floor shifts, gasping
its response to tectonic plates grinding
their edges together. Above ground,
our flimsy dwellings exhale groans

whenever seismic shudders rise up.
In time with the planet's respirations
we inhale gently, awaiting Gaia's next
gasp, hoping it will not be her last.

Sheryl Clough
Clinton, Washington

Fiction

I once crushed on a literary couple,
after attending a reading of a novel
they coauthored. Their shtick was endearing
as well as maddening. I fell for it.

My young marriage tarnished in the glow
of this golden duo, whose book dedications

were love poems; partners who finished
each other's sentences and books.

I wanted their farm in East Thetford, Vermont
where the woman, heavy with their third,
pumped water mornings, while he taught at university.
Afternoons, they collaborated

by thumbing catalogs and restaurant menus to choose
what their characters would wear or order for supper.
When I think back to how their books shared one voice,
I am breathless at the irony.

When the story of them began to unravel, line
by line, with twists stranger than...well, fiction,
I had to appreciate the art of their narratives.
Yet mostly I felt betrayed.

Dorian Kotsiopoulos
Canton, Massachusetts

Day One

flip open the new calendar
to this first shot:
your heart is meant to stop
for a look, consider
how close
those mountains seem

over all that snow—
cold enough to
hear across
if you lean out

past clotted pine-branches:
high windows
 of the winter birds

shift your eye
to the river knifing
 under boulders and ice—
unexpected yellow
 flares its thin skin,
more snow
in those swollen clouds—
 you'll need
to watch your step
from here

but hold off for now—
check out this other,
 tiny frame
in the lower corner:
a snowshoe hare
does its best to disappear
 in plain view

finally,
 pause to admire
this clean white field
fenced in blank squares:

nothing
nothing
nothing

except the tracks you'll make
with the small quick facts
of your life

Scott Lowery
Rollingstone, Minnesota

It's What He Does Instead

Out here, the paint stays
between his fingers--a boat,

a long afternoon, this wide
and generous landscape. He

likes the smells: grass, yellow,
the insides of old hats, rain,

the rot of logs and leaves.
He wonders about church.

He'd like to paint the pews.
He likes every afternoon, how

the morning empties and opens,
and birds and light come into it,

how the color moves north or
veers into his neighbor's yard.

And he likes where his hand goes
when the brush takes it across

a board or broken dinner plate,
an old bed-spring, shoes, those

tin trays over there beside
the bicycles, or these stumps.

When he's out here, it's quiet
and the wind moves across his hands.

Jack Ridl
Douglas, Michigan

Backyard Allegories

Trees in their seasons, long shadows
at evening, moss on garden stones.

Now and then an empty nest
blown from some branch.

And in the blackened patch
where we burned leaves last fall,

new grass—such places growing greenest
after all, thin shoots

learning their way to light through ashes,
nourished by the burning.

James Scruton
McKenzie, Tennessee

Ohio Blue Tip

I liked to watch you light your pipe
with the stick match pinched from the trough
of the match box holder nailed by the door
to the world, and how you popped it
to flame with the edge of your seashell
thumbnail, and then how you drew
the fire down and out of sight in the bowl,
then turned it loose, then did it again,
a cat-and-mouse game you were playing
with flame without saying you were,
and then, though the fire tried to cling

to the tip of the match, how you flicked it
away with a snap of your wrist, though it
always took two flicks to do it, and then
how the two of us studied the thin curl
as it lifted away from the charred tip
and then vanished, and it seemed you
could read something in it, but never
would say what it was.

Ted Kooser
Garland, Nebraska

**Sitting on the Back Deck of Our Houseboat in
Key West a Few Days After Jim Harrison Died**

Jim, we never met. We would likely have
nothing much in common. I don't fish,

can't cook, wouldn't know a good bourbon
if I drank it, have few opinions. It was good

not knowing one another. Here I can imagine
you sitting on your back deck three boats down

the pier from ours, picture you looking down your
one good eye, catching my timid wave, nodding back.

Jack Ridl
Douglas, Michigan

Lois at the Catholic Home

In a single bed like a child's she lies
under a light blanket of red hearts,
a snowfield splotched with blood,

eyes almost closed, head thrust back,
chin up, mouth open. On her finger
for seventy years (now embedded),
her thin wedding ring. Her left arm, white
and swollen atop the blanket, silently begs
to be fondled: is softly stroked by a friend
who sits close by, then by a granddaughter
who can't resist.

Red Rover, Red Rover
send Lois on over

One by one they come, each a solitary
dweller in a one-room house of memory,
each speaking his own idiosyncratic language
to continue an ongoing chat: the son who softly
murmurs of bluegill and crappie, lightly crosses himself,
stops at the door to wipe his eyes and unrumple his face
with both callused hands before he leaves; another son,
blank-faced in a coat and tie, who's in and out;
a daughter who sneaks in close to midnight.

Red Rover, Red Rover
send Lois

Long moments between breaths, her body,
which sweated and strained to push
one out every year for a decade, not ready yet
to go, inhales, exhales, rattles,
empty, but still here.

Phyllis Wax
Milwaukee, Wisconsin



Growing

Photograph

Rana Williams

Hayesville, North Carolina

Snow in March

Yesterday we hung up the birdhouse
on a bare elbow of the backyard
maple.

Today, snow whitened its small roof,
its open circle large enough
only for wrens fleeing the city,
not for the fat robin
who will lay her eggs in a nest
above our back door.

It was a light snowfall,
like the feathers
of the birds themselves,
airy enough to let
the birdhouse swing slightly
in dark gusts of wind.

Where to land, to stay,
which domicile or island
to inhabit, is the question
we ask ourselves—which
disappearing glacier,
which hillside that slid down
the mountain in the rain,
which cracked earth in a war zone,
which town built on a fault,
which country that does
or does not like strangers?

We've settled here with the birds,
just outside Chicago.
Wanting light and warmth,
we've set the clocks ahead,
hoping to breathe spring
into the garden, to seduce

the green tips of crocus
into a purple bloom
right through the snow's
last call, up towards
the dancing birdhouse with
its little hole inviting wrens.

Donna Pucciani
Wheaton, Illinois

Spring in the Old Forest

The woman,
whom I fancy
thinking mine,
enjoys walking
the web of paths
weaving through
126 acres
of scrubby woods
that Memphis knows
as The Old Forest.
I suppose
it is remnant
of an earlier time
when the Chickasaw
and the river
both ran free.
Now it is an island
marooned
and choking
on itself;
but each spring
some of its old glory

reasserts itself.
The trillium
begin blooming
and the copperheads,
thinking the paths theirs,
sun themselves
back to life.

Jude Dippold
Concrete, Washington

My 97 Year Old Aunt Ami

The last person she saw on this earth
was her hospice nurse.

“You are beautiful”
my aunt whispered.

And then, even more softly,
“The angels are beautiful.”

The next moment
she stopped breathing.

May this be the way we all leave —
praising this world

with our next-to-last breath,
and the next one with our last.

Laszlo Slomovits
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Geometry

My little woodstove
takes a sixteen inch log
so the manual says
and the guy who cuts
my wood knows that
and tries to saw them
about that length
though occasionally
he will cut them too long
which I discover
when adding a log
to a roaring blaze
a knob or two at the end
sticking out through the door
which I can no longer close
the far end already ignited
and flaming as I try to move
the piece into a more
diagonal angle
and then raise one end
to see if that might buy
a few inches
or turn
the whole thing
in the other direction
as if magically the stove
will stretch to accommodate it.
And sometimes, magically, it does
and I close and latch the door.
But other times I accept
that it will never fit
and walk through the house
with my flaring taper in hand
setting off the fire alarms
as I head to the garage
and through it to the back yard

my Roman candle sputtering sparks,
the neighbors looking
through their window
thinking I must again
have something to celebrate.

Robert Haight
Marcellus, Michigan

In a Bog, September 2018

Global warming floods streets and
dooryards in the Carolinas. I walk
the dog before first coffee in shadows
darkened by the streetlight's blare.

Next door, the neighbor leaves for
Bangor. Blackness fuels the air. I'm
feeling low. Later, I work the garden,
snap off collard greens that rattle

like luffing jibs, cut squash vines, pile
delicata and butternut with their squirrel-
gouged skins. Gardening's almost done.
The TV news is shootings and

presidential lies. At the shore the waves
slosh and eddy between ledges.
The reek of salt spray heavies the air.
Staring toward Islesboro across the bay

I muse to heal my spirit: sailing with my
father sixty years ago on a yawl in Blue
Hill Bay, motoring in my sloop at midnight
around Turtle Head, and how, across

there in the tiny Cape Rosier chapel,
John the electrician sang, quavering,
He walks with me and He talks
with me on a summer afternoon.

