

Third Wednesday Magazine
Volume XIII, Number 3
Summer 2020

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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Duck With Reflections (Photograph)
Lisa Yount / El Cerrito, California

Special Thanks to Lisa Yount & Judith Jacobs for providing some of the filler artwork in our pages.

Editors Note for Volume XIII, No. 3

Joining us for the summer issue as a guest associate editor for poetry was Katherine Edgren. Katherine is author of two chapbooks and a collection, “The Grain Beneath the Gloss”, from Finishing Line Press. She has been a frequent contributor to 3rd Wednesday.

This issue features poetry by a number of old friends and many new ones. We’re thrilled to have multiple poems from Jude Dippold, who will be guest editor for the fall issue and by Leslie Schultz, who will join us this coming winter.

As a new feature for this issue, all submitting poets were offered the opportunity to contribute a small amount to a prize fund for a chance to win 50% of the proceeds. The inaugural 50/50 prize winner is Jen Ashburn of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for her poem, *Excavation*. A new contest is underway for the fall issue.

We’ve got some great student poetry from the *InsideOut Literary Project* from schools in the Detroit area curated, as usual, by Peter Marcus.

The fall issue will feature winning stories from the annual George Dila Memorial Flash Fiction Contest, judged, this year, by Lisa Lenzo, author of three books of short fiction. Entries are open until August 15th.

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CV (draft) / Thomas Moore

I come from macaroni and cheese,
sawdust and cheap booze. My father

drank himself out of Princeton fresh-
man year, then mined copper in Bisbee.

I come from my parents' moneyless
privilege, their disdain for the hoi polloi.

I biked with the local guys. Picked apples.
Swiped some. Oh we almost never got

caught. Thumbed town to town. Cousins
from Harvard for summer tennis. Cousins

from Brown. At seventeen, drove
a gravel truck of sweet esker smells

and loam. Found Pago Pago, Te
Awamutu, Pape'ete. Had losses early

on. Poems salvaged me. Enough?
Employment? References? Fluff?

Thomas Moore / Belfast, Maine

WalkNcloset / J. Ray Paradiso



Photograph, J. Ray Paradiso / Chicago, Illinois

Trial and Error / Joseph Hardy

It's rained for two days,
hard enough to raise the creek,
run it dirt brown

under broken weeds
and algae blooms swirling past
like gathered cobwebs,

turning branches
pulled from its banks
like wheels as they pass.

A helmet-shaped turtle
resists by slow inches, pushing
into half-submerged grass on a mud bank,

but no sign of the baby snappers
I've watched for two weeks
since my dog passed,

no sign of their angled shells
and armored bumps,
perfect in teaspoon miniature,

surely prepared for this by Nature,
by the recombinant guessing
of our long and shared inheritance,

trying and erring
through regular disasters—
if not swept away, maybe hidden.

Joseph Hardy / Nashville, Tennessee

Shoveling the Driveway With My Father's Ghost/

Thomas Moore

Beside the coal furnace we rub candle
stubs on our hot shovels. His

shoulders craze forward, nostrils
aflare in raspy sniffs. Outside, I run

to keep up with his strides in the eager
air. His fist clutches silent syllables.

Icicles click on the hydrangea below
the stonewall. The night is steel.

I hunker down, mark off and toss
sullen shovelfuls, but his precise

squares disgrace my slipshod chunks.
Winter clamps us. We cut and toss,

cut and toss as the web of his
disapproval tightens. If I could

become anyone, I think, I would
be the shaper, the carver of spaces.

