

3rd Wednesday



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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 magazine are completely free to anyone and print issues can be purchased at Amazon.com.

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Editor's Note

Over the past couple of years, 3rd Wednesday has made changes that have greatly expanded readership. There are several ways to read 3W. You can read each piece as it is accepted by following our Facebook or you can sign up at thirdwednesday.org to receive a link to each piece in an email. It's like looking over our shoulder as we put each issue together. As quarterly issues are released, print copies of the magazine are mailed to subscribers and contributors. You can also buy individual issues at Amazon.com. Once a print issue is released, that complete issue in PDF format is also made available to read or download completely free at our website. We also have a YouTube channel where you can find recorded video of readings from contributor books we have featured in our blog posts.

In this issue you'll find a special feature of four annotated poems by Richard Tillinghast. As a preface, we include a brief biography to introduce you to this special poet.

We also mark the return of student poetry from The Inside/Out Literary program from Detroit Area Schools, as usual curated by Perter Marcus.

Coming in our fall issue, the winners of our annual George Dila Memorial Flash Fiction Contest. This year's judge is poet, youth fiction writer and flash fiction maven, Ron Koertge. Ron's flash fiction piece, *Negative Space*, was made into an animated film that was nominated for an Academy Award in 2018. His latest poetry collection is *Yellow Moving Van*, a collection of relaxed and buoyant and sometimes very funny poems that address Desi & Lucy with the same courtesy as Walt Whitman.

Entries for the flash fiction contest are open until August 15th.

***Villanelle: For My Father* / D. E. Green**

What is a father? The role keeps changing.
You cradle this stranger, squalling at you.
You're unprepared, always rearranging

Your plan. But there's no plan. You're exchanging
One task for another—painting rooms blue,
Pink, gold. What's a father? The role keeps changing.

You find emotions swing, feelings ranging
With the baby's temper and your spouse's mood—
You're unprepared, always rearranging

Your several selves. You sense them moving, ranging,
Striving to fulfill love's need, to renew
What *father* is even as it's changing.

Paternal obligations are estranging
You from whom you love and from who loves you.
You're unprepared, always rearranging

Your world, surrendering control, engaging
The strange newcomer and the one who chose you.
What's a father? The role's ever changing—
You're unprepared, always rearranging.

D. E. Green / Northfield, Minnesota

What's in the Flame of a Candle? / Hedy Habra

Close your eyes and stare inward, conjuring the voice of your first yoga teacher. Was it her soothing Danish accent that instilled peace in you? Or perhaps her reassurance that only outlining movements mattered, the way brushstrokes lead you without expectations? With eyes closed, draw a candle out of the darkness, see its flame get brighter with the rising sun, see it redden the background against the dark horizon delineated as in a Rothko painting, and watch the setting sun shed blood over ocean waves. Keep staring at the flame's harmless cool light wavering, stretching. Watch it as you'd watch the flicker of coals under caressing tongues of flames dancing inside the hearth, the way you did that night when alone with your cat, you survived the power outage in the midst of one of Michigan's worse ice storms. Let the eyes of your body recall the mountain bonfires lit in honor of the Virgin Mary's Assumption, the tall votive candles, remember the Bunsen burner's blue flame that sterilized your grandmother's needles and syringe.

Heady Habra / Kalamazoo, Michigan

Eurydice's Return / Mary McCarthy

Husband, your music
unlocked the gates of hell
but this is a fool's errand.

You think to pull me up
out of the earth
the way a snake charmer
gets the cobra to rise and dance
to the music of his flute.
You forget I am not asleep
in a basket but dead and buried,
already dissolving into the net
of root and fungus, food
for worms and insects,
and the thread-fine roots
of sprouting seeds.
I am not what I was, what
you knew, too much of me
is already gone,
leached into the soil.

Look at me, love, and see
our time is over,
no art can bring me
back into myself.

I am a bone desert
without breath or tears.
I am thin, insubstantial,
a fog disappearing
into its own shadow.
I have already supped
at death's banquet,
and lost the taste
for wine and honey.

There is no music,
not even sweet as yours,
that can open my throat
or free my tongue,
stopped and sealed
in a mouth
filled with ash

Mary McCarthy / Edgewater, Florida

Moon Over Neva, St. Petersburg, Russia / Diane Martin



Photograph
Diane Martin / Bangor, Maine

Featured Poet – Richard Tillingshast

Richard Tillingshast's new collection, *Blue If Only I Could Tell You*, won the White Pine Press Poetry Prize and is coming out in 2022. *Blue If Only I Could Tell You* is his thirteenth collection, in addition to five books of creative nonfiction. His 2000 book, *Six Mile Mountain*, was reprinted this year by StoryLine/RedHen. Tillingshast has taught at Harvard, Berkeley, Sewanee, the University of Michigan, Trinity College Dublin, and is currently a member of the core faculty in the Converse College low-residency MFA program. He is a founder of the Bear River Writers' Conference in Northern Michigan. His poems have appeared in the *American Poetry Review*, *The Atlantic*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Harvard Review*, *Image Journal*, *The New Yorker*, *Paris Review*, *The New Republic*, *The New Criterion*, and elsewhere. The recipient of the James Dickey Poetry Prize from Five Points and the Cleanth Brooks Award for creative nonfiction from the Southern Review as well as grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the NEA, the British Council, the Irish Arts Council, and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, he lives in Hawaii and spends his summers in Tennessee.



Mimbrenño

. . . the true sound of history, this metal against bone.

—Jim Harrison

A chunk of mesquite
sizzled against the bricks of the old man's fireplace
and popped. That's what you get,
he thought, and it woke him.

His tooled leather saddle
and his Apache saddle blanket lay on the floor,
He had grown old, and made his peace. He reached
for the silver cup he drank mescal from.

He had fallen asleep on the horsehair sofa,
saw himself in the beveled glass
mirror across the room.
"That's what you get," the old Mimbrenño mumbled,
and then knew he was talking to no one.

The wounded were delirious, he remembered,
begging for water,
the strips of rawhide
he gave them to chew on for the pain
turning bloody from their head wounds.

The soldiers had Sharps rifles,
.52 caliber.
They could fire from hundreds of yards
away, and the wounds were grievous.
The men were cut to pieces—
limbs, brains, chunks of bone.
If they brought up the cannons he knew
he would be singing his death song
before sundown,
and he heard the weird, minor-key
intervals of it in his head.

“Now the change comes over me,” he sang.
He had killed that day,
and his heart was glad.
Then the canyon rang with the deep voice
of artillery above the rancheria.

But then why was he alive now, why was he
old, drinking mescal from a silver cup?
Whose life was this?
A black thunderwall rolled up from the southwest
over the mesas of Old Mexico. The wounded were begging
for a drop of water.
The cup he drank from, of hammered Mexican
silver, stood on the marble-topped table a few
inches from his hand.
Whose life was he remembering?
The violence of the storm

came of a sudden.
Sheets of it blinded the men
as they lay in the wallow facing outward,
firing their carbines and muskets.
The storm blotted out the encircling troopers.
Rivulets of rainwater
pooled where they lay.
Muddy as it was, and bloody too
as rain ran down from their clotted wounds,
they lay down on their bellies and drank.

The Mimbrenño Apaches, native to New Mexico, fought as part of the Native American resistance against White settlement of the Southwest during the Indian Wars of the late 19th century. The old warrior in my poem has made his peace, lives a comfortable life on his own *hacienda*. He remembers the battle he led his men in years before, so perilous he thought he might be singing his death song. But he survived, and his memories are confused though vivid. One of my maxims is that poetry is a form of fiction, and I like to make

up characters and situations that come partly from my reading of history, partially from my imagination. The horsehair sofa and the silver cup come from my memory of an old house in Monteagle, Tennessee. Much of my knowledge of the Apache Wars comes from Paul Wellman's *Indian Wars of the West*.

Keeping Company

It was New Year's morning.
Daddy and my brother were watching
the Rose Bowl parade roll past
on that tiny black-and-white TV of ours.