Thomas Moore
Belfast, Maine

The Turtle Race

I don't suppose you two remember
how the people in Ann Arbor
wanted Peace and, not quite
knowing what to do, held a picnic
in the park beside
your elementary school—
a spot I now consider Paradise
although I didn't at the time,
because I didn't think about
the future when
you guys would not be home
evenings after school,
and would not recall
the Turtle Race—
a dozen kids
and one or two grad students
laying the reptilian contestants
in the center of a huge grass circle,
then withdrawing to the edge
to crouch,
call, coax the shell-bound,
hard-of-hearing animals ambling
every which way on the grass—
“Come on, Lulu!” “Henry! Over here!”—
until one

chanced to cross the finish line
into the arms of a winner
who looked as pleased
as I do when you travel
 to the outer door
where I've been waiting.

Sarah White
New York, New York

Bar

My mother gone a whole year
and here I am with the last
bar of soap from her bathroom
in mine. It's the closest thing I have
to touching her – my hands
around this spicy homemade stone
she pressed between her own.
Hardening and cracking,
its lather thinning, rubbed
and spun between my palms.
As if moistening it to wash
could bring her skin back again.
O cinnamon genie,
grant me my wish for more
wishes. Simple water and soap:
the scent of clean fingers.
What is left of her touch
slips through my fingers.

Jennifer Burd
Ann Arbor, Michigan

And They Lived

When my father's money paid for this townhouse, finally one bedroom for me and a different one for my mother, what ends up hanging on the wall across from her bed is a line of framed magazine covers featuring her picture: *People*, *Us Weekly*, *Time*, *Vanity Fair*, *Newsweek*, another two or three. "Not Vogue," she sighs, "but still." She dug them out of the box that goes under her bed, a pretty big box that she says a fur coat came in once, where also she saves all the newspapers her picture was in, all the copies she got anyway because she tells me, "This face was in every paper in America, plus every paper in the countries you heard of." She points at the row of crooked frames—I did my best as a girl uninterested in hammers and spatial thinking, but the tops aren't exactly aligned—and she says, "When I wake up every morning, I can see who I was."

My mother was famous, at least for a little while, at least long enough for a collection like that. I mean, she says she was famous and I believed her until I learned the difference between famous and infamous, a year or so ago when I was thirteen. It was in homework, a chapter about Benedict Arnold. "Turncoat," the teacher sneered.

My mother is infamous. After hanging the pictures and after me stressing about tetanus when a drop of blood oozes out my thumb after I grab a nail wrong, I brave up enough to tell her that, and she laughs hard, LMAO laughter because I say it wrong, "inn-famous." That's always totally hilarious, always fodder for her, me screwing up one of my fancy words she says to stop showing off with, which proves exactly what she doesn't know because those words add "exquisite" "*je ne c'est quois*" to my life, like so. Infamous slots into another category.

"In-fuh-mous," she says. "Said like that. And no, I'm famous. I was a clue on 'Jeopardy' last week. How famous is that?" That "Jeopardy" clue event actually happened like a year ago, when we lived in the apartment next to the Beltway in Maryland, where out the window at night was the snow-white glow of the Mormon Temple spires. And it was me who saw the show and told her.

But it's been a year since that "Jeopardy" and a year since I learned the word so by now I've read the articles behind those magazine covers and inside those folded-up newspapers (literally, no, but figuratively—online) and my mother is infamous. Here's her story: She meets my father at the North Carolina state fair when she's a seventeen-year-old beauty queen

wearing a rhinestone crown and a sash that's now rolled up in the fur coat box. She enchants him, luring him away from his loving wife and three perfect children into this movie montage of an affair with hotel rooms and Georgetown fundraising dinner parties where the wife eyes her across the big round table. She gets pregnant. She refuses the arranged abortion (she says, he denies) and he marries her because he's topsy-turvy in love (he says, she denies). Not even a year of that before the divorce. She goes witchy-mad or she started out that way, growing up with "a temper like a stepped-on snake," quotes her mother I've never met, only one of all the family members I never met, including him. He claims I'm not his child but turns out I am. There are lawyers and courts. Towers of paperwork, documents cramming folders, briefcases, and file cabinets. Now a townhouse.

People talk about *then* compared to now like *then* was some once upon a time, some princess-perfect era, and the biggest detail is how that story all unfolded when my father was crowned the nominee, supposed to be elected our shining armor president, expected to save the world, because people back then believed the world could be saved. They really did. I don't see it. But I hear it's true.

My mother was pure wicked. My mother was babe in the woods innocent.

He was innocent. He was wicked. But the story is always my mother.

My mother altered the course of events; she shifted destiny. My very own stupid mother did that, by being a beauty queen at a state fair in North Carolina. And now we have this townhouse. Now I'm going to private school paid for, no sucking up to the weasels chairing scholarship committees. I'm good through college tuition and one negotiated year of grad school, my choice, make it big bucks, suggests my mother.

Tonight she's passed out on the couch sleeping off another one, and I'm looking at her face crunched into its snoring scowl, skin plucked pink like something sore, her neck loose and exposed, like a weak animal, the thing the big bad wolf tears apart. There's not one ruby-red drop of beauty to see. She can sleep forever like this.

So I tiptoe into her new bedroom, draped in shadowy lamplight, and concentrate on those magazine covers hanging like mirrors on the wall. Embarrassing. Powerful. Enchanted myself, I can't look away. I'm mesmerized. This woman noosed a spell around my father, tightened him

helpless, until all he could do was give up everything, letting the world skitter and stumble. Here I am, the symbol of it all.

Me.

I look like *him*, I think hard, like thinking hard magically locks what we want into place. I'm not *her*, I think, won't ever be *her*. She's awfully pretty in these old pictures, and I mean, there on the wall I'm looking at my same nose, my eyes, my long shiny untamable hair spilling all over the place. Such curious relics. But underneath her surface, even in these tattered images, something insistent radiates, like the simmering heat blowing out a dragon's mouth: "I know what you want," she's whispering, and what if what you want is to be destroyed? Did she need him? Or, really, did he need her?

"You got us in this townhouse, sweet pea," she whispers after the movers shut the door. That's so much power, I think, my heart thudding hard, locked in the compression of her sweaty hug. "It smells brand-new," I say, and she says, "Because it is. No one but us to live in this sweet castle."

How long have I been lost in these pictures? It's midnight already. The wise girl trots off to her new bedroom, burrows covers-over-the-head under her new comforter that's been plumped across her new bed, lets herself dream big new dreams. But me, I'm back to the couch, tucking the ragtag quilt shoulder-high over *her*, loosening the cap off a big water so it's easy to open later, shaking loose four Advil from the bottle, lining them up alongside the water. Look at her face again. *Beauty queen*. Kiss her lightly on each cheek, once, twice, three times. She won't awaken. It's the only best time to kiss her. Curl my limbs into the tightest ball on the beige-matches-everything carpet. Quest to stay awake through the darkness, watching for what I don't know, or because why, also I don't know. I never last the night. I always wake thwarted the next day, muscles flaming, her morning-after croak breaking any lingering spell.

"Famous or infamous," my mother says arching one eyebrow that way she can when I tell her about the new word. "Either way I'm pretty on the magazine covers, right? Am I right?"

She doesn't see the kingdom of difference between the two words. But I do.

Leslie Pietrzyk
Alexandria, Virginia



Sketchbook Page 15

Drawing

John Loree

Ypsilanti, Michigan

Survival of the Fittest

Consider the hawk, said the magpie.
Consider the turkey vulture.
They swooped and soared, and still you said
So what.

Consider the raven, said the mockingbird.
We picked our own feathers to line the nest.
We watched you walking out of doors intent
On being somewhere else oh quickly
Because you have no wings.
We ripped the food apart on your abandoned table and fed our young.
So what, you say, ignoring us.

Consider the robin, said the wren.
Our eyes see more beauty than yours, more thankful than yours
For the warm bodies of children.
Our hearts beat faster than yours
Even as you pour smoke from your metal housings
Wheeling down concrete and asphalt.
Encased, you can't catch us when we fly away,
Or see what butterflies see or even know their taste.
Do you know one word, one single word
A dragonfly knows?
He looks you in the eye.
So what.

In your pockets, pieces of plastic, a measure of your poverty.
All the stars at night are yours to see.
Consider the owl, said the hawk.
Who knows the moon and the angles of the sun, how they transform—
Who knows the killing art of food, who knows
the hunting sounds, their rhyme and weight—
Who knows the weightlessness of life, a kind of light you almost feel—
Consider the light, said the dark.
Consider the dream, said sleep.

