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Third Wednesday is a quarterly journal of literary and visual arts. Though we manage the magazine from Michigan, we welcome submissions from all over the world. Digital issues of the magazines are completely free to anyone and print issues can be purchased at Amazon.com.

Find us on the web at **thirdwednesdaymagazine.org**. There you can download free digital issues, read many of the fine poems we have published in the past and find the link to our portal at *Submittable* where you can submit your work and subscribe to the magazine. You can also find and follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Tumblr.

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Editor's Note for Summer 2021

This summer issue of 3W marks the return of the 50/50 Poetry Contest. One contest winner receives 50% of the net contest entry fees from this reading period. The winning poem this time is “Casual Gospel” by David Prather. This contest continues to grow in popularity and we offer it again for the upcoming fall issue as an optional add-on to our always free regular poetry submissions.

Serving for this issue as a guest associate poetry editor is Buff Whitman-Bradley, a poet who has contributed frequently to the pages of 3W. Buff's poems have appeared in many print and online journals and he is the author of several collections of poetry. His most recent is *At the Driveway Guitar Sale*. In addition to poetry, he has written for education, travel, and parenting magazines and has written nonfiction books for young readers as well as a handbook for educators on teaching poetry writing to children. He and Cynthia live in northern California. You can find more at his Third Act Project author page:

<https://thirdactproject.com/author/buff-whitman-bradley>

We welcome the return of Inside/Out Literary Arts in this issue, this time with a suite of poems by 5th grade students from Cesar Chavez Academy in Detroit, Michigan, curated, as always, by Peter Marcus.

Until August 15 we are reading for the fall issue, which will include the winners of our annual George Dila Memorial Flash Fiction Contest, this year judged by Elizabeth Kerlikowske, writer and teacher.

Unsettling Wonder / Nan Williamson

days go by
when I lose hold of wonder
when last night's quarrel
or news of more disasters
blazing forests icy storms
families fleeing killing fields
fresh-reported Covid numbers
shove and push for my attention
crowd out the emerald moon
and dancing fools

but they come back
and I'm ambushed by

bluesy words
jazz-dancing down
the syncopated page

fragile stars
frozen lace on winter windowpanes

a revel of nasturtiums
oranges scarlets yellows
reflected in a shining copper pot

the whole damn glorious dazzle

Nan Williamson / Peterborough, Ontario

A Stationary Front / Seth Rosenbloom

He died. A fluke caused by ice
where roads are plowed
and drivers should know better.

In mourning, snow makes us trudge,
we remove our boots beside the others
at the wet pile by the door

recite twice the ancient prayer.
Breath spoken, breath vacant,
like a contrail vanishing over a frozen lake.

On the way home, aimless
flurries loom around the sign
that reads *Out of Salt*.

Each step belongs to the cold.
Gray takes the sky. And everything
is the same.

Seth Rosenbloom / Seattle, Washington

The Waiting Room / Christine Blaisdell

A woman slowed by stroke
shuffles into the dentist's
waiting room, each
of her steps
a separate
event.

The flutter of magazine pages
and ripple of stolen
glances settle
like gravel in
a goldfish
bowl.

A man checks his watch,
a mother, her toddler;
we shift in
our plastic
chairs.

The woman cradles her hands
in her lap: one hand
holds the other
like a baby
bird.

She rises when summoned:
a flower growing in
time-lapsed photo-
graphy, click,
click.

We study her exit,
twitch in our
skin, unfold
our guilty
limbs.

Christine Blaisdell / Wilmington, Massachusetts



Street Scene / Michael Hill

At the far end
of a summer day,
dusk bearing down,
pale slivers of sunlight
stripe the deep green
of our limb-shadowed lawn
and, just down the block,
a man in a white T-shirt
stands out in his yard
and soaks it with a hose,
water streaming forth
like the beam of a flashlight
searching the soon-to-be dark
for the hours gone missing
while, across the intersection,
a woman scrubs a beige minivan
with a faded yellow sponge
that she dips in an orange bucket
of soapy water, her vehicle
glowing softly in the gauzy light,
offering up what seems like,
at best, a half-hearted defense
against the steady advance of night
as a pair of bicyclists rolls past,
followed shortly thereafter
by an inky blue pickup truck
presumably hauling off
what's left of the day,
darkness trailing
just behind.

Michael Hill / Fort Collins, Colorado

Lake Fishing, East Texas / Michael Hill

The flat, breeze-ruffled surface
conceals another surface below
and a secret world in between

where, with the aid of a fly rod,
I maneuver a hook half-hidden
beneath a ribbon of fiber and fur

as though it was a kite on a string,
twitching, tumbling and gliding
through a tranquil, indifferent sky

not unlike the one here overhead,
with its vast and silent depths
and its sleek, torpedo-shaped clouds

all schooled up like so many bass.

Michael Hill / Fort Collins, Colorado

Portuguese Instant / SEIGAR



SEIGAR / Islas Cararias, Spain

(Photograph)

The Book Reading / Mark Czanik

The bookshop window boasted several copies of the new hardback on prominent view when I arrived, along with the usual rash of celebrity memoirs and cookbooks. I felt my heart quicken. Inside, a table had been given over to an arrangement of my hero's work. I had expected to find the place packed, but somehow I'd gotten the time wrong and I was still a half hour early.

I went over to the table slowly, as if the whole display might take flight at my approach, and picked up the book. It was a disappointing cover really, far too cartoonish and irreverent for a writer I held in such high regard, but the weight and thickness of the book was promising enough.

My eyes skipped impatiently over the blurb on the inside front cover, unable to take in the words. On the back flyleaf I found a picture of the author. It was the same photo that had been used for the past four novels, but it would be churlish not to forgive him this small act of vanity, which was doubtless the publisher's decision anyway. A few friends had even said I bore something of a resemblance to him. Well, I didn't know about that – it was probably just the glasses. I would just be glad of the opportunity to meet the great man tonight. Shake his hand and say thank you.

I'd been doting over his books ever since my early twenties. So familiar was I now with one or two of the characters he'd dreamed into being in his fiction, they seemed more real to me than some of my own friends. And now he was actually here, treading the same pavements I trod every day, breathing the same poisonous fug of street air I breathed; the man who'd set me off on my own literary path. Perhaps he was already in the bookshop? Sitting in the café upstairs choosing a few tantalizing passages from the new novel. In some of my own early stories, I'd tried to emulate his style – with not entirely unsuccessful results, I liked to think. Still, it's funny how some people just seemed to know things.

I turned the book in my hands, savoring its mystery, my neck chafing at the uncomfortable newly ironed white shirt and ‘posh black writer’s jacket’ Sadie had insisted I wear tonight.

His other books were also on show here, all of which I had long since greedily devoured. Several, however – one crucial early short story collection in particular – were absent, I noted with annoyance, in favor of a more recent selected stories collection with another gaudy cover and inhospitably small print. I was tempted to point out this oversight to one of the staff currently stacking the shelves, preferably the guy who’d just announced he read Montaigne for pleasure to everyone within a five mile radius. Sadie was often saying I ought to get a job here. They were always looking for people. Only yesterday I had quietly moved *Memoirs of a Survivor* from the biography to the fiction section where it belonged. But I was afraid I would start thinking of books as units rather than objects of desire.