Mama was cooking the blackeyed peas
like she did every year.
I had scrubbed the ham hocks
and sliced the vidalias.

She said the black-eyed peas
would bring us good luck.
"Will it really, Mama?" I wondered aloud.

"Well I don't know, honey,
but let's keep company with the rest of the world
and say it does."

I was also wondering about the collard greens
that were supposed to bring money,
That was something she budgeted severely
in the leather account book she kept in her desk.

I had made my New Year's resolutions
that day I'm talking about,
and burned my faults the night before in the fireplace
after writing them on slips of paper Mama gave us,
keeping company with the rest of my now

faultless family.

Years later, yes,
I keep company with the rest of the world.
I sing the song everybody sings.
I say it's all good. I preach to the choir.
I say it is what it is.

Does it do any good?
Does any of it ever do any good?

I am a native Southerner, and on New Year's Day it is our custom—brought over from Africa so I have been told—to eat blackeyed peas for good luck. And collard greens to bring money. The business of writing down our faults on little slips of paper and burning them in the fireplace was a family ritual too. I love these little rituals. And I love looking back on life with my parents and older brother back in Memphis.



Umami

Steam from soba noodles boiling
has gone to my head.
My kitchen's a rain forest,
the roof of my mouth-cave darkens.
As I cook, I enter under dripping trees
and forage for shitake
among leaves rotting under slow rain.

Back in the forest, barrels of anchovies
mellow under lantern light,
mossy in the half-light.

Garlic I already had, and now
exhalations of oysters, tamari, seaweed
float with the resonance of a struck gong
over broth the noodles have tintured.

As you dip in your spoon, I watch
like a mother
at her daughter's cello recital.

Umami is a Japanese word that translates as “pleasant savory taste.” Highly valued in Japanese cooking, it is found in savory meat broths, mushrooms, and fermented foods. I am an amateur cook, and I am proud of my homemade broths and soups. In this poem taste and the creation of taste become a journey of creation every cook will be familiar with.

I Tuned Up Seán's Guitar

for Thomas Lynch

I tuned up Seán's guitar
and gave it an airing
on the flagged forecourt outside Lynch's house,
the wind whipping off the North Atlantic
three fields from where
Clare drops into the sea.

Soon I had it ringing
with songs of my own country,
green mountains, bottomless rivers, deep valleys
dark as a dungeon and damp as the dew.

I shot a man in Reno, I sang,
just to watch him die.
I had no fiddle to liven it.

The foal's whiteness was something not of this world.
Not till tomorrow would she feel
on her coat, that was new as anything,
what we call rain.
Camilla licked the foal's
leaf-like ears
as I sang out those dire things
that happened *ten years ago on a cold dark night.*

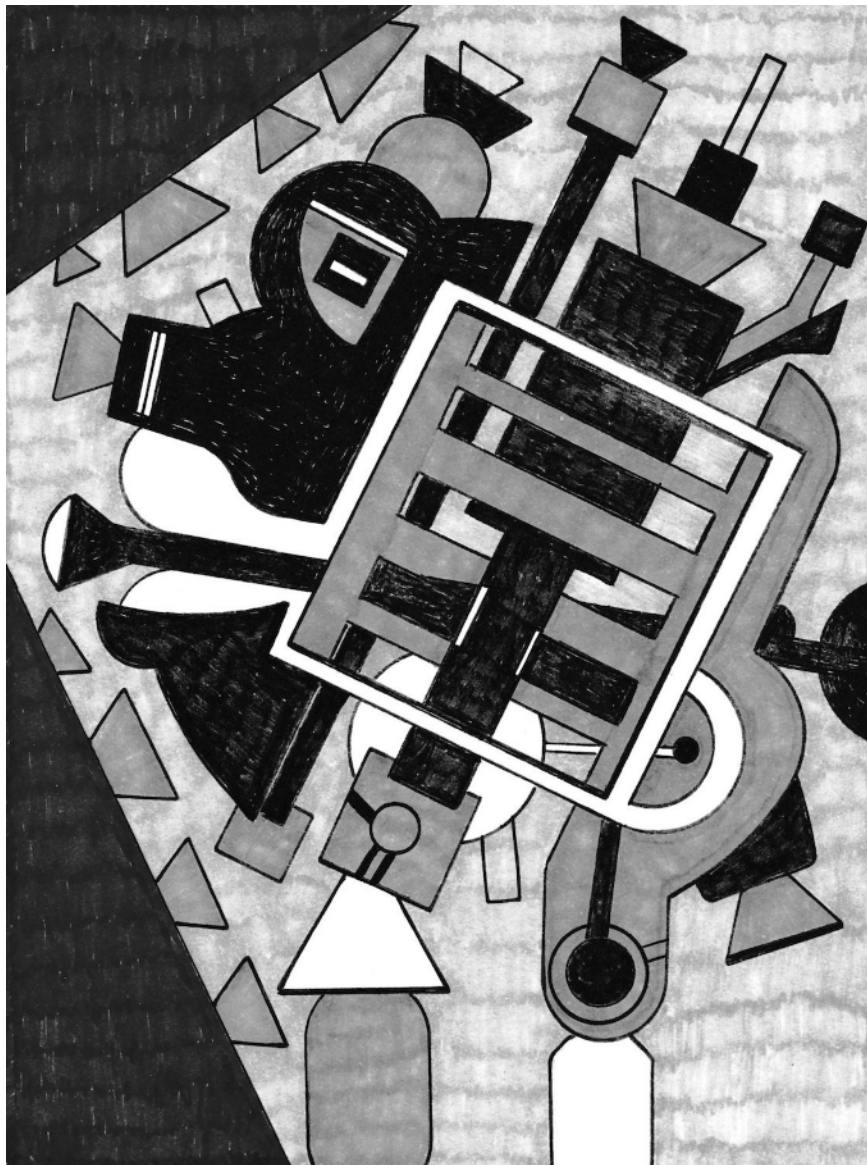
Even the black crow left off cawing
when he heard about the long black veil and the
night wind that moans
and the living who weep over gravestones.

What business had I
 singing into those still-damp ears
ballads of murder and horseback journeys,
 duels and scaffolds
 from a country she had never heard of?

It was some comfort to know
she and I shared no common tongue.

I play the guitar a bit and love to sing, particularly Country music and folk songs from Appalachia. Those who know those old songs will be familiar with the lyrics quoted here. It has been my good fortune to number among my closest friends the poet and writer of fiction and creative nonfiction, Thomas Lynch from Milford, Michigan. We have been friends since the 1980s, have fished together and been colleagues at Bear River Writer's Conference on Walloon Lake ever since we founded the conference over twenty years ago. Tom has also kindly let me stay as his guest at his ancestral home-place in West Clare more than once. I am particularly interested in the interactions and communication or lack of communication between humans and animals, in this case one of Tom's donkeys, a foal born to Camilla (named after the Duchess of Cornwall). This poem was previously published in *Poetry Ireland Review*.

Piston Putter / Denny Marshall



Drawing
Denny Marshall / Lincoln, Nebraska

Ouroboros / Dan Wiencek

I compare you to frost. Your name painted
by fingertip on a windowpane canvas.
You speak *serpent, seethe, slithering thing*.
My doffed skin on the shower floor.

There is truth in the scent of earth
incubated under a ceiling of fallen leaves.
The story we are born knowing, the beginning
and end chiming as one in the body's bell.

We cannot agree on when we came together.
In the end, we divide everything. The chill
that sends shoots retreating into soil. Hissings of
questions left to glide away in s-shaped trails.

Our locked eyes would speak in lessons,
the unwritten calendar of snow yielding to sun.
Teach me the difference between poisonous
and venomous. Twine with me and trade
warmth for warmth. Speak: *sheltered, secret,*
solely this.

Dan Wiencek / Portland, Oregon

Ed Note: noun: **ouroboros** a circular symbol depicting a snake, or less commonly a dragon, swallowing its tail, as an emblem of wholeness or infinity.