Consider the forest and its ghost,
Said the dawn.
What are you hearing? What are you seeing?
Your boxes and packages clogging us all.
Why plug your ears? Just stop the noise.
Consider the heat, said the cold.
You shrink, you expand, we have names for you.
Incantations to shrink you down.
The little bird who sings your words.
So-what? So-what? So-what?
Get Us through This, Houston

Lock my black-eyed blues in John Glenn's capsule
and let all emotion be guided
by Mission Control.
Let our words be level, be measuring tools.
Let the vision of earth steadying its orbit
run through my sucker-punched hours
as we ride this spectacular torment in our awkward suits,
our bodies focused on navigation.
Let's stage-jettison our empty tanks and shrouds,
and let lift-off be where we thrust
the payload in our hearts,
riding through plank-walked moments
with flatline jargon on our lips.
Let's embrace the vacuum, the zero-
gravity, with levity,
and if systems run amok, let us be
unmoved machines, the Dr. Spocks.
Let's look out from this cramped module into the unfathomable,
keeping loose screws from flying mid-air.
Let our chill-down maintain an ordinary ambience
where we breathe a kind of peace
too practical to be destroyed.

Siham Karami
Orlando, Florida

Little Miracles

Decades I braved
speed-spooked freeways
streets of Southern Cal
steering Chevys Nissans past
allotted life spans

When overworked vehicle
huffed stalled on highway
side street back road
most often than not
help arrived
smooth-running carcacha
crew of muchachos
from Mexican villages
sprang out of their coche
ease-opened hood
tinkered coaxed
motor shuddering awake

Gracias gracias gracias
all they accepted
for the little miracle

revived jalopy and I
once again
daring the road

Gina Valdés
Portland, Oregon

Self Portrait with Ghost Painting

*a "ghost painting" references the paint stains that remain
on the wall after the painting has been removed.*

Maybe years function a little
like a ghost painting —
marking the sweet leftovers
after a lifetime of masks—
skinned underpinnings of a drama

where remnants of a cinnamon
dot or an extension of fine lines
cling to the studio wall
as the canvas disappears to the seaside
home of an anonymous patron

or into a burn barrel. Maybe
images in the cleared space
more closely resemble
wild sex, luscious souvenirs
of avenues traversed, private

compulsions repeatedly expressed.
The ghost painting hangs,
one last back float
on the wall's ocean, one last
flutter across from the refurbished TV—

the small flair of late night jokes
and saturation of color—
insistent as the extended notes of Adele
in the years that are now
just a little hard of hearing.

Susan Rich
Seattle, Washington

Primitive Religion

On the day of the sacrifice we wait
outside. The weather is always tricky.
No one knows what to wear. Often it rains—
Our god's revenge, we're told. Or heat's so sticky
we can't touch each other for a kiss of peace. The same
things happen other days. It's the place we
choose to live. We stand—hot or wet—too late
in the evening. Someone sings a song. We
must watch. The moon moved to a new spot—away
from old stones. The sacrifice fails. We wait
out the weather's revenge. Gods are tricky.

Mark Mitchell
San Francisco, California

I Observe the Climate Changing and Complain

How casually the snow saunters
down, each flake individual,
unhurried. In this fashion it
can never bury us. Razor

cold slashes my face, eyes.
Birds fall frozen. I rush to fill
feeders, toss ground food
rush inside to be engulfed

as if the house were a warm
mouth I want to swallow me.
I don't belong in this land
scape. I couldn't survive.

Yet summer overwhelms me
to a lump of overdone flesh.
I'm a creature of spring and
fall when my body quickens.

I'm too old for climate change.
I long for days I remember
when fritillaries bowed flowers,
when birds I never see now

darted through branches, when
hurricanes were rare and bees
grazed on our flower beds. This
world's too hot, too cold for me.

Marge Piercy
Wellfleet, Massachusetts

Discarded

The morning is swollen with clouds
above the 48th Street stop south of Elliot
where a carton rests on the seat
with its lid raised to reveal
cake and shrink-wrapped produce
while a carry-all bag
rests on the ground, full with notebooks,
folders, and hygiene aids.
A pack of chicken fillets stands alone,
fresh and sweating in the sunlight.
The evidence suggests
the owner ran. Or else bought a ticket
to oblivion. Or else, or
else . . . Who knows? Not I, says the asphalt
where traffic goes by without a care;
Not I, says the traffic light

flashing red-green-red; Not I, says
the trash bin overflowing. And not I,
says the sky which sees everything
although it masks discomfort
above day's last horizon
with peaches and a rose.

David Chorlton
Phoenix, Arizona

In the Produce Aisle

January in the Midwest. Snow squalls.
Night pillows crackle and spark.
Breath hurts. Sun glares stab.
Concrete steps, treacherous, lead here:

a miniature garden, hanging as
in Babylon. Five tiers, misted
frequently, arrayed
with colors from five continents.

Radiant carrots, tiny sweet peppers
like traffic lights—green, amber, red—
cut pineapple awash
in juice, eggplants—solid,

curving parabolas, purple splendor.
Oh, tomatillos and kiwis!
And these mysteries:
shrimp-hued forms rising like coral—

turmeric root, ginger's soothing cousin—
and this riotous, lemony
fruit from evergreen,
Buddha's hands, each clapping silent air.

Leslie Schultz
Northfield, Minnesota

Getting Autographed

Before they take me into radiology,
the doctor autographs my breast
to show we've in sync,
then I'm led into a room of women.
The table I lie on has a hole
where gravity can do its job,
signed flesh swinging free.
A nurse holds my hand
while cold numbs the area
to be biopsied.
As the doctor does her work,
the nurses banter with each other,
with me, teasing about horoscopes.
There is a camaraderie
I did not expect.
When the biopsy is done
a small piece of me
will journey through microscopes and test tubes.
Like so many before,
I carry a small bit of metal
to mark the spot like a treasure map's X.

Terri Simon
Laurel, Maryland

Pirate

*"The day before me is fraught with
God knows what horrors."* ~ John Kennedy Toole

He ordered a couple of cart water dogs
with the ghost pepper mustard on Bourbon,
then walked through the Quarter in comfortable clogs
and an outrageous velveteen turban.

The shadows that gull him came up in his face,
full up from the must of perdition.
A bold eructation and discharge of mace
preceded his round erudition.

Boethius spoke to him under the eaves
at Lafitte's, where the tourists were drinking.
The Mardi Gras Indians tugged at his sleeves
and picked at his pearls and his pinking.

Rick Mullin
Caldwell, New Jersey

The Nightjar

Swahili has no name for the time in the middle of the night which is
a time of no sound or vision; a good man stays at home, resting. The
darkness settles like a black powder, slowly smothering all reflections.
In this, the Nightjar in our garden will begin a lament so poignant
and haunting that we find ourselves looking forward with pleasure to
it, night after night.

Kim Ottavi
Cessy, France



Blue

Wash Drawing

Nan Williamson

Ontario, Canada

Recovery

Recovery denies a count, denies
a clock, depends on luck or fate
or maybe grace, whatever trace
of care or prayer or chicken soup
defies the diagnosis or improves
the mood, whatever gospels or
voodooos collide or rendezvous
toward balm, the ease of healing,
the wonder of feeling less and less
pain. Recovery decides its own way,
declines to say when it's complete or
claim its victory too early, late,
requires faith that death is poorer
than we think, carries its own purse
right against its hip and knows
if it is careful day to day with what is
spent, it has the cash to pay for almost
anything. Recovery declines all
invitations, schedules celebrations
on its own, throws parties only when
the time is right, who knows if that
means late next year or now as daylight breaks.

Mary Brown
Anderson, Indiana

Down The Long Night

think beehive and
private tiny entrances
the Poseidon of the garden
through the maze
the span to the end
a trail of stings

four quiet wings
flap timpani
float nectar to nectar

returning to their hive
crab-cracking percussion
shakes down their dreamland
notes progress horizontal
soft now, like cotton
“Nature Boy” by Miles Davis
lulls baby bees to sleep

Gloria Keeley
San Francisco, California

Three Triolets:

The Many Things in My Day That Are Not You

The many things in my day that are not you
are patently made of water, glass, or air:
nothing in my day eclipses you.
The many things in my day that are not you—
like screens and traffic, or people other than you—

are immaterial. *You*, though, are palpably there.
The many things in my day that are not you
are patently made of water, glass, or air.

I Have No Thoughts on Cosmological Matters

“Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing?”
—Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (1988)

I have no thoughts on cosmological matters—
why must there be something instead of nothing at all?
Love’s points and edges have left my mind in tatters;
I’m unable to focus on cosmological matters.
My thoughts are of love, not time or space or matter,
yet it’s love’s dark energy that makes my world feel small.
I have no thoughts on cosmological matters.
My thoughts are of love . . . or of nothing at all.

This Spooky Action at a Distance Defines Us

“Einstein disliked the notion that objects can share a mysterious connection across any distance of space,” “a phenomenon [he] referred to as ‘spooky action at a distance.’”
—Elizabeth Gibney, *“Cosmic Test Bolsters Einstein’s ‘Spooky Action at a Distance,’”*
Nature (Feb. 3, 2017)

This *spooky action at a distance* defines us:
although we’re far apart, we’re correlated.
Communicating faster than light reminds us
that *spooky action at a distance* defines us.
A common field, non-local, unreal, aligns us.
Though spatially separated, we’re integrated.
This *spooky action at a distance* defines us:
although we’re far apart, we’re correlated.