Thomas Moore / Belfast, Maine

Apple / Thomas Moore

1

Not the orchard

2

but the parking lot in front of the Co-Op: Subarus
and Fords, Audis and Jeeps, while inside, near
rows of Mixed Greens from Albion, wooden
bushel boxes hold a gamut of apple tastes:
tart, sugar-sweet, crisp, rich, tangy,

pears abutting one side—D’Anjou, Bosc—
Pomegranates and Satsuma Mandarins
on the other, next to a cluster of cider gallons
from Fairfield,

3

no kitchen aromas of oven-baked crusts, no crush
and splash of cider mills,

4

but a panoply of apples, bushels, some half full,
others brimming: Honey Crisps, tart Baldwins,
Pink Ladies, custardy Tolman Sweets, Rhode
Island Greenings from the 1650’s, Northern
Spies clothed in wispy red/green stripes,

plum-sized Black Oxfords with dense sweet flesh,
slightly tart Vartanian Lightnings, Rome Beauties
for sauce and cider, tart-fleshed Liberties, Sweet
Sixteens, red-patched Winter Blushes, Hudson’s
Golden Gems for drying,

5

not to polish, not for pie or pandowdy or sauce
or cider,

6

but to bite and savor for their toothsome crunch,
the handheld crackle of apple.

Thomas Moore / Belfast, Maine

Ghazal for the New Year / Ujjvala Bagal-Rahn

Each neat drawer, each pencil in place, waiting for the New Year.
Each clean dish, folded blouse, clear desk, waiting for the New
Year

Outside my window, gray clouds gather like dustballs.
I wander these lamplit rooms, two days before the New Year.

The still-unlit candle, the still-taped box, the still-sewn pocket
still as the pause before the dawn of the new year.

In Savannah, gunshots pierce the night. The bullets
rocket up, but where they land is the answer for the New Year.

Rhymes with tear, fear, ear, clear, dear, near, leer
and each has a place at the table of the New Year.

In Philly, not a bird left, not a speck of light
across the black ice days of the New Year.

Snow-fog night, the dark hotel bar-cave, noise drowns out
the cold. Alone before the lobby fire, I write, this New Year.

My name in Sanskrit means radiant, means brilliant
a spotlight on the night-dark stage of the New Year.

Ujjvala Bagal-Rahn / Savannah, Georgia

Lunaria / Jenica Lodde

No matter how I catch the air or where I land I can't feel the
weight of my self

I'm going to drift across the leaves and keep on drifting

If I could feel real and know the truth I'd be ok

But life just throws me bones and not meat

That's the problem with being high and above all the grass

You're looking for things you can see

And I'm searching for vapors with certain flavors

I want them bad enough I'd leave earth for them

I'd turn away from the touch of human flesh for them

Don't crush the mood

Don't take the shimmering strings down from the trees

Where are the eyes that don't see through me?

Where is the clear patch of peace?

Where is the soft touch of earth?

Where are the angels pressing me on?

I've never known anything but the hard leaning back on my
own spine.

I've never had one truth that didn't get lost in the mix

But the point of living,

Yes, I'm sure I know this one thing:

The point of living isn't to keep staying alive,

It's to be filled up with light

And rest in flames on the hand of

a blood orange sky.

Jenica Lodde / Clarks Green, Pennsylvania

A Walk in the Country/ Ann Privateer



Water Color, Ann Privateer / Davis, California

I Try to be the Best Dad / Richard Merelman

so I roll the recycle bin to the curb.

It's a steamy dawn
and wind flips the lid up. In the bottom
someone stuffed
a blue receiving blanket. Not ours.

Crusted bloodstains
cover most of the bunny rabbit design.

Did the neighbors,
a young couple—loud, nasty, profane—,
take their troubles out
on the *baby from hell*, as they call him?

Two blocks down
there's a half-way house for battered moms.

Stricken mothers
wheel their strollers by our driveway.

Who *can* you trust:
child porn, date rape drugs, sex slaves?

Even “respectable” people
like school teachers. Suzy, my daughter,
took Art from a jerk
just this spring. The guy posted an Instagram
of himself

and a girl in his class, both of them naked
eating pizza. No surprise,

the thing went viral. Suzy saw the picture
the night before

it hit the news. Turns out she and this sad girl
are friends.

No surprise, the girl discovers she's pregnant,
and Suzy texts her

daily for a month. Moral support, she says. Well,
I better fix this lid on tight.

Richard Merelman / Madison, Wisconsin

Plainsong For Ordinary Time / Scott Dalgarno

Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee.