‘We all need a bit of eternity. It’s just a case finding it, and then not running out on yourself when you do,’ a character from one of my favorite stories (again, criminally missing from the selected stories) had so memorably said.

Fast on the heels of this thought, though, came a familiarly disquieting one. Here was a man who’d written half a dozen new books since that fateful day I had picked up his first slim collection of short stories, yet here was I, how many years later, still stoically plugging away at ... what?

A memory came to me of a frowning toddler carrying a picture book across the lawn and dropping it indifferently into a rosebush without so much as a backwards glance, before climbing the big curved smooth step into a black-and-white house. My fixation with this thirty second glimpse of my three-year-old self from one of Uncle Leonard’s super 8 silent films that had recently surfaced after my uncle’s death was a fantasy of giving up, I had begun to realise, as if all those books on my shelves were much easier to do without than I pretended. As if to remind me that a cake by any

other name can be eaten too. Yet as I sat down on the thoughtfully provided chair by the table and opened the book to the first page, all recollection of this quickly faded, and the room dissolved into silence.

I was woken from my reverie by a little cough. Looking up, I saw a bespectacled boy of about seventeen with a thin solemn face and a mop of disheveled hair standing over me. The boy smiled and held a book out to me, his hand visibly shaking. Strangely, it was the same book I had open in my lap.

I stared opened mouthed at the queue that had formed behind the boy, which included several attractive girls, each of them clutching the same hardback to their chest. A young couple joined the queue. They were all watching me from their places in the line with bright, expectant expressions, as if I alone held the answer to a riddle they longed to solve.

My eyes returned to the boy. There was something familiar about him, something I recognized in his hopeful, worried brown eyes, but couldn't quite place.

I returned the boy's smile, reached into my inside jacket pocket for my pen, and took the book from his hand.

Mark Czanik / Bath, United Kingdom

Two in the Morning / Patricia Bingham



Patricia Bingham / Pocatello, Idaho

(Painting)

September Elegy / Cynthia Ventresca

The yellow walls are growing cold
and I have slipped into my mother's worn
gray jacket.

Four years since she left.
Spider flowers purple in waning hours.
The garden is going, turning back to earth
with a deepening hum. It is the season
of letting go.

Even the oak in my neighbor's yard
must grow leaner, weightless.
A train mourns around the city's edges,
people inside sure of their stops.

And I stand, unready for winter,
watching a squirrel bury seed
for later.

Twenty-two / Cynthia Ventresca

report cards, yearbooks,
your graduation hat. pictures
of girlfriends, names scrawled
on the back, your first pay stub.
traces of what had barely begun.
and they speak
of headlights slicing deep
into December, dark roads
of darker reflections, and they speak
of sudden endings
that break us in half —
how a phone wakes you
a door slamming shut
when all there should be is silence.

Cynthia Ventresca / Wilmington, Delaware

***Desert Rubicon* / Sheryl Clough**

in memory of Peg Bowden, 1942-2020:

*Dios te bendiga en tu viaje.**

Darkness as though stars had burned their last.
Icicles on saguaros dripping into sodden sand.
Javelinas roving, snuffling for fallen fruit.

Through this roadless murk stumbles
a figure forlorn as an empty wallet.
Frostbitten toes poke through holey shoes.

You, a *gringa*, start straight up in bed
at the midnight knock, knuckles on oak.
A weak voice: *help me I am lost*

and now the river must be crossed.
Your husband is still asleep and,
admit it, your first instinct is

to grab the phone and call *la migra***,
but years of nursing practice kick in,
and with a prickly spine you get up

and open the door. The skeletal figure
grabs the door frame for support.
Fighting your fear, you offer your arm

and take him to the kitchen for coffee
and reheated frijoles on tortillas. His
English and your Spanish are equally

halting, but with enough hand gestures
you both make meanings known.
The stranger sleeps on your sofa and

in the morning, your husband agrees
you must help this desperate one.
You volunteer in the following years

at El Comedor, an aid station for *migrantes*,
leading the way for a cadre of volunteers
to ford the stream dividing fear and love.

Sheryl Clough / Clinton Washington

*God bless you on your journey.

** Border Patrol

Charlie Chaplin / Ellie Anderson

Swaggered through my dreams,
his knees stiff, elbows out,
hips swaying like a woman's.
He swung his cane and rolled
his darkened eyes.
He made me laugh
and what I want to know is,
where is he now,
when we need him?

Ellie Anderson / Bellevue, Washington

When Black Girls Go Missing / Kathy Z. Price

I have turned my head. The car lurches away, the door slams,
catches a bright red leather strip of strap angled from her shoulder
purse

He reflects on the abductions, about plucking another berry he
says, hunting those that have fallen, or were mashed by shoes
running over low dropping fruit, infiltrated with worms, dying in
the weeds, evaporated into dust

If I lift my hand to shade my forehead already, I can count off the
rings of the Sequoia tree, when it might not hurt anymore. When
my head lay against your spine, you were that warmth I retreated
to when I could not find my own pulse

Sky flattens the empty seat where you had crouched years before
head in my lap. The day had stretched into hours although you
only went 10 minutes out of town from the streets of flowers,
called the Gardens, Wisteria Drive, Verbena Way, Azalea Avenue,

We have never seen any of those flowers and we won't see you
anymore, the people whisper maybe she went hitchhiking maybe
the police are bored when you call, to help, find our daughters,
gather them up like blown dandelion seeds, through our fingers,
each plucked up, the dirt in the road, mingled with their dust.

Count them,

each..

Kathy Z. Price / Woodstock, New York

After Birth / Lorna Rose

Someday I'll tell you about the day
I found out about you,
about the thin black line indicating your existence,

and my screams:
I don't want you! I don't want you!!
And the guilt.

I'll tell you about the abnormal test result
and all the questions about kidneys forming,
heart beating, and the high

miscarriage rate and a
maybe a goodbye is just as well
And the guilt.

Someday I'll tell you about how I labored
all day, still grocery shopping and drinking tea at *Tastebuds*
'til I could no longer speak without moaning

and telling your dad *It's time*
and tucking your brother in and trying to walk
and a stranger grabbing me a wheelchair, your weight

jack-hammering my hips.
Someday I'll tell you about pushing
right after the meds wore off, about the time I told you

not to be scared. *You just come right out, Baby.*
I'm here. I'll tell you about the day you fought, the day you
surprised the doctors and lived.

Lorna Rose / Wenatchee, Washington

Maple Syrup / Elayne Clift

It's like maple syrup,
The thing called love.
Calling for patience,
And requiring just the right
Amount of heat and chill,
You need to draw it out,
Tap it well, sugar it down
Clear to perfection.
And when it's ready,
You let it drip over your life,
In small dollops at first,
Savoring its sweetness.
Then, growing bold,
You let it flow generously,
Knowing that while it's
Hard to come by, and precious,
Nothing else can take its place
When offered without restraint,
And nothing else makes quite so
Golden a gift.

Elayne Clift / Saxtons River, Vermont



The Cold Taste of an Unripe Plum / Sergey Gerasimov

If you never walked out into an orchard at dawn,
you don't know many surprising things.
You don't know how well goes
the cold taste of an unripe plum with
a spider's web shining in the rays of the rising sun.
They are in such a perfect harmony
that you understand: it's a miracle;
so you stop in your tracks
to watch and think.
Then a boy goes by along the fence,
and you can hear from his headphones not rap,
but a Bach chorale.
And you realize
that all these things:
the rising sun,
the glowing spider web,
and the chorale
have been contained all the time,
ahead of time,
in the cold taste
of the unripe plum.

