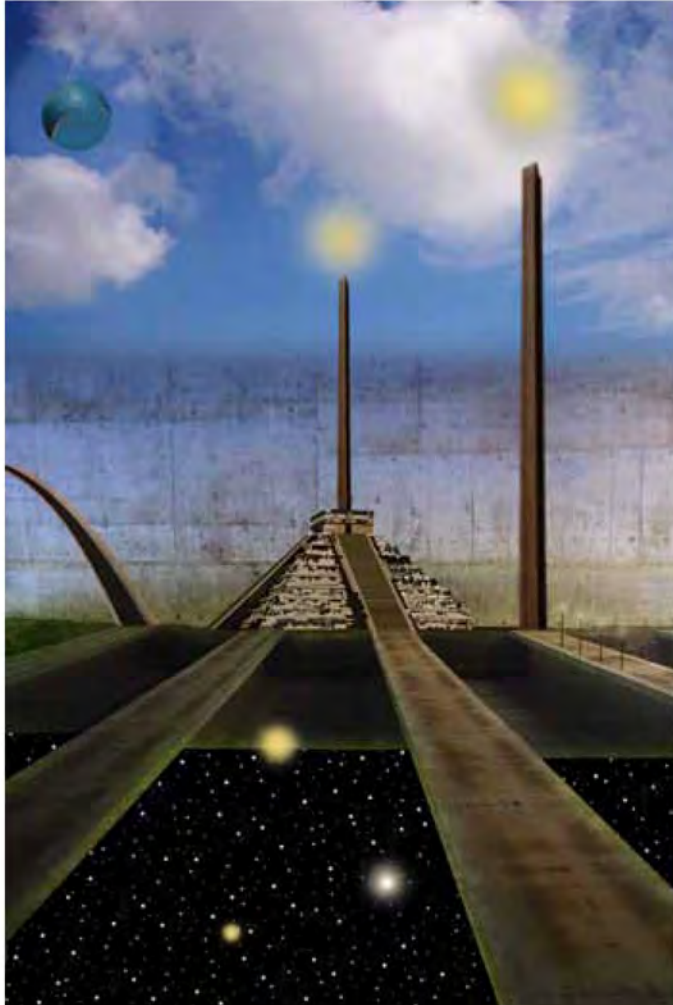


# Third Wednesday

Vol. XII, No. 2



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## Editor's Note for Spring 2019

“The kinds of poems I write—mostly short and requiring endless tinkering—often recall for me games of chess. They depend for their success on word and image being placed in proper order and their endings must have the inevitability and surprise of an elegantly executed checkmate.”

- Charles Simic, *Why I Still Write Poetry*, New York Review of Books

Unlike many journals, T.W. doesn't ask for cover letters or author bios because we don't print them. Thankfully, that doesn't prevent some contributors from sending them, so I often read them (after our editorial decision has been made). While most of them aren't as interesting as the Charles Simic quote above, which describes exactly what we're looking for, they're still good reading. You can find a few of them posted on our website, a sampling of poets from reliable old beaters to shiny new poets fresh off the showroom floor.

This issue includes the winners and honorable mentions from our annual poetry contest. We are pleased with the selections made by our judge for this year's contest, Robert Fanning. In addition to the monumental task of reading and evaluating nearly 450 poems from the contest, Mr. Fanning also curated a special feature of student poems from Central Michigan University where he teaches. This is the latest in a series of student features we have published. We're excited to give this opportunity to young writers, many of whom are seeing their work in print for the first time.

Our summer issue will include poems from our third “One Sentence Poetry Contest”. Submissions are open until April 15th for this popular event. In the past year, some of the best poetry we've published have been poems of a single sentence.

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## The Tides

My father left us  
for the intoxicating Crystal.  
She worked her magic,  
dazzling him with euphoric  
potions, and he was  
overcome by the world  
she showed him,  
the one without us in it.  
His affair began long ago  
and I only recently noticed  
the way he'd get chills in July,  
surging shudders,  
clattering teeth and  
a limited vocabulary,  
reserved for repetition.  
What do you call a relationship that  
keeps you up for days,  
pacing the house  
practicing conversations  
with clients years after  
quitting your job?  
Crystal controlled the tides  
of my father's life and we  
were the sand weathered  
by his crashing waves  
of highs and lows.

Airea Johnson  
St. Augustine, Florida

## **His Words Are Lost In Noise**

Hair in dreadlocks, a Garifuna cleans  
snapper on the dock in noon sun.

His words are a ruckus—  
Wuguri wuri weyu watu

Black frigates cry, bent elongated  
wings, swoop for the remains.

Kate McNairy  
Ballston Spa, New York

## **Board Meeting**

To hell with polar bears,  
their cubs in dugout dens.  
To hell with satanic fires.  
We are businessmen.

Fuel brewing beneath this frost,  
we pipe up to the top.  
Regardless of the cost,  
oil's our cash crop,

our roof, our daily bread,  
our road, our bottom line.  
Some dolphins may be dead  
but God's elect are fine.

More than fine, we're proud  
to resist, to stand alone.  
To hell with the science crowd.  
We rule our spinning stone.

Larry Levy  
Midland, Michigan

## **Lucky Bullets**

I have skills I don't know I have. An imitation of a lab experiment, I'm wide asleep. Jade says I look like a search party, lost. I tell her I'm crawling closer and closer toward the target. She says my clothes may be an asylum, but my dreams are a bull's eye. Often, I wonder why I am the way I am, but what good is it answering a question with a question? I may be an unknown quantity, but I'm familiar with strangers. Jade says she's been trained to recognize the signs of counter-intelligence. I remind her that there's something about secrets that forces me to confess. The radio reports that when police officers are involved in a killing, frequently they're merely acting in self-defense. It's not the notes you play that matter, it's the notes you leave out. Life's a gamble, but what are the odds? Tonight, only the snipers are lucky.

Brad Rose  
Wellesley, Massachusetts

## **It's Just Chips**

Stay in the action, my uncle said, it's just chips  
scared money always loses, don't get out too soon  
he drove a flashy Packard he called The Yellow Peril  
my grandmother in the trunk in a bronze urn sealed  
so if it rolled she stayed put until she could get to  
Kansas City a few years later. Meanwhile she  
toured San Diego and Tijuana as always, to the  
race track, to the bars, to the impound lot one  
night when Reno Pete had a little run-in with the  
law. He said in Tijuana you just slipped the cop a  
sawbuck, rarely more back then, this was the fat  
fifties, and things were looser, not so serious no  
big deal like now when everything outrages and  
offends but undercurrents ran beneath the surface  
smoothness and chickens did come home to roost.  
JFK and RFK and MLK and Malcolm X and the  
freedom marchers and Vietnam all exposed the  
skull and crossbones of the upper class elite and  
when asked, "It's just chips," said Reno Pete.

Guinotte Wise  
LaCygne, Kansas

## **Why I Remember Apollo I**

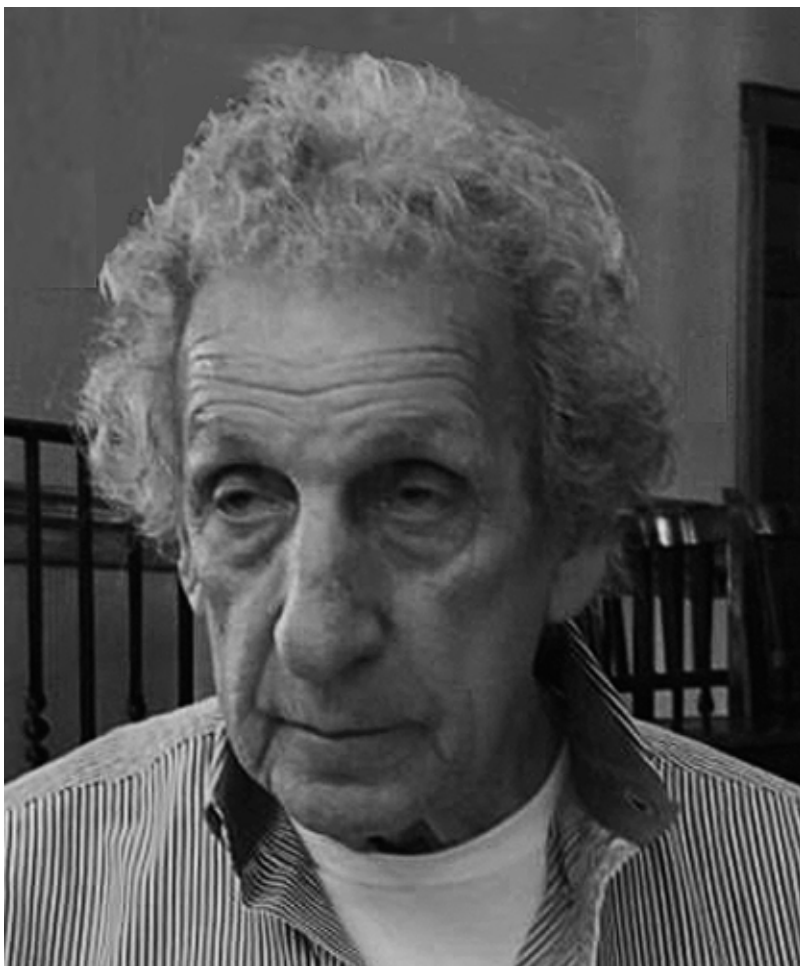
I used to think  
Sister Robert was mean.  
But she was a woman  
who locked things in.  
There was precision  
in the way she walked,

how she held  
her shoulders and head,  
and the same sharp edge  
showed every day  
in her penmanship.

Friends still talk  
about the day Sister  
broke down in class,  
slapping a hardback  
down on her desk  
then ranting how the class  
could behave so bad  
since our brothers  
hadn't burned in a fire,  
one quick flash  
leaving them nothing  
but white bones scorched  
in a bucket of ash.

We were too stunned  
to really understand  
what she'd said,  
but we felt a force,  
a white heat speeding  
up from the floor,  
and as Sister started sobbing  
into her hands  
we saw a flash and  
rocketing streams  
of red and white light  
flowering the air now  
igniting around us.

Mark Madigan  
Springfield, Virginia



**Robert**

*Photograph*

David Jibson

Ann Arbor, Michigan



## Or Have You Ever Wondered Why She is Looking Back?

After Charles Edward Perugini's *A Backward Glance*

Hoping to make sense of the artist's strokes,  
the model sees the nape of her neck turn into  
an unexpected dawn rising between her gathered  
tresses and the low-cut black velvet dress.

Was he aware of the time spent applying the right  
amount of eye shadow, a slight outline of kohl  
and a touch of mascara? She even barely brushed  
some blush over her lips, a natural look he favors.

And yet, her face is left offstage as the brushstrokes  
add light to her naked back above the ruffled décolleté.  
She watches the grain of skin sparkle like sand dunes  
under midday sun, and drowns her sight within  
the shaded area where so much is left unsaid.

Hedy Habra  
Kalamazoo, Michigan

## The Forest After Rain

Every step on the path  
is sculpted in mud  
as the forest appears  
through a drop of rain,  
clung for a heartbeat or two,  
on a yellow loosestrife petal.

Hazy trees,  
more dreamlike than dreams,  
unravel in the light:

the scarlet oak,  
a century old,  
a black tupelo sapling,  
straight as a handshake,  
answering to its name.

The woods as cathedral  
is a description I've heard  
over and over.  
And now, the altar  
glistens gray.  
Crosses gleam in the canopy.  
So concentrated the religion,  
prayers are spoken,  
answered, simultaneously.

John Grey  
Johnston, Rhode Island

## Access

Making moot the barbed-wire they mantle,  
disheveled thickets of blackberry  
fend the river-side shoulder of the road  
where I pause, above the gated rentals.  
The unpicked fruit at hand is shriveled,

but deep in thorn a couple of beauties,  
out of anyone's reach, gladden  
my heart with their open teasing. One more  
mile to the public beach. I continue,  
listening to the current breathe.

Michael Jones  
Oakland, California

## Waiting for a Train

I'm waiting at the station for a train that will carry me away.  
I wait, and read signs posted above the tracks.  
They whisper to me about how to become beautiful and rich.  
They show me how to tend my eyes.  
They speak to me in languages made of light.  
They pulse and they burn and they sing in my ears like drums.  
Because the train is late, I feel an emptiness in my chest.  
I am waiting for night.  
I am waiting for berries to ripen on the yellow bush beside my door.  
I will pick them slowly, eat them in the morning with sugar and cream.  
I am waiting for a dream to come.  
I hope it will gather me into a realm of cloud and rain.  
When it rains, the mountains disappear.  
I walk through a curtain of rain and I am content.  
My feet soak through, my hair knots and curls as the wind blows.  
Sometimes I feel as though I were made of rain, liquid and clear as glass.