Matthew 4:18

Partly sunny or is it partly cloudy, this ho-hum
day? Jesus -- neither coming to birth, nor determined
to die. How pedestrian. Just Jesus, ambling round

the windy lake-edge, eating his Friday fish,
cradling a new baby head in his workman's palm.
A holiday from holiness. Who could see his halo

anyway? Not out to heal anyone this morning.
Likes them all as they are; not out to change
the world. Time to take a walk with his little brother,

remind his little mother he's still the apple
of her nut-brown eye, before she becomes Queen
of Heaven, before he is crowned King

of anything or becomes what he never wants
in the least to be. Emptying himself, emptying his heart,
his bladder -- no agenda; only considering

those lilies that come up volunteer, unadorned,
no worries, neither toiling, spinning,
nor spanning anything more

than their allotted patch of yellow.

Scott Dalgarno / Salt Lake City, Utah

Litany / Scott Dalgarno

God of the cockroach
God of the half-formed heart
God of the melon-sized tumor

Hear me I will not be glib

God of shrinking hope
God of the ballooning aneurysm
God of plodding cancers of the polis

Are you silent or am I deaf

God of the hairball
of the gone brain
of the mad dog
God of the perfectly sane white shark

Will someone say *Amen*

God of Arrhythmia Rwanda
Biafra Treblinka

I praise you
with these faint damns

Scott Dalgarno / Salt Lake City, Utah

Diminishing Retorts / Scott Dalgarno

God said, "Who told you that you were naked?"

Descartes said, "Who told you that you were?"

Bogart said, "Who told you that, *you . . . ?*"

Monica said, "Who told you that?"

Dimmesdale said, "Who told *you?*"

Nixon said, "Who told?"

The ugly step-sister said, "Who?"

The snake said nothing.

Scott Dalgarno / Salt Lake City, Utah

Penelope / Greg Mahr

Sleepless again,

I think of you

as I stroll among the night stars.

At dusk I knew

the straight-line certainty of the cormorant.

Now its death, or sleep, or home,

and the sinister constellations of the heart.

Ithaca is a dream.

There are islands of you

And miles of pale blue sea.

Greg Mahr / Northville, Michigan

Ice Balcony / Diane Martin



Photograph, Diane Martin / Bangor, Maine

Summer Visitor / Alan Feldman

For Tony

I thought of you twice yesterday.
First, when I was carrying Nan's exercise bicycle
down the stairs from our deck. "What friend
would I trust to help me carry this?"
(It weighed about a thousand pounds!)
And I remembered you showing up,
as promised, to help me haul the kayaks
up from the bay at the end of the season.
You were wearing a sweatshirt with no sleeves,
and your arms seemed strong from exercise.
Then later, swimming in your favorite pond,
I saw my own arm lifting with each stroke
and felt surprised to see how it could—
a confusion, I guess, when a younger friend dies.

Once we sat at a *Dunkin' Donuts* table in the sun
exchanging work. I showed you a lame poem.
"It's getting there," you said. Then you
gave me something to read, not yet complete,
as if trying to spare me, before that last one
that exploded my head, touching and beautiful.
Were you trying to protect me from your gifts?

And then, two summers we taught together—
our free workshop at the library (your suggestion)—
and had some funny disagreements. "Your intellect
is your greatest enemy," you told the class,
because, I supposed, you had such an active one
you valued the freedom to stay simple?—
but I, who never had that problem, disagreed.

Today at the library, in our corner classroom,
where light filters through the oaks and maples
that still have leaves, we're reading some of your work
to feel close to you. Your voice is so alive.
But it grieves me to think of *you* never returning.
No more autumn swims for you to enjoy.
And those of us grateful to find we can still swim,
struggling to understand how you won't drive up
next summer from Houston in your dusty Prius—
but will stay everywhere from now on,
including here, even in winter.