M. B. Powell
Union, Washington

When Freedom, Yes

as freedom is a breakfastfood—e. e. cummings

when freedom, yes, is breakfastfood
and jellies lie to donut holes
when belgians waffle at the news
that danish pastries are not rolls
 it won't be long, and soon enough
 that we ask flakes to please collude
 with milk that's cowed in other bowls

when hands can't shake their diplomats
while hope flows like the syrup drip
that trickles down a flapjack stack
and puddles under bacon strip
 it won't be long, and soon enough
 we'll flip our plates upon our laps
 and let the ham return to hip

though truth be fake yet gets applause
as farm-fresh links begin to doubt
how kosher sausage ungrinds law
and lox gets specked as rainbow trout
 it won't be long, and soon enough
 for hollandaise (how sweet the sauce)
 to benedict the traitors out

then home fries won't want hash browns gone
and skin will flee from marmalade
whose fruit can squeeze its juice to song
like silent graces shared aloud
 and any fork's more right than wrong
 when lunchtime breakfast's eaten now
 and if not soon, it won't be long.

Richard Krohn
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

The Practiced Silence

Estes Park, 1972

There was hiking the trail eight miles
up to a campsite beside Boulder Brook,

waist-high blonde grasses waving on
either side of the trail, and the next day

feeling lightheaded from the elevation
but just forging ahead to the open

expanse of Grand Lake to fish for perch,
the fragrance of which emanating

from the campfire alerted a ranger
later that evening. This meant walking

down to the trailhead to pay the \$50
fine for fishing without a license, and

walking back up, which was all right
if you're 19; but it was returning that

afternoon, and immersing myself by
reading a book on a flat rock in

the middle of the torrent, cleansing me
with its roar; and then the next morning

awakening, clear-eyed, to
the echo hammered by a flicker, who

was debugging the pine bark, and to
the practiced silence of the kit fox,

sniffing the backpack hung on a high
branch of a felled tree that contained

the eggs for breakfast, those black
furred feet quickening into a leap from

along the tree trunk onto the sandy
shore, where it stopped,

momentarily, just to look back at me,
never quite receding from memory,

before trotting away
to enter the shadows beneath the pines.

Wally Swist
Amherst, Massachusetts

Exit

Two uniformed men
one green jeep park
across Tokyo apartment
for days watch
visa's end

At the wheel one guard
by jeep post one
fix eyes on
goings comings
ears perk up rustling
skirts bracelets clinking

Ready escort poet
out of big city secure
seat flight land
ten thousand miles away
where she belongs

Ohayo gozaimasu she greets
teeth glinting earrings flashing

All day for days
one sits one stands
alert fixated

With bow one poet
exits

Gina Valdes
Portland, Oregon

Open Season

In the headlines we find ourselves
jogging, walking home from the party,
alone on the street at dead time. On
the radio when I brush my teeth we are
a girl, a sophomore, young woman,
young mom, mother of two. We are
disappeared, still missing, search ongoing,
remains recovered, body identified.
And I know that we were found naked,
knees scraped after we fell, after we were
dragged; bloated with the greenish glow,
folded neatly in the generic trunk, body
charred in the woods, turned into carbon.

But remember this about us: a long
time ago we did not talk to strangers,
did not let go of the hand. Did not accept
candy or venture outside after dark.
We listened and nodded. We ran in the
sunshine and scraped our knees, wore
our scabs and scars proudly. Not long

ago we were one, and knew ourselves
to be: protected by the ever after,
drowning in the warmth of God's
light. Shaded from his rays by
the fears of our mothers.

On a hidden day in our histories we
began to emit an invisible radiation,
a smell perhaps that only others could
sense. Something sprouted from our
bodies like grenades, an invisible hand
pinched at our waist, broadened our
hips, watered new crops of dark hair
that shines and then

O murdered girls, we are the only ones
who know how cold you have felt. Forgive
us: we can't think of you too long, or
only this: how different you were. No,
we cannot be the same. We cannot be
the same. We cannot be the same.

Marie Baléo
Paris, France

Leaving the Candle on Overnight

I.

Invites the dead

Leaving a candle on overnight
Invites roaming spirits that walk
in the shadows of the moon's smile.

I wait for the hands
of my dead father to hold mine.

There's plenty of room in my home now
For his luggage, his disease, his dead suit.

II.

She waits for her father to visit and sit on our couch.
She bakes a chocolate cake in her dreams with strawberries,
just as he loved. She has a placemat that's been empty
for too long now. I see him with his long fingers to his mouth
telling me not to wake her. He loves her silence and sound sleep.
He cries into her hair, then walks slowly through the walls.

III.

On most nights, the granddaughter goes to bed not knowing
while she sleeps and dreams of dance class and storytelling
one man sits at her side feeding her mangoes

the other man sits at her feet
trying to communicate in a language that was forced back to
the jungles of his country.

He begs to be called abuelo.

Edward Vidaurre
McAllen, Texas

The Future

We would meet at the muddy banks
of the great Allegheny River after school,
coal miners' kids, steel workers' sons,
pockets full of rocks and trouble.
Each of us carrying the weight
of a father's fists, bad grades in Algebra,
the missed shot at the end of the game.
The Future? What future? each failure
is a black eye, a short-fused father waiting

at the door, another nail driven into a coffin,
all of us loading our hands and taking aim
at the coal barges sailing low and dark
beyond our reach, the whole damn town
a tinderbox of vacant shops and boarded windows.

Michael Pantano
Cincinnati, Ohio

Thinking About Poets Who Thought About Death

My old poetry books are full of their work:
poets contemplating life's later stages.

Sam Hamill recalled dogs he has buried
and a visit to Carruth's shack in Vermont.

Poor old Yeats, buried on the Continent, asked
to be dug up and brought back to Sligo.

We will never fully know Plath's vision
as she contemplated those oven knobs.

I'm right there with them, at this ripe age of 68.
But just for today, I will focus on the low tide,

the moon snails half buried at bay-edge,
the view of Tahoma, majestic in my face.

In the neighbor's bottlebrush tree
a wild canary celebrates the sun.

Sheryl Clough
Clinton, Washington

The Other Side of Life

She's having a good day, so I'm okay with watching her. Mom and Dad went to Costco, which means two hours, minimum. Grandma dances around the kitchen to *All Tomorrow's Parties*, swoops down to kiss my forehead. Her braid whips against my cheek. She loves the Velvet Underground, even hung out with them, back in the day.

I take a brain candy break, but how much of that shit can you read—which skanky celeb has a muffin top, or who's over-accessorizing—so it's back to the Dracula novel. The report's due in a week. Dracula's supposed to be sexy, a whole seduction thing, but I don't know. He's not Edward Cullen.

Sister Ray ends, and Grandma's clapping, "I wish your parents were here, Abby, they're missing this," like she's at a concert. She used to find new music, from NPR, but now she just wants the old stuff.

Grandma sings along to *I'm Waiting For The Man*. "Aren't we all!" she yells, and we laugh. It's an oldie, one of her Before jokes. She remembers shit from years ago, but not where her bedroom is.

Now she's singing about furs, shiny boots of leather. "You didn't just get dressed back then," she told me once. "We wore costumes, really. Scarlet crushed velvet, up to your ass, or dragging in the mud, all kinds of boots, beads, feather boas, jeans turned into skirts, Edwardian shit. Half the stuff you couldn't find in stores—or, if you could, it was too expensive—so we made it ourselves." Mom found peasant tops at Walmart, like Grandma used to wear—they're back in style—but she had to buy eight of them because Grandma spills something on herself at every meal.

She stops in front of our Gaugin print, across from the bathroom, and points, "Look at those rocks, all the same size, almost the same shape, but the different colors...all the colors!" There's no rocks in the Gaugin print, just these washer-womens' rear ends, covered by their gathered skirts. They're all stretching forward, scrubbing. Grandma was an artist; still is, when Mom has time to let her get messy. She did paintings

of people, mostly, in the shadows, at funny angles, as if you were spying on them, but the one she did of me is different. I'm five, looking straight ahead, serious, like I see something in the future. She painted some still lifes, like when she painted this chair with random objects piled up. The top of the chair legs takes up the bottom half of the picture. "You were my muse," she said, "just learning to walk, and I started looking at everything from your perspective."

She starts down the hallway, toward the stairs. If she goes up, I'll have to go up, too. I go to the print, "They're beautiful, Grandma," and she comes back, and puts her arm around my shoulder. I put my arm around her waist and we sway, and sing "Venus in furs."