Steve Klepetar  
Dalton, Massachusetts

## Boyhood Lesson

The older ladies in their fifties said boys come in different fruits.  
That there are some boys who are like apples  
with red or yellow skin & firm white flesh.  
They are naive & meant to be tended to,  
& eaten until the flesh wilts— & no more!

Some boys are mangoes, sticky & messy,  
Meant to be eaten for fun in chutneys; boys who  
catch the wind wild 'til they deem themselves  
fit in clothes of their fathers to meet girls like them.  
And oh, how they wear and ride them loose until  
they are napkins, serviettes for dust & mud.

Some boys come with pines on their skins,  
all flesh and muscles, factitious physique,  
seem ready for war in bludgeoning mass.  
But no, they don't know their body is an arsenal:  
a stride of their legs an artillery, a thorn of their breasts,  
a club of their fingers... . They are an inbuilt weapon.  
The last boy they sent to heaven never came to earth.

Sometimes they can be water. Like when they pluck  
the oranges from their still, suck up the juices  
& stir the rind in the middle. They let it dry itself  
because too much water floods. They let it empty  
into bliss. This fruit comes in flavours: there is  
the sweet & the sour; each for its own design.

They said these boys do not know a woman  
is the beginning of earth. That Adam was hacked  
in the throat by Eve. That a boy can be locked  
in a body, fed to skin, never to be heard again.

Aremu Adams  
Ketu, Nigeria

## **Keeping Time**

Saying it's too loud, my daughter hands  
me a dead battery alarm purchased for  
those workday mornings without power.

I unscrew the round, vintage-style  
bedside model's back to replace a AA.  
No wheels, cogs, or wound-up spring

inside, just a Made in China stamp.  
I close it up, switch the buzzer off,  
and stand it on a bookcase shelf

light as a beer can in *faux* tarnished  
brass and factory faded face, leaning  
back like a turtle tipping on two legs

with *Crosley*, an old American brand,  
scrolled across the belly. I step away,  
then TICK and TOCK resonate, one

thousand ONE, one thousand TWO...  
So that's what she meant, but the noise  
strikes me as more comforting than loud.

That night I listen to the second hand  
advance and later dream of napping  
near a tall, carved-walnut headboard,

smelling sweet tobacco and charred bowls  
from Grandpa Clarence's pipe rack on the  
white marble dresser top nearby and hearing

from behind wooden wall-clock glass  
a timeless pendulum beat, steady and  
authentic as Grandma Mary's voice.

Raymond Byrnes  
Leesburg, Virginia

### **Ghosting on the Side of the Bed**

After getting up each night around 2am  
he would return and sit on the side of the bed  
for an hour or more or less  
just sitting there  
I would ask if anything's wrong  
everything's right he would say  
I'm just listening to the sounds

I take for granted  
What sounds, I'd ask and he'd reply  
the sounds of a vigilant house  
in the middle of the night  
as it watches over you  
Go to bed you silly old man I'd say  
still say  
at 2am  
as I alone listen to the sounds of a vigilant house

Alan Harris  
East Lansing, Michigan

### **A Loving Rain**

Because sometimes the rain is a loving rain. An imagine-yourself-waist-deep-in-a-field-of-phlox rain. The kind of rain which supposes no one late & the day long. The dog not entirely wet. A rain that debrides a rare earth. That gentles the body into discovery of the softer brinks of its flesh. It's possible I may come to believe in such a rain. For now, I say: I am trying. Afternoons, I listen to old records & practice, feverishly, the so-called maxim of good faith. More so, I practice hope. Which is to say I wish the rain an infinitely well-mannered thing. Still, I am desperate. Too hard-edged. Which is also to say our best ideas need convincing in order to be. Because sometimes the rain is just rain. All ebb & flow. As if it were cut & pasteable water. I hate to say there should be more tumult. That I have become good with inconvenience if it means I can prove myself cursed. So let today's rain be a barbaric rain. A rogue piece of atmosphere with evidence the world is absorbed in its own desires. Funny, as people get older, they develop a liking for the rain. Say they can sense in their bones the first measure of a far-off rain. Meaning a clever rain that idles. This could be the calm before the storm. Could be doves playing dead or a pair of lungs shorn from the wings of God. The sky a purpled torment or single swath of gold. So, I keep my options open. Because every rain is a sudden rain & what is love if not the surprise of one's interest in the earth?

Susan Leary  
Coral Gables, Florida



## **The Lighthouse**

*Photograph*

Tracey Ranauro

Las Vegas, Nevada

## **If Only The Heads Stayed On**

Dan's Lego-people need a hospital  
because he drops them, and their heads fall off.  
Or else they're sitting on their vehicles  
and hit a bump, and then they're down to stumps  
in bright-red pants, a stubborn bottom half  
perched, resolute as always. Kathryn says  
that hospitals can put the heads back on,  
but first you have to find them – and Dan tries,

but Joshua gets bored and wanders. If  
the pegs fit better, or we found the girl  
before the radiator melted her,  
we wouldn't be so short of people. We  
have legs left, and a pair of overalls.  
But somebody should teach them how to fall –

Kathryn Jacobs  
Commerce, Texas

## **Daughter**

If I never tell you anything else  
I tell you this.  
I will hold you up  
until your unsteady  
legs carry you out.  
I will remind you who you are.  
Know your eyes  
are whole worlds worth  
exploring.  
Boundless.  
Beautiful.  
Daughter



Listen.  
Some will lie to you  
about your worth,  
your beauty.  
Some will forget you.  
Forget them.  
I know who you are.

Tucker Lux  
Toledo, Ohio

## Night

After you left, I listened  
for the night sounds  
we'd heard for years from  
the hollow walls and crawl spaces  
of our old Victorian house.  
Flutter of bats, scratch of mice,  
and once a small flock  
of spring birds winging through a corridor  
of dormers. But the house went silent  
without you like moonlight gone to fog  
and the silence settled within me  
weakened me as illness might  
and I began to believe that the loss of hope  
the humiliation of betrayal  
had cracked the bones of my soul  
because I couldn't breathe  
or speak without pain,  
Spring came and then summer,  
perennials opened in border beds  
beneath the sun--  
single-budded tulips, white as boutonnieres,

pink peonies, dense with double buds  
and heavy with nectar-loving ants.  
The earth lifted its leaves and needles  
and I saw that it would all continue—  
the arousal and desire of returning  
the colors and scents, the lovely touching.  
Whether or not I cared again  
Whether or not I wanted to.

Elizabeth Whittington  
Hopkinton, New Hampshire

**To Heaven**  
(For Pittsburgh)

You can't get there from here.  
So go toward the Cathedral  
Of Learning to Liberty Avenue.

Turn right past the Seven-11  
the adult bookstore  
and the Hollywood Theatre

where *Predator, Love and Death*  
and *The Little Buddha*  
are playing. Turn left

at the Salvation Army  
addictions treatment  
and homeless shelter.

Keep walking, past Wal-Mart,  
Barnes and Noble,  
and the Heinz ketchup plant.

When you get to the Merton Center  
you're close.  
There's a small street—

it might be Hamlet,  
maybe not  
—that dead ends in an alley.

Keep going until you  
can't go any further.  
Climb over the wooden fence

with your initials in a heart.  
The bar is right there: *Heaven*.  
Go up a flight. Tell Jésus,

the bouncer, I said 'Peace'.  
Have a *Two Hearted Ale* and just  
listen: The band there is to die for.

Richard Solomon  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

## The Sound Return

The tide has turned its face  
from the shore, once more  
the herring-gulls feed and quarrel  
on the luminous mud  
where lonely boats, abandoned and still,  
wait, listening for the sound  
return of the sea that will come  
like the end of a journey.

Upright figures that stand on rocks,  
the stranger who digs

for bait or for something he has detected,  
the hopes and fears which are his alone.  
The rose-blush of air enters  
the bay on this invigorating day,  
sand-ribbed and rubbed grains  
peel away time, a flight of sky  
seen before the rolling mist returns  
again to listen for the marooned and mysterious cry.

Byron Beynon  
Swansea, Wales

### **Devotion**

At the age of seven,  
beneath the deck outside  
the kitchen door,  
I found my mother's  
favorite dog  
who we'd thought lost  
the previous winter,  
and I knew from the way  
the sagittal crest  
fit in the palm of my hand  
in a muddy pat  
that it must have been her  
with the beagle bark  
and the soft soil eyes,  
but I could not tell  
my mother,  
the one who loved her best,  
of my discovery  
for fear that  
the soft gray bones  
would go away,  
be pulled from the slatted light

beneath the stained deck  
and there would be  
a loss of love  
or the memory of it,  
a lack of protection  
or the spirit of it  
by the kitchen door  
in the hour I first knew  
that such love  
will not endure.

Heather Mydosh  
Independence, Kansas

### **Inside Of Me As Once Inside Of Her**

Lovers from decades ago, I can't  
conjure their faces with accuracy.  
But my mother who died thirty  
years past, her voice is still

caught in my ears like a fish  
tangled in a weir. Her face  
young, middle aged, old hangs  
in my brain as if in a gallery

in a museum, her permanent  
exhibit. Our mothers are part  
of our flesh, our bones. We  
carry them like a blessing

or curse all our days. I hear  
myself shouting her profanity  
exactly when I drop some object  
on my foot or a zipper's stuck.

My life was as alien to her as if  
I were a giraffe or a dolphin.  
I've carried her into lands  
she couldn't imagine, a love

she dreamed of till death closed  
that door. My choices scared her.  
My sex exploits shocked her.  
Yet still she lives in my life.

Marge Piercy  
Wellesley, Massachusetts

## Time Capsule

The twenty-gallon glass water jug  
stood in a corner of the bedroom  
closet, its shoulders coated in dust.

Hefty with coins, it was hard to move  
into the light. When we wiped it  
off, it sparkled with copper and silver.

How many years did it take him  
to save all this, a handful of change  
scooped from work pants at day's end?

Pennies, nickels and dimes left over  
from buying sand or cement or bricks  
or gas held in his lime-chapped palms,

an unexpected bequest not mentioned  
in the will, so heavy we couldn't pick it  
up, so we tipped it so it wouldn't shatter

and poured out a treasure tide tinkling  
like the chimes of an old alarm clock.  
There's a 1918 Wheat penny, a grimy

Mercury dime, a Standing Liberty quarter  
date worn off by decades of fingers,  
a Buffalo nickel in the same decline.

Even a chip of mortar. Years of frugality,  
saving what he could without a word,  
a time capsule of more than small change.

Eric Chiles  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

### **Crossing The Pennines**

So this is the famous pea-soup fog,  
more like dirty clotted cream  
with the occasional red bug  
of a taillight swimming through.

Foot on the brake, utterly terrified,  
my wife mutters imprecations  
against all things English.

Our GPS babbles on, to no avail,  
when I notice a roadside rail, broken.

Bradley Strahan  
Garner, North Carolina

## **Narcissus**

Echo texts again and again with no reply.  
Decides not to call. She is sick of repeating  
herself anyway. She is unhappy with all of her

selfies. Takes them over and over to find  
just the right one for her story. Can't decide  
between the crown of daffodils, the funhouse

look, or the face swap. And even though she  
always seems to end up alone in this  
Glen, she is pleased with the cool filter

on this pic of her by a fountain with an  
egg-white, rhubarb bitters martini until she  
remembers -- he is not following her.

Victoria Nordlund  
South Glastonbury, Connecticut

## **Collected Works**

As if he held another  
body of himself in his hands  
and turned it over and  
looked at it and  
wondered where to set it down.

Dan Gerber  
Santa Ynez, California



## Your Obituary Said You Were Dead

I did not write it, having known an able actress of 22  
in a time of moonstruck ambiguity when everyone  
22 was a starry-eyed prophet, and actress, too.

It said you died unexpectedly, a code perhaps for  
what the psychiatrist once said: emotionally labile.  
He meant you were neither all fragile nor wholly stable.

If I wrote your obituary, it would have said you lived  
unexpectedly and expectantly, eyeing your next betrayal  
so that no one beat you to it this time, this one last time.

If I wrote it, it would be an advice column, a pabulum,  
telling us to unstudy indecision, be done with the thing.  
If I wrote it, it would ring with the poetry of daily murders.

It would curdle tears to icicles for later use, a gloss  
for martinis, clinking the lecture that all losses, all losses  
ring in conjecture, and echo, echo just past us in passing us.

Pamela Sumners  
St. Louis, Missouri

## Vacancy

Our ski trail stretches across white space, the lake gone deep below—  
we kick-and-glide to the point and back, our summer swimming route.

Along the shore, snow-piled cabins stand abandoned. A lime-green  
bass lure hangs from a monochrome dock parked among bare trees.