Alan Feldman / Framingham, Massachusetts

Sailing Boston Harbor / Alan Feldman

What a gift, this mild November day
out on the harbor, though I feel like an idler
as I pass a lobster boat circling,
the stench of fish carrying down wind.
I know they're too busy to wave,
hauling their traps in their orange suits,
so I don't either. But I like to drift along,
and watch them out near the sewage plant
that looks like a cluster of giant naval mines,
suggesting the life and death struggle
to manage waste water, just as the towers
of shimmering glass in the other direction,
or the needle-nosed planes piercing the wind
stand for something else I can't be a part of,
some collective striving, unless my sails,
white and billowing, help decorate the harbor
so the wealth managers in their offices
far above the wharves can draw breath,
inhaling the view, and feel like kings.

And what am I doing among the outer islands
and all alone? I love sailing on a reach
over a sea of solitude. And I tell myself
I'm quieting my desire to be free
so I can be attached and responsible.
Tomorrow the wind may be steadier,
or the air milder. Even so, I'll be helping
my wife hang paintings she needs to show,
and then babysitting for the grandchild
who likes to demand that I play a specific character
while she controls the plot. But later,
before heading back, I'll sit for a while
to write in my notebook—a few lines
at the cabin table.

Alan Feldman / Framingham, Massachusetts



Winner of the 3rd Wednesday 50/50 Contest

Since we began publication 13 years ago, 3rd Wednesday has been a token paying market, offering payment of \$3 per accepted piece. We have noticed that many of our contributors choose to opt out of payment, thus contributing in their small way to the cause of literature.

Beginning with the summer 2020 issue, we offer a new alternative. The poems of each submitter who chooses to waive payment and contribute \$3 to an ongoing contest pool is eligible for a larger payout of 50% of the net contributions for that issue or \$50 (which ever is larger), plus a one year subscription to the print edition of the magazine (a \$28 value).

Our first 50/50 winning poem is...

Excavation / Jen Ashburn

The men did not march into the town at night.
Their heavy steps did not awaken the children.
They did not bury the bodies in a field while a farmer
watched from the darkness of his kitchen.
The farmer did not ignore the stench of decay
as he plowed that field, inexplicably leaving one corner
untended where daisies and mallows thrived.
An ironwood did not take root there, and the farmer's
great great grandchildren did not climb that ironwood,
unaware of what was buried, or not, below.

Jen Ashburn / Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Bad Movie / John Ballard

Persuaded to imagine a different ending,
you and I exit through the popcorn
laden aisles, then out into the feral,

pouncing light of day. Lousy matinee
left us ill-intentioned, maybe: we
don't look away passing an accident

on the highway, obedient only to our
blood impulse, vulgar together instead
of the less pleasing solo kind. Later,

neither of us cringes when the late
local news brings us *Death on the Interstate*.
We listen as one survivor says it was

like being in a bad movie— cliché-bound
rube even in celebrity. He smiles,
farcically jubilant, while the moon contributes

its bright breadth to the limelight.
As for the dead: lone adult, cindered,
identification pending. Already we're

imagining the roadside memorial, its white
cross plunked down in the median against
the vacillating tide of goldenrod, yellow

flowers rippling as if in a movie's final frame,
and us, sitting in the dark afterward,
dissatisfied we don't know why.

John Ballard / Farmington Hills, Michigan

Miss Valerie / Paul Lamar

We were at the amusement park on the day that the trapeze artist, Miss Valerie, fell. We had seen her from a little distance while we were having lunch at a nearby pavilion, and she was good, particularly when she hung by her heels, her bright blonde hair hanging upside down---who does that? But she did, eliciting great applause from the mid-sized crowd. It was actually on a fairly simple dismount when she apparently just lost her grip on the rope about 10 feet up and crashed to the ground. No wonder, really. It was very humid. My guess is that she will be back on the circuit soon and good to go.

The news traveled swiftly around the park. Later, during the Pirates' Cove water ride, I heard a tuber say to another tuber that Valerie had died after losing her grip on the high bar.

"No," I interjected, "it wasn't that at all. I was there. She apparently lost her grip on the dismount from the rope. She waved to the crowd as the medics took her out."