Sergey Gerasimov / Kharkiv, Ukraine

How Do You Google / Sergey Gerasimov

How do you google, my friend,
how do you wiki in this cold December?
You send emails,
you log on, you check your bank account,
you call it being busy.
Your kid who used to go to the toilet without his phone,
then with his phone,
now doesn't go at all:
the phone grabs him by the scruff
and carries him to the toilet,
to the bedroom or kitchen...
You don't see, you don't hear water dripping
from the cornice outside,
at noon: the freezing drops
have made the snowdrift by the window
look like a big white udder
of a placid, upside-down cow.
A little farther, look,
a dog's gnawing on a knee joint,
like a hairy rheumatism
while the other dogs
have curled up and hardened,
hard-boiled by the cold.
A poor lonely granny
climbs down an icy slope
like a fly that crawls across a dead man's knee
and, wearing this long white coat,
with a black mask on her face,
she resembles some Conchita Wurst,
like, to tell the truth,
all of us do...

Sergey Gerasimov / Kharkiv, Ukraine

We Dance Anyway / Lisa Yount



Lisa Yount / El Cerrito, California

(Digital Collage)

All It Takes / Charles Springer

Steve and I are sitting out in the backyard. It's nearly dark when he asks me, what's that bulge there in your pocket, and I tell him, oh, that's the moon. Yeh, right, he sneers, really, what is it and I squeeze it out without getting up, you see I'd just sat down, and hold it in my hand. He wants to touch it but he's afraid. He blows on it, sniffs it and finally pokes it where it makes a little sound like a start of song and then I ask him, are you done, and he says, sure, okay. I tell him I want to go and hang it in the sweetgum tree that parts our yards and as I'm reaching up, he spots me just in case I teeter or it gets too heavy but it never does.

Charles Springer / Lock Haven, Pennsylvania

The Transition / Jeffrey Zable

A friend of mine—a native San Franciscan who's lived in the same house for 38 years—recently cashed out and moved with his wife to a suburb outside Seattle, Washington. And in speaking with him yesterday he particularly focused on how much fresher the food is up there, especially chicken.

“You’ve never tasted chicken like this in your life,” he said in a rapturous tone. “It makes the chicken down in San Francisco taste like cockroach meat!”

To which I responded, “Wow. . . I can hardly believe it. I’m not a big chicken man, but when I come visit you’ll have to cook me some so that I can taste the difference!”

“You’ll taste the difference immediately!” he responded. “I don’t know what took me so long to make the transition. . .”

Jeffrey Zable / San Francisco, California

Daybreak / John Muro

Holding close to the water-
Line on a day when nothing
Rises, a sky hewn from dusk
Has been pressed toward
Earth like slabs of granite
Bound with mortar made
From soot and ash. Between
The far horizons, thunder-
Heads, barrel-vaulted,
Hang in tightfisted swirls
Mottled with dollops of ether,
Forming a canopy the color
Of basalt and brackish water
And the only other inhabitant
Is a solitary, sick-for-blue
Gull – plummeting from
Heaven without the means
Of ascent, tangled in the
Splintered threads of gill-
Nets thrust toward shore
By the morning tide.

Petroglyphs / John Muro

Otherwise lost in language
Figures etched in stone
Now washed by water

Import is difficult to gauge,
Woodland streams are prone
To make porous stone softer;

Most likely, ages
Ago, the unknown
Was eerily captured –

A blunt, brutal page
Where stone upon stone
Shaped these figures;

Fronds of plumage
Entombed;
Serrated limbs of conifers;

Clusters of aster,
And a lexicon
Preserved in tongues of water.

John Muro / Guilford, Connecticut

Stones / Robert Stone

I'm not sure what it would be politic to call Desmond these days – that seems to change every couple of months – but we used to say he was backward. He had been called gormless, but it was more than that. He had an ancient face. He was clean and neatly dressed and his hair was greased, cut and combed. His dad was dead or had disappeared like they sometimes did, but we were sure Desmond looked just like him. Sleeveless jumper, knitted tie. And that was the giveaway. What twenty-year old, in those days, dressed and cut his hair like his dad?

Desmond was a man in work, but his mother bought all of his clothes. Yes, he had a job of a sort; he was in house clearance. When some lonely old soul finally pegged it he would go round with the totter and help clear out all the junk that nobody wanted. He would walk in front of the cart shouting rags, bones, bottles. He loved that. The other thing that marked out Des as not quite right was that he always hung round with kids half his age, kids like us.

What we liked to do was play over what we called the quarry, which was in fact an abandoned open-cast mine, basically a massive hole in the ground which usually had four or five inches of water at the bottom of it. We would dig boulders out of the side of this pit and then watch them roll down into the water and we found old bits of metal rubbish and pretended they were debris from crashed alien space-craft and we would hunt the frogs, newts and fish, sticklebacks mostly, that had already begun to populate that place. And Des liked to do these things too. Twenty years old and looking twice that. He actually liked to torment the small amphibious creatures that he caught, the newts with their orange bellies spotted like leopards and the fish with their bones already outside of themselves, but we would not play those games with him. He wanted to play other kinds of games too, but that came later. I am surprised now at how tolerant we were of him, of that kind of thing. We would just say, 'Well, he can't help it. He's backward'.

Even so, Des was popular with us because his job made him very useful when it came to that other game we liked to play; throwing stones at things. We would throw stones at anything. In the hope of smashing it in an interesting way. Once we even stoned a fridge. To prolong the game, I suppose, although really this was all part of the game, we would use the smallest possible stones first, stones that we knew would be useless, to make our enterprise look difficult, to make it look as though we needed to expend some ingenuity to accomplish our end, to make our victim appear, at first, invulnerable.

Those small stones just bounced off that fridge. Of course they did. So we got bigger stones. I remember the fridge because it was our greatest challenge. But in the end we got it. One of the lads, we were all of us lads, got close with some slab he could barely lift over his head and snapped a hinge off. The armor was breached. There was only one way that was going to end then.

The occasion that makes me think of all of this though is the time that Desmond came round with those old specimen bottles. These had not come from a museum, although they were the kind of thing you did see in a museum, they were out of some old bloke's shed, Desmond said. Not even the totter wanted them. They were glass bottles full of brown liquid, like a dirty, dusty vinegar and if you shook them then something would loom out of the brown and squash itself horribly against the glass wall. Specimens. Lizards, organs, fetuses. Not human.

The liquid was supposed to preserve them, but it had hardly done that. I don't know why that bloke had them in his shed. Perhaps the museum didn't want them either. I had the label from one of the bottles, brown too and even the writing on it, which had been written in long hand with a fountain pen, had gone brown. I could not read it. The days had gone when a little boy could read such a hand and no doubt the words would have been too hard. Latin maybe. I had that label for a long time but I have lost it now. I only remember us smashing one of the bottles, so maybe there was only one in truth. That we would smash it was inevitable. It was no

fridge. We set it up at a fair distance and started with the smaller stones. The glass was tough. These specimens had been worth something once. But sooner or later someone would find a flaw or maybe that rain of little boys' stones just built up a pressure, like time itself, so that as soon as enough passed, then the burst came.