Two silver rowboats, belly-up, a tilting charcoal grill. Behind  
a blank-eyed row of windows, deep cold sinking into thick joists.

The mice have moved from their snow tunnels to the empty drawers.  
Chairs stand stiffly around a table, almost remembering an old song.

I think of visiting my cousin Susan on our way north—  
how she turned her beaming face to us in the sunny room,

her thin frame limp beneath the nursing-home bedclothes  
like some flubbed magic trick: oops, she's *not quite* disappeared!

Since last time, her Parkinson's has been at work  
serving evictions: muscle going, nerves going, bones

packing their bags. She needs to think hard to swallow now,  
needs help sitting up, yet still hungry for our news

from the old normal: travel plans and kids. I had to lean in close  
to hear sharp steel and heart's flame, insistent in her whisper,

and together we ticked through the family names,  
mostly gone, reminding ourselves as we smiled and smiled

how good it is to be here still: this give-and-take,  
this life, sailing merrily along its surface though

we know which way these tracks must lead, how much  
we'll toss aside, how little we'll leave as we tuck

the spare key under the mat, hear the lock click  
behind us, and turn toward the white lake.

Scott Lowery  
Rollingstone, Minnesota

## **Lest You Forget Who I Am**

I carry salt in my pocket.  
For poems, glass and cinder,  
toss matches over my shoulder  
when the train comes too late

for poems, flint and tinder.  
In case the tide tires and stars slip,  
in case the train comes too late  
through a hole in the fabric -

In case the tide tires and stars slip -  
(are you taking this down in writing?)  
through a hole in the fabric -  
For protection against the Rapture.

You are taking this down in writing  
you crazy and unrepentant uncles!  
For protection against the Rapture  
I declare the endangerment of all

crazy and unrepentant uncles,  
Elvis records, my seventy eights,  
I declare the endangerment of all.  
Place each bluesy box beneath the bed,

my Elvis records, my seventy eights.  
Toss matches over my shoulder.  
Place each bluesy box beneath the bed.  
I carry salt in my pocket.

Ronda Broatch  
Kingston, Washington

## 2019 Third Wednesday Poetry Contest

Our thanks to this year's contest judge, Robert Fanning. Mr. Fanning is the author of four full-length collections of poetry: *Severance* (Salmon Poetry, Ireland, 2019), *Our Sudden Museum*, (Salmon Poetry, Ireland, 2017), *American Prophet* (Marick Press, 2009), and *The Seed Thieves* (Marick Press, 2006), as well as two chapbooks. His poems have appeared in many literary journals. He is a Professor of English at Central Michigan University, and lives in Mt. Pleasant with his wife, artist Denise Whitebread.

“Having read, for months, dozens upon dozens of excellent submissions, and after poring over my pared-down but far-too-long list of finalists, it was brutal picking a winner for this contest. Though any of my list of finalists could have been Honorable Mentions or Winners, what made these winning poems shine was a line or an image that astonished me, diction that flickered with deeper meaning, and an ear tuned to the extraordinary music of language. Congratulations to this handful of glinting poems that caught my ear and eye, from a river thriving with bright poems.”

- Robert Fanning

[Editor's note: Mr. Fanning chose the following poems from nearly 450 poems that were entered.]

## The Three Winners of \$100 (in no particular order)

### On the Birth of an Unlucky Child

A child of the nerve in your one bad tooth,  
hooded with gray amalgam.  
Child floated among marrows so thick

they ossify his lovely skin  
into little more than gauze, his heart like  
a button on someone's sleeve.

A cut of thorns you wear for no one  
but him, the veins he swims  
as sure as shouting in any other room,

any other ear. Perhaps  
there's a sound that isn't the grinding  
of omens, but he isn't it.

Wailing like wind-braille and tree bark.  
Once, he was a marsh  
of body, water tickling boulder-backs

in twitchy runnels, baby  
in a limbo when limbo took babies  
and shelved them high,

same as the unbaptized who were just  
and the unjust who tried  
and tried. He was born undone by

the same rules and chords  
as your own discontent, broken cross  
of dogwood flower,

budded new and the wind somewhere  
already stirring as it  
will do with a late and careless frost.

John Blair  
San Marcos, Texas

### **Forgetting the Color of Hansel's Hair**

if my brother had left a breadtrail instead  
of leaving me  
I wouldn't have met my unbirth mother  
whose hands are blacked  
with licorice roots & whose eyes are beaded  
with coal candy tar  
who taught me to change my body  
when I could change nothing else  
in this house I am  
the daughter who reaches elbow deep in boiling  
stew to pluck out the bones  
the daughter who gathers  
deathcap from the forest & nurtures  
it within her brother's chest  
this mother has never grinned  
so widely as when I matched her arthritic hands  
stitching my brother's lips closed  
poultice of rosemary & thyme inside his teeth  
this mother knows I won't be here forever  
I will grow taller I will sprout antlers  
twine magic that transforms me  
I will be more than breadcrumbs

more than the smell of Hansel's hair  
soft & brown & burning

Hannah V. Warren  
Lawrence, Kansas

### **With An Army At Our Gates**

Even up to the final moment  
when the walls of the city  
collapse, there are people  
going about their usual  
business: A man  
washes out his socks in the sink;  
someone runs to catch the subway;  
a girl in a café orders salad  
while thinking about the argument  
she just had with her lover;  
two professional rivals  
meet on the street and  
nod politely; it looks like rain;  
a mother opens the back door  
to call her children in for lunch;  
an old man coughs  
waiting in line for a matinée;  
the phone rings and  
it is a wrong number.  
All, as if the day  
were no different  
from any other: As if  
an army of men without faces  
were not at our gates.  
A lone honeybee pollinates  
a red, red flower;  
a little girl starts singing

and refuses to stop; she sings  
even up to the final moment.  
Even after it.

W. Luther Jett  
Washington Grove, Maryland

## Two Poems of Honorable Mention

### Estuary

In the trash on the shore  
of the island I found  
my first dried seahorse.

He was completely intact—  
the unmistakable curve  
of the neck and distended belly,

dead eyes of a prehistoric fossil.  
*A Roman soldier with his trumpet,*  
I say to myself, and I don't think twice

as I swaddle up his spikey  
little corpse. Never mind the smell.  
I clean his waffle skin with

a toothbrush, wonder which species  
he is related to, has he evolved much.  
It's hard to envision this minute dragon



bobbing upright in the gloom  
of a seagrass bed, his jaundiced eyes  
illuminated by the sun.

It's hard to imagine  
he was ever alive, to begin with.  
Dead dreams of an estuary.

I prop him up in the bathroom  
for a day. After a fit of nightmares  
I return to the shorefront,

bury him quietly in the dark.

Ana Pugatch  
Fairfax, Virginia

### **So I Gave It**

Always, I'll recall  
the night your question  
shadowed me:  
a rabble of cicadas beat  
on inbuilt tambourines;  
the air a four-cornered curtain--  
smell of wet velvet, of wet dog, of glue;  
the set of your face--  
eyes open-caved,  
your lips made of sunset--  
awaiting an absolution  
I alone  
could give.

Jessica McEntee  
Westport, Connecticut



**LawNorder**

*Photograph*

J. Ray Paradiso

Chicago, Illinois

## Solo

She sits cross-legged on the bed,  
a slip of a girl.  
Elbows bent, lips pursed,  
she holds up a flute  
and marks time  
to the steady rhythm  
of the stately metronome  
standing straight and proud  
on her nightstand.  
She whispers a secret to the flute,  
and its first notes  
float in the air,  
mystical gaslight in the fog.  
Though measured and metered,  
captured and welded  
to dark bars of five lines,  
they are, at the same time,  
free to wander.  
They drift into the ears  
of those who listen for them,  
then they drift away again.  
The notes are,  
and will always be,  
vagabonds, loose in the world,  
their travels mapped  
by the will of a secret.

Cynthia Pitman  
Orlando, Florida

## Torch Song

Look at him! Just look  
at what the years have done.

The hostess leads me through the dining room  
toward him. I *refuse*

to see myself  
an hour ago  
before the hotel bathroom mirror. Fluorescent light.  
Cringing at the sight of me —  
gray strands threading through  
what once was chestnut hair, liver spots  
on backs of hands, belly lipping over  
waistband. Eczema! — that little island  
of decay between my brows. O Death,  
you stake a foothold on my flesh.

But look at him. Just look!  
He can barely reach the table for his girth  
as he levers scrambled eggs from plate to mouth.

Seated now before him, I will make my point.  
I order coffee.  
Black.

Forty years. The dorms. A floor apart,  
reclining on his roommate's bed,  
smoking pot,  
plotting revolution,  
laughing at the National Lampoon.

Toward the end of freshman year he fell in love  
and I was out. Sitting with his roommate  
on the hallway floor, those noisy thumps inside,  
the laughter and the moans,  
with her.

He friended me on Facebook several months ago.  
Thrilled to see my post about a conference in Houston —  
*Hey! I live there! Let me take you out for breakfast,*  
he had written, *at the hotel's restaurant.*

They married after college. I had transferred  
to another school.

Three kids. *We're blessed*, he says  
as he pushes one last strip of bacon in his mouth.

We try rehashing skits from SNL — Belushi, Ackroyd,  
alas! poor Gilda Radner —until a silence, then a longer  
silence stretches out between us,  
heavy as the sweet roll he devours in three bites.

*It's so good to see you* — now he shakes  
his head, and...tears!  
*It's a shame we never got together*  
*sooner. Sure you don't have time to come*  
*to dinner at our place?*

Yes. I know I'm sure. Where's the waiter? Where's the need  
to try to challenge as he offers, *Let me get the check.*

Leland Seese  
Seattle, Washington

### **The Soon of Spring**

On a clear night  
we're told the human eye  
can spot a single flickering candle  
  
at a distance of thirty miles or more  
  
but it's only the landscape we see  
our coats billowing, breath taken by the wind.

William Reed  
Cedarburg, Wisconsin

## **What Is Chartreuse Anyway?**

put the drink down you said quietly

they have 14 gins and  
nine scotches here I said

the glow of my cigarette was optimistic  
you're so pretty when you're mad I said

I'm sorry but I love you I said  
your clenched fists stared at me

I'm leaving now you said  
what an awful mess you've made

but the bar has all my favorite things I said  
into the big emptiness of your leaving

I've had worse days in my life I said

Debbie Collins  
Richmond, Virginia

## **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

### **The Fold**

*"The corners of death fold us into ourselves."*

*- Loretta Diane Walker*

Mother and I are sniping. This visit  
has been that way. The farm is rundown  
as she is now, at 94, bent over her walker,  
bare-knuckled in her independence.  
She says I mumble. I say she never listens.  
We know this game. I'm packing to go home,  
and she calls, "Do you want breakfast?"  
I mutter yes, knowing she won't hear.  
It starts again.

I'm her favorite and visit least. I'll look back  
on this weekend, feel guilt. She will win  
another round. This time when we hug goodbye,

there are no tears. As I drive away I glance  
back to make sure she's still in the doorway,  
watching.

Sarah Russell  
State College, Pennsylvania

### **The Last Days of Sam Snead**

He stepped up to the first tee, the old master of the Masters, tipped that classy straw hat, waggled his faithful driver, took that easy back swing, the one that had taken him cleanly down every trip to the green, and hooked his drive smack into the gallery of acolytes sending their awe into the horror of disbelief. Everything stilled: the azaleas gaudy in their pinks, the caddies cleaning the clubs of the next in line, the prim protectorate of Old Augusta. Sam stood stunned for no longer than a follow through, apologized to the worshipper who had taken the hit, shyly took a drop, and hit a three iron out onto the sloping grass, shuffled down the fairway, eye fixed on the flag. This should have been the last drive of a god, a slam from Olympus, the ball starting out low, then rising into the sweet southern air, lingering at its apogee against the impossible Georgia sky, then landing with a twitch of suspense just past the dreaded edge of a yawning bunker, rolling another thirty yards to a quiet stop in the center of the clean cut roll of the grass. No one knew this would be Sam's last drive off a number one tee. It's embarrassment that drives us out even



for a master who carried his clubs with grace,  
always styling the perfect swing. Maybe  
it came as a sigh of relief for all who had  
stepped up to the tee, three foursomes waiting  
to hit, all those who had taken a dozen practice  
swings, shifted their weight until everything  
felt just right, adjusted their grip one last time  
and coming down into the ball had topped it  
sending it off like some buckshot riddled rabbit  
hopping down the fairway fifty yards at best.