She moves down the hall, pulling me along, towards the old mirror, her mother's. My hair is the color of a new penny, like her hair was, before it went white, no gray in-between. Our eyes are a surprising brown, our arms and legs long, but now I'm two inches taller. Grandma leans her head on my shoulder for a minute, then she twirls off, into the family room.

"Thought of you as my mountain top, thought of you as my peak," she sings, looking around. I point to the dining room. There's a picture of her and Grandpa in there. She doesn't talk about him much, now that she's sick. She sees Grandpa sometimes—starts talking to an empty corner right in the middle of dessert. On a bad day, she'll spend an hour looking for him. He died in a motorcycle accident, five years ago.

She's so hyper, and if she doesn't chill, Mom or Dad will have to stay up until she falls asleep. I'm going out later, for a sleep over. So I switch to the Moody Blues, and Grandma sings "The Other Side of Life." One time, she played it for me and said "Abby, sooner or later, we all see the other side of life, you know?"

I said "I know, Grandma."

But I didn't, and I don't, not really, you know?

Michelle Morouse
Blomfield Township, Michigan



Low Tide Birds

Photograph

Patricia Tompkins
San Mateo, California

One Sentence Poetry Contest

We tasked our contributors with packing as much poetry into a single sentence as they possibly could. They really came through for us. Picking three prize winning poems from the many we received was no easy job. The first three of these are winners of \$50 prizes. Following them are the best of the rest, in which our editors found considerable merit. Thanks to everyone who entered.

In Late November (Winner of \$50)

when the haze of wood smoke
layers the morning fields
and the cows no longer
wander out to nose
the browning pasture;

when the last of windfall apples
have been collected
and crushed to cider,
the pulp in fragrant mounds
behind the deer blind;

we will remove the potted mums
and rake away the yellowed
leaves from the headstones,
appeasing the ancestors
we no longer remember.

Jane Wheeler
Lowell, Michigan

Late Summer Rain (Winner of \$50)

*Arlington National Cemetery
August 2009*

It seems more
like love than duty

the way a young soldier
sitting on horseback
in his dress blues

accepts without scorn
each heavy burst
of late summer rain

even as he raises
a gloved hand up

to halt a glistening
line of cars

then turns his arm
into a sharp
formal salute

he holds for the time
it takes my father's
casket to pass

while I sit safe
and dry with family

following behind
in a new minivan

trying to understand
the things one soldier
does for another.

Mark Madigan
Springfield, Virginia

Markings (Winner of \$50)

When asparagus spears have gone to fern
and spiders, crazy with design, stake out their night webs;

when low-lying fog shrouds the field, and fruiting puffballs, *b. utriformis*,
push their button heads to the surface;

when goats rut and horses grow shaggy and crickets become abundant;

when blades of grass are goblets for dew, and the black snake
leaves the loft to find safe harbor for sleep
it is fall again—

and I have traveled thirty-four times
around the sun without you.

Linda Blaskey
Lincoln, Delaware

April Dissonance

What crazy season is this
with flowers—like moonlight—shining in the linden,
and frost glittering on the grass?

Katherine Edgren
Dexter, Michigan

On The Way To The Ice Cream Truck

Makiyah Wilson
might have had a grin on her face
when she spied the ice cream truck
as she was coming back
from the swimming pool
with her big sister,

and we know that when she got home,
she asked her mother for some money,
and who could have said no
when the weather was as hot and humid

as it was on what turned out to be
on the last night of her 10 year old life,

when, clutching a 5 dollar bill,
she started back out the door
thinking perhaps about what flavor to get
and should she ask for sprinkles

just as 4 armed people got out
of a black Infiniti with a dented bumper
and in the space of 25 seconds,

fired more than 70 rounds of ammo
into the crowded courtyard
of the Clay Terrace Apartments
where Makiyah's family lived

and one of those bullets
ripped through Makiyah's chest,
before she had a chance
to decide about the ice cream,
to play basketball in 5th grade,
or to conquer the world,

which was her dream,
according to her mother,
who held her baby in her arms
as Makiyah, who sometimes
liked to wear a tiara in her hair, bled out,

leaving the remaining children who still call
the Clay Terrace Apartments home
to wonder whether it is safe
to want an ice cream cone
on a hot summer night.

Lucinda Marshall
Gaithersburg, Maryland

Remembering

I remember
that you liked
to speak to me
in French,
that you liked
that it had
so many silent
letters
& that
you compared
the letters to
people, some
heard, some
not heard,
all important.

Alejandro Perez
Rockville, Maryland

Yellow Jacket

It was a mistake to swat
the yellow jacket away from her dinner,
to swat and swat until it turned on her
and dug into the fleshy part of her arm,
its sting like the small pains of childhood—
the skinned knees, the bruised shins,
the broken toe, or the time
she and her sister got tetanus shots
and then rode the Octopus,
each whip slamming their shoulders together,
the pain and pleasure mixing
in that other July heat
causing a kind of delirium

that returns now, drives her inside
to lie under the ceiling fan
draped in cold washcloths
waiting for the balm of darkness
to cool the welt of heat rising in her arm.

Suzy Harris
Portland, Oregon

The Porch

My grandparents had been divorced
over thirty years when Pappy came
to pick us up at Mimi's house, and I remember
how she straightened her white beads hanging
over the blouse she wore to clean in, how
she clipped on rhinestone earrings and disappeared
into the bathroom for a few moments,
her lips more pink, her cheeks clean
and young as she stepped onto the porch
as he waited outside in the car and looked

at the house he had lived in
all those years ago, the black mailbox
that once held his letters home from Guam, the maple tree
he had planted so tall now, his solemn eyes
behind glasses, his combed strands of hair, the spots
on his hands, his hands still strong as he gripped
the steering wheel, watching, watching
the familiar woman, her hair still red, who stood
by the front door waving to us, to him
like a war bride
as their grandchildren
went through their delicate exchange
and his car slowly drove away.

Ethan Joella
Rehoboth Beach, Delaware

This or That

There are two sides to every story—or
perhaps a half a dozen—maybe more—
since far too much depends upon perspective—
and memory is usually selective.

Jane Blanchard
Augusta, Georgia

Chopin Ballade in G Minor

When I am old I want to sit in this wicker chair
with this book open on my lap, these slippers on my feet,

and gaze through this glass wall at the lagoon
placed like a silver coin on the landscape,

and listen to this music which sounds perfect
to my ear though the pianist claims to have made
many mistakes.

Linda Blaskey
Lincoln, Delaware

The Californian

The Californian says he needs someone who grew up in the sunshine, not in gray
days and snow storms and long winter nights; someone with sunshine and sand
in her step, the ocean's salt in her long brown hair.

Frances Kai-Hwa Wang
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Superior

Waves lap in sleepy cadence on the sunlit bay as
reflections blink far out like signal mirrors flashing
until the breeze swings north and rumpled water
gray as engine oil builds to humped-up whitecaps
rumbling in like loaded ore cars spilling thunder,
rolling boulders on the rocky shore.

Raymond Byrnes
Leesburg, Virginia

On North Street

We both know why I'm writing
this, and it's not for dreams and wire-

thin eyes whose green unfolds cruelty,
or the press of fur-damped forehead

against passing shinbones in three
or four ginger lines, nor for claws

and mews and dramatic throwings
back on hot cement, arches and

appearances from under cars,
but it's for how you reshape space,

how we fold your impossible
want of sentimentality

into heart-shaped stanzas, how you
circle, twitching, throwing punches

at butterflies, how we speak you
in bubbles and mistranslations,

how you flatten yourself, double-
belled to forewarn birds, and plate up

blood echoes of human failure
as popular as forgetting.

Bernard Cohen
Annandale, NSW, Australia

Perspective

Up on this mountain,
where each breath of thin air
is a gift from an ocean of sky,
you see with new eyes
how it all fits together,
stone and pine and cloud,
how the swaths of forest fold
into your outstretched palm, how
you can hold it all
in the circled mudra of thumb
and index finger, how the world
pours into you, for you, and how
in this place (holy) you are so different
from where you walked below,
when you tripped over roots
and rocks blocked your way,
when, dizzy in a tumble of leaves
you saw yourself
so small,
lost,
not knowing
where
you
belonged.

Ellen Collins
Vienna, Virginia



Gladstone Winter

Photograph

Sacco Vanzetti

Detroit, Michigan

Canoe Trip, Massasauga Provincial Park

That summer canoe trip we left our camera home
relying instead, on the lens of memory, the unshuttered
heart, the bright focus of each moment,
to capture and hold

those images. Snake swimming with sinuous
grace across a small bay. Lazy
fish lurking in shadowed reeds. Square
shape of the beaver's

head, as he swam, at twilight, past our campsite,
moonlit reflections veing behind. The
hummingbird that visited our clothesline
mistaking a brightly

coloured pin for a flower. The turtle raising
its wizened head like a deadwood stick, while its half-
submerged shell, broader than a basketball, loomed,
armour-plated, behind.