It was like an explosion, a shattering, the top of the thing disappeared and the lizard or serpent or whatever it was lay, this otherworldly white, in a jagged crown of broken glass, soaking in its gush of vinegary effluvia. A ferocious tang tainted the air and we pelted it frantically as though we had been attacked. Our pebbles and flints struck and struck again into those fetid ancient white coils. In the end we stepped up to see what we had done and little enough was left. That slithering thing had escaped us, leaving nothing behind but scales and stink and regret. It had slipped away into the thirsty earth.

Robert Stone / Ipswich, United Kingdom



What Do You Know of Eggs? / Nancy Jentsch

Today's pumpkin-colored yolks scramble
with bubbly beaten whites,
the foam a color Kandinsky
would drool for
Frying eggs sizzle serenades
harmonize with salty bacon
sport accents of poblano and cheddar
their taste delicate as their shells

If this is all you know of eggs
it is sufficient

As for me,
blessed with hens,
my hands wonder
at the warmth
each egg entrusts
exquisite as any snowflake or rose

And in my dimpled basket
their pastel rainbow—
tans, blues, greens—
seals an understated promise

Nancy Jentsch / Camp Springs, Kentucky

Billy / Rana Williams



Rana Williams / Hayesville, North Carolina

(Photograph)

Thanks to You Today / Kelley White

I learned today that ‘Ghost Riders in the Sky’ is a variant of the ‘Wild Hunt’ myth collected by Jacob Grimm among others. That the term Aryan comes from a study on indo european languages. That spell check accepts indo without caps but not European. That your cousin on your mother’s side has almost exactly the same birthday as your cousin on your father’s side. That the young woman killed in the Right is Right (white is Right) protest was called fat by the Stormtrooper web site. That the Storm Trooper website is just one guy. That one guy can spread a lot of hate. That Trump condemns racist violence. That he might suspect that Breitbart guy of spreading leaks. That according to Teen Vogue a Muslim contestant for Miss Universe Britain won the right to compete without a bikini. That Odin often appears with two ravens. That Jimmy Fallon has done a series of Camp Winnepesaukee sketches. That spell check actually can spell Winnepesaukee better than I can and I’ve lived here all year. That Eisenstadt’s famous movie The General Line had as a big reveal a tractor made by Ford. That Henry Ford was anti-semitic. That the Virgin Mary pretty much wears hijab. That I got Eisenstein’s name wrong. That he had some pretty amazing hair.

Kelley White / Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Roommates / Mary-Michelle DeCoste

We meet through the bland urgency of necessity
vaguely curious
mildly apprehensive
ultimately apathetic
yet compelled to make peace with our intimacy.

We are not lovers, seeking to obliterate our
separateness,
sinking sighing into each other's empty spaces.
We are not friends, spontaneous in solidarity,
meeting, speaking freely, parting.
Unambitious, we wish only not to be inconvenienced,
and, in more expansive moments, not to cause
inconvenience.
Our generosity with each other extends no further than
this.

We circle each other, now amiable, now uneasy,
taking stock of our differences.
In the kitchen, you crunch organic granola,
reproach my Pop-Tart choice.
Your pot of chives, cheerful and forceful,
crowds my tulips on the sill to witness sequential
solitary suppers,
dishes done twice.
Tupperware cupping tomorrow's lunch
teeters on the fridge's shelf
all night.

I listen for you in the bathroom; you listen for me.
We take polite turns:
the gushing of water, the brushing of teeth,
the silence of self-examination in the medicine-cabinet
mirror.
We bear indifferent witness to our bodies'
disintegrations:

I stretch your hair, a sodden seaweed tangle, from the
drain.
You swipe epidermal scum; the tub shines behind your
sponge.
You sweep nail parings from the floor.

We do not make a home

Mary-Michelle DeCoste / Guelph, Ontario

***Broken and Lost* / Garrett Phelan**

split open and busted
the old doorknob on the beach
belonged to waves,
and wind, and sand.
No hands open it or close it.
No one comes or goes,
enters or leaves through it.

I pick it up and carry it to the cottage,
leave it outside to have the night
clean and open spaces to find

what hands touched you,
what dreams you opened,
what hopes you closed?
Who walked in using you
and who walked out and
never returned?

Garrett Phelan / Bloomfield, Connecticut

***Sun Hat, Cape Cod Photo #1* / Terry Blackhawk**

Here you are, squinting out from the straw hat
we bought at the Stop and Save,
and here I am, uncut, hair shaggier
than my dog's, its fringe a hinge of memory.

And what's a photo but a mirror,
one where I see you still seeing me
and meet again in your gaze the woman I was
the night we met, strangers just in from the rain.

***How You Left* / Terry Blackhawk**

I saw the Hairy Woodpecker
with its oddly yellow crown,
a bullfrog on the far side
of lily pads gleaming
in the sun, its throat a small balloon,
and there were children beside us
peering into the woodland scene.
You gave each bird its one assignment:
this one scratching, that one peck-
pecking, and then just like that
they were gone. Not as if a door
opened or a human had walked out
into the feeder area.
Rather, it was circular,
some vortex had sucked them up.
I thought *waterspout, whirlwind*.
It got still. Then the hawk cried,
stretched wide its wings and landed.

Terry Blackhawk / Hamden, Connecticut

Taking a Dim View / Sharon Scholl

Maybe I could lick
this apprehension, but
I'm short on time.

I've just begun to understand
the life of faith, at least
the lure of it: the holy book
that answers everything,
the rituals, the prayers
the deeds of mercy that add up
to an admission ticket.

None of this would solve
my basic problem,
that growing sense of doubt.
I'm not a good pretender
thinking I'll wake safe
in the arms of Jesus instead
of tossed into the void..

Some days I can defeat
that dreadful expectation.
Some days it shows up
armed and ready
for a fight.

Sharon Scholl / Atlantic Beach, Florida

A Mouse in Camp / Mark Hamilton

With that certain slant of blade
rhythms glide through fallen leaves
of curled colors,

in autumn tunnels
filled with the forest scent.

A fire burns hot
banked with sand against cottonwood roots
bleached by the sun,

the night becoming so clear each star moves
across the Mississippi by itself.

A last cup of tea;
a mouse nibbling half a pecan—
its little crunchy face.

All morning, I paddle with mallards
in shoal waters so shallow and slick with silt
only a gnawed beaver stick
warns me off an invisible mud bar.

A silo stands
on the ridge line, clouds
folding up and up.

Mark Hamilton / Dunedin, Florida

God spoke to me the other day,
said, “How ya doin’?” so casual,
nonchalant, as though omniscience
had failed. And I said I was okay,
but that must have been a lie,
or why else would an omnipotent
being ask? So I started babbling
about the names of things:
elm and zebra, cantaloupe
and cardinal. I started questioning
the shape of the jaw, the arch
of the upper palate,
the malleability of the tongue.
And God nodded and said,
“Yeah,” as though willing
to take the blame. And I said,
“Yeah,” because I just need
someone to hold accountable
for all the things I don’t understand.
I get in the car and drive away,
and who do you suppose
materializes as a bobblehead
on the dash? Yep, you guessed it.
And, so, now, I’m self-
conscious because I know
there’s nothing I can do,
nowhere I can go without
being found. After all, I move
from past to present,
and this omnipresent being is still
keeping tabs on me. So I say,
“All right.” Then I step on the gas,
drift a little too close to the edge.