Jack Ridl  
Douglas, Michigan

### **Inheritance**

when I die, I will leave you the collection  
of books I never read but meant to, the ones  
I did read but kept because I meant to  
read them again, the collection of dust  
I left behind the chair I wanted to keep  
even though we couldn't sit in it because  
it was broken but I couldn't let it go

I will leave you the collection of things  
I left unsaid but planned to say and never  
got around to, the dirty socks in the laundry  
and shirts in the dryer that needed ironing

I always meant to get around to that too  
but you always got there first

I will leave you the argument about the color  
of the walls when we got the house repainted  
or where to put the couch, the gold pocket watch  
I inherited from the grandfather I never knew

the watch I meant to get appraised but never  
got around to either, the hope it will be worth  
enough to let you take that trip we will never take  
to Nova Scotia or maybe Idaho or Madagascar  
to see the lemurs before they are all gone

you can keep your memories of me  
if you want to, and I will leave you the part  
of my heart that really belongs to you anyway  
and that feather of regret that rests at the far side  
of the pock-marked shelf in the living room

I will leave you jars of pickles, cherry conserve  
and bottles of mustard at the back of the fridge  
and the wedge of cheese that wasn't meant to be  
moldy but probably will be by the time you find it  
hiding under the mandarin oranges perched  
on slices of smoked turkey breast

and I will leave you the smell of my sleep  
and my waking up every morning

James K. Zimmerman  
Pleasantville, New York

## **Red Stilts**

Seventy years ago I made a pair of stilts  
from six-foot two-by-twos, with blocks  
to stand on nailed a foot from the bottom.

If I was to learn to walk on stilts I wanted  
them red and I had to wait almost forever  
for the paint to dry, laid over the arms

of a saggy, ancient Adirondack chair  
no longer good for much but holding hoes  
and rakes and stakes rolled up in twine,

and at last I couldn't wait a minute longer  
and took them into my hands and stepped  
between them, stepped up and stepped out,

tilted far forward, clopping fast and away  
down the walk, a foot above my neighborhood,  
the summer in my hair, my new red stilts

stuck to my fingers, not knowing how far  
I'd be able to get, and now, in what seems  
just a few yards down the block, I'm there.

Ted Kooser  
Garland, Nebraska

## **Oranges and Anniversaries**

Beside us, silence breathes.  
Beside us, silence breathes.  
The sound sits, stuck  
on our lips.

We pet the cats,  
put on coffee,  
slice oranges,  
never sensing the same wind.

Our hours bear  
an unkind calmness  
that hovers,  
fracturing thoughts unsaid.

Even so –  
I want your still arm  
to rise from its side  
and brush the top of my shoulder  
with fingers  
in a way that needs no words.

Cynthia Ventresca  
Wilmington, Delaware

### **Home is Just One More Piece of White Plastic**

My father didn't use metaphors  
to make meaning in the world,  
so when he tried to make me  
a better baseball player, he taught  
techniques I should take literally:  
when my frame was too small  
to find enough force to return  
the ball from the outfield fence,  
he showed me how to crow-hop,  
not to overcome obstacles I would  
encounter later in life, just to  
make the ball fly farther; and  
when he saw me strike out one too  
many times, he turned me to the other  
side of the plate, not as a way to see  
the world through another's view,  
a way to develop empathy for those  
who are different, but out of exasperation  
at my lack of connection; but when  
he tried to turn me into a pitcher,  
when every throw went high or low  
or wide, he unknowingly became  
my Buddha, gave me a *koan* for life

after he had left it, for a way to endure  
all the losses that have and will come—  
*Don't aim the ball, he said. Just throw.*

Kevin Brown  
Harrison, Tennessee

### **Sam and Saul**

The twins were prodigies  
in math and music.  
Saul played cello,  
Sam the violin.  
By the time they were three  
experts were measuring  
the elasticity of their brains  
and listening  
to their rendition  
of Pachelbel's Canon  
with tears in their  
calculating eyes.

We preferred The Stones  
to Pachelbel  
and treated the guys  
as if they were normal.  
Mostly they were,  
as long as you didn't invite  
them to play poker  
at stinky B's after basketball  
or try to beat them  
at Scrabble or chess.

Saul sickened and died  
the year they were to start  
at the Institute for Advanced Study.  
Our parents spoke of leukemia—  
murmuring "blessedly quick,"

as if a mantra to ward off evil.  
They buried him on a day in March  
so raw, it was a relief  
to be in the overcrowded synagogue  
listening to sorrow  
recited as it should be—  
in the ancient language  
of Torah.

After the service,  
Sam sat all alone  
in the bitter cold  
outside their apartment building  
and played his brother's cello—  
it was the most beautiful thing  
I'd ever heard.  
He played through the sunset.  
He played until  
his father gently took his hand  
and helped him up  
to their half-empty home.

Steven Deutsch  
State College, Pennsylvania

## **June Thunderclouds**

*à la Tom Hennen*

Soiled laundry pushes and shoves the sky,  
spray-washed with drizzle  
from agitated branches.  
There is no end to the world's laundry.  
No end to the exuberance of leaves.

Carol Deering  
Riverton, Wyoming



## **The Time Machine**

*Collage*

Bill Wolak

Chicago, Illinois

## Central Michigan University Student Poets Feature:

Curated by Robert Fanning

### 3 x 3

I was walking past the village of crows  
their eyes black, x-ed out  
filling rounding sockets.  
I wanted to play tic-tac-  
toe with the mirror –  
but she told me to go to bed.  
I laughed all night imagining crows  
with pens, marking lines with crooked claws.  
3 x 3 – one bird wins, and then the rest  
devour him in his sleep.

Amanda Olsen

### Let's

Get lost in frosted catacombs,  
watch moss grow 'cross forgotten bones,  
sing hymns from old erotic tomes,  
like no one else before.

Kiss in silent bathroom stalls  
and desecrate cathedral walls,  
scat hearts on beau-tiful banal,  
like no one else before.



Weave bracelets out of misery  
and yellowed nails and smokers' teeth,  
used needles on our Christmas wreath,  
like no one else before.

Match outfits with our Lexapro,  
use Netflix dates to overdose,  
drip smut 'cross sick sardonic notes,  
like no one else before.

Duncan Tierney

### **My Sister Went to Vienna and Never Came Back**

We are born from the shelves of a Meijer, you and I,  
from Crayola corner suns and Ovaltine with every meal.

Sharing a bed until I am eight and you are twelve  
because I am afraid of the dark. You roll on my hand in sleep.

It goes numb, a distant satellite.

At eighteen you are skinny dipping in a neighbor's hot tub  
in October, bare feet on dead leaves, with your boyfriend

who wears you like an old T-shirt. I hear your laughter  
float up like steam over the fence and condense on my window.

Down the hall, dad fucks my math teacher.

That night, for the first time in years, you climb into my bed.  
Your wet hair on my pillow, we sip whiskey

from our parents' wedding china. Mom's headlights outside  
illuminate your face, tears falling into the teacup in your lap.

When we grow up, our fears grow up with us.

Dad's face folds in sorrow standing at the airport terminal, pulling  
your suitcase you've had packed under your bed since you were 15.

I want to ask you to stay, and what your tattoos mean,  
and if they hurt more or less than when our dog died.

Two years later, I want you to come home.  
*We are like turtles*, my mother responds, sitting on a folding chair

in her new apartment blowing cigarette smoke out the window,  
*we take our homes with us*.

I wonder if she knows her voice is still on dad's answering machine.

I like to imagine you, then, finding mom's sister in Austria,  
eating veal and sauerkraut and maybe drinking chocolate milk.

Anna Shapland

### **Rummaging Through Your Room**

Here's to the way  
your neck snapped

up from your Gameboy  
whenever your mom'd barge  
into your room.

Here's to how you'd  
lose yourself

in that handheld  
landscape the same way  
I did as a kid. Your death

is a cartridge  
I wish I could remove

from my system,  
my hollowed electronics.  
An experience to pull,

to lose on the floor like all things  
I've learned to discard.

Here's to the process  
of unplugging things.  
The shutting off, the powering

down. Remind me, again,  
what's the cheat code

I need to forget you, or at least  
remember you differently?  $\times \times a b$ ,  
*left right left, up up down.*

All the moves we think we have  
to make.

Benjamin J. Kuzava

## Sibling

My mother has a second set of eyes  
on the spot that Dad kisses her neck  
watching me through the ceiling while I shower,  
or clip my toenails. It sees the things Mom  
imagines probably happen under this rented roof.  
Her cancer knows what position I sleep in,  
catches our incontinent dog finding relief at 3 am.  
It's witnessed me climb school bus stairs,  
turn keys in cars and dorm room doors.

This humid mass under layers sucking and colicky.  
This spongy bulge soiling arteries and rolling.  
This pregnancy grasping spine in Mom's throat womb.

Mom's had tumors removed three instances in my life,  
but each time this abnormality clung with parasitic gums.  
Doctors swaddled it with used needles  
in a bio-hazard bin but left a pinky toe, a right earlobe  
nuzzled behind a vein or muscle, a seed to sprout  
just when things start to get decent again.  
Someday I'll walk along the mouth of the Two Hearted  
where Mom's ashes are spread, see a thyroid flower,  
and know baby sibling is all grown up.

Elizabeth O'Donnell

### **Ghosts Revisit**

Some trauma there is no recovering from  
by loving men who were only violent somewhat.  
What has been done unto us is who we become.

He left months ago, yet here he is telling me how he's newly numb  
from a party with a drunken man and a slick crew cut—  
Some trauma there is no recovering from.

I hold his hand, brush knuckles that once beat me dumb  
and listen to his violent heaves, my lips pursed shut.  
What has been done unto us is who we become.

A heart in anguish so ineffable I hear it as a drum  
as he screams about how he felt it rip through his gut.  
This trauma there is no recovering from.

We weep together for both our broken selves, one solemn hum  
My empathy exceeds anger and I try not to remember but  
some trauma there is no recovering from—  
what has been done unto us is who we become.

Elizabeth Waitkus

## Like a Butterfly

Summer night in Benton Harbor, 1998, Muhammad Ali  
kissed my pregnant mother's belly. I was born  
easily, quietly. Made all my pleases, pretty;  
Made all my punches, taps. Preserving energy  
for the good fight—compassion takes a slow,  
persistent way of life. Came out like a butterfly;  
product of patience. Preferably peaceful, preferably  
a lover with no need of sting, but hit me  
and I assure you,  
I can hit back.

Hannah Stark

## Considering Emily

I have never loved someone so much  
that I didn't want to kiss.  
I want to kiss strangers on the street,  
women with waterfall eyes and tanned skin  
like an apple picker in mid-July  
who pets birds with only their fingertips  
fingertips that graze mine when  
they hand me the book I dropped.

I don't want to kiss you, though.  
You who everyone wants to kiss.  
You who I have shared secrets with  
that I've told no one else,  
certainly no one I've kissed.  
Secrets like my dream about a giant  
orangutan with laser eyes who destroyed  
my childhood home.  
Secrets like what porn I watch, or don't,  
or how more than anything,  
I just want someone to kiss my hand.

Never so closely have I held the image  
of someone to my heart.  
Like the image of your crooked glasses  
and gray hoodie you fell asleep in  
after reading too late into sunrise.  
Of you sending me greasy haired selfies  
to match the double chins I sent you.  
Or of you cooking spaghetti for me  
while watching those Korean dramas  
you love so much.

I remember you calling me about the boy  
you met in Korea and how he broke your heart.  
I've always stumbled in things like  
comforting people  
never skilled with words  
outside my head.  
Still, you laughed when I offered  
to punch him in the face.  
Or the dick. Or both.

My birthday present was going to the zoo  
with you, with the penguins and the kangaroos.  
We ate nitrogen frozen ice cream  
from bowls covered in cartoon animals.  
I drove two hours to see you for three.

Never have I loved someone so much  
I would call them over my mother  
to talk me through a panic attack  
because a character on a show  
committed suicide.  
When I hug you, I feel the warmth  
of every mother humming goodnight  
tunes of babies falling from trees.

Gene Agee

### **The List Series: (an ongoing collective)**

*a small list of things i wish i could encounter  
upon being romantically rejected by you:*

- whichever whale swallowed Noah
- the milky way galaxy's super massive black hole
- a spaceship recruiting untrained, civilian astronauts
- a paper bag boutique
- the Bermuda Triangle
- all of the quicksand used on cartoon network in the 90's
- an impossibly large vacuum sweeper
- an uncharted, solitary island
- a reformation camp for the shameless
- the disappearing place of everyone's second sock
- a convention for "mom friends" trying to be taken care of
- a man who doesn't think I'd make a cool second source  
of attention and notices my bare skin
- you, still, be it hopeless or not

### *List of Things I've Done in the Kitchen (1998)*

- Been washed warm in the sink by the dryer rack
- Received free haircuts from underneath a glass bowl
- Scarred my skin for the first time, accidentally
- Pulled down window shades mom said to keep up
- Fed myself
- Starved myself
- Laid with limbs stretched like a star ready to shoot itself
- Left my best knife in the drawer on nights it felt most like a weapon

### *List of Moving Essentials for the Sentimental and Emotional*

- Pack the bottle opener on top
- Listen: "Till it Shines" by Bob Seger
- Read: "Moving Day" by Neil Hilborn
- Exercise needs for expression
- Fresh air and fresh water
- Half open blinds (at least)

- Half open heart (at least)
- Calming color schemes
- Plants to grow with you
- Text your mom “I’m okay.”
- Tell your nerves “I’m okay—  
even if change does come  
harder to me than most.”