"Well," said the freckled woman, "my cousin texted me that a friend of hers who was in the vicinity said she fell from the high bar and is dead." Then the woman floated away.

After that, while we were in line for the Tilt-a-Whirl, I heard two teenage boys talking about Valerie, saying that the clown had gone berserk and stabbed her while she was dismounting.

"Actually," I said, "I saw it happen."

"How big was the knife?" the boy in the red trunks asked.

"No, it wasn't a knife. There was no clown. She fell dismounting from the rope, a simple calamity, but I think she is going to be all right."

"Well," the young man said, dubiously, "that's not what we heard, brah. There was a clown, that's all I know, and if it wasn't a knife, it must have been a handgun. They closed off that part of the park

pronto, is what I heard, which I don't think they would do if she just fell off the goddamn rope."

"No way, brah," said the boy in the blue trunks, and then they went through the gate, shaking their heads.

We forgot about Valerie until we were leaving by the little train that took us from the lower dry ride section of the park to the parking lot. An older couple in the car behind us was speaking in somber tones about the tragedy of the young woman who had committed suicide by purposely jumping from the tight rope she was walking and over the netting until she hit the top of the ice cream stand.

"Are you speaking of Miss Valerie?" I asked, turning around. "Was that her name?"

"Well, the name of the trapeze artist who fell as she was dismounting is Miss Valerie."

"Oh, no. Not the same person, I guess," said the older gentleman, in wrap-around sunglasses. "We saw this from the Sky Ride, saw the whole thing. What we saw was a young, dark-haired woman with a cape fling herself from the high-wire and land in what we can only assume was the ice cream stand."

"But you can't see the circus area from the Sky Ride, can you?" "Most days, no," said the woman, also in wrap-around sunglasses, "but today, for some reason, we got a good look." She leaned forward. "We heard that she did it because she was in love with the clown, but he was not interested."

"The course of true love never did run smooth," intoned the man. The train came to a stop, and we all left for home.

Paul Lamar / Albany, New York

Fishing / Gary Wadley



Photograph, Gary Wadley / Louisville, Kentucky

Trompe L'oeil / David Chorlton

On the inner walls of a stone house
that holds by a claw to the slope
overlooking a vast bowl of trees
the prisoner incarcerated with no tool but a brush
made pictures of a storm
believing he needed only create the sky
in order to fly away. When the walls
beat him back he covered them with the sea,
wide and dappled with sunlight,
and determined to swim
through them, but he flailed his arms in vain
until only plaster splashed around him
and he reached for his black paints
with which to depict the night.
Then he heard pines
groaning in the wind, the glass in the windows
rattling and, when he was alone,
the wolf sniffing at the door
he could not unlock. But there were always crusts
left over from supper
which he smuggled through the crack
above the step, and he pushed them on through
before he lay down to sleep
with his head on the pillow he had drawn
on the floor with the same chalk
he used to keep record of the days.

David Chorlton / Phoenix, Arizona

Every Day / David Chorlton

Every morning the first bus leaves its depot
wiping the sleep from its headlamps;
a circle of blue flames ignites
beneath the kettle, a piece of fresh toast
hops on the hand
that takes it to the table
while the mint taste of toothpaste
bites through the furry residue
night has left in the mouth.
So it starts:

another day, another cartwheel of the clock,
another predictable page
in a book of hours. But once in a while
beside the plate a spoon is missing,
the keys are nowhere to be found,
a credit card disappears
into a slot that won't cough it back,
all flights

have been cancelled. The sky
is eerily quiet
and the birds' uninterrupted songs
would have us believe
this is a normal day.

David Chorlton / Phoenix, Arizona

Winter Cat / Gary Wadley



Photograph, Gary Wadley / Louisville, Kentucky

I Call You / Ana Gardner

With my hands
When I knead the *skovrada* dough
And fold it at the corners
And turn it, like you taught me,
Six hours on the clock.