David Prather / Parkersburg, West Virginia

King Tide / Barbara Parchim

seals and sea lions bob in the froth of high surf
near rocks they usually haul onto,
bare spots drastically reduced to a choice few
that the strongest have already claimed

huge driftwood rafts, entire trees and stumps,
roil and tumble like toothpicks in the waves,
as light as corks, they batter the cliffs,
flinging foam into the air,
beaches submerged beneath them

through our anthropocentric lens
we speak of the sea's fury —
why not the sea's ecstasy?
moon and wind her cohorts
in this wild revelry of the millennia,
the inexorable rhythm of wave and tide

morning's parking lots and streets
strewn with driftwood, sand and sea wrack,
evidence of our fragile peripheries —
reminder of our transience

there is comfort in knowing the sea —
our first home —
will outlast our follies

Barbara Parchim / Cave Junction, Oregon

Summer Girl / Gary Wadley



Gary Wadley / Louisville, Kentucky

(Photograph)

***Hundred Year Afternoons** / Ron Czerwien*
after a line by Charles Simic

All of the crows have fallen silent.
On the rooftop of the closed church
the only one in sight raises and lowers
ragged wings like semaphore flags.

The blue Siberian squill has gone viral
spreading across the neighbor's lawn
where an old oak with sawed off limbs
reminds us survival comes with a cost.

When our hundred year long afternoons
have ended and are replaced by timeless
tomorrows, a secret door always locked
will finally open, or so it seems.

Ron Czerwien / Madison Wisconsin



I'm Outside Shucking Sweet Corn / Leslie Schultz

when a hummingbird whooshes over,
crisscrossing the geraniums
and sunflowers, hovers
near my shoulder—
just a one-second splinter
of eternity—in which I hear
her wings, her wondering
whether I (in my fuchsia-pink shirt,
up to my elbows in sticky husks and juice)
am the sweetest-scented flower
in the whole garden.

And now, I am wishing
I were.

Leslie Schultz / Northfield, Minnesota



***Out Of The Toy Box And Into The Fire* / Bruce McRae**

Every midnight Johanne's toys come alive.
They raid the kitchen and play with cutlery,
mother's suspicions turning to concern
after dolly has moved a muffin.
They hide daddy's papers
so he'll be cross in the morning.
Teddy sacrifices a mouse
on the altar of his yearning –
oh to be human, or very like Johanne,
his wooden soldiers planning a bedroom coup,
the hour primed for revolution.
The day is near! My brothers and sisters.
The playgrounds are for burning.

Bruce McRae/ Salt Spring, British Columbia

That Fast / Dale Stromberg

Blaise was a big man and made no apologies. Some things about your appearance you could control, some you couldn't. So he didn't do any stupid crash diets, but he always made time to iron a crease into his trousers. Kept his hair gelled and tidy. Trimmed his beard every third morning. In fact, he'd always thought the beard was a selling point. Now he stood before the bathroom mirror, electric razor in hand, wondering where to start.

It wasn't like he'd ever gotten a vibe from Radiyah. She probably merely saw him as one of the guys on the day shift. Nevertheless, it couldn't hurt to just—customize for her, if that was the word.

He'd waited three days. At work, she'd made a chance comment: all her past boyfriends had been clean shaven. Blaise had thought it would be weird to come back beardless the very next day. Too obvious. "Start with the cheeks," he said to the mirror. He'd leave his sideburns, mustache, and the rest for now. Eliminate bit by bit and see how it evolved.

He considered himself to be above the typical male gaze stuff about a girl's appearance. But he felt this incredible gap between Radiyah's looks and how naturally she behaved: frank, friendly, always herself, subtly ironic but never satirical, laughing at her own mistakes in a way that invited him in with her. He'd have assumed that a pretty girl, since she could get through life without cultivating much inner complexity, wouldn't cultivate much. Which was him being shallow after all, he told himself.

The sideburns on their own weren't thrilling him, so he shaved them next, inching them up to above his earlobes. He surveyed this bizarre version of himself with only a ring of hair around his mouth. A picture arose of him doing a lumbering karate kick, and the words sprang out unbidden: "Steven Seagal." The dumpy direct-to-video version. Nope. Not working.

Blaise had been at The Mug for three years when Radiyah joined. She was studying speech therapy; he was perpetually five hundred bucks away from going back to school. Lloyd had made Blaise assistant manager in his second year until Blaise had asked to be busted back down to cashier. Authority wasn't for him. So he'd never been Radiyah's supervisor, which would have taken the whole thing off the table. Customers generally asked for her advice on coffee beans and his advice on pastries. Guess why. But Radiyah joked about it, making him feel like she was on his side.

The problem was, what next, the mustache or the goatee? He shaved the connecting strips down each side of his mouth, giving himself a Van Dyke. It made him look like a really round Jack Sparrow. Nope, nope, nope.

He stared at the mirror, trying to picture two potential versions of his face.

They were friends. Workplace friends. Blaise was a pro at boundaries—there was zero resentment. Another guy on the day shift had been complaining one slow afternoon about how some girl in his circle had friend-zoned him, which he was taking personally: “To her I’m nothing.” Blaise would’ve liked to change the subject. But Radiyah had said, “It means she trusts you. It can actually take a lot for a girl to trust a guy. That’s not nothing.” Something about how she’d said it had hit Blaise hard.

He’d see friends posting relationship stuff on Instagram, and it was like news from a distant star. In high school, Blaise had let people assume he identified as asexual. After that, it wasn’t like the years flew past or anything. They crept past, and all that happened was that nobody ever came into his life. There were women he wondered about, one here, one there, but it was wake up, do what you need to do, live another day, repeat. He wondered if Radiyah was on Instagram.

Well, it was time to decide. Off with the mustache. He shaved it, then shaped the goatee a little. Hmm. He was on the verge of axing the goatee too, but hesitated.

The area above his upper lip was too big. He didn't remember having so much goddamn upper lip before. He looked like a Simpsons character. He left the goatee untouched and went for a glass of milk. Folded some laundry. Came back to the mirror twice before deciding: keep the goatee for now. He felt done with it. No use polishing a turd. He brushed little hairs from the mesh of the razor and returned it to the mirrored cabinet.

Radiyah was late for her shift the next morning. She got there when the queue was stretching to the door, ducking her head like guilt was physically pressing her down.

. "Sorrrysorrrysorrrysorry!" But he was managing the rush fine, timing his round trip between the pastries, the espresso machine, and the register pretty handily.

She came around from the back still tying her apron strings. "Morning."

"Yo." He'd recently been doing this yo thing. Sometimes it got a chuckle.

"Hey." She squinted at his face. "You look different."

He did his level best not to freeze in his tracks.

She nodded. "You grew a goatee, didn't you?" Her smile was as friendly as always. "Looks cool. I didn't know guys could grow them that fast." And she was off to the back again with a tray of dirty cups.

And—that went swell, he thought.

The coffee wasn't going to pour itself, so he spirited a mochaccino to the pick-up counter and got to the next customer in line. And the next, and the next. Though his face burned where the razor had inflamed it, and the space behind the counter suddenly felt too cramped to turn around in, he did all he could to keep going. How

hilarious. He couldn't decide, he honestly couldn't tell, whether it was so funny he could cry, or so sad he needed to laugh.