Hannah Stark

### **Parentheses of a Deep Breath**

Once I went to  
a Santeria ceremony  
where a woman  
handed me a goat skull  
and an egg with red spots  
in the yolk.  
She told me I am already dying,  
said my eyes have been saying  
a slow goodbye for a while now.

I have been drinking, feverishly,  
earth’s milk from a bowl,  
finding, and staying in, every place  
I’m not supposed to be:

The graveyard on an island  
where no one I know is buried  
(I like the name Aphranus  
and the way the cool imprint  
of letters on a headstone sink  
into my palm).



The edge of the highway where  
I saw a deer hit by a truck writhe  
through streaks of its own blood  
(I still watch its broken back heave until  
night rises like fog in my rearview mirror).

The neighborhood haunted house,  
just a lot now. I imagine  
the way a mother's sigh felt like rain  
as she watched it go up in flames  
(she never saw it, but I'm sure she dreams  
she did every night: her 14 year old son,  
accidentally shooting  
himself with his father's pistol).

On my knees  
on your bed,  
again  
(faith is one form of death).

Sometimes I'm sure I am a balloon,  
tied here by some elephant anchor  
I've never learned the name of.

Sometimes I lie  
in the woods  
and think about how a boy  
accidentally put a pistol  
against his teeth,  
how maybe he wanted  
to know the feeling of thunder,  
how maybe, when we go,  
the whole universe  
exhales in the color of smoke.

Isabella Barriklow

## A Reckoning

A twirling rearrangement of the stars  
aligning into something flawless.  
The heavens have raised the bar.  
It feels like there should be a law—

against this repositioning of blue  
and green. The everything in-between.  
A constellation of chemicals, a breakthrough  
of atoms so few have ever seen.

The swirling of the navy rivers  
and the rustling of strawed grass,  
even the desert cannot help but shiver.  
Or the air crack as if it is glass.

The universe gives a sort of bow  
at the blessing we've been allowed.

Kaitlyn Weisdorfer

## An Overweight Sestina

Every time you see online advertisements for jeans,  
remember your body will never look exactly like that  
model. Graphics like that could never be perfect.  
Imaginary body-type labels don't really matter;  
there's nothing wrong with having a little extra fat,  
until you're told you're not a real woman.

Compare each curve of your body to the woman  
next to you. Look at the way her jeans  
cling to just the right areas but avoid the fat

on her thighs and wonder why you can't look like that.  
Looking like everyone else shouldn't matter,  
except it does. If you don't, you'll never be perfect.

Remember all of your skinny friends always look perfect,  
regardless of what they wear. But even those women  
struggle and feel like their bodies do not matter,  
because fitting in size zero jeans  
does not equate to "healthy." That  
mindset hurts all of us, not the fat.

Why do we even hate the word "fat"?  
It's an overused adjective, just like "perfect."  
People throw it around like an insult but that  
shouldn't affect your self-worth as a woman.  
Why not let your beautiful body hang over your jeans  
(as if it's only the jeans that matter!)?

Regardless of size, we're all just made of matter.  
Why does that matter not matter when it's fat?  
Why do we forget our bodies are influenced by genes,  
too? We all know no one is perfect.  
Your body shape is not what makes you a woman,  
and yes, you're allowed to look like that.

Society says, "Fuck that."  
Of course the size of your body matters.  
It's what designates you as a real, desirable woman.  
Real women have curves, but real women don't have fat.  
No one will want to be your partner unless you're perfect,  
which means you need to wear the right sized jeans.

Only the numbers on your jeans and on that scale  
can determine if you'll ever be perfect or ever truly matter.  
That is what it's like to be a fat woman in America.

Jade Driscoll

## Poem 1

Wind bitten from fall stumbles through frost-sieged windows tinted dark,  
The glass is strewn with fractured promise, and in cold hands he holds a rescinded spark.  
*Could sunlight ever cut through something so stubborn?*  
The grease streaked boots on his feet weigh heavy,  
and smudge something so free of mark.  
*How could something so fragile not meet its maker eventually?*  
The sight outside screams of death, bereavement, with fallen leaves against snow sitting stark,  
*How could two things so different belong together, anyway?*  
He wonders if bad fortune was just of the timing, or if fate had simply found its mark.

Kelli Cywka

## Feathers

I carry this bag  
    A canvas casket about to spill  
        It overflows with pricking cores  
            Light at first, determined to fill

They flit as the fall from the air  
    Such sweetened fuzzies kiss my skin  
        You must think they are harmless  
            You have yet to understand what is hidden within.

Let them deceive you  
    I know looks can do such a thing  
        But these feathers are a nuisance  
            What is their purpose to a creature with no wing?

They let go when ready  
    Like all dead things do  
        But they do not leave  
            They come back again, like grass and it's dew.

Yes, it's a burden  
Why wouldn't it be?  
My bag of molted feathers  
Holds every broken part of me.

Lainey Williams

## **The Botfly**

### Phoresy

What are mothers for, but to swaddle  
and contain. I was delivered by the blood  
hungry stork, looking for a capillary bed  
to deliver me into, a place to gorge herself  
on foreign blood. She has her own children to feed.

### Myiasis: First Instar

It was your warmth that attracted me, always.  
mothers are cold-blooded by nature, they are called on  
to breed, not to care. Chitin cannot replace flesh,  
and yours was so soft: a perfect womb. I emerge  
and enter your body, speak your name, Mother.

### Second and Third Instar

Your body is swelling around me, we move  
in tandem: perfect symbiosis, this amniotic sac  
its rich pus-like milk. I grow and grow again, peeling  
away my fetal skin, turning over; I wonder  
if you know what you are capable of, Mother.

### Pupation

Have you felt me moving these last weeks?  
I am full now, satiate and pulsing  
crown and slip from your body, I am falling,  
Mother.

### Maturation

I have found a mate; she has been called on to breed  
The blood hungry stork is coming.

Lexie Morgan

## Trauma

You bags of trick and witchery,  
You hollowed-bone cacophony  
You wicked—waking me from peace  
To beat my bloody soul.

You aching, midnight retching  
Whiskey-tasting lips.  
You whispering whip,  
You silent, striking bits  
Of who I was before.

You clock thunder, constant ticking  
You desiccating lungs and faith  
You winning cage,  
You blunt blade  
Still burning.

Liza Gutierrez

## Bird

dead apple red it had  
a twisted neck with  
swollen belly  
protective

the only thing not  
sticky from grease on  
papa's workbench

I missed his cracked  
hands with dirty  
fingernails every  
so often

bird was one more  
thing he chose  
to leave behind  
that day

I like to think  
he left it for me

It comes with me now  
I think it brings me  
luck

he will come looking for  
it one day and  
find me instead, smile  
or take back what was his and  
walk away

Marisa Stroebe

### **Thanksgiving Shot**

My father swayed in his last year's Christmas slippers and  
shot it on Thanksgiving morning.  
The buck staggered away from the muddy river  
bank into the dense wood.

My father leaned in his burgundy bathrobe against  
the maple that used to hold my tree-house.  
I twiddled with my fork, a sausage link stabbed on the prongs.  
He walked into the kitchen with the gun  
in his hand and sat down at the table.  
He scooped scrambled yellow eggs past his wiry beard.  
It danced on his face as he chewed.

I let the sausage fall.  
It rolled across my plate.  
My mother wiped her hands on her apron  
and shoved the round turkey into the oven.

Marisa Stroebe

### **Jesus Whispers the Secret Name**

*Matt. 9:20–22, Mark 5:25–34, Luke 8:43–48*

Jesus touched the hem of a woman who was really a man.  
with blood never ceasing, she didn't need  
any more shame.

by day he was Martha, but each night  
he would return to his husband, bind  
his chest with the tight cotton  
tube he'd sewn, put on the secret  
shorter tunic with a man's tzitzit,  
replace his belt with one less  
femininely adorned. he'd crush  
cochineals, smear carmine  
over his peach fuzz. he laid  
extra cloth on the ground, let  
his husband enter from behind —

it was a kind of pride. secret  
neither would utter, locked door  
only they could enter, a kind  
of stained glass chamber. *Mark*,  
that sacred name none knew.

no one else would let him touch them.  
that holy cloth of Jesus was all  
he could get his hands on. yet Jesus,  
He still called it touch — *Who*



*touched Me? Who touched Me?*  
still Jesus hailed the faith  
of the perpetually unclean, all sinners  
Pharisees & Sadducees declared  
obscene, said “go and be freed  
from your suffering” and leaned  
that godly face, mouth grazed  
against Mark’s ear. the crowd  
silenced before the whisper:  
“Mark, I know.  
Go. Be free.”

Jesus paused, furrowed His brow —  
eyes only seeing the other’s —  
then kissed the untouchable forehead

as if to say  
he knew  
one night,  
He too would bleed.

Rob Linsley

## **Tumor**

Golden white hair  
but we called it yellow

One day we saw you  
tilted and turning  
in the silk-soft grass  
in the candy-colored sunlight

We wanted to know how you felt  
but you couldn’t tell us

One week later  
your breathing stopped  
on the examination table

My father who had known death  
sat with me  
his hand on my shoulder  
as I cried in his car  
after baseball practice

Mark Ryan

### **Concrete Stains**

Concrete carries stains so deep rain cannot wash them away.  
Contact with liquid creates a portal of coagulated blood.  
Look in and you see the marionette murderer.

The legislative puppet master controls from the veil of Capitol Hill.  
As his strings move, the marionette sways like a phantom  
haunting those with marked skin.

Their skin is a homing beacon, nothing else exists.  
They were arguing about sports,  
a neighbor with cat-like ears made the call.

The marionette appears in all blue—tool in hand.  
Now their stains are stories.  
The world moves on, but their parents never will.  
Families now carry those stains.

Sidney Williams

## In The Natural World I Feel Fake

in the natural world, I feel fake,  
wrap vines around my stomach, thorns  
caressing chest, blood like kisses down  
shadowed curve of ribs that jut  
from flesh, ivory bone thick with heaves  
that shift like moon-tugged waves.

Orion's belt in bruises up my spine,  
weight of shattered stars and fallen  
leaves, mark my body with foreign  
memory. I pluck pubic hairs like petals  
and wish for different stems.

Summer LaPointe

## East and 7 Mile

*"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."*  
—Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

The mortar in the hottest mug  
for my mind. A check-up every quarter  
'cause that silver spoon can't fix me.  
Mixing the herbal essence of nerves congested,  
my nervous presence.  
Mama ain't raise no fighter.

Snot-nosed babies in diapers clinging to me,  
they all sick. No money for medicine, they congested.  
The bad one's got a temper, say he a fighter,  
won't get him past 3rd so his brother teach him to sell a quarter.  
His mom anointed, but he not covered by even God's presence.  
All he's got is unlearned lessons and money under his mama's favorite mug.

Sprinkled with teenage girls and fear, the corners congested,  
'cause her brother's in jail. She's shaken down for a quarter,  
that's all she's got. The girls don't like her, they say they wanna fight her,  
and she ain't scared. She been ready for it, when the time presents  
itself. All she wants is a hug, tired of being tired, but all she gets is a mug.  
She breathing, but her prayers consist of wishing to "not be alive, I can't be me."

I'm not from here. A check-up for a quarter  
don't work 'cause that's not where it hurts me.  
My heart be broken, my people like pack mules congested  
in jails 'cause ain't no work but selling work. Their presence  
is a disgrace. But oppression's sweating 'cause they some fighters,  
ain't going down without justice. Say "we busting out of this mug."

She's a suburban girl. The only people trying to fight her  
are her friends' parents. They can't stand to see her shine, and hate her presence  
in school. The only drug she knows is Robitussin, and has never seen a quarter.  
She's a well-off child, so she calls her PCP when she's congested.  
He tells her she isn't affected, although her cup  
is filled with depression. She questions, "Am I black if there's no 'hood in me?"

Mama ain't raise no fighter.  
Mixing the herbal essence of my nerves congested,  
and my nervous presence.  
With the hottest mortar in my mama's mug,  
and a check-up every quarter,  
even silver spoon money can't fix me.

To make your presence known, you have to be a fighter.  
My heart is congested with pain and fear so I fight oppression.  
Because that could be me asking you to put a quarter in my mug.