I call you
With my fingers
Playing *O Tannenbaum* on your old piano
I call you with the tips of my fingers
Pulling bugs from potato leaves
Dipping into the holy water fount
Touching your photo in my wallet
I call you

With my eyes
Watching the leaves turn
And the squirrels you fed in our back yard
I call you with my tears
And with my smiles
Curled up in the old armchair by the hearth
With your *Karlovy Vary* mug
And the blanket you wrapped around my cold toes
When you brought me peeled apples on Christmas morning

I carry you around my shoulders like a blanket
Your name sweet like country apples
In my night prayers
I call you.

Ana Gardner / Norton, Massachusetts

Even Now / Elisabeth Harrahy

My fifth grade teacher Mr. Beland
looked like Barry Gibb of the Bee Gees
with his dress shirt open to here
gold chain, mustache
and feathered hair

But he loved Barry Manilow

This was 1978
and when Barry Manilow released
Even Now
Mr. Beland played it in class
and asked us kids to listen
to how the music builds and builds
through story and voice
to this mighty
emotional crescendo—
and for a moment
we were all right there
riding that powerful wave with Mr. Beland
before the music faded out

Mr. Beland taught us about electrons
and electricity
by having us drag our feet across the carpet
before reaching our fingers out toward his chest
to draw a crackling white spark

Mr. Beland called me his bionic brains
and taped my name to the wall
after I memorized my times tables
so I bought him a tiny mustache comb
when I was out shopping with my mom

The comb was tortoise shell plastic

with lovely curved edges
and it lay on a bed of red velvet
in a clear plastic box

When I got home
my dad was on the couch
drinking a beer
watching Steve McQueen on TV
and I was reminded it had been a while
since my dad and I watched one of our favorite
car chase movies together

I handed him the comb in its box
told him I thought Mr. Beland would like it

He opened the plastic case
lightly ran his finger across the comb
then lifted his hand to cup his beard
and smooth his own mustache
with his thumb and forefinger
before closing the case and handing it back
saying Mr. Beland this and Mr. Beland that
maybe you could go live with Mr. Beland
and he could be your dad

I always assumed my dad would go out
with a bang
like a human crescendo
maybe fly off the edge of a cliff
while driving 120 miles-an-hour
perhaps sail off the top of a half-finished high rise
where he was doing iron work
or maybe bleed to death after being stabbed
in some barroom brawl he started—
his blood erupting like a volcano

But in the end
he died when his 73-year old heart

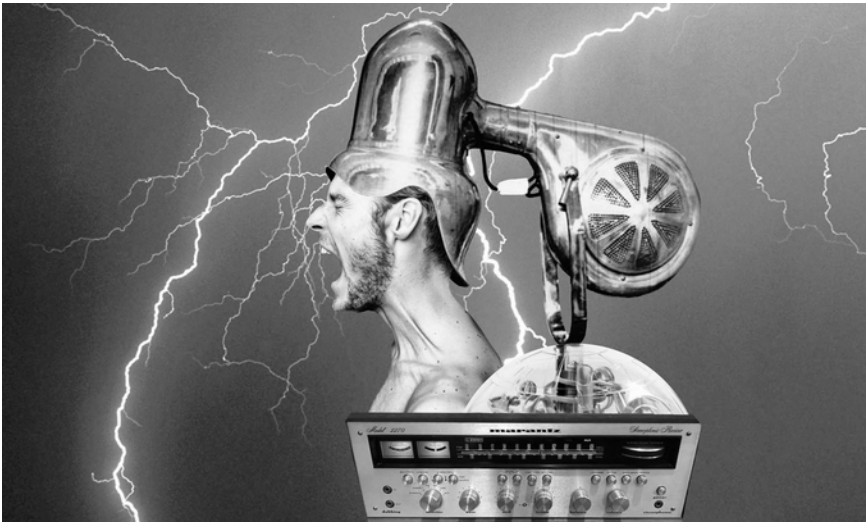
simply slowed to a stop
in some stupid hospital
down in Georgia
a quiet fade to black—
and no amount of electricity
could illicit a spark
or bring him back