Dale Stromberg / Selangor, Malaysia

Riddle in the Anglo-Saxon Style / Susan McLean

I sing of a serf, unswerving and able,
a longtime house-man, loyal to his clan,
gift of a guest who had gained him of old
among the goods from his mother's wedding.
Woeful the wretches who writhed in his hold!
They screeched in his grip, though girded with iron,
keening their pain-song as he clove their brainpans
and bared their inwards for any to see.
With his biting blade he breached their helms,
and handed their hoard to his hearth-lord as spoils.
Older he was than all of his hall-mates,
having outlived a horde of others,
and still he was sturdy, a standby in need.
Hail to the helper, a henchman of worth!

Answer: an electric can opener

***Ghost Spring* / Susan McLean**

A fall of snow in April overnight
topples the daffodils and lays them low;
each crocus wears an aureole of white:
a fall of snow.

It's curtains for the greening world's new show.
The pink magnolias wither in the blight;
the tulip buds succumb in embryo.

Though rolls of cotton batting drape the bright
swaths of blue squills and violets, I know
fresh waves of blossom will resurge, despite
a fall of snow

***Communing* / Susan McLean**

They tasted of honey; they tasted of dust.
They burgeoned and billowed like rising bread
with a springy crumb and a crackly crust.
They gave tingle to yearning, and tongues to the dead.

Like DNA, they twisted and chained;
like waves on the ocean, they rocked and swelled.
The sound of them died, yet the seeds remained.
The tether snapped; the connection held.

They flicked on perception from far away;
they raised a cathedral with no façade.
From dark and light, they built beacons that stay,
and they tapped the lightning, for words were God.

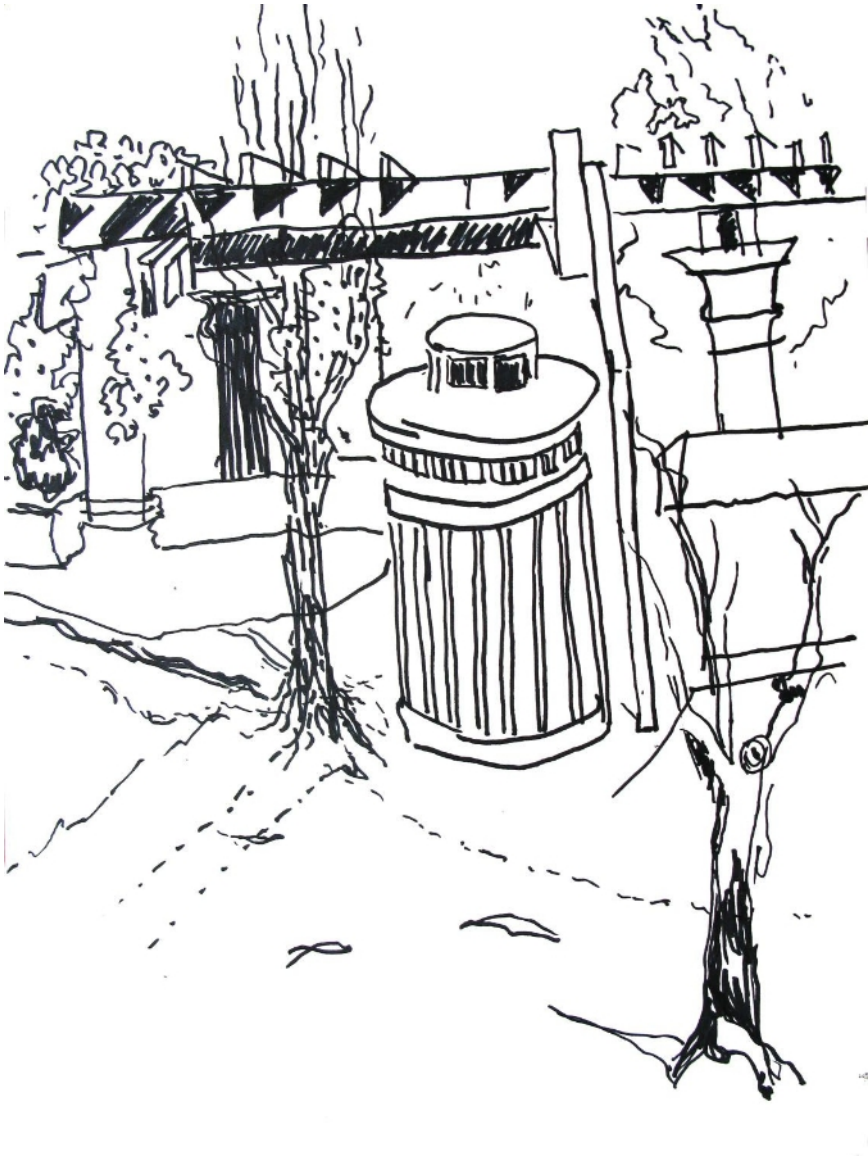
Susan McLean / Iowa City, Iowa

Fruition / Carolyn Russell

I nurse my grievances
Until they are ready to eat on their own.
By then, they have teeth.
By then, they can clamber off my lap
And find the dark places to go
For the small, buried bodies
To lay at my feet.
Some will grow wings,
Fortunate exiles.
Some will crawl
In bitter circles as they wait
To be born again,
Refreshed and grimy with
Expectation.
Either way, I'm never lonely.

Carolyn Russell / West Newbury, Massachusetts

Waste Receptacle / Jay Daar



Jay Daar / Berkeley, California

(Drawing)

Assisted Living / Judith Sornberger

For my mother, dead eighteen years

This time, Mom, I'd stay overnight
at Assisted Living when you asked.
Borrow a pair of your satin pajamas,
paint your fingernails pearly white.
Finish off a box of Russell Stover
chocolates with you. I wouldn't
even complain when you pinched
each piece to reveal its center,
avoiding the dreaded marshmallow.

Forgive me. I was trying to avoid
sleeping on the sofa too narrow
for my body, staying up later
than I like while you filled ashtrays
with cigarette butts and my eyes
burned and watered from your smoke.

This time I'd visit the past
for as long as you wanted.
Sit with you, hip to hip,
looking at pictures of me
and my sisters, the ones with
scalloped white edges like
the lace on our Easter anklets.
Watch as many classic black
and white flicks as you wished,
and weep beside you at their endings.

Where I Find You / Judith Sornberger

This morning I'm recalling the yellow spiral notebook where you wrote your poems and even drafts of letters to your parents. No one would have read that small, precise monk's hand as belonging to a former paratrooper. When I winked at you across the table in the writing workshop, a small spark ignited in me, like one that might grow into a poem. We never guessed we'd end our story this way—with your death and my writing to you on the wooden lap desk you gave me many years into our marriage. Laying it across my thighs, pulling it snug into my belly, I slide my palm across its polished skin, smooth and cool as your back, our first time, moving over my body like midnight. Today I gaze into the wood's grain, trying to read a message from you in its horizontal lines—some calm ripples, some swirling out to sea like lines of poems we hoped to follow beyond logic or expectation, swerving off and diving toward a place unknown and true.