Taylor Perry

### **Mamma's Rhythm and Blues**

Mamma could never stop dancing.  
When she danced, she colored the room  
with her hips. Wide and curvaceous—  
they swung

left to right.  
Painting our kitchen's peeled wallpaper  
into marble.  
Her coils bounced in the air,  
flinging and intertwining with the notes  
she sang through her pursed lips.

Her song encased me.

And her cocoa skin reflected  
the rays from the windowsill.  
She shimmered.  
Like her hooped earrings  
and eye-shadow,  
golden  
like the honey  
I licked off my fingers.  
I sat on the counter,  
beads jingling in my hair,  
and beating a fork to a frying pan  
to layer rhythm.

Our pockets often lay limp.  
Lint and crumbs instead of penny  
cents,  
but our home swelled when  
harmony permeated.

When Christmas was only a  
Charlie Brown tree  
hovering over a naked doll  
and coloring books,  
I was happy.  
I thought Mamma was too,  
and she would still dance  
with me, dollar store cookies  
in our tummy.  
But Mamma pulled me close,  
rocked me back and forth,  
and I inhaled her cheap perfume  
as we swayed.

She didn't know how beautiful she was  
when tears flooded her cheeks.  
Her face sparkled like dark brown sugar,  
but her eyes fell dull  
when the music ceased that night.

Tiffany Mitchell



**California Dreaming**

*Photograph*

Fabrice Poussin

Rome, Georgia

## Forgiveness

My father was a silence fallen  
at my beginning, a trace of memory  
uncertain as a midnight ghost.

In time, he wrote sparse notes,  
masterpieces of self-justification,  
excuses well past lies.

In middle age came cards with fantasies,  
wishful thinking, here and there  
hints of regret.

In old age, long past  
a time in which such things are due,  
he wrote, *I'm sorry*.

I could have written back to say  
it was all right, I turned out fine,  
but it didn't matter any more.

Sharon Scholl  
Atlantic Beach, Florida

## The List

November 7, 2018 - Thousand Oaks, CA

After the search of names—last, first—  
attached to the dead, the dying, the “only”  
wounded, the always scarred, we fear

in our mouths, the sounds articulated,  
the nicknames donned by mothers,  
fathers, siblings, friends before

the killer became the killer,  
before—or while—the becoming  
already began in a word or a glance,

in a name called without thinking,  
a syllable stressed unnecessarily,  
the bad joke tossed off as jest,

by someone we know, or don't know  
well, or met in passing, fear in that  
everyday uncomfortable undercurrent

of conversation off just enough  
to make us look twice and then again  
over our already burdened shoulders

into the face of him or her or you or me  
or my student who, twenty years ago,  
crept, while I slept at 3:00 am,

up to my small house on a hill  
to leave in my rusted mailbox  
hand-scrawled poems, pages of them,

unattached to any name,  
his authorship anonymous until,  
semesters later in a class, I recognized

the rage, the rush of wound,  
the tight urgency of words,  
the half-broken letters in a name

which is half the name of the former  
marine who, last night at 11:20 pm,  
stormed into Borderline Bar & Grill

and murdered someone else's students,  
friends, daughters, sons. All morning,  
irrationally, I search old emails



for the names—last, first—  
and calculate ages, not of the dead,  
but of the killers, of the students

gone, I don't know where,  
taking with them the pain  
they hoarded, or spat at others,

but also their jagged and  
transcendent images that named  
the wounded and wounding

whose names I try now to speak—  
last, first—into this dangerous air,  
into this world of constant weeping.

Marjorie Maddox  
Williamsport, Pennsylvania

### **Shore Affair**

He feels her tides,  
Her liquid  
Indifference.  
Her aquiline tresses  
Caress him and,  
In them,  
Warm him.  
Betides.  
Betides.  
He marries the sea.

Fred Yannantuono  
Bronxville, NY

## **Elegy (After the Death of My Student)**

Late one night last summer, I saw you in my dream, Cristina,  
with your long raven hair and deep brown eyes.

You had your head partly back, showing off a young woman's brilliant confidence,  
talking about going to medical school.

I remember the particular eager curve of your smile, the brush of freckles  
across your cheeks, and the very delicate frame of your body.

You had no fear, as far as anything was concerned.  
Then, without any point of reference, everything stopped.

I saw a photo of your charred car in the newspaper;  
it reminded me of an old tortoise shell that I once found as a child.

The hexagonal patterns created a complex equation:  
it begged the question how to solve for X, find the unknown integer of life's mysteries.

Dorsia Smith Silva  
Carolina, Puerto Rico

## **Fish and Chips**

*Fremantle, Australia, 2017*

Along the seawall, the time is now.  
I know, because I checked my watch.  
Yup, now. Checked again.  
In five minutes it will still be now,  
and tomorrow the day filled  
with salted fish. The sun heats us  
to boiling as the sea churns.  
We're eating fish and chips

with vinegar and salt, drinking  
a local lager, lemony and cold.  
Waves crash against the pier.  
A girl sits on a bench nearby, singing,  
her voice salty and sweet  
as a lake of ketchup on a white plate.  
She sings a sad song about bullets and bread.  
The woman in the song keeps her head down  
as bombs rip up the ground all around her.  
Trees explode and fall.  
There is a boat and a helicopter  
and fire and wind. I can't finish my food,  
I've already eaten too much,  
and if I could go back, I would slip  
into the water, swim beneath the waves  
until my belly scraped against pebbles on the gray sand.

Steve Klepetar  
Dalton, Massachusetts

### **Djembefola, Song of the Mandinka**

While beneath his iron hands the goblet-like Djembe,  
the Mandinkan breaks as a millet stalk breaks,  
plays his ancestors into wind, spirit of the woodcarver  
invoked, spirit of the drumming gods, spirit of his mother.

He stretches above the rising gale, without a body, without a shape,  
lets the rhythm pound his throat with erratic music  
as he finds his pantheon and sings. He sings and drums  
and drums and sings. He drums and twirls and twirls and sings,  
standing between the temperate forest and the green river.

With the Djembe hung around his neck with a tunic rope,  
he talks in the incoherence of a bird about a hundred drums

he has thrilled, the Sabar drum of the Serer People, the Gudugudu  
with skins made from breathing wood, the three-incisioned  
Kiringi and its intoxicating sound.

He sings of shredded ears at the mere listening of his hands,  
and feet taking different forms, daring grounds to dust.  
He sings of a lonely widow in a distant land of Khassonké  
with face creased with time and tide,  
shoulders drooping under the weight of memories.

She'll be by the window now, the wrinkled blind mother  
of a drummer's son, the widow will be by the window,  
searching for tongues, and she will know he is here  
when his rhythm travels down a hundred miles.

With the flick of his wrist and the speed of his hands,  
he picks his voice again and sings of the void of a lifetime,  
of a fair lady who has declined to marry a peasant's son,  
of stillborn brothers, fortunes consumed by silent smoke.

The Mandinkan works his hands into a rifle, shoots his past  
with each sound of his beat. He pounds into flames till his  
sweats and blood are submerged by the streams of emotions.

He drums into a frenzy, at the sea of nonchalant faces, and  
when he drops his contoured fingers by his sides, the world  
becomes still again, the forest is quiet, and the fishes make  
a solemn dash into their niche. He stares at the red sunset,  
dips both his tired feet from the riverbank into the river,  
watches the seawaters slosh and recede into their chests.

Aremu Adams  
Ketu, Nigeria

*Editors Note:* Djembe is a rope-tuned skin-covered goblet drum from West Africa. The name derives from the phrase "Anke djé, anke bé", "everyone gather together in peace" and defines the drum's purpose. A Djembefola is an expert player.

## **Foul Down the Right Field Line**

God shells peanuts  
in the cheap seats  
along the first base side  
taking names  
of those who chose to chase down  
to covet  
the sliced-foul  
instead of making way  
for the child  
to find it first  
to hold it close  
to discover what it's like  
to create a memory

Alan Harris  
East Lansing, Michigan

## **On Wisdom Teeth**

They creep up from behind  
To use their intimidating size  
And advantageous position  
For the most possible impact  
Flanking the other molars  
To misalign and shift them  
With the steady strength  
Of miniature tectonic plates

But there's not enough space  
On this side of the velvet rope  
They shouldn't be allowed in

Until others have left the club  
Maximum capacity regulations  
Are honored for fire safety codes  
But of course disobeyed by the  
Rebellious mouths of teenagers

But offense is the best defense  
Both in sports and in dentistry  
So they're physically removed  
Leaving four gruesome holes  
That feel like fleshy caverns  
To the anxious tips of tongues  
That are magnetically drawn  
To spelunk against their will

You'll be confined to your bed  
Until you despise its every coil  
To drink broth and eat gelatin  
Until your least favorite solid  
Would be happily welcomed  
Only narcotics and ice packs  
Can help battle against your  
Chipmunk metamorphosis

All because you haven't evolved  
Far enough yet to rid yourself  
Of all the superfluous enamel  
That's appended to your youth  
And when it's over you are left  
With the certain kind of wisdom  
That one can only attain from  
Experiencing deep pain and loss

Marcus Benjamin Ray Bradley  
Versailles, Kentucky

## An Anniversary

Your husband is bothered by the photograph on the brochure that shows the helicopter hovering above the bay and about to land on the cruise ship. It's a great shot, he says, fantastic, except that each of the helicopter's rotors looks blurry. He says that for the money you're paying to this company they could have at least found a better camera or a better photographer or someone should have done a little bit more research about shutter speeds and apertures and the angle and intensity of the light in the bay at the time of day they were shooting. You think maybe your husband has been secretly taking photography courses in the little bit of free time he has, but then you remember that aperture is a word you know, too, but like him probably never have a chance to use. He goes on and on about it. He wants to write to them, one of the properly formatted letters he types up on the computer and then prints on heavy 100% cotton paper. Some of them he makes two copies of, like the letters to the editor he writes. Four of them have been printed in the Saturday edition of the paper. So in addition to the newspaper copy you also have the duplicate in the second drawer in the family desk. He wants to write the company and request a discount, but you know even more than the discount he wants them to write back and say thank you for your concern, you're right, absolutely, it was an oversight, definitely, an embarrassment, and we have the best people on our team looking into it. He wants to be able to smile when the letter comes back on official letterhead and signed in blue ink, real ink, by a real hand, Donovan Fincher's, maybe, according to the information on the website. He wants to be able to take the letter, which he will point out is not printed on 100% cotton paper, and clip it to his copy of the original, which from now on he will call the original. He will keep it in a file, probably even make a new file, and label it ANNIVERSARY in his favorite red pen. In this new ANNIVERSARY folder he will keep the two papers, pressed flat against each other in the too-crowded-already file cabinet in the dark in the office, never forgotten about, exactly, talked about sometimes, but only ever read again, alone, by you, in a likewise crowded dark.

Brendan Todt  
Sioux City, Iowa



## Signs

*Photograph*

Gary Wadley

Louisville, Kentucky



## Calling All Lemmings

You'll stampede over it most likely. And  
that's just as well, since frankly most of us  
are ill-prepared for anything but noise;

the silence scares us. If life goes as planned  
however, and if nothing interrupts,  
you'll stumble on it someday, juxtaposed

between your usual agenda and  
the final drop-off: call it breathing space.  
By all means fill it up with doctors' scripts  
and surgical procedures if you wish,  
if that convinces you there is no cliff.

But when that doesn't work, a few of us  
relax, breathe deeply, clear our calendars,

and just enjoy the view --

Kathryn Jacobs  
Commerce, Texas

## Living in the Tropics

You were like the first time I tried mango:  
a different kind of sweet, so I wasn't pleased;  
not at first.

However, sugar is hard to refuse,  
especially arrived fresh and dressed to impress,  
even for not-so-special occasions.

First, I put mango in my smoothies with the other fruit.  
Next, I found it in my salsa, so I bought more salsa.  
Finally, I picked it from the tree itself; remembering nothing more delicious.

Caroline Wright  
Rochester, Michigan

### Heaven's Gate

*"If this had not perished, I would have."*

—Anaxagoras

Precisely  
at the end  
of your  
portfolio

there is this gate

that swings  
between Emptiness  
and Form

Emptiness  
the dissolution  
of all that arises  
All that arises  
Form

As in  
you  
are as empty  
as a bucket  
of tears

When the gate creaks open  
every bird calls your name

Once through  
you  
are back in front

and your little dog  
recognizes  
you

Richard Solomon  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

### **A Feast for Robins**

There are many ways a worm can die  
in these spring months of warm rain  
and straight-line prairie winds:

in the culvert pipe, there, just beyond  
the metal mouth, one turns slowly gray  
bloating out, a collapsing fleshy straw;

strung out in shallow puddles, in jointures  
between paths, mixed in with shed twigs  
and leaf carnage, a thin seasonal soup;

others are stretched or curled in little loops  
where water had run and now the sun, hot,  
bakes them into firmness, a beakful, a glut.