Three weeks later
as I am driving home
listening to a '70s station on satellite
the song *Even Now* comes on
and a tear runs down my cheek
and then another
and by the time Barry Manilow sings
God I wish you knew/ somehow/ even now
I am pulled over in the breakdown lane
wracked by sobs so strong
my lungs ache
and my heart breaks
because my dad is dead
and oh how I wish
I had given *him*
that damn mustache comb
instead

Elisabeth Harrahy / Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

A 50/50 Contest Honorable Mention Poem

Winter, 2016 / Ray Legans



Manipulated Photograph, Ray Legans / Albuquerque, New Mexico

In the High School Assembly (1962) / Paul Lamar

For Neil

The speaker talks of whales.
I glance around and there you are,
an aisle away, your profile in the light
through stained glass windows, shining words
from John: Come unto me.
Your handsome face.

I dreamed about us
sledding down a hill
your arms wrapped gingerly
around my chest.

I glance again as I have done since
someone spoke of traffic lights and crossing guards.
I'd stared at Billy Myers' badge and strap—
the big sixth-grader.

She speaks of Eskimos.
Your bottom is as smooth as sealskin.

Assemblies touch me just this way:
a weariness and stillness, cottonlike,
like amniotic fluid, where all my thoughts
on love are floating.

If Mr. Wyman showed a painting of this crowd
in Art Appreciation 101, I'd be the peasant gazing
at the viewer—you—and paying no attention to
the fight or fire ravaging the scene.

Now she cites The Law of the Sea.
Law of the See, as though directing me
to look at you again. I roll my neck,
pretending stiffness, peek your way:
the face that should be minted. Ah,
I'm heavy laden, thirsting for the comfort
of my head upon your lap!

Paul Lamar / Albany, New York

Catch / Michael Hill

The signature smack
of the ball in the webbing,
cowhide on leather,
might just be the best part
of this passed-down pastime,
one that arcs all the way
from my baseball-rich childhood –
the trading cards, the trips to the ballpark,
the tellingly brief little league career –
and across the intervening years
to this warm summer evening,
where I take it and hurl it on
like an heirloom, over the lawn
and into my daughter's waiting glove.

Michael Hill / Fort Collins, Colorado

Books on a Shelf / Michael Hill

Like old pals, they lean on each other
for support, a close-knit clan
swelling with stories
for anyone willing to look
past the dust on their jackets
or the must on their breath.
In fact, I'd like to think
they're not simply content
to keep to themselves, but rather
that they'd gladly open up
to whoever might want to drop by
and sit with them awhile.
At any rate, they don't get out much,
not anymore, so here they rest,
among friends, lingering on
past glories as they index the days
before their pages were dog-eared
and their spines were bent.

Michael Hill / Fort Collins, Colorado

Roofers / Michael Hill

Materializing in the soft, gray glow
of morning, a small flock
has come to alight atop a house
across the alley. Like woodpeckers,

they drum out intricate rhythms
through the early hours, their busy music
echoing about the neighborhood
as they pry up and turn loose

the old shingles, scattering them to the air
like tumbling blackbirds. No sooner
have they stripped the roof bare
then they begin feathering it anew,

their voices raised in birdsong
as they call, respond, and call again
to each other along the down-slope
of afternoon. Once they're done,

they drop from their perches
to tidy up the shingle-littered lawn,
then take flight, their wing-beats receding
as a dusky quiet descends.

Michael Hill / Fort Collins, Colorado

A 50/50 Contest Honorable Mention Poem

The Happiness of Fear / Paul Jones

I am the gleaming skull with bony fingers,
the host pointing towards the birthday cake.
I tower over the party makers--
those hip high heroes--Batman, Elsa, Hulk,
Ariel, Mulan. They all cut and run
and hide behind the couch. Their mothers,
cats or queens or a friendly witch. Their fathers,
sheeted Greek gods unintentionally
cast as Bacchus with beer and dad bods.
Here parents are safe places to peer from,
hideouts to dash out of. Eventually,
the game becomes touching my shoe, to squirm
giddily, to contact this grim unknown,
the old touch-and-go tease that life lives on.