Lake's glassy surface, unspoiled, in evening. Brilliant
yellow water lilies about to bloom.
Pale pink lady slippers. Trees that
scrambled for a foothold

in the oddest places, in clefts and ledges on split-rock
cliffs. No intervention of viewfinder, no seeking of
perfect photo. Just seeing and being and breathing.
No camera needed.

Lisa Timpf
Simcoe, Ontario

Going Smaller

Days like this, you slip as you kick,
wind again too warm to stiffen the snow.
We tilt off-kilter another degree, or...
it's just a mid-March thaw: no sweat, yet.
Either way, I can't outrun the news.

Yesterday, the radio host asked the expert,
what about a national health service?
This is America. Forget about it!
Across the lake, a pack of snowmobiles
whines past, snarling like misplaced anger.

I narrow my attention to the oak leaf
that still holds on, the laughing nuthatch:
how small do I need to go before
I'm no longer living in any nation?
A full moon rises, factual among the trees.

Scott Lowery
Rollingstone, Minnesota

“My Egg Is an Imagination of the Moon”

—my sister's granddaughter

Yes, and the fish in the stream out back are
the lost children smiling as the water turns
into light. The branches hang from the outstretched
arms of anonymous angels. And this morning,
a thousand cupcakes rolled off a comet
and spun down growing smaller

until they fell through the icing of clouds and
turned into of all things, rain. We wandered inside,

and watched each drop disappearing into
the earth's open mouth. Your kind hands

will hold to this ever splitting planet
so your egg is will always be an

imagination of the moon you keep in
your pocket with seven polished pebbles.

Jack Ridl
Douglas, Michigan

The Brown Trout's Death

The kingfisher stares
at the narrow entrance
to the deep eddy,
implacable
in its patience,
knowing the kill will come.
I sit under the bowed limbs
of the stately cedars
on the riverbank,
waiting for his murderous dive,
a shameless voyeur,
thrilled by the way
life and death embrace
when the brown trout dies.

Jude Dippold
Concrete, Washington

White Pigeon

— or is it a dove,
this small-headed, fat-chested bird
peering in, unblinking, through
the glass door at ancient monks
having tea?

The old missionaries
talk in crackling voices of the novitiate
in Scotland, life in Nigeria, a school in Palestine,
an English home for delinquents.

They have names like Aidan and Lavinus,
their backs stooped, their knees
uncertain. These were the good ones,
now decommissioned, shuffling about
paneled rooms smelling of mildew,
wondering, as we all do, for what purpose
they still exist.

They fall asleep at noon
after fish, chips and peas in the refectory.
At four they brew up and sip tea
in their sagging armchairs, watching
the white dove—or is it a pigeon?—
carrying twigs outside the patio window,
shoring up her nest above the lintel.

Donna Pucciani
Wheaton, Illinois

Cardiac Unit: Roofer Visits My Roommate

Did five squares today buddy.
Missed you. When Billy paid us off
he took out the forty he'd loaned

you. Here's the rest—sixty bucks.
Took a taxi over here. Them OSHA
guys was there today snapping

pictures. Danny didn't have his
harness on so Billy may get fined ten
grand. And his price for the job was

for stripping two layers. When we
got the back side started we found
three. Had to take an extra load

to the transfer station. Six hundred
bucks Billy had to cough up. Used
his truck. Said he paid two grand

for that truck and I know for a fact
it was five. Has pretty good rubber
on it. Ball joints a mess though.

Five squares today. Didn't quit till
six thirty. Three layers of tar
around the chimneys. Hardened

to stone. Remember when we was
chippin' tar on Union Street that time?
Six squares left for Monday.

Get better buddy. Before summer's
done. We miss you. We need you
back buddy.

Thomas Moore
Belfast, Maine

Everything's a Perfect Storm

Not just the missed date,
the fated relationship or
dropped plate. For what
of the soulmate, the dream
job, the open gate? We go
forensic when something goes
awry, but chalk it up to stars
when what we want falls
from sky. Each breath
betrays a trace, each giddy end,
footsteps falling into place.
Your every move was made
by what prevailed, by what
went right or wrong in the weather
of pre-existing detail. Don't
debate it – watch... wait.
Catch a snowflake on your tongue.

Jennifer Burd
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Wilma

Wilma reclined in an
Institutional nursing home bed
A sparkle of past ghosted,
She was dying.

smooth hair, smooth skin,
long fingers and a short smile,
a mouth made for lipstick.

How often do we meet those
advancing into a direction

chosen by herself, for herself.
no children to bother, or husband
to call her back to a small house
with potholders and café curtains.
she was going home
knowing all along, where.

Early on a gray morning
no sun yet and
first snow setting down its direct white
she did just that.
let go, with a telltale smile.

Her ashes boxed
sent to Pennsylvania
and on arrival
placed in an upstairs closet shelf.

K. Carlton Johnson
Lake Linden, Michigan

Granite Washed

I want to stand
on gray granite
and bend down,
scrape the surface
and find shining stone
ancient and waiting
water whipped and fresh
I will wash my
hands on this stone
and rub it up my arms

It will loosen the
closed in elbows

that folded when he left
it will soften the palms
that hardened without
his face to caress
it will loosen the fingers
whose grasp closed on emptiness
after he was gone

I want only the shine
of the stone
but the dull
comes too
seeps into my skin
slivers stick to the surface
and I am stone wet
granite washed
ready
to begin
again

Leslie McGriff
New York, New York

Hens

On spring and autumn Saturdays
when the windows were open,
the laughter of women floated
from Mama's beauty shop,
over the breezeway,
through the screen doors,
into the house

disturbing Daddy as he read the news
or watched sports on television,
snippets of words cutting through
the hooting and carrying on —

hens cackling in a henhouse
he squawked, shaking his cockscomb,
then arising from his creaky recliner,
flapping into the kitchen to clutch
another mid-afternoon beer,
feathers rumped, wattles in a knot

I flew away from him then
to join the women who roosted
under hair dryers or nestled
in the styling chair as Mama groomed
their fancy plumage for show—
like Silkies, Cochins, and Frizzles —
all clucking and purring and bagawking
as I perched quietly on the drink box
and listened with great attention,
learning about the ways of hens
and roosters, never making a peep

Daun Daemon
Raleigh, North Carolina

In the Heel of the Boot

Men lived in walled towns
for centuries, driving their ox carts
brimming with grain along the rutted paths.
They called out to one another
in their lost language
as they gathered grapes and olives,
as they cast their nets at dawn
into the flashing sea,
before the rule of law, the long straight roads.

Ruth Holzer
Herndon, Virginia



Clowns, Amsterdam

Photograph

Diane Martin

Bangor, Maine

Miami Beach

Considering all the eye-catching pastel and neon
of a haven where every building is uniquely named,
where every hour is happy, small wonder
you only realize several days later
that you've been treading all this time
along pink sidewalks cool as the breezy mornings
greeting risers eager for sand and surf,
for the push-back of salty Atlantic waves;
tread nimbly, stroller, else you're bound to startle
scurrying lizards or grazing chickens down below
while high above by rooftop pools loungers
sipping margaritas and mojitos tan
and speakers blast reggaeton like they mean it.
We all don and doff per activities and weather,
usually paradisaal, occasionally catastrophic,
luxuriating for a time always too fleeting,
prompting vows to return and explore
even more in sessions of sun still to come.

Brandon Marlon
Ottawa, Canada

Good Thoughts

For Otto Sellinger and his family

This morning I heard
my eighty-nine year old neighbor,
had died in his sleep.

One day, forty years ago, soon after
I moved across the street from him,
I was walking back to my house,
working on a new song out loud —

I thought I was alone. I looked up
to see him watching me. Seeing
my embarrassment he smiled kindly,
and said in his raspy, droll voice,
“Chi canta mal non pensa.”
And then added, “It’s Italian.
One who sings has no bad thoughts.”

I thanked you then, Otto, and here
once again. I’m still singing to myself,
thinking good thoughts of you.

Laszlo Slomovits
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Dancing With Fermi

From back when *Los Alamos*
just meant “*the poplars*,”
a black-and-white labeled
'45 *Social for Project Y*,
Fermi already balding,
leading his awed partner
the way his mind led him –
Pisa, Fascist Rome,
New York – within each site
the orbit of his job:
x-rayed crystals,
measures of magnetism,
mass and particles,
his plutonium thoughts
careening at light-speed
around the perimeter
of his skull as he dances
in witness, the shot snapped,
history has it, just before

fellow physicists began
to split off mid-song,
breaking other couples apart,
first a few, then many,
the un-partnered falling
to the floor, flattening
against walls, or vaporized
on the spot, the whole hall
a silent explosion even
a photo could not hope to
stop.