Judith Sornberger / Wellsboro, Pennsylvania



Bitterness / Laura Ann Reed

We've passed the Spring Equinox
though here in Western Washington
where the sky spits discontent through mid-July
rain shivers on the maple's naked limbs
and I'm chafing at that saying
from the late 60's, early 70's:
*You can't keep blaming your mother
for the way your life turned out.*
For years it surfaced everywhere:
bumper stickers, talk shows, magazines...
Who cooked up that pabulum?
I'll bet it was someone's mother—
a mother who knew her bitterness
was why her daughter was lighting fires in the dry hills,
why, years later, the girl wouldn't eat
and later still, feared having children of her own.
Yes, it was someone's mother
and I see her out there in the biting wind—
chiding the maple's leaf buds for failing to unfurl,
lowering her voice so as not to be overheard
by the young couple walking past, laughing,
the woman holding the hand of a child wearing red mittens,
the child pointing first to one thing, then another
and another—a stone, a bird, a cloud floating
across the gray sky— her small face glowing
in the cold air, the bright mittens like tiny flames
leaping.

Moonlight / Laura Ann Reed

The words don't hold enough restlessness.

Not enough risk.

Not enough hunger.

Send them to the mountains
to live among wolves.

Let them return,
fresh blood staining their muzzles.

Let them speak between howls,
in silences—
their matted fur
glowing with moonlight.

Unsaid / Laura Ann Reed

He draws my hand toward the oxygen mask
covering the lower half of his face:

there's something he wants to say.

The nurse has told me he's delirious.

With the stubbornness
of an undertow he pulls again.

Afraid he'll drown, I shake my head.

Within his unsaid words are clouds,
winds, the migration of a thousand birds.

Decades pass while I wait
for the sound of beating wings.

Laura Ann Reed / Mill Creek, Washington

Groundsman / Robert Nisbet

The cricket club is closing for the winter.
The pitch is clipped and mown, the grass compact,
the boot-scuffs healing, ready for spring.

He has oiled the machines, the mowers, tractor,
and is packing the kit away, washing the pads
with soda, rubbing the linseed oil into the bats,
so the willow will have the give, the resilience,
for the blocking and driving of a new season.

They didn't win the championship last year
but with spring they will crowd the grass again,
their shouts ringing and the fervent sense of team.

Tonight he must email his brother in Quebec,
a janitor too, for the hockey. Their winter
will bring matches on the freezing hiss of ice.
He wouldn't care for it himself, prefers his sport

Now, as he padlocks the shed, there sweeps above him
a flock of Canada geese, migrating, high
in the enormosness of adventure. Here he's content
with hibernation and the smell of linseed oil.

Robert Nisbet / Haverfordwest, Wales

Desk, Cannery Row, Monterey, California / Roger Camp



Roger Camp / Seal Beach, California

(Photograph)

Barely Morning / M.J. Iuppa

It's early. I wake, as I always do, before first light, before
the rumble of the furnace kicks on and gears spin in-

to action, sending warm gulps of air, gushing through
the basement's cloverleaf of heat ducts into the registers

of our dusky rooms of deep cold and sleep. I wake, with-
out waking you, sitting on the edge of our bed, looking

at my socked feet, wondering if they will move in devotion
to me. I stand— feet planted, putting my arms out, with

the gesture of an umbrella opening, and step gingerly in-
to the hall, only to pause at a porthole window that holds

its ransom of winter's blue light reflecting off freshly
fallen snow; and I think hard thoughts about falling

in the depth of this hour, when no one is awake, except
for our gray cat who has found me standing here, at

the turn to the stairs, showing me the way down—
what more could I ask?

M.J. Iuppa / Hamlin, New York

Blessing / Robert Fillman

Leaving the old place for the last
time. Got the trash out, a couple
boxes in the car, the final

walk-through over. It's amazing
to see the place empty. I hope
the new owners will find as much

happiness as we did. As I'm
about to lock away the years,
abandon the memories of

dancing in the dark and my wife's
full pregnant belly warm against
my ear while I listen for our

daughter's first thoughts, I wonder if
the energy we leave behind
from living well is a blessing.

Just in case I rub hands across
plaster, squeeze every brass doorknob,
make my way outside, where I raise

my arms beneath the full moon, cast
a spell at the point of the roof
aiming to protect every brick,
every shingle of crumbling slate.

Robert Fillman / Macungie, Pennsylvania

Chalice / Mary Van Schoelandt

below the second step
of shale

water whitens into spray
a million crystals

gone green
against the mounded moss
not yet in spore

on the east bank
a single stalk

Mandrake midway
through its unfurling

its yellow bloom
cupping a drop of creek

offering the ocean.

Mary Van Schoelandt / Fontana, Kansas

The Master's Hands / Daniel Edward Moore

He's finally becoming friends
with pressure: heavy blankets,
big dogs, the hope to be better.

Speeding down hypertension highway
as the blood in his brain's
red light starts to flash, hysterical

is easier to say than happy as
failure's fumes begin tickling
the throat and laughter's mistaken

for a rest stop called joy but he
misses the exit and wakes up
in a bed with a big dog under his blanket

named *Why* who obediently fetches
life's broken moments and returns
them to the master's hands.

Daniel Edward Moore / Oak Harbor, Washington



The Mantra Don't / Cecil Morris

Across the street, all day long, the nail guns
shoot don't don't don't in the neighbor's new roof
and I nod along in private dance
of prohibition: don't touch that, don't squirm,
don't get your dress dirty, don't talk so much.
I learned silence, stillness, obedience
made me pretty, earned me praise, attention,
the kind of love I loved, the kind I felt
for dolls I didn't touch, my no-no dolls.
The other dolls, the cloth and plastic ones
that could stand scrubbing or a tumble dry,
I played with, shared, but kept on my bedroom
floor. I stepped on them, kicked them, chastised them
for their dirty wildness, their wagging tongues,
their constant hunger for new adventures
like riding the dog through the yard tucked tight
in her collar, like falling in muddy
places, like skydiving from my window.

Unlike the bad dolls, I stayed clean and white,
motionless on the sofa, snow and ice,
a still life in the formal living room.
I was the angel of renunciation,
repeating the mantra don't don't don't don't
while in my head I imagined Barbie's
new escapades, sinful shenanigans,
desires enacted like sparrows scattering.
She lived for tang of danger in my mouth,
the stolen pixie stick and sugar rush
with nip of sour, the sudden stomach
drop of near disaster or disaster
real—the body stained or broken, a bruise
that rises like dark petunias, hair shorn
or melted, experiences time can't
erase even if the body heals.

Cecil Morris / Roseville, California

When I Go / Marsha Segerberg

When I go, I want harps and angels,
Winged clouds lifting me up,
Gate entwined with tulips,
The greeter, a transsexual
Wearing wandering jew,
Curly tendrils shading delicate bits,
A camel with a rose in her mouth.

I want all my dogs lined up and wagging,
Dead lovers with toothy smiles
Reach toward me holding pecan pies.
Friends all my friends and Colette Ella Fitzgerald.

Through the gates I want to find
A beach with seductive palms,
Tracks of extinct animals
In the cloud-sand.

A *paletero* hands out coconuts
With sriracha and lime.
Blazing sun that I needn't hide from
But a shady *palapa* anyway.

I want to smoke cigarettes again and celebrate
Perpetual happy hours with spicy shrimp,
Pescado frito brought to me on a banana leaf,
And Maria Dolores Pradera.

Over there's a scalding-white hacienda with open windows.
Glenn Gould plays fugues
That flow through curtains
Wafting out with scent of eucalyptus.