How thin the line between worm-life  
and this water-logged worm-death—  
as thick as a worm, maybe, viewed from above?

The robins hop, caper, pop their songs  
out into the stirred air, their bellies round  
with segments unraveling inside them

until they can swallow down no more.  
Robin-songs come broader, louder, full  
of plenty, belligerent in full fortune.

Heather Mydosh  
Independence, Kansas

## **My Father At Ninety**

He still tends his garden  
to the natural call of light  
that each season brings.  
Once a week drives his car,  
steering a familiar route  
to replenish the required need.  
He eats less now,  
but undimmed he remembers  
seeing Haile Selassie in Penllergaer,  
and the destructive fires  
caused by the Swansea blitz.  
The year he was born  
a total solar eclipse  
rested over Wales.  
His steps are strong,  
he lives on with the changing tides,  
walks in a world that races  
onwards in the afterglow of a lingering day.

Byron Beynon  
Swansea, Wales

## **Good Company**

Forgive me as I grow old,  
not so bold or quick, or sharp  
of mind. You see,  
it's the underground  
river of time that has eroded the earth  
beneath my feet, a miracle to me  
as I sense my body sink and seep,  
my toes wettened

in the boggy springs  
of subsurface memory—  
a geological survey of lands  
trod upon, planted in,  
climbed and fallen over,  
and now,  
as if earth is rising through me,  
this familiar parcel of land  
where I settle down  
in good company  
with gravity—  
soundlessly reminding me  
that whether rogue or disciple,  
like the moon and the seas,  
I have always been held,  
always been desired,  
free to exist,  
upright or horizontal,  
dead or alive.

Guy Thorvaldsen  
Madison, Wisconsin

### **Mysteries of the Turners' Guild**

A squirrel turning,  
turning a nut,  
tail unfurled behind  
like a swirl of paisley,  
calligraphy scriven  
against the rugged bark of pine.

Splintering shell flies  
from his perch,  
small gray machine turning

the nut, intent on his work,  
but alert, every hair  
an antenna wire,

eyes, dark  
with the mystery  
of the turners' guild—  
parting, planing, bead and cove—  
hollow gut filled  
from secret trove,

hidden those months  
ago, his craft inscribed  
in eons of cunning instinct  
or passed down  
from master to apprentice,  
from mother to flash-tailed son.

Jamie Keith  
Knoxville, Tennessee

### **Shadow Walking**

Was that your shadow walking by,  
piece of dream chipped off my morning?  
It had your hair, your determined stride  
and all that day my thoughts ran after.

All that day the sky was shattered:  
leaf fragments, cloud shadows.  
And the sun (What else is love?)  
taking a dive for the horizon.

Bradley Strahan  
Garner, North Carolina

## Butterflies

Like the wings of butterflies  
that couldn't fly, Neruda wrote,

of poppies as he  
saw them as child, as I

saw them in the meadow  
above the house, something

bright orange and moving  
in the breeze against a field

of starry filaree, for a  
moment not sub-

tracted from my life, half-  
expecting them to rise

in search of other flowers.

Dan Gerber  
Santa Ynez, California

## Nine Questions Answered

- Only when I circle my head. My right ankle, turned counter-clockwise would say something similar.
- Entirely possible. My father once bit all the way through his, having fallen asleep while driving.
- Of course. In high school. Lipstick on the mirrors, boys in the bathroom.

- I would fix his brokenness, my mother's grief.  
I would disappear for days at a time.
- They must have answered the candle's call, and  
in so doing became fodder for the ink and paper.
- On that day I was too wired to eat. Cake?
- Yes, but mostly dinner. The flowers, I left behind.
- They are the ones who spoke in hexes, listened to Cheap  
Trick, talked sex.
- My only defense? All lies.
- It is a sigh. In the morning. All  
day long, if you must.

Ronda Broatch  
Kingston, Washington

### **Rays of Grace Have Failed to Catch Them**

*after the poetry of James Tate*

Sometime in early May,  
we noticed our family photos  
had stopped breathing.  
All that we had wished for.  
Even so, we ran  
from room to room calling,  
Aunt Mae? Uncle George?  
flinging our wet clothes  
behind the armoire and the chiffonier.

But by now we needed  
to break for lunch.  
Whisking out our napkins,  
and daubing our small but feral chins,  
some of us were gripped  
by a brave and terrifying frivolity,  
amazed as we were shaken  
from our overly brilliant cocoons,



to find our drama had melted  
and was spreading  
in its buttery way across the floor.

What old recipe  
could save us, now?  
And why were we shivering  
at a bus stop south of Toledo?  
All we could do,  
was to settle ourselves,  
hold hands, and smooth  
each other's hair.  
Already, by the look of it,  
there would be nothing  
but savory crumbs  
on our uncommonly beautiful fingers.

Barbara Blatt  
Santa Monica, California

### **Life or Death at 1B, 11:36**

We stake out seats in the long  
twilit basement, tether our gaze  
to the digital boards that cue  
our entrances for treatment. We are

a stooped old black woman beside  
her son in wing-tipped shoes, a brusque  
blond in heels and cleavage with better  
places to be, a skinny grizzled  
white man with a dirty backpack  
who I take for homeless till he rises  
for his turn. We flip

through magazines, the lists  
of our days; the boards flash our names  
and station numbers, Blake and Lim  
at 1B before me.

We march down the hall to Apollo,  
Megatron or Superrad,  
where they lay us down in the dark  
under bisecting green rays  
that snake across the room, tug us  
by the gown into just the right spot  
to stave off doom.

We work in millimeters here  
the tall rad tech says as he maps  
the war zone of my chest  
with a red Sharpie. Three pairs of eyes  
hover over my breast, compute  
then depart as Apollo whines  
into action, its huge arm  
passing over me like a satellite  
till it grinds and clicks to a stop.

And in less than four minutes, before  
I can contemplate life or death,  
lights flash on, hands reach out  
to pull me up. *Happy Wednesday!*  
the short smiley one chirps.

They work in minutes, these subterranean  
techs and their lumbering machines.  
And in minutes, we 11:36ers  
emerge, ready to float back up  
to the surface.

Susan Auerbach  
Altadena, California



## **Birth**

*Photograph*

Fabrice Poussin  
Rome, Georgia

## Dick and Jane

Did anybody really live like this  
in a perfect house with a perfect lawn  
cut by Father, in dress pants, on weekends,  
with a push mower that never needed gas,  
as Mother watched from the kitchen  
while baking a birthday cake for  
Baby Sally who didn't wear diapers  
or even cry for that matter? Yet, somehow  
we swallowed the whole kaboodle.  
No one ever asked why Spot never chewed  
shoes or soiled the carpet, like other dogs.  
No one seemed to think it strange that Puff  
didn't claw drapes, or massacre robins,  
and never once hawked a furball.  
Brother and sister walked to school,  
smiling, spit-polished, eager to learn,  
ready for monosyllabic discussions  
with caucasian pals or Zeke the janitor,  
who was kind, not creepy in the least.  
"Look," they said. "Oh. See."  
We sat at short desks consumed with envy,  
at the same time completely charmed  
by this vision just beyond our grasp.  
We swung scabby legs back and forth,  
the untied laces from our grubby sneakers  
dangling on the floor under our teeny chairs.  
When Teacher looked away, we punched  
our neighbor, wiped our noses on our sleeves,  
pasted chewed gum under the seat, stuck out  
our tongues stained red from hot cinnamon  
jawbreakers cadged from the Five-and-Dime.  
When the bell rang we rocketed through  
the schoolhouse door, relieved to be free,  
living in an actual world we understood,  
full of noise, clutter, dirt and eloquent profanity  
that could not be contained by single syllables.

Jeanie Mortensen  
Ludington, 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?*

Siham Karami  
Orlando, Florida

### **The Plump White Rat That Paul and Margie Left Behind for Back Rent**

in the middle of the night  
taught me about tenants  
slipping out, I guess.  
I did not affix their faces to the rat,  
though subconsciously I must have tried  
after the rat bubbled up  
like veneer over a cupboard drawer,  
freezing its pose

and Paul and Margie's blushing  
features floated over it.  
Or, perhaps, due to its human  
connection, thought of itself  
as rat above all others.  
Whichever the case,  
before my wife could uncrook  
her elbow to hurl a shoe,

the rat had scrambled over  
the drawer and cajoled

its lumpy form down where pipes  
trombone beneath a sink,  
and our hearts sank to meet it  
in the wet rain forest  
where a pipe had sprung a leak.

Later, the rat ran its tail along the baseboard,  
to stress, we thought, its domestication,  
and still our dreams painted it  
into a corner, but how then  
to catch it? A steel-jaw trap  
seemed cruel for one  
who'd furred in us fuzzy feelings,  
even if we'd not claim them.

We settled for a cheesy cone trap  
that, once inside, the rat  
would become entangled,  
but checking it later,  
we learned the rat had wrestled  
out of it, the device now  
a fat fur slipper with enough fur  
on the floor to make a pair.

Then from around the bathroom  
it showed itself stripped down  
to its skin, up on two legs,  
leaning front arms against  
the woodwork in a shiny bid to be human,  
the plump white rat seeking  
a soft eye, not taking things  
personally, just trying to fit in.

Rodney Torreson  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

## Hospice

In the house that has Abandon Hope  
written over the doors,  
we find other ways of coping.  
We can learn to long for oblivion.  
To love the darkness itself  
is another kind of hoping.

And sometimes in the dark  
the door to that unused room  
in back of the heart swings open  
and all kinds of things walk in:  
angels, your first puppy dog,  
visions of Venice – this  
could be faith, another alternative  
to hopeless hoping.

It is also a good idea,  
when you see your useless relatives  
at your bedside,  
laden with duty and virtue,  
to summon your fading mind  
to bless them and all living things:  
this gives you credit for love  
and it goes with you.

Gail White  
Breux Bridge, Louisiana



## **The Harbor, Finally**

My sisters wheeled  
my father's bed into the living room so  
he could feel the sun, look out, watch the seaside golfers  
drive long balls into the blue and drop  
into the fairway of mounding jade waves.

Bit by bit he was slipping,  
releasing the grip on his anger at all of us  
and my mother, who seized the wheel years ago  
steering to a swell of monthly worries,  
aging hospital bills, holy books,  
and canceled tee times. He accepted  
how his course was mapped by rhythmic tides  
and sermons from the unknowing.

Now my mother rested by his bed,  
her constant hand lying on his,  
holding the pulsing ache of the years, gazing  
past his fading eyes, out to the green sea.

He finally understood  
these accidental adults in this worn out house,  
our whispered laughs echoing summer swims,  
here by choice, thanking him, controlling our goodbyes,  
plunging into the necessary, as we  
swabbed our family vessel, filling the hull with reconciliation,  
sweeping over the bow decades of  
dredged-up golf balls and counterweights.

.

Jack Mackey  
Rehoboth Beach, Delaware

## Ode to Zingerman's Pulled Pork Sandwich

Ah the Joys of Pork, circumcision notwithstanding;  
Our inheritance of dread from Adam notwithstanding;  
I sit alone in post-prandial bliss in Zingerman's Roadhouse.  
(Whoever is not guilty—complicit in his or her comfort  
Of daily immoral acts in these end times—cast the first stone.  
Even Nestle's ("... the very best chaw-clate") beans  
Are harvested by child slaves in Ivory Coast.) But,  
Postmodern in its social responsibility toward fine eating (accept killing)  
12-dollar-mac-and-cheese-Zingerman's Roadhouse with their philosophy  
Of excellence at any cost has won me over—  
At some expense. Oy! They roast the whole pig slowly, slowly,  
Slowly on a spit, on site in a big roaster. Then, do they soak it (no one knows)  
In special juices of papaya, peppers, cardamom and clove  
Such as to make the un-embodied angels weep from jealousy?  
The west wind's aroma wafts among the strip malls  
Up and down Stadium, past the Yoga Center and  
The Castle beer, wine, and cigar store and Nicola's bookstore  
Pulled muscle, I say, stripped from the bone  
Of some smart oinker raised to die for our double chins.  
And in full awareness of my sins I confess  
(With two Coont Ales having passed through the splanchnics  
Now soaking my frontal brain with froth)  
This is the best foinkin' pulled pork sandwich  
In the best big-assed pork-soaked sesame seed Kaiser roll  
With the best ministered-with-mayo-anointed-in-apple-cider-vinegar-  
&-shrived-in-yellow-mustard coleslaw  
Exactly matched to the savory tang of pulled pork such that  
If the Buddha ate meat, he'd eat Zingerman's pulled pork sandwich.