Richard Krohn
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Changing Season

It had been less humid and cooler
for a few days, a breeze

from the north though only late July
when I heard over

our roof through the open windows
the honk of a Canada goose

stroking south from one lake
to another, and it left

the thought that this sound
could signal the beginning

of autumn though so many
times meaning has been only

my creation: that woman dangling
her red high heel

and smiling in the restaurant
someone waving in the grocery store

to their friend standing just
behind me.

Robert Haight
Marcellus, Michigan

Tidy Up

A Zen master of my acquaintance
Once said that when he died
He wished to leave no trace.
All the backpackers I know
Say the same
About their sojourns in the wild.
No messes, no unfinished business.
It's a good idea to tidy up
Before all of our little departures
And our impending Big One –
Douse the coals, strew the ashes,
Bag any food scraps,
Bits of paper, foil and cardboard,
Erase all footprints,
Be forthright, apologize, forgive –
So that what remains of us in memory
Is not a squalid little campsite
Full of trash and debris
And tangled disputes
That will cause great consternation
Or anguish
To those left behind,
But is instead

An expanse of mountain grasses
Beside a high cold tarn
Where ones who loved us
Might like to pass a little time,
Pitch a tent,
Build a fire.

Buff Whitman-Bradley
Fairfax, California

For the First Time I Am Afraid

of my country, I say, and he says,
yes. He who has not

taken his safety for granted
does not shame me

for only understanding this now.
We navigate the broken

Interstate, eyes focused on
our near-future and the shape

of the talk continues on
civil in slow-drawn twists and turns—

past green exit signs and a floating
bridge that disappears across the lake,

behind the cut—two complete
strangers—portrayed in black and
white—

driving our nation's highways
in the rush hour of late spring.

Susan Rich
Seattle, Washington

Rooting For The Storm

You can't be too careful in my line of work. It gets to be Big Business if you play it right, and that's well and dandy, because what good is business if it isn't big? If you're not growing, you're dying - that's what all the business books taught me, that's what I believe. I'm just trying to grow, keep food on my table and jewelry on my ex-wife's fingers... just not too much food or jewelry. Because, like I said, you have to be careful in my line of work. Otherwise, you'll find yourself rooting for the storm.

###

I never saw it as destruction. I saw it as opportunity. After all, you can't rebuild what hasn't been torn apart or blown away in the first place; you can't make something better if it's not already worse-for-wear. Take it from a divorcee. I don't consider the service I provide noble or charitable, but rather necessary, the way every city needs a garbage collector.

My mother named me William and my father called me Bill. Others have labelled me a storm chaser, but I prefer the term roofing specialist.

My team and I traveled to North Carolina ahead of hurricane Florence. I laid them up in a cheap motel in the city of Henderson some hundred miles away from the howling winds and sideways rain, where they're waiting for the storm to dissipate, for the homeland of North Carolina and all its shopping malls and gated communities to provide enough friction that it just... peters out. Then we can get to knocking.

I'm currently seated in some smoky bar a couple miles from their hotel, drinking alone, enjoying a cigarette, silently commending the Powers That Be of Vance County, North Carolina, for their no-nonsense decision to allow patrons of bars to light up inside. Everywhere else around the country, it seems, you can only smoke in your own home, under the covers, with the lights off, so long as your closest neighbor is twenty-five yards away or more. God-forbid your bad habits affect someone else

The bartender is the type I like, a leathery-faced old woman with a mop of scraggly gray hair who refills my glass without my having to ask her to. She does so now, and I thank her with a nod. The bar is dimly lit and the cigarette dangling from her mouth creates a blue-gray cloud around her face, but I think she may have nodded back. I like to think so, at least.

If I ever have a son – and I don't think that's likely, since I'm constantly traveling the country on the heels of the latest natural disaster – I would give him a few pieces of advice. The first would be to make a habit of flossing your teeth every morning and night, same as brushing; the second would be to always tip large the first time you order a drink at a bar. Sure, my teeth are yellow-stained

from forty years as a Marlboro Man, but the glass in front of me is three-quarters full of whiskey gold. And as my father liked to say when confronted by his own uselessness: You can't win 'em all.

There's some chicken-scratch on a cocktail napkin beside my drink. *You can't be too careful in my line of work*, it reads. I have some more to say on the matter, but my attention is drawn to the television mounted on the far side of the bar.

Of course, it's not just people like me who benefit from natural disasters. The news crews get their piece, the people at home get their entertainment. The Red Cross and the National Relief Fund and the mega-churches with their prayer lines, their stocks go way up every time a hurricane or tornado touches down. And then there's the storm chasers – the roofers, remodelers, water damage specialists. People like me.

At least we're building something, repairing, making better.

At least.

I set my pen against the scribbled cocktail napkin, write a few more barely legible lines - something about rooting for the storm. It feels right. I finish my whiskey in two harsh gulps and set the glass down on the napkin. I watch as the moisture from the glass bleeds the ink into hieroglyphs.

I don't know when I started leaving these notes behind. It's not a regular occurrence, but sometimes I have something to say. When the mood strikes, I'll write on whatever is close by – a scrap of receipt, the corner of a thrown away newspaper, a cocktail napkin. Once, I wrote a message on the back of a cereal box at a storm-ravaged Woolworth's in Watford City, North Dakota. Reason I remember is it's my favorite line:

When we got done with it, the house looked like a man with a thousand-dollar haircut wearing two-dollar shoes.

What can I say? I have the poetic sensibilities of a roofer.

You can't win em all.

###

You go to the Keys during hurricane season. Chase tornadoes through South Dakota. Weeks ahead of any natural disaster, advertisements appear for your company – "Now proudly servicing Oak County residents affected by Whatever." You wouldn't believe what a little name recognition can do.

You do the job as best you can, hire others to do it for you when you get too old and beaten down. You're building a company, after all. You're growing. And everyone has to eat, don't they?

But you have to be careful. The money's just too damn good, and if you don't watch out, you'll find yourself rooting for the storm.

I know I did.

Jesse Kemmerer
Falling Waters, West Virginia



Milk No Honey

Photograph

Fabrice Poussin
Rome, Georgia

Cezanne: “The House of the Hanged Man”

Auvers-sur-Oise, 1873

Evening falls but the road still swings left,
up and over the hill. Two houses
gape at each other. Farthest away,
that house with the blue door reflects
all the evening sunlight. A dozen shades
of yellow spangle walls, sills,
gables, those bare but upright trees.
Behind, pearly clouds float like foaming limestone.

Below, land rises and the road folds up sharp, like a jack knife,
its handle a swath of bluntly darkened thatch
crowning stone walls, a parapet
softening in the western gloom,
like last year's grave: rain-flattened grass
cradling the distant valley view, a patchwork
of white chimneys, red roofs, impossibly blue fields.

Leslie Schultz
Northfield, Minnesota

An Argument of Crows

The crows are talking loudly
to each other, some on pitchpines,
some on white oak branches,
stripped of all but a few brown rags.

They're having a heated discussion.
Then one flaps off and slowly several

follow. Finally there are just branches
swaying in a fitful wind. They've all

gone where the first one suggested.
Apparently he/she [I can't sex crows]
won the argument. They hash things
out: consensus is important to crows.

They form a good community, raising
their young and passing on culture
generation to generation, fighting
off owls, hawks, mourning their dead.

Their language is complex. I wonder
are there dialects? Southern, Boston,
Portland, Nova Scotia, Greece? Some
fear them. A woman tamed one here.

She found it injured and nursed it.
After she freed it, it returned every
few days, not to eat but to give her
trinkets or just hang out together.

in winter I feed when needed: deep
snow, ice, storms off the ocean. We
know and trust each other. Sometimes
they've sung arias just for me.

Marge Piercy
Wellfleet, Massachusetts

Slowing

I speeded in California fearing being rear-bumped
off highways. Flying down I-5 one day, I slowed down,
forever, recalling a mortuary billboard, SLOW DOWN.
WE CAN WAIT.

I stroll on cracked sidewalks with small steps
of a kimono-clad, geta-wearing lady
on plum-scented and cherry-lined streets
of Portland,

step aside for e-scooters, sprinters, the coffee-revved
cane-carrying speeding by, leaving me asking,
Where are you going so fast?

I need a flock of sparrows to help me sing
praises to slow love slow mouths slow hands
slow-moving bodies in long nights
nocturnals slow-blooming aglow like the beginning
of life on earth

In slow motion, I smooth-land in the center
of a round black cushion, face a blank wall, still body
startled by LA-rush hour reckless mind,
thought after thought a necklace of crushed roses
and skulls.

Slowly I learn to sit at sunrise at moonrise
thoughts arising vanishing body mind
relaxing in the pause.

Gina Valdes
Portland, Oregon

Marmato, Colombia, August 2016

On the way up the hill, the fog burns off quickly.
Rivulets of last night's rain run down the hill.
A radio plays vallenato music, tinny in the morning air.

Further up the hill, folks walk to work.
An old woman kneels in the gutter, gathers trash intently,
a pile of neatly creased snack bags by her side.