They Say We Have Seen / Mark Burke

The towhees that come to feed
just before night are gone;
wind has blown the clouds
past the mountains.
Tonight will be a good time to try.
When the furnace begins
to grumble a call to vespers,
the house rafters creak
and the steady moan begins.
I go to the window and wait
for the darkness to deepen,
allow the light-flow
of eons past to appear
and streak across the night sky.
Its then I go down to the water,
cast off, float in the quiet,
ride the sea of stars
drifting to a place far beyond
the grip of metaphor,
a time they say they have seen
in the fabric of old rages,
red hues shining a code
in beams of color,
a theology of light declared
in the firestorms of suns
that this child of ash
comes to watch.

Mark Burke / Everett, Washington

Mnemosyne / Lucy Western

In my dreams I'm eating mangoes
the wrong way, scraping against
core until they turn to silt in my
teeth. And sometimes still a crow
will call from nowhere over the
Atlantic shrill of songbirds, one
body, tracing the outline of its own
invisible swarm above the hills.
I forget to listen for trains, forget
their clatter like dishes breaking
after sundown, how like the jacaranda
they burst once into being and
then are gone. Winter here is a
perpetual sunrise. Blue-banded
clouds pile up against the edge
of the earth, and in the glow
everything ebbs to smoke.

Lucy Western / Charlottesville, Virginia



While You Pull the Car Around / Lucy Western

At twilight the turtles heave
their low, dark bodies

to the water's edge: no sound
but the dead-leaf scrape

of shale on bone. They leave
white etchings in their wake,

dip careful heads, ease down
one stony claw to tear

the pond's black cloth
in two. The milkweed hiss

beside the water lilies, red
as an algae bloom.

A splash ripples
through the cattail: *that we*

should have to leave so soon...

Lucy Western / Charlottesville, Virginia

Tenure / Melinda Coppola

I offer you gifts
of words newly strung
and tender,
strong and
sometimes proud,

words that are still humming
with the cadence
of my beating heart
from which poems burst forth
onto the page.

I call them *my* poems,
but we both know
this is folly.

The purled words don't belong to me
any more than the morning sky
I kiss with my eyes,
or the breath I take in
that my lungs wring out
and return as something transformed.

Here on earth we
borrow things
like time
and plots of land
and beings that come through us.

we
label things —
yours, theirs, mine

we
covet things
bits of shiny coin and
metal beasts that transport us,
wood boxes that give shelter.

We
think we own so much
of what passes though our lives
yet the Earth always reclaims
her soil
and rubbish
and creatures

as she'll reclaim our teeth,
our fine furniture,
our soft organs and
all those volumes
of poems
I said I wrote
for you.

Melinda Coppola / Norwood, Massachusetts

A Plague of Grackles / Thomas Moore

I scatter a scoopful of seeds for the grackles
on the bricks under the maple where

the feeder hangs. They must have texted
all their cousins because by noon there are

hundreds—the ground is black with
the shiny birds, greenish feathers glinting

when their heads bob forth and back.
OK that's it, I say to myself, *no more seeds*

for grackles. But by mid-afternoon the maple
branches are packed with yakking grackles.

I can't even hear the gravel trucks down-
shifting on Route One. By supertime

the branches start to snap under the weight,
and, when I walk out the door, they come

after me, shredding my jacket and pecking
at my head. *Join us or you're toast*, one

of them says. So, desperate, I nod in agreement,
taste a few seeds, and sign on. I fly up to

a poplar branch, catch my breath, and
set out with several new comrades to a feeder

over at the condominiums. Actually, it's not
a bad deal—they're spirited—and they

say we're flying up to the County potato fields
in a few days. The boss promises we'll be in

Quebec by June. Plus, they have a great sense
of humor, always making raucous puns.

Thomas Moore / Belfast, Maine

Kraken / Lisa Yount



Digital Collage
Diane Yount / El Cerrito, California

You Say Grief / Noah Berlatsky

You say grief is a dark lake we must pass through
or stay stranded forever on that arid shore.
But maybe grief is also the shore where you walk.
Maybe grief is the person who walks.
The person who walks inside of you.
The foot placed where you leave a footprint
at the bottom of the lake. Someone swims above.
Their shadow covers you. You can't see your shadow.

Noah Berlatsky / Chicago, Illinois

Daredevil Nights / John Tustin

I remember those too-few nights with you
when I stuck my head into the maw of a lion,
balanced 60 feet in the air on a wire above a stream of broken glass,
was dropped into the Atlantic Ocean while in a straitjacket, locked in a safe
with nothing but a hairpin in my teeth.

I remember those nights sleeping soundly beside you afterward
in a bed of flames,
the floor a carpet of writhing snakes,
enough electricity between our resting bodies to turn every transformer on
the East Coast
into burnt toast, the flashes visible from heaven,
our heartbeats audible in hell.

John Tustin / Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Life is Good, Sometimes / John Tustin

Life is good at night,
sometimes.
You get in bed,
sleepy,
knowing the day ahead might be bad
or it might not
but the morning will bring
breakfast
or coffee,
at least.
Relaxation covers you
as you fall asleep thinking about it.

Mornings are good,
sometimes.
It's small moments,
to savor them is key.
Pile up the small moments.
Remember not the memories
as much as recalling the calm,
the easy feeling.
The cool breeze,
the cat cavorting
in a beam of light,
the way a stray dog looks
when it walks away from you,
as if it has important business
somewhere
to which it must immediately attend.

Life is good in day,
sometimes.
The hawk swoops from treetop
to treetop,
sailing like a ship on the waves.
You hear a train in the distance
and the sound disappears
almost imperceptibly.
It's nice to go someplace
but it feels fine today staying put.
You listen hard,
can faintly hear the train
getting away,
slackening like a rope released,
going where it needs to go.

It's getting dark.
It's almost night
and the cool clean sheets wait for you.
You'll get in bed,
ready to do something new
tomorrow
or something you've done many times –
you'll do it again.
You think about it
as you fall asleep.

Life is good at night,
sometimes.

John Tustin / Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Jesus Lizard / Jane Snyder

Basiliscus basiliscus

I thought the name was an interjection,
expressive of surprise,
as you might say Jesus, a lizard!
Didn't know in Costa Rica lizards
walk on water.

When they're threatened
flaps between their toes
fill with pockets of air
make them buoyant.
They do the rest,
feet splayed apart
legs bicycling, churning water,
frantic.

Jesus took a different approach,
calmed the water,
glided across its newly smooth surface,
beckoned to the frightened men in the boat.
Come to me.

Unseemly for him to struggle,
as if the outcome were in doubt.
But the disciples,
seeing something they'd never seen before,
imagined themselves flailing as drowning men will.
Don't look, they told themselves,
and forced their feet
onto the water.

Jane Snyder / Spokane, Washington

Zombie Maintenance / Conor Watson

Your local supermarket is too colossal and ugly to ignore. It's a battleground for bargain-hunters and a social hub for lonely pensioners. Joyless pedants will find everything on their alphabetically-ordered lists. Negligent husbands shuffle up each aisle, knowing that something might just leap into their arms that will make up for the forgotten anniversary, the vomit in the birdbath, the last six months.

The sliding doors incrementally swallow the prey clogging up its carpark. Frazzled health-freaks snatching an avocado salad in the half-hour before yoga, scrubbed-up schoolkids daring each other to place a six-pack among the crisps, new parents eager to swap a screaming baby for an hour's blissful muzak...all are muscled irresistibly into the huge mouth by an invisible tongue.

But before they're ingested, each will be plagued by a persistent pest. A gaunt and wretched man, unsettlingly pale and creatively decorated with skin lesions, will silently approach. He'll mumble an apology and hold up a laminated card. Like a late-summer wasp that materialises as soon as the cake's uncovered, the apparition with the card darts from one potential source of crumbs to the next. He asks for spare coins and waves the card as if it officially permits him to do so.