I want to stay.
I want to stay.
Don't make me go back
As somebody else.

I'll be the camel, the paletero.
I'll be a tulip, the wandering jew,
The coconut.
I'll be the hot sauce.

Marsha Segerberg / Phoenix, Arizona

***Day 121 and Still No Tomatoes* / Paul Bernstein**

Day 121 and still no tomatoes.
It all comes down to
soil and weather, labor,
time, and the grace of God.
Labor is under your control,
grace is not, and time,
they say, is relative.
Penelope waited 20 years
for Odysseus to come home,
Job 80 years for his release
from torment, Sleeping Beauty
a century to wake, and we all
still wait for the Messiah.
You're not stuck with a wait
for your ship to come in,
for pigs to fly, or for Godot.
So be patient; water,
watch, hang on, with life
and tomatoes there's still hope.

Paul Bernstein / Ann Arbor, Michigan

The Emigrant / Paul Bernstein

Grandpa was the first man in my family
to wear a dress, shaving his beard,
slipping into drag to escape
Russia and a war no one remembers.
He sailed to America, owned a store,
spent weekends at Brighton Beach
swapping dirty jokes in Yiddish
with the other naked old men in the solarium,
and nights watching the great Antonino Rocca
wrestle Nature Boy and the Amazing Zuma.
Rocca starred in a DC comic
taking on the Man of Steel but Grandpa
did not believe in Superman,
was not a scholar and never read it.
He stood by the halakha,
the old Jehovah laws and ritual,
but Grandpa could not pay
the Orthodox temple fees.
He settled for a Conservative
shul he could afford,
with up-to-date notions
and a rabbi fond of wrestling
with Toynbee's theories
on the Jewish problem,
then came home to tell his wife
"He talked about books again."

Paul Bernstein / Ann Arbor, Michigan

***Dawn and Later* / J. S. Absher**

we know not what we should pray for as we ought
—Romans 8:36

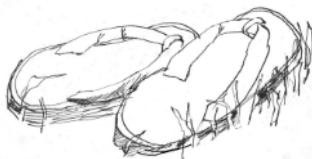
Dawn comes in over the trees
across the lawn through window glass
to illuminate the books in line
at the back edge of my desk.
Its rosy fingers caress
Abba before *Eban*,
the *r* in *rainer*, *Deli* in
Delighted States, and all
the *Wit* in *Wittgenstein*.

Not that I see it, most
days. I sit out of the sun
so I can read a screen.
If I go into the sun
it's to observe the plants
I've arranged more or less
at random under the trees,
shade and dappled-light
lovers—mints and cleavers,

begonia and impatiens.
They hold still, inviting
contemplation. They come back
every year, even some annuals—
persistence is a neglected
virtue—and all they ask
is water in drought, weeding,
vigilance against pests,
the occasional feeding.

After noon, I stand among them
hearing leaves stir, and, over
the din of traffic three blocks
away, the distant snare drums
of a marching band. What
should I wish for, I wonder;
which prayers will touch
heaven? I wait to be told, needing
so little, wanting so much.

J. S. Absher / Raleigh, North Carolina



Secret / George Stein



George Stein / Boonton, New Jersey

(Photograph)

INSIDE/OUT LITERARY ARTS PROJECT FEATURE

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.

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.

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.

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:

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

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

All of these student poems are by 5th grade students at Cesar Chavez Academy in Detroit, Michigan.

***Look There's a Poem* / Kevin Zarate-Castillo**

Look there's a poem
Watching *Madagascar*
On a plane heading to London.

Look there's a poem
Drinking black coffee
At a luxury hotel built in the 80s.

Look there's a poem
Shopping for new clothes
While doing jumping jacks.

***Sometimes I Feel* / Abby Arcos-Gonzalez**

Today I am feeling tired
like a bird flying too far from Canada
all the way to Michigan.

Yesterday I was feeling happy
like a grasshopper jumping and skipping
all the way home.

Sometimes I feel upset
like a husky because he forgot to be nice
and did not get a treat.

When I think about dogs I feel like
I want one but I have a chicken
and I am worried it will kill my chicken.

***Paying Attention* / Katelyn Vazquez-Lopez**

As I walked out the door I wondered to myself “what will I hear, see, smell, and feel.”

I heard the kids having fun outside.

I saw the birds in the trees.

I heard motorcycles outside from the porch.

I smelled the air and I felt a breeze of warm air blowing against my face.

Many kids were walking or biking back home.

Some people were walking their dogs.

The sky was bright blue with spots of fluffy clouds.

But at night it was different...

You could hear music blasting from down the street.

You could see cars leaving and going.

You could feel the chilly air from the porch.

Some nights you can hear very loud cars and motorcycles getting louder and louder.

The sky at night would be either clear and bright, or sometimes the sky would be dark and hard to see.

But when the sun goes down, it is very calming and relaxing to watch the sky get darker and darker.

Until the whole sky is full of pitch blackness.

***When I Close My Eyes* / Katelyn Vazquez Lopez**

I see a dinosaur sitting on a plane.

I see a frying pan flying in a circle.

I see a ball running down the street.

I see a pig at the market buying cheese.

I see a pair of boots swimming at the lake.

I see a star doing cartwheels.

I see a pillow playing board games.

I see a bear eating pancakes with a dog.

I see a piece of toast cooking shrimp underwater.
I see a ladder making a birdhouse outside in the backyard.
I see an alarm clock sleeping in.
I see a book doing laundry outside on his porch.
I see a shark playing a violin in the desert.
I see a fish taking a bath.
I see a gingerbread man taking his dog to the park.
I see a kangaroo jumping on a trampoline.
I see a sock running away from their owner.
I see a unicorn flying in the air while eating a donut.
I see a car parked in the clouds.
I see a mouse eating a house.
I see a banana with five legs trying to walk.
I see a teacher teaching upside down.
I see frogs playing leapfrog.
I see a man getting lost on a straight path.
I see a monkey having tea with a donkey.
I see a chair cleaning up the dining room.
I see a pencil doing math in a bathtub.

***Finding Light* / Katelyn Vazquez-Lopez**

I find light in the hearts of others
I find light in the smiles of my parents
I find light in those with creative minds
I find light in the laughs of people

Find light in the sunlight above us
Find light in the people who fight for their rights
Find light in those who speak their minds
Find light in the warm days

I find light in the rising sun every morning
I find light in the flower in spring
I find light in my positive brother
I find light in my caring teachers

Find light in the bright moon
Find light in the smile of my sister
Find light in the times I spend with my family
Find light in the hugs of my dad

To Our New President Biden / Miranda Cervantes

Tis a new season of leadership.
It is time to grind new peppercorns.
To help the needy.
To get rid of the greedy.
To shave new paths in the old marsh
Bringing along new tulips in their place.
Give Americans what they need and deserve.
Don't desert your promises
Because if you do it hurts people.

Life in the Shade / Miranda Cervantes

I'm tired of staying inside all day
It's been too long since I've visited my cousins
I want to talk to my friends in person

It's been too long since I've seen my grandma and grandpa
I want to talk to my relatives that I don't know
I'm tired of staying inside all day instead of being outside seeing
the world

I want to talk to my friends in person
I'm tired of staying inside
It's been too long since I've visited my cousins

Let me find light be like a toy being played with
Let me see light like a little girl smiling happily
Let the light be like a happy puppy