Still further up, the road flattens out.
As the sun clears the hill's edge,
an unexpected dovecote.

Plump white doves nudge each other
into the wakeful day. Seen from above
the landscape stretches in the warming air.

Elizabeth Ferry
Brookline, Massachusetts

Since We're Talking About Stars

Albedo
is a measure of an object's reflectiveness.
The albedo of libido
is zero since any serious reflection
would almost certainly result
in abandoning the enterprise.

Bobby Steve Baker
Lexington, Kentucky

Multiverse

Dropping out

I am working on my dissertation
on knitting as a metaphor in the minor poems
of the later Emily Dickinson
when, in a luminous Blakean vision,

I see myself at the age of forty-five,
as another one of those professors—
pompous and pretentious—
with a tweedy jacket and a long-stem pipe.
Then I hear a volcanic “NO”
erupting from the deepest depth of me,
and I set my dissertation drafts on fire.
Now I rent a room in the outdoor shed
of an Upstate New York farmhouse,
devoid of plumbing and of heat.
Lit crit has ruined Emily for me.
I groove to Baudelaire, Whitman, Ferlinghetti,
write poetry that is published in small presses
that no one reads except my girlfriend,
a sophomore at the local community college,
who is younger and is kind
and has problems of her own.

Selling out

I am working on my dissertation
on hymnal tropes in the minor poems
of the middle Emily Dickinson,
living hand-to-mouth and month-to-month
on an adjunct's salary,
while my college roommate, who started out
in public interest law but switched to contracts,
is making a mint doing mergers and acquisitions.
Then, tired of breakfast cornflakes and dinner macaroni
and a monthly splurge in a fancy Chinese restaurant,
I file my dissertation in a folder labeled “Later.”
Now I write ad copy with metaphors that sell
deodorant and soap, have a duplex
on East End and 83rd,
an Upstate New York country house,
and a wife, and on the side
a sophomore college girl, an English major,
who calls me “sweet sugar daddy.”
I trade in my pipe for good cigars
and don't read any Emily anymore,
which I try not to regret.

Copping out

I complete my dissertation on the use
of deviant diction in the neglected poems
of the early Emily Dickinson,
which I turn into a book that gets a good review
from the MLA, and more importantly, gets me tenure.
Two books later, I make full professor.
Now I walk across the well-kept campus lawn
from my home to my office in College Hall.
My health is good. I don't smoke,
except for my pipe on rare occasions.
I'm content with my marriage,
or at least not very discontent.
I resist the siren song of the sophomore undergrad
from a small Upstate New York town
who wants me to help her with her poetry.
My analyst says I've managed to achieve
a mature accommodation to reality.
But sometimes I wake up at 4 a.m.,
shivering from a dream I can't remember,
and wonder how my agreeable life would seem
were it seen from Emily's slant.

Carl Auerbach
New York, New York

Traffic

Bananas rushing from green to brown,
seldom pausing for yellow.

Daniel F. Gerber
Santa Ynez, California

Her, her

On Facebook, a string of posts
on a friend's page connects me
with an old acquaintance—I
know this because she tells me
she remembers me from long ago,
recounts an incident that involves
us both, one that rings true, but
she insists there is no reason I
would remember her, her

name different now, she says, so
many years gone by. I imagine
a marriage that changes her name,
check her page to see that yes, she
is married. Her cover photo is of
a cat, no help. I forage through
the years for a Carla I remember,
someone I talked with, recognized
by face, by name, who now insists
no reason you would remember me.

But you remember *me*, I think,
and I cannot find you, Carla, hard
as I try. Eventually I ask her, sure
that knowledge of that old name
will trip the switch, bring this Carla
back to me so I can say *Of course*
of course I remember you now.

Bruce, my name was Bruce back
then she writes. I surprise myself
by not being fazed. But frantic
now, I hunt, chase after Bruce
and do not find him anywhere, hate
myself for losing him this way. *I'm*
truly sorry, Carla, I can't remember
Bruce I write.

*It's OK she answers
It was such a long time ago.*

Mary Brown
Anderson, Indiana

Lessons Learned from Salvador Dali

Never dress your child in his dead brother's clothes
or someday he will grow a mustache on his face
that is without peer.

Ricky Garni
Carrboro, North Carolina

The Best Part

Never more happiness, never
a greener stillness of the leaves

than the blue-grey darkness
of the summer afternoon, alone

in the house of his childhood,
the dense air heavy on the

heavy trees around the house,
its walls and windows pressing

the gathering storm around
the jubilant child who isn't there.

Daniel F. Gerber
Santa Ynez, California

Recognition

The day after the chicken dies we attend an award ceremony for my son: Paramedic of the Year. It embarrasses him, the attention. So when he is asked for a few words for the local live-feed, he says that he accepts the honor for his whole department—firefighters don't work alone—and he thanks us, his family, for being in attendance.

"Is that why you're called *pair-a-medics*?" I quip, afterward, during celebratory drinks at the distillery.

He volleys the lame joke gamely. "Working as a team," he says, "just means having someone else to blame when things go wrong."

His wife blames him for the chicken's death. An expensive, exotic breed—a guaranteed layer—it was DOA when my son got home from the farm downstate where the chicken had been raised. He'd transported it with two other hens in a blue plastic tub in the open bed of his bronze pickup, the color of which his wife never cared for.

Poor judgment, she said.

The award is a glass sculpture etched with words that credit my son's service to the community, his "intelligence and compassion." He has yet to decide whether to mount the award above the fireplace at home or to display it in the trophy case at the fire station, with other departmental honors.

The chicken, on the other hand, is wrapped in a plastic grocery sack I'd found in the recycling. My son already knows, he says, what he'll do with that.

Phillip Sterling
Lowell, Michigan



Hope

Photograph

Gary Wadley

Louisville, Kentucky

INSIDE/OUT LITERARY ARTS PROJECT FEATURE

By immersing students in the joy and power of poetry and literary self-expression, InsideOut inspires them to think broadly, create bravely and share their voices with the wider world. Guided by professional writers and celebrated by publications and performances, youth learn that their stories and ideas matter and that their pens can launch off the page into extraordinary lives.

You can help give Detroit's children the joys of reading, writing and bringing their creative spirit into the world by supporting InsideOut, a 501(c)(3) corporation.

Visit InsideOut online at: www.insideoutdetroit.org

The Project is supported by gifts of corporations and people who hope to light the creative spark in our youth. Readers of *Third Wednesday* who see the fire burning in these young poets can help with donations sent to:

InsideOut Literary Arts Project
5143 Cass Ave., Room #225
WSU — State Hall
Detroit, MI 48202

InsideOut places professional writers and poets in Detroit schools to help children give voice to their often turbulent lives through poetry and writing. Since 1995, the organization has served tens of thousands of Detroit students grades K-12 in over 100 different schools. This year they are serving 27 different schools.

InsideOut works with a variety of schools, partner organizations, and artists to help inner-city schoolchildren find their inner voices with which to express themselves and share their stories, which they then do at performances and events presented by InsideOut.

I Am a River

I am a river
that never stops missing you.
Inside me feels like a cave that's missing
important people. Six years of crying,
living without you. You're not there
shining in your rocking chair.

N'kyla Davis

I Can't

make a force field around the Twin Towers,
make a time machine to tell the Haitian people to evacuate.
I can't wake my aunt up to make more memories,
or stop the hatred between countries.
I can't make a big bowl of soup to relieve world hunger.
I can't cure my family's broken hearts,
or blow on trees in the winter so they get their color back.

Eann Dixon

When I Reach Into the Sky

I take the sun and use it as a lamp.
I use a bucket to gather water,
then I fly it to Africa
to give to people who are thirsty.

Quentin Calhoun

How to Fill the Hole in My Father's Heart

I would sweep love into his heart
as if I was sweeping dirt off the curb.
I would make silver and gold appear
in his hand whenever he wanted.
I would take five stars out of the night sky
and make a nightlight just for him.

Jasmine James

Simple

I can make a light bulb
out of fireflies.

Kuemani Jones

The Rain Is Not Rosary Beads

The rain is not rosary beads
forming into a river
that would carry me
to paradise. The ocean
is not a body of water:
it's a big blue field
where birds soar.

J'nae Williams



Gone Crusading

Photograph

Fabrice Poussin
Rome, Georgia



Third Wednesday Magazine Annual Poetry Contest

Judged by Robert Fanning



Low \$5.00 Entry Fee

Three Prizes of \$100.00 and publication in Third Wednesday's Spring Contest issue.

Entry open now through February 15, 2019

As a thank you for your participation, each entrant will receive a PDF copy of the poetry contest issue (a \$5.00 value), so the net cost of your entry is \$Zero. Winning poets and honorable mentions will receive a print copy of the contest issue.

Non winning entries may be considered for publication as a regular submission with the permission of the author.

See our website for details and the link to our portal at Submittable.

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