Very few people ever read the card. They see the emaciated frame, glance accusingly at the sunken eyes as the smell engulfs them, and invent their own story. Occasionally he'll acquire some coins. A minority of donors are former junkies or alcoholics and know they really shouldn't, but remember what it's like. The majority make a direct unspoken contract with him: with this coin, I pay for your hideous stench and appearance to leave my life as abruptly as they entered it.

Most people he approaches give him nothing. Some assume, correctly, that the money will not go towards the purchase of vitamin-rich foodstuffs and shake their heads firmly: no, I will not contribute towards zombie maintenance. Schoolboys, consumed

with worries about computer games, virginity, homework, have little time for empathy and rigid priorities for their pocket-money. They sheepishly ignore him. Many adults mime at him. They pat their pockets (look, no coins!) then provide a hands-upturned gesture and sympathetic smile, which can mean a variety of things: Must dash and look for quorn sausages- hasn't my daughter bloody well gone *veggie* on me? Or: How powerless I am to solve complex social problems! Or: Look, I would hang around but I've got to get the wee man to his cello lesson, *and* I make monthly donations to Amnesty, Greenpeace and Save The Children, you have my word!

The cursed apparition with the laminated card is regularly refused, ignored, bought off, mimed at. It is not enough.

The huge mouth opens and closes every few seconds. The sickly little puffs it ejects are composed of inoffensive chart-toppers and the smell of freshly-baked rolls. It is getting dark and colder by the minute. The apparition with the card sees a middle-aged man with an immaculate head of hair and even more immaculate coat. The coat has ample space for coins and notes. The man with the card ghosts behind the man with the coat as he gets himself a trolley.

"Excuse me sir, I'd greatly appreciate any spare change you may have..."

Immaculate Coat has not had a good day, or even week. He has narrowly missed out on election to his company's board, some local oiks have drawn a huge marker-pen phallus on his MG, and lover number one has found out about lover number two. Wife number three is aware of both of them, and is threatening things that would certainly reduce the magnificence of his hair. He is in no mood for beggars.

"Yes, you'd greatly appreciate my hard-earned cash, I'm sure, and I'd greatly appreciate being left in fucking peace. *Every* time I come here, I'm asked to contribute to someone's next fix, and I'm bloody well *sick* of it. You have *options*, you know. Your life doesn't *have* to be about shitty vodka or dirty needles. Which is it? Have you written *that* down in your little tale of woe?"

He snatches the laminated card. He loses patience after reading the first four words.

“‘*I have been cursed*’...Oh, would you fucking well *spare* me! My dad carked it when I was twelve and I got diabetes two years later! But I got on with it! Did nobody ever tell you that we’re not defined by our scars but by our ability to heal? Yes, I’m sure your life hasn’t been easy, but you don’t have to wallow in self-pity for the rest of your days! Triumphant over adversity, never heard of it?”

Immaculate Coat knows a lot about it. He’s thinking about his increased sales *despite* the recession and a game of squash he recently won from 8 – 2 down. He manoeuvres his trolley between himself and the man with the card.

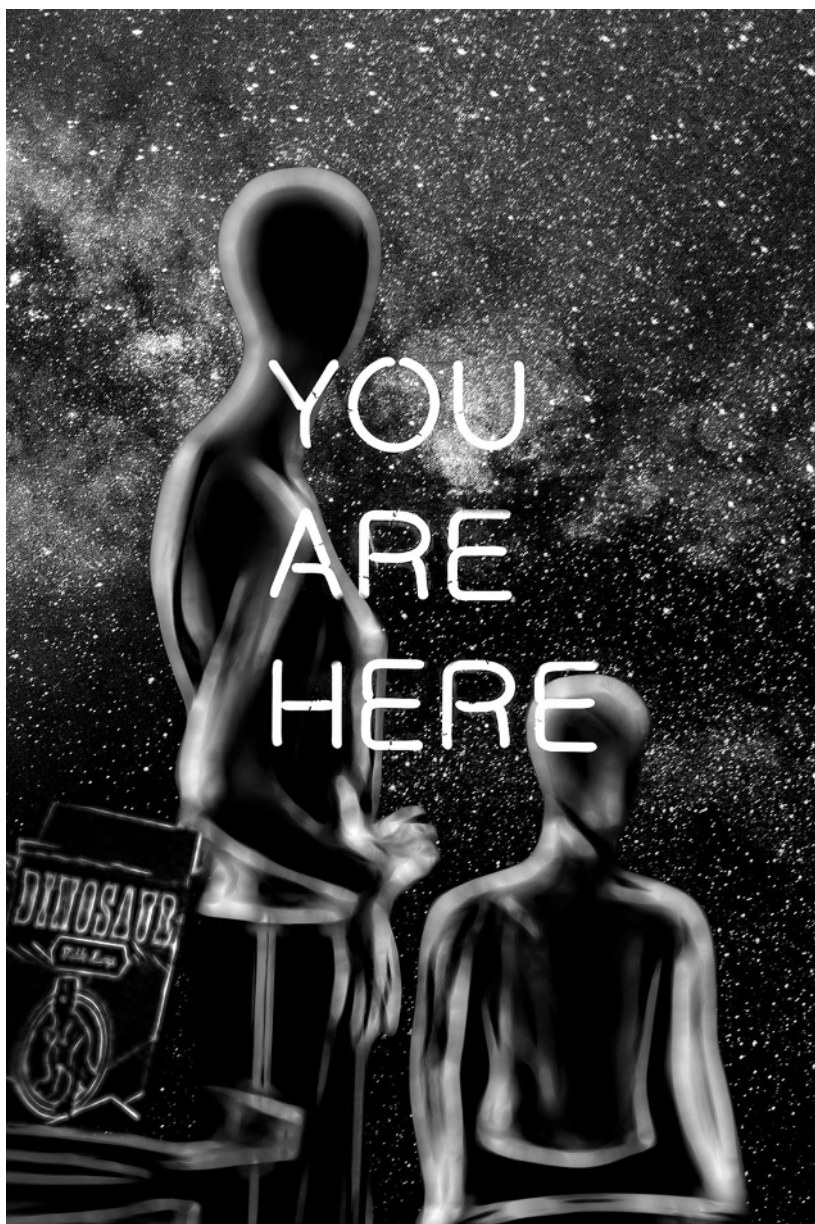
“So no, you won’t be getting any money, but some words of advice. Turn your life around. Yield to self-pity and you’re just settling for an excrement-stained bed under a bridge. Christ, do you *stink* of piss. Show some backbone! Can you even bloody well *spell* backbone? Right, lecture over. Out of my way.”

Before he moves, the cursed apparition with the laminated card allows himself a smile. He has just been insulted, mocked and patronised in the space of a few seconds. At long last! *That* is enough.

Man with card becomes man with coat. His pockets are indeed full of money. His first priority is to purchase food and drink worthy of a king, which is precisely what he feels like.

Man with coat becomes man with card. He does indeed stink of piss. He feels very cold and his skin lesions sting. He has very little money and must immediately begin begging for more. He looks at the card in his hand. To understand his plight, he needs only read the first four words.

Conor Watson / Kleve, Germany



Digital Collage
Lisa Yount / El Cerrito, California

The Good Dishes / Sarah Mackey Kirby

A few weeks after
she turned seventy-nine,
I walked into my mother's house
and there she was
sitting on the couch,
in her lap, oven-warmed
leftover Domino's pizza

on a Napoleon Ivy pattern
fine china plate
passed down from
her great-grandmother
to her grandmother
to her mother,
to her,

drinking ginger ale
from a fancy matching
teacup, the rest of the can
next to her, tiny silver spoon
set on the saucer
so she could swirl ice,

watching the noon weather report
on the local news as she sipped,
pinky out like in some old movie,
cloth napkin striped with sauce,
the dog watching
intently with his
hope-she'll-drop-some
forlorn face.

"What in the world
are you doing, Mamma?" I said.