How much of our day is spent in longing  
Expecting, anticipating, measuring, waiting for  
Our desire to match our expectations? Better even than  
the first drag on a Camel after months of failed abstinence  
This sandwich fit sire in sow. More than just a met desire,  
This alchemy was like some Gnostic recipe for seeing God and  
I dwelled in Thy House as I savored and sucked swine

With my eyes closed meditating; and chewed it to an essence  
And pouched it in my cheek like the strike of a slow curve ball  
In the catcher's mitt that ends the World Series  
Played over and over again and again in slow motion  
And recorded at home on DVD for posterity forever and ever.

Richard Soloman  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

### **Memoir In Field Grass**

*for our mother*

As wind touches contours of a weathered barn  
and brown-pink tips of grass heads breathe  
in the sun, I almost see how our mother's life  
shone through her skin of rice-paper and leather.

She could watch a black cat in its window  
across the street for hours. *I don't have that much*  
to look at, she said. No, not the surface  
of this field, the blue of an abstruse mountain.

When grasses turn brown and when they're green  
and fluent, I picture our mother on her front porch,  
wearing her baseball hat, near the blue lobelia.  
Near death, she could laugh. Her DNA in my sister,

in me. The sun in its sleep, sleeves of wind,  
combers blowing. Like one of the noble gases,  
our mother stayed herself. Like a soldier,  
she kept her eyes open. She fell like grass.

Richard Widerkehr  
Bellingham, Washington

## **Aubade: High School Restroom**

You reach in your book bag and I wonder  
if it's a weapon, but it's only a bar  
of soap that you wrapped in a dishrag  
and packed last night knowing the cracked  
dispensers are empty, haven't been filled  
in a month. You lean over the sink, push  
the hot and cold silver knobs that stay on  
for five seconds then turn off automatically.  
You push again, hands flashing like you're  
running a shell game, prodigious dexterity,  
cupping water and lathering soap, all the while  
on off on off on off on off with the water,  
you've got the rhythm now, rubbing behind  
your ears and the back of your neck, your face  
bearded with bubbles. That's when you glance up.  
It's so early, you didn't think anyone else was here.  
I've caught you, haven't I. But don't worry.  
I won't tell anyone.

Barry Peters  
Durham, North Carolina

## **Waiting For Men**

Summers I would try to fold the pants  
the way my grandmother and her sisters did,  
lining up the cuffs, pulling at the waist,  
listening for the slap of creased legs on the denim pile.  
My great-grandfather's store sold dry goods –  
those stacks of dungarees,  
striped suspenders and V-neck sweaters made of U.S. wool,  
slim pink packets filled with stockings, sheer and nude.

I watched my grandmother wait on men,  
buying their gear for rain and snow in the August heat,  
growling in hunting jackets and thick socks,  
stomping until their heels were deep in new rubber shoes  
and their feet filled the mirrors.

I shrank away, went behind the cash register and back in time  
to arrange ladies' fine handkerchiefs and girls' flannel nightgowns,  
then put aside my paper dolls  
to look through the stack of records and lower the needle  
on Hot-Diggity Dog and Sixteen Tons,  
while red hot cinnamon drops melted on my tongue  
and colored my lips.

But then it was another summer.  
I made a tower of men's pants, Levis and Lees,  
and went to the back of the store to wait for men.

And while I studied shelves of cardboard cartons,  
I watched the tall shadow march down the middle aisle,  
a burly man with hunting on his mind and fishing in his plans.  
He lowered the creaking seat of a folded wooden chair,  
and sat, hands clasped, as if he were in church,  
waiting to be helped.  
He wanted hip boots for wading in streams or fording rivers,  
for large feet, wide and spread like paddles.

Though I was small with young hands,  
I found the box, displayed the sole,  
for I knew what he needed,  
so stroked the boot, from toe to calf,  
to show its smoothness and its sheen,  
and then from calf to thigh.  
And he awoke from reverie  
of plaid wool coats and hats with brims,  
and his sons striding through the autumn air,  
with guns and rods and boots of their own.  
"I'll take them," he said softly,  
and never tried them on.

Jan Grossman  
New York, New York

## Poem in Which I Try, Very Hard, to Do My Own Bidding

*for W.B. Yeats*

I find a hollow tree  
with a hidden opening  
under a greening branch,  
like a cave in the side  
of grass-covered hill.

Rhyme and meter  
are the small boat  
and dependable motor  
that have brought me  
clean across the blue lake.

Now I stand at the place  
where the tree's black trunk  
enters the earth below my feet,  
where its textured bark rises  
like a rigid fountain,

and new leaves pool  
overhead. I see the hollow.  
I think I will climb  
to a new home.  
Yet even as I yearn,

for its high, clear view  
I hear lake water  
churning, the slip-slap  
of my ill-moored boat,  
feel its cadenced pull.

I am both ways tempted.  
I reach forward, trace  
the runic-grooved bark  
even as I turn to renew  
a horizontal voyage.

Leslie Schultz  
Northfield, Minnesota

## The Visitor

The Hobblebush's white flowers blur in the rain.  
Cardinal flickers to a branch, *misko-bineshiinh*,  
always alert and watchful, he nods toward me.  
When I move closer to the window,  
he senses my presence and flies away.

I think about my sister who loved birds,  
how they often came to the sill and sang for her.  
The rooms of her house  
were always alive with song.

Once I remember sleeping there,  
my baby daughter curled against my side  
as the dawn chorus awakened us.

My sister has been gone for two years now.

I never used to feed birds, but each day I put out  
seed and suet, mix sugar water for hummingbirds,  
search for lost blue jay feathers,  
but never find any.

“*Errr-in, errr-in*,” calls the Gray Catbird,  
then the robin, the black-capped chickadee,  
and sparrow joins in.  
Even the mourning dove coos sweetly at my back door.

It's June, everything is green and bountiful  
and the cardinal has returned to its leafy  
perch in my garden.

When winter comes, I dislike the silence,  
when it is too cold to go outside.  
When sheet ice freezes the birdhouse's wooden roof,  
even their feathers stiffen during the Great Spirit Moon

But, I will not think of that.

Rosalie Petrouske  
Grand Ledge, Michigan

[Note: *misko-bineshiinh* is a word for Northern Cardinal in Ojibwe]

## Smaller Spectacles

—for Jamaal May

Outside sheets are pulling  
back together into bodies.

The wind confuses sway  
with dance, asks the dresses

there's no one left to wear  
for one more go before

the music ends. We wait  
for the well out back to

illuminate its drowned coins,  
all the gods overrun by prayers

to choose just this one to answer.  
We beat the rain from hanging

undershirts & sing like nothing  
the sky can do can rust the birds

from our mouths. We promise  
our children the world

is forever, that this time  
the wolves won't show.

The fields are smoke  
& through the smoke

figures materialize.  
Deer that might be

mothers or sisters, gutshot,  
looking for a slice of shadow

to die in. So many hanging trees  
we confuse with men.

John Sibley Williams  
Milwaukie, Oregon



## Singing Bird

after Joan Miro's *The Singing Fish*

Drain your teapot, a future will  
be your emptiness throughout. As smooth  
as a feather, you will be deemed  
smooth at its branch. Soft what you are,  
you see that altogether—

even though will you fly—  
from outcry,

too sweet a trait,  
your mind's outreach momentarily.

Then loveliest your nest thrusts,  
then will you from me  
receive death?

Ann Huang  
Newport Beach, California

## Not Explaining

the bark on the locust tree  
creates a song

the yellow-gray  
dusk

the pale blue sky  
the last days of winter

I think of friends who have died

It's like waiting in an elevator  
alone

last night I dreamed  
of a man and a woman

they were the size of dolls  
and they made their living as musicians

at one point in the dream  
I knew what their secret was

the man doll begged me not to tell  
they were performing on a ship

crossing the Atlantic  
the man played guitar

the woman sang  
she wore roses of silver

today I feel like my body is made of water

Rustin Larson  
Fairfield, Iowa

### **Considering the Peace-Be-Still Bath**

*Trauma healing is what I'm selling.*

Gary Copeland Lilley

I need to drive away the Disturbs, Gary.

Only a moon scrap of my husband left  
after his bones turn to knives

cutting him from the inside out.

I need to steep myself in the scent of pears  
ripe with bees, oregano, lavender, marigolds

and water, *the ultimate blessing.*

I need to baptize myself, like you say,  
Gary, and send those shoulder-riding spirits

off to a dried-up creek bed to die.

Susan Landgraf  
Auburn, Washington

## Gen Y Love Poem

When I text you,  
Platonic kissy face, rest  
assured I do not  
mean, *I love you*, so much  
as I love the halfhearted  
ironic gesture, rest  
assured I am still

lean-faced as any  
dust devil, still  
willing to devour  
you, still ready to  
drag you up  
a long flight  
of Chicago high  
-rise steps, club or  
cocktail in hand. Rest

assured I still mean  
I love listening to you  
talk of Tartars and  
Saladin and how  
Mehmed II compares  
favorably with  
Erdogan. Trust me,  
my love  
is still trying

to glimpse  
the titles of others'  
books around wrought  
-iron chairs and sunny  
dry-eyed ficus  
on any veranda  
under any tricolor  
awning in Wicker Park  
with you—

which is to say  
I am still in it

for myself,  
to keep you there  
is still the mystery  
of whether I will  
stay.

Phillip Provance  
Woodstock, Illinois

### **Saturday Morning, Heat Advisory**

Like an anxious heart running ahead of what chases it, the frenzied lawn sprinkler pulsates hard, throwing its work ethic around the ornamental grasses and purple cat mint, already suffering from lack of rain. Today it's a certain kind of heat that is expected. The kind that gets inside you early, as the negligee moon drifts sultry in the cloudless morning sky then disappears. I pull the hose around like a sailor hoisting rope anxious to get this done before the day becomes an opaque balloon of heat. The arbor-vitae prefer loam and lots of water. They have grown tall along the edge of the property. Healthy enough – despite not all their needs getting met. We spaced them naturally so as not to look like a line of soldiers. They've grown into one another – the way we have. Whatever their desires, they are not going anywhere. They block the neighbor who loves fire – the air still thick with the smell of last night's sacrifice. They say plants communicate through their roots using an internet of fungi. They warn one another of drought, offer sources for food, sabotage unwelcome plants by releasing toxic chemicals. We do this too—our tribal instincts—our lovers. While getting water to the herbs growing in a pot on the back porch I think of how when something as dangerous as heat threatens, surrender seems unavoidable. Grass stores it energy, shuts down, goes dormant. I too give in to what I can't control. The neighbor with department store lighting surrounding his front porch and circular driveway—he believes light will protect his family. He's up early too, watering his potted plants, trying, I suppose, to stay ahead of danger.

Joy Gaines-Friedler  
Farmington Hills, Michigan



**Salvation**

*Photograph*

Rana Williams

Hayesville, North Carolina

## 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](http://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.

## **People Think**

People think my name is Bianca  
but I am a sky of bike riders.  
I am a diamond princess.  
I am a flying caramel dancing  
chocolate.  
I am a disappearing walrus.

Bianca Sands-Williams

## **What Fear Is**

Fear is like the world trying  
to wake from the dead.

Fear is like the world crawling  
out of darkness.

Fear tastes like the world gasping.

Brailyn Dickerson

## **Beautiful Stars**

My sister has caramel  
skin and is tall for a baby. Nala is  
a star just like the sun. She can shine so bright  
because she's beautiful. Everyday I come home,  
I hear her voice saying Nasia! Nasia! and everytime  
I hear her voice I see beautiful stars.

Antanasia Talley

## **Powerful**

I was on a bumpy road  
until I found the end. Now  
I'm on a flat road and that is  
where the journey begins.

Joiriana Threat

## **My Voice**

Today my voice sings  
like the stars in the darkness  
sing music all night  
to the moon sleeping tight  
and the planets circling  
around the sun  
and grey clouds  
with rain pouring out  
till the morning comes.

Kaiya Ingram

## **Heart Tree**

I have a tree inside my heart  
It grows each time  
I make it sprout  
But when it grows  
Too big  
For me



It finds another place to be  
And then I grow another one  
In the place that  
Used to be!

Kaiya Ingram

### **I Feel**

I feel happy like a baby goose learning how to fly.  
I feel mad like a computer about to die.  
I feel sad like a box with only one piece of candy  
in it.  
I feel lonely like the only person from 1921.  
I feel afraid like a falling butterfly.  
I feel furious like a screaming cow.

Laila-Ali Withers

### **I Am a Poem**

I am a poem about  
a fluffy cloud roaming  
around the sky. I am a  
shooting star that lights  
up in the dark. I am  
a blue car that moves  
a little slow in the sky.

Breniyah Watkins



**Ancient Black Cottonwood**

*Photograph*

Jude Dippold

Concrete, Washington



## 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.

<https://thirdwednesdaymagazine.org/>

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Wednesday