"Did you know it's supposed to sleet
on Friday? Dammit. The daffodils."

The Dead Speak Through Loathing / Sarah Mackey Kirby

And the same middle school hallways
Hunter S. Thompson and I both walked.
Wondering whether I sat at the exact wobbly desk
as he once did before he scattered
his Gonzo energy with “Mr. Tambourine Man”
and a Colorado cannon. How he and I
are linked through six degrees
of blackboard chalk and Hell’s Angels,
riding below outlaw-varnished stars.
Thinking about how if our lives had crossed,
we might have shared a drink
one history-making evening
at the Watergate Hotel,
unknowingly sipping whiskey
and yakking Nixon
through the story-break of ’72.

Life is mystifying. Why do the bugs
destroy one pepper but not the other?
One rose survive the frost
when the others fold?
One sister live. The other die.

I float in and out of poetry,
slathering nonsense with enough butter
to hide uncertainty beneath the sweetness.
Truth is in a drought. It needs to rain
fearlessness and satire. Words that haunt
and levitate. That rise like hickory smoke
and unveil hard knocks through the city.
That point a finger toward a backyard
in Louisville, Kentucky hollering,
“Dust off your grit, and get up.”

Sarah Mackey Kirby / Louisville, Kentucky

With an Ex, This is as Good as It Gets / John Grey

Across the table from you,
I'm at my most emotionless,
speaking of mundane matters
in short sentences,
as if my life now
is barely worth repeating.

Your voice is soft
but equally unobtrusive.
You reduce your life
to some kind of DIY kit
that you put together
in your spare time.

I try to recollect
but tender moments
are buried in the rubble
of intervening years.

And you do tap a little
on your memories,
but nostalgia won't come
to the door.

And yet it's good to see you.
And you say that it's good to see me.
We make no plans to meet up again.
That's even better.

John Grey / Johnston, Rhode Island

Glass, St. Petersburg, Russia / Diane Martin



Photograph
Diane Martin / Bangore, Maine

My Father's Ghost / Kika Dorsey

1

No written ghost can rhyme, can compose music out of letters.
They can't inhabit themselves with bone, but they can walk
through doors, whether you open them or not.

2

My father's ghost is crowned with antlers to protect him from his
manner of death, because every suicide is a predator's stalking of
prey blinded by its own reflection. My father's ghost uproots a
time capsule where a letter from me spells out how fawns can sleep
on stone, how I have finally learned how to spell, how I promise I
will not walk to the cliff's edge when the wind blows. My father's
ghost surely wants me to curtail his body's drop.

3

I have my own treasure chest I never bury and rarely open. In it
lies a string of pearls he gave me when I was thirty, when he said
to me, now you are surely a woman, and leaned toward my clavicle
bones and clasped the pearls around my neck. Now the skies of his
gifts are blackening so I wait out their storm to wear those scars
again.

4

A ghost does not spoil children. It covers bruises with gold. It finds
itself in prayer. It sheds its antlers only to adorn itself again with
every memory left behind, hidden and molten like the feathers of
midnight before light takes flight.

Kika Dorsey / Boulder, Colorado

Where the Angelfish Dwell / Kika Dorsey

It's below zero outside and snowing. In me a rancor lies sleeping and across the seas a country invades another. The salt and gravel of it eats away at my unpaved roads I gave to you when we were young and in love. One took us to the end of a peninsula in Mexico, where we fished for barracuda and collected conch shells.

Now nothing melts if we don't fiddle with the chemistry. Sanctions, tanks, weapons crossing borders. Don't tell me we haven't manufactured half of what gets turned against us. And don't tell me that borders can be thickened with walls. I cross them all the time.

The snow is so light it floats, can barely fall. I'm tasting gray. I'm looking for color. I'm a holy thought away from rising. I told you how all our walls blanket our watching. We've always prioritized interpretation.

And what if the road takes us to its own corrosion, melting into images we hold in the backs of our minds of a child holding a shell to her ear to hear the sea? Surely we can follow that sound. Surely we can throw salt over our shoulders and not look back. Surely the peninsula can snake into the sea and embrace the coral, where the angelfish dwell.

Kika Dorsey / Boulder, Colorado

Somewhere / Kika Dorsey

Tendrils of light peek through the clouds in the dawn while
somewhere a coyote pounces on its prey and somewhere a mother
is buttoning a child's coat and somewhere a grandmother boards a
train to leave Ukraine.

Eighty years and no war, now cities turned into the broken stones
of riverbeds, the unbound wounds when the fighting won't stop
and there's no time for healing, not when tectonic shifts of crooked
and cracked castles claim land in the hope that empires are not
outdated.

But they are. Valleys cry grass, mountains rise like ghosts, sea's
water struggles with its vastness, hitting the shore like bullets.
Countries pregnant with oil despair that their wealth is also a
disease, and the conquerors are not coming to cure, but to lay claim
to its grave.

Somewhere the Black Sea parts like the middle of humanity's life.
Somewhere a sail bleaches white in the sun. Somewhere a mother
stitches her child's blood type on her dress and sends her to school,
and the dawn shifts its thin body—restless, red.

Kika Dorsey / Boulder, Colorado

Football Therapy / Ace Boggess

I remember watching the Super Bowl
with my father after the divorce.

Washington versus Miami.
Only the second championship for me, &

these were not my teams,
as his was not my house, or our house,

just a place I visited on weekends.
We were alone, drinking Dr. Pepper

from glass bottles & not talking much,
except about the game.

That's a West Virginia guy, he said,
when Fulton Walker ran back

a kickoff & scored a touchdown.
That sounded like the most important thing

I could learn: someone from here
could do something great,

although it didn't make a difference
in the end. Not to me, not to Miami.

Ace Boggess / Charleston, West Virginia

Downstairs 1960 / Linda Laderman

Daddy died six months after I was born.
It was sudden. A heart attack.
He left me and Mamma a yellow duplex.

Sometimes I go upstairs to help feed baby Freddy.
His mama and daddy rent the second floor.
Freddy laughs when his daddy makes funny faces.
His mama shouts *stop*, but then she laughs too.

In my jewelry box is a picture of Daddy standing
on our front porch, smiling and smoking a pipe.
I imagine his voice having a twang, like Sky King's,
when he's flying with Penny to save someone.

For lunch I make mayonnaise sandwiches on Wonder Bread.
My favorite dinner is Swanson's turkey with trimmings.
I love to watch the steam rise when I peel the tin foil back.
Sage and thyme fill the air. Almost like it's Thanksgiving.

Mamma says, *if your daddy was here things would be different*,
I ask, *does different mean you'd cook and clean?*
She tells me not to sass.

.
Most days Mamma won't let friends come by.
Complains she's too tired to clean. So, I clean.
She claps when she sees the room sparkle,
rays of sunbeams bouncing off the windowpanes.

Soon she's climbing into the tub for the afternoon.
I wait in the hallway, writing in my pink plastic diary.
One day, I will live in a one family house.

At night I lie in bed and listen to the cool whistle of the train
that runs by the jeep factory near our house. It sounds
so close, as if its cars might rumble right into my room.

Linda Laderman / Commerce Township, Michigan

Leaving the Lake / Shutta Crum

In an up-rush of wings, wild geese are abandoning the lake.
They rise with their cries of *are you coming?*
Lifting from the watery reflections of maple and alder,
each finds its place in the slanting light.

I, too, feel Winter's approach,
hear her stealing through the evening hours,
see her white breath curl and swell across the water,
know her handiwork in the filigree lacing the shallows.

So, I'm chinking the splintered gaps in the old house,
bringing in the firewood, restocking the larder.
I promise to stay as long as I can.
I thought you'd want to know.

When the snow deepens, I'll put on your sweater.
The sleeves, too long, will shelter my hands.
I'll walk the path to the water.
The last of the geese will have gathered in the mist.

They'll stretch their necks, lift heavy bottoms,
slap the lake into a frenzy of silver,
and cry out, as they veer off over the pines,
Are you coming? Are you coming?

Shutta Crum / Ann Arbor, Michigan

Enigma / Rachel White

After Salvador Dali's "Persistence of Memory"

first eyelash flutter
on Groundhog Day
this half-painted scene
reappears like an echo
and we are inert
—two distant stones
sunk in wet sand

attic mould replaces
hormone cologne
the clocks are little liars
sagging and flaccid
I have been here
much longer than they say

the artist's primed Masonite
lies on its back
grows cobwebs
and waits

...do something

...do something

a branch points
like a pious finger
resurrects
adolescent insecurity
long since buried

here, I regurgitate
your memory—
a phallic, vulvic taffy
the languid, flesh-coloured
eye-lashed, moustached
stale gum chew
guest that has overstayed
and eaten all my food

Rachel White / McLaren Vale, South Australia

***Bushmaster* / Robbie Gamble**

First shot
resounded up the valley
just after noon
followed by two more
then a quick clustered trio
a pause
and then the full clip, unloaded in a torrent,
spurring sheep to hurdle for cover
behind the paddock shed.

A minute later, the same ragged sequence
over and over and over at intervals
for two hours
and this was not some guy
re-sighting his .22
a quick tune-up
for impending deer season
rather, someone in the thrall
of the pure power
of booming semiautomatic projectiles
unleashing his joy
onto a postcard Vermont afternoon
and I know these rhythms well
reverberating
from the torrid contours of El Salvador, circa 1988
where we observers always asked ourselves
two immediate questions of such sounds:
where are they coming from?
and, what is the intention
of the one squeezing the trigger?

On this crisp October day
in the United States of America, 2021
I can't answer either question
with any degree of satisfaction

so I will postpone my jaunt to the mailbox
depriving my unseen neighbor
of one collateral target
while he exercises
his Constitutional right.

Robbie Gamble / Brattleboro, Vermont

Stopped / Robbie Gamble

I was stopped for driving over the limit in a construction zone. I was stopped for expired registration tags, twice. I was stopped for driving at night with my headlights off. With my high-beams on. For rolling through a stop sign. When I was a kid, I was belted to a car seat in the back seat of my Grammy's VW Bug when she was stopped, and she smiled her most disarming smile and said "But Officer, I couldn't have been speeding; I wasn't in a hurry." I was stopped while walking through a toney neighborhood on a glorious Sunday morning one spring, a few minutes after I had peered in the window of an upscale storefront, trying to find a clock to check on the time. I was arrested while praying for peace at the entrance to the launch site for a nuclear submarine. I was arrested for occupying a US senator's office in protest of the mining of Nicaraguan harbors. I was stopped when I was sleepy and drifting out of my lane, and simply told to get off the road, check into a hotel and get some rest. In precisely none of these incidents did an officer make a show of resting his palm on the butt of his holster. Not once was I tased, or pepper-sprayed, or zip-tied, or stomped, or kneed into the pavement. Call me lucky, call me clueless, call me charming, call me floating over these circumstances in a bubble of privilege, call my bullshit, call my whiteness, I better stop.

Robbie Gamble / Brattleboro, Vermont

The Drop Might Be Long / James D'Angelo

I followed Steven across the States when we were both nobody and then across the Atlantic when he was famous and I was still nobody. We hit London and then Paris and finally find ourselves here. A taxi in Prague. Rain blurs the windows. Inside the cab is the whole world. We're driving to the train station which leads to a thirty-hour journey to Moscow.

"We won't stay long. Just see Lenin's Tomb." His voice is something I'd like to keep in my pocket to cheer me up. Even when he's not sincere, he can't help sounding like this. After Moscow comes a trek across Asia. Climbing in the Himalayas. Biking through Vietnam. Hunkering down for the monsoon season in Bali. Steven lives roughly and inspiration condenses on him like moisture on glass.

Last night he played me a new song, a soulful ballad I pretended was about me. If he hadn't written a song for me yet, he never would. In the bathroom I crumpled my train ticket, sweaty hands smearing the ink. There's only one song I'm dying to write. One song wants to burst from my panicky chest. But I can't write it. Not now. -

Back in London the crowds parted for him and cameras flashed in every pub. We didn't pay for a single pint. I'd step aside for photo ops. Stay silent while paparazzi conspired. And then in Paris, where all the young women are cultured and think they're artists, he had his pick each night and would even find a girl or two for me to bring back to our hotel. Once in the early morning darkness, when we both knew the other was awake, he said, "I might need money to live, but I need an audience to be alive."

Last year he played night clubs and now he fills stadiums. But his connection to the fans never changed. He ignites the crowd with a clapping rhythm they'll follow for the rest of the song. Between songs he responds to every comment he can, like he's playing

around a campfire. And he's mastered the trick of starting a show dressed in layers and stripping as he sweats. His blackout sunglasses keep him cool, but only I know he wears them to block stage fright.

When the cab stops, I say, "I can't wait for your next tour. To see how all...*this*...becomes music."

His peach fuzzed lips pull into a smile, but it's all wrong. It's not the smile I saw those nights crawling through the London fog or riding the Metro drunk in the early morning. It's the smile he's been putting on since we left Paris. Something shifted there. I gave up and let it show and maybe he never knew exactly what I'd stopped chasing, but the change in me changed him too.

That night when the women we'd pulled ditched us in the elevator and he was too glassy eyed to notice, he grabbed my waist without realizing it was me. Our gazes met for an instant. Only after that did he let go. His tension released slowly, like he couldn't quite decide. Maybe he read my mind at light speed then, or maybe he figured it out the next morning, but he was drunk and it wouldn't have been right. It wouldn't have been real.

The next day, at the tour's final show, he said, "Lots of talkers today," to silence the audience. After he strummed the last mellow chord, he dragged himself offstage, guitar scraping against the ground. He mumbled, "Thanks for letting me be part of something."

The scenes play out superimposed. Diverge like two travelers at journey's end. We slouch on the train platform, faint hangovers still sizzling. The platform's edge is also the edge of the Eiffel Tower we climbed after his last show. He's gazing out over the city and avoiding my eyes and when I step closer, aligning his sleek shoulders with mine, he squints even though it's not sunny. The down on his arms pricks up from the cold but he refused a jacket.

"Quite the view," I say, because I can't manage more.

He gives the whole city a whistling once-over. Leans beyond the railing, craning his neck to the ground. “Yeah but...”

“But what?”

“Forget the view. Look at the height.” He pulls me flush with the railing. At street level, specks of people float over the ground. The tower’s legs vanish into the base from this angle. Wind twists the wrought-iron and I waver with it. Steven’s still clutching my arm, still taking it all in.

My balance falters for a moment until I get a grip.

“You know how I like danger, so don’t call me crazy when I say it.”

“I won’t call you crazy.”

“Once you’re at the top...” He looks down with closed eyes. “The drop might be long, but the rush would be incredible. Something so new and brilliant, it has to be the last thing you ever do.”

Like he’s daring me to make a choice. To see his pain.

Then I’m back on the platform just as the train arrives and we don’t shake hands. I try, but the distance between us keeps growing.

He tells me the earth is round so we’ll find each other again.

That hollow smile spreads across his face. We wave. The doors close. The train pulls away and takes the whole world with it.

James D’Angelo / Furlong, Pennsylvania

Of An Age / Cozad Taylor

I once heard an artist say
That when painters get together
They don't talk about the meaning of art.
They talk about that new turpentine
That one of them is using
To clean brushes and palette knives.

When the rest of us get together
We don't talk about whether
The universe will take note
When we stop breathing.

We talk about last night's Jeopardy,
Or the chances of that idiot
Getting re-elected.

And when we're of an age,
We stop talking about solvents.
Our lives are drying over in the corner;
There's nothing left to clean up.

Now it's just organ recitals.
How we're blind in one eye
And can't see out of the other.
And how we hope that our hearts
Won't attack us...at least for a while yet.

Cozad Taylor / Louisville, Kentucky

***Beasts Naming Adam* / Eric Fisher Stone**

Silence begets words; words beget silence.

Frog throats billow in a boggy gumbo.

Sugar ants taste chemical glyphs

on the linoleum floor, spelling
the dog's kibble. Lantern fish speak
syllables of light, blackness candled

in lapis halos. Hogs belch phrases
for swill and love, snouts signifying
the world's presence. Dawn choruses,

birds lullaby their eggs, new wings
slurring through yolk. The first humans
heard the lion thunder like a god

commanding sunrise. Meerkats stirred
from mazy humps of earth to name
this anonymous biped, who, in turn,

christened each creeper and mover,
doves cooing through mist, seashells
whispering surf, water, stars,

grass, rocks, past, present, and futures
milling bones back to red dust
that birthed Adam. Before galaxies

fronded from the void, before moon or rain,
the naked abyss waited
in silence for singing to begin.

Eric Fisher Stone / Fort Worth, Texas

Open Air / David Chorlton

The lady on the tricycle is not
deterred by rising temperatures
as she rounds the cul-de-sac
with her cat in the cage
behind the seat she rides on.
She's every afternoon's three-thirty
on the cheerful route
from winter's end to springtime
when her neighbors mostly
retreat to air conditioning and leave
the desert to the hawks
commuting now from the golf
course to the desert
with their razor eyes and
itching talons. They are the airborne
bridge between the tame grass
and wild sky. Their every flight
strips years from local time
and takes the mountain back to
when people ground light
with a metate, stone against stone
turning heat to dust
as rocks bloomed around them.

David Chorlton / Phoenix, Arizona

The Crossing / David Chorlton



Painting
David Chorlton / Phoenix, Arizona

Cages in the Afternoon / Eliza Gilbert

You're in the waiting room and the sun is glass
-buckled through the panes, the wind an evergreen
quavering somewhere you are not. Every door bleeds

uniforms, scrub caps, sea-foam
green, the shrews that tame the swell. You
will keep the gauze-pad new-metal sick

smell for longer than neurons can hold
a conversation, the checkboxes
slurred with spill. YES/NO/MAYBE/

THIS IS A DREAM. There is no good reason
for the sickness besides a rumbling
bone or two, a mutiny that began

like all mutinies; with a tiny crow
coming alive inside of a predisposition. The cells,
a line of plastic chairs. The body,
an anthology of chains.

Eliza Gilbert / New York, New York

February 25, 2022 / Laszlo Slomovits

another war started yesterday and once
again I didn't know what to do — still don't

this morning I sang the ancient daily prayers
for peace doubting if they'd ever worked

at the same time wondering if things might
be even worse if none of us had sung them

if even one of us had doubted
long enough to stop singing

I still don't know what else to do —
but one of my flutes has been signaling

in a hoarse voice that it's getting
too tired to sing and to be honest

it had been a cheap instrument though
it was the best I could buy at the time

so today when I saw a much better one
though I didn't know if I could afford it

I bought it anyway because I want
to make the sweetest music I can

doubting that it does any good
at the same time wondering if things could

get even worse if none of us made music
if even one of us packed up our song

Laszlo Slomovits / Ann Arbor, Michigan

Peace, a Dream / Laszlo Slomovits

we are looking through it as if through
a window and a hard rain is falling

streaking the glass blurring the view
but we can still see the meadow with

a pair of horses yoked together pulling
a cannon but look they've stopped

a man has slid to the ground his head
in his hands see how his back is heaving

he is sobbing so hard we feel moved
to comfort him or is he laughing it's hard

to tell comedy from tragedy until the play
is done but there is no door for us there

never is for bystanders should we break
the glass crawl through shards broken

glass eyes but look now the man lifts
his head his tear-stained face is lit

with a radiant smile and we whisper
to one another he resembles us or is it

John Newton slave ship captain singing
for the very first time was blind but now

I see and he shouts I'm free we're all free
and he begins to unhitch the horses

from the cannon lifting off their yoke
and they look perplexed their eyes ask

what now and he shouts you're free
we're all free and the rain starts falling

more gently and look how the cannon is
turning to rust see how it's sinking in the mud

Laszlo Slomovits / Ann Arbor, Michigan

Perseids / Laura Weldon

We lie on the grass for hours, watch
whisper-fast meteor storms sweep past
some tinged blue or green,
a few leaving vapor trails
like wavery ghost bridges.

We stop pointing, stop speaking,
feel gravity's sturdy embrace
hold us against Earth's skin.
Sense space not "up there" at all
but what we're in.

It's hard to stand, to walk, after
merging with ground and sky.
Once we wobble our way indoors, light
obliterates night's dark intelligence,
switches us back into what we seem to be.

Laura Weldon / Litchfield, Ohio

Today I'm Harry, He's Dad / Homer Mitchell

He doesn't know his wife once lived here, too, reduced
to glimpses as through bent blinds of strange streets,
facades, rumors of laughter, old songs. I am lost.

A nurse points me to the day room. He, two others sit
like stone islands caught beneath ice and winter
drifts, aliens all. Behind watery eyes—but canny—

he has retired, thoughts frayed, without purchase.
From his tongue, like bent nails, words fall unmediated.
Dry lips tremble, jockeying for all that will not return.

I ferry him back to seasons he can sip. We fish for faces,
places—times I learned from him and now toss back
in soft trajectory. Today, I am his best friend Harry.

I wear him proudly like a badge, a fine old hat, join
my dad musing at that bruised edge where the old wind
toys with us, sings softly our new names.

Homer Mitchell / Jay, New York

Upon A Friend's Sorrow / Jude Dippold

My next piece
will be simple,
I tell myself,
a joyous observation
of nature,
something in the manner
of Mary Oliver.
Then you come
cupping sorrow
in your outstretched hands,
and my intention falters
as the heron takes flight
in my unborn poem
and storm clouds
roll up the valley
of my imagining.
Your tears are real,
and there are no words.

Jude Dippold / Concrete, Washington

Lessons / Jennifer Burd

As a girl she'd gone to school until
her breasts began, then was kept home
until married at 17. Five grown kids later
she's here at the literacy center
memorizing transition words – *but why*,
she asks, *does the sentence have to change*
course? Can't everything just be simpler?
Week after week she comes, fifty-some
and struggling to understand the gears and wheels
of the second language her tongue
knows by heart. Together we pull sentences
apart, explore just why it is
this word follows that one. It's all
for a piece of paper, she says,
her GED. She wants a good job – she
who has lived by someone else's book
all her life. *I love to talk*, she says,
and *I'm good with people*.
We talk about supporting points
in an argument and about getting into
a vehicle to get to the meaning
of a metaphor. It takes you places, I say.
She climbs inside, eager to go
wherever learning will take her
out of her husband's house.

Jennifer Burd / Ann Arbor, Michigan

Begin Journey / Gary Wadley



Photograph
Gary Wadley / Louisville, Kentucky

InsideOut Student Poetry 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

My Poetry Pencil

by Yareli (Grade 5, Cesar Chavez Upper Elementary Academy)

The pencil that is made of shooting stars.
The pencil that looks like a sparkly unicorn.
The pencil that can paint cats on the moon.
The pencil that flies off my hand to write
my homework and make ice cream at the same time.

This pencil that has a pair of purple sparkly wings
that shine as the moon and can turn everything it touches
to silver and gold. This is MY poetry pencil I'm talking about!

In a world filled with 1,000 other unicorn pencils,
my pencil is the one casting spells to use on cats
to make them fly to the moon.

Inside My Poetry Pencil

by Yareli (Grade 5, Cesar Chavez Upper Elementary Academy)

Inside my poetry pencil I see
a golden cat getting ready to fly to the moon
to see a blue alligator.

Inside my poetry pencil I also see
a shooting star that talks in Chinese
talking to a cotton candy hamster.

Inside my poetry pencil
I see a roller-coaster
that every time I get on
it screams "Get ready, Kid,
I think you're gonna fly off!"

In a Poem

by Ciarah (Grade 5, Cesar Chavez Upper Elementary Academy)

In a poem
you can be happy.
You can be something or not.
You can be air.
You can be a flower that's always blooming.
In a poem you can be whatever
you want to be.

I write to let my emotions go freely...
to be free from emotions.

A poem can be happy, so can I.
A poem can be sad, so can I.

A poem is a poem.
A human is a human.

I want to be a poem that
is always happy,
is never bored,
is never alone.

Remember

by Ciarah (Grade 5, Cesar Chavez Upper Elementary Academy)

Remember you are an important part
in someone's life. Remember the skies
you were born in. Remember the path
you took to get where you are. Remember
the better days are not the worst days.
Look at the direction the stars took you.

Look at the path you're going to take
before you take it. Listen to what your gut says.
Listen to the ones who stayed. Listen
to your mind, voice, gut and heart.
Think about the land you were born in.
Imagine a world with hope. Dream
of a better world. Dream of world peace.
Believe your future. Believe your dream.
Concentrate on what's real, not fake.
Focus on your loved ones. Feel the air
while you're running around on a hill.
Do what is right not what makes you happy.
Remember glow sticks break before they glow.

If a Poem Is a House

by Leyani (Grade 5, Cesar Chavez Upper Elementary Academy)

I am an apple you pick.
I am a couch you sit on.
I am the flag in your room.
I am a bird flying in the sky.
I am a plant you walk by.
I am a fireplace you sit near.
I am a crack in the wall.
I am the soul that lives in your house.
I am the pencil in your room.

When I Look Outside

by Leyani (Grade 5, Cesar Chavez Upper Elementary Academy)

When I look outside
I see an ant eating a rat.
I see a human dancing

on a flying duck.
I see a backpack
wearing a human.
I see a human telling
a stop sign to stop.
I see a fish eating a turtle.
I see a shoe wearing a human.
I see a dog walking
a human. I see a rat
barking at a dog and the dog
is meowing at the rat.

My Poetry Pencil

by Emilia (Grade 3, Salina K-3 Dearborn)

My poetry pencil runs really fast
to my mom's house to deliver
a letter I wrote to her from school.
My poetry pencil gets my mom's
groceries, so she can rest.
My poetry pencil can make me candy
because I like candy.
My poetry pencil can fly to Albania,
the country that my dad came from.
My poetry pencil can help me
write with more creativity.
In a room filled with 22 other pencils,
my pencil is the one that says,
"Thank you."

My Watchful Eyes

by Emilia (Grade 3, Salina K-3 Dearborn)

I want to write a poem that looks
at the stars and prays to God.

I want to write a poem that reads
a chapter book with me.

I want to write a poem that hums
to help my cousin sleep.

I am a poem that hums you
to sleep under the moonlight.

I am a poem that dreams big
and hopefully.

I am a poem that does your homework
for you to help you.

A poem is like a friend that helps
you along the way.

A poem is like a book; it is you reading
and the whispers in the wind.

A poem is like a god looking
me in the eye.

Hope Is a Verb

by Anas (Grade 3, Salina K-3 Dearborn)

Hope sings on a car.

Hope is dancing on someone's brain.

Hope is talking with an ant.

Hope is listening to a pencil.

Hope is hunting for birds.

Hope is walking on the street.

Hope is writing on a paper.

Hope is waiting until the sun comes down.

Hope is flying on the moon.
Hope is a fish that can jump on the sun.
Hope is the boy flying around.
Hope is like a house they can take you too.
Hope is like a bee that can run.
Hope is like a cat that is 100 years old.

Hope Sleeps on the Moon

by Musaed (Grade 3, Salina K-3 Dearborn)

A world without hope would be like -
a tree that doesn't have leaves,
a star that can't shine,
a house with nothing inside,
a person with no hands or legs,
a basketball that can't bounce,
a book without words.

In the Ocean

by Musaed (Grade 3, Salina K-3 Dearborn)

I want to write a poem that climbs gigantic buildings.
I want to write a poem that swims in the ocean.

A poem is like a clock that rings a lot.
A poem is like a tree that can fly.

If a Poem

by Amari (Grade 7, Schulze Elementary-Middle School Detroit)

If a poem is a car I'd be driving.
If a poem is a queen I'm the king.
If a poem is the sky I'm the clouds.
If a poem was alive I'd be the heart.
If a poem was water I'd be air.
If a poem was a piece of paper I'd be writing.
If a poem was a house I'd be the mirror.
If a poem was you I'd love it forever.

A Blue Book, a Bird, a House, a Window

by Dalya (Grade 3, Salina K-3 Dearborn)

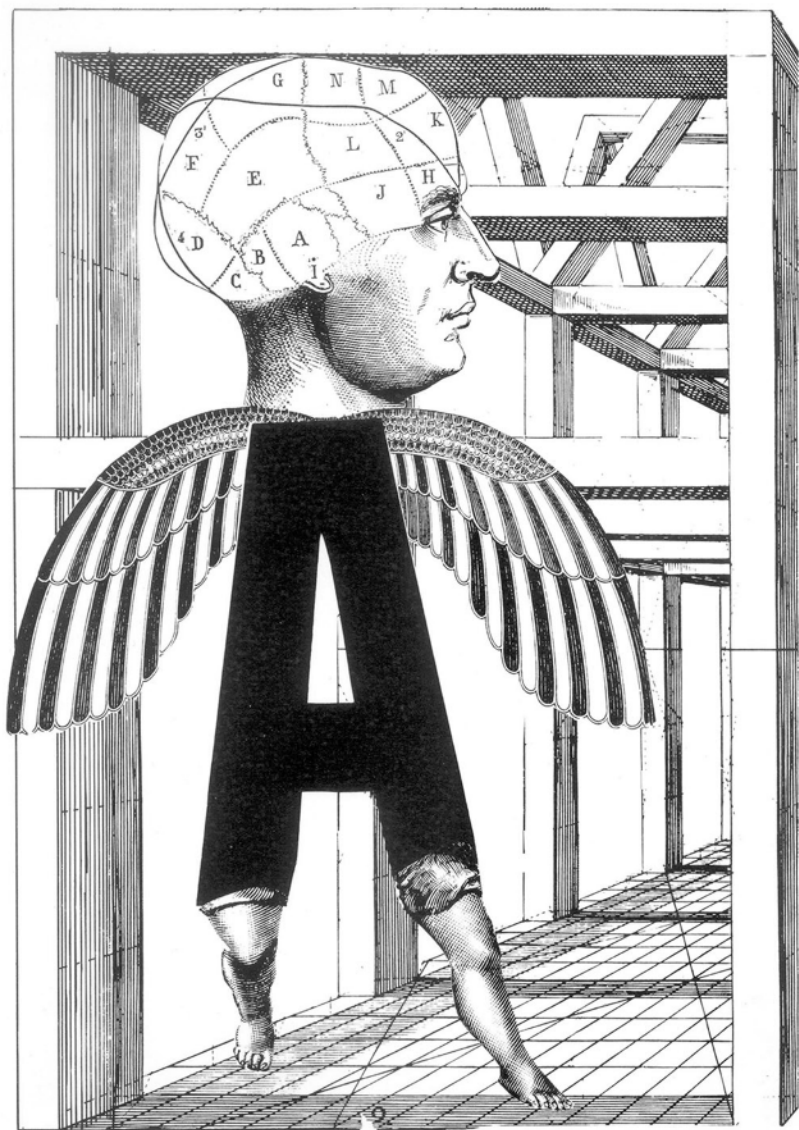
I want to put a blue book into my poem
so the reader can read while he's resting.

I want to put a bird into this poem
so the reader can hear the bird singing.

I will put a house into this poem
so the poem has somewhere to sleep.

Now I want to add a window
to open the curtain into the poem.

A/Ken Weichel



Collage
Ken Weichel / Benicia, California