Paul Jones / Chapel Hill, North Carolina



An Honest Talk To The Shadow/Paul Jones

Oh for fuck's sake. You're back again.
Bird, whose other name is darkness,
whose wings unfold like leather, black
hashmark, permanent bleak birthmark.

When the sun goes behind a cloud,
you light, noir avis, on near limbs.
What you bring are fear and omens,
harsh raven. Your chirps never sing.

Pitiless hooked flesh-breaking beak,
talons that tear too deep for scars,
shadow over the brightest stars,
could I remake you as my friend?

The wise say night, like light, can blind
yet both extremes can free the mind.

Paul Jones / Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Boris / Rana Williams



Photograph, Rana Williams / Hayesville, North Carolina

Eve / David Rogers

Adam and Eve created the world
in six days
five really because Adam took
most of Saturday
to recover from his Friday
celebration
during which he'd dreamed up
pharaohs
floods
pyramids
the stock market
a lot of other bad ideas
that he tried to write down
but most of what he scratched
on the wet clay tablet
looked like Eve in high heels
and nothing else
a notion she scoffed
at because heels
and other instruments of sado-
masochistic fashion
had not yet been invented
and anyhow it was way too cold
to indulge Adam's male fantasies
Eve pulled her mammoth-wool
robe tighter
The young planet
still wobbled wildly on its axis
so days and nights
were unpredictably hot or cold
She decided that when Adam
woke up
the last thing they should create
ought to be a god
Then Adam could invent a religion
and play high priest

It would be a good hobby for him
keep him out of trouble
while she did something useful
maybe plant a garden
get started on that orchard

David Rogers / Cave City, Kentucky

Sis / Ellis Elliot

My secrets ricochet off the sandstone
and slate of these mountains I will wait
to chart by signs seek to leave my home
by the season's half-moon shine escape

the thin sooted hem of my dress chop
clean the black braid down my back
turned to dreams that others sought
for me to wed and birth and act

as if my shorn head would not love
to press my ear at river's edge born
to hear of ancient indigo seas and cove
forests in valleys I am formed

like our mighty hemlock sturdy I grasp
for fingers of sunlight as they pass

Ellis Elliot / Juno Beach, Florida

If / David Rogers

If he knew he'd be dead by dark
Tolstoy supposedly said he'd keep
plowing which proves either
he really liked to plow or else
he was a bit off that day and I think
it must be the latter because
no sane human likes to plow that much
unless you mean the metaphorical
kind but Ell Tee was way too
uptight to mention that sort of thing
and not creative that way but if
I were cursed with such knowledge
a premonition of my own demise
I'd find a hot metaphor and have a
wild time and get a revolver to
defend myself in case I'm slated
to die at the hands of a jealous
lover whose girlfriend I haven't even
slept with and I know I'd probably
end up being shot with my own
weapon because as the Greeks figured
out a long time ago that's how
these things usually end
nobody escapes irony but still I say
it's best to go down fighting or
polishing your weapon or being
metaphorical or doing anything
that counts as honest rebellion

David Rogers / Cave City, Kentucky

Hypothesis of Moon / Dan Wiencek

At the end of a trail of cypress and
hidden owls, a dark shimmer of pond
and mirrored moon and there is so much sky
you and I might as well not even be here

Our moon retreats four centimeters
every year, you say, and I do my best
to convince you I can see it happening
like a dime between my fingertips

nearer, farther, now flicked into the pond
where it drops with a pearl-like B-flat
A frog answers, soon enough there is
an orchestra with full hooting choir

Perhaps the air is a canvas, or a microphone
hung from a branch far from the trail
and the sky is the pond's reflection and not
the other way around, ten thousand dimes

on a cushion of black water — either way
I do my utmost to convince you

Dan Wiencek / Portland Oregon

Reverse Fable / Hilary Sallick

The human heart there's no accounting for it
she said
A broom stands in the kitchen
balances on the tip of its
yellow straw leans
its slender dowel of self
against the stove
waits for two hands
to seize it briskly to
thrust it back and forth upon
the boards of the floor
the surface so smooth bare
it almost reflects
the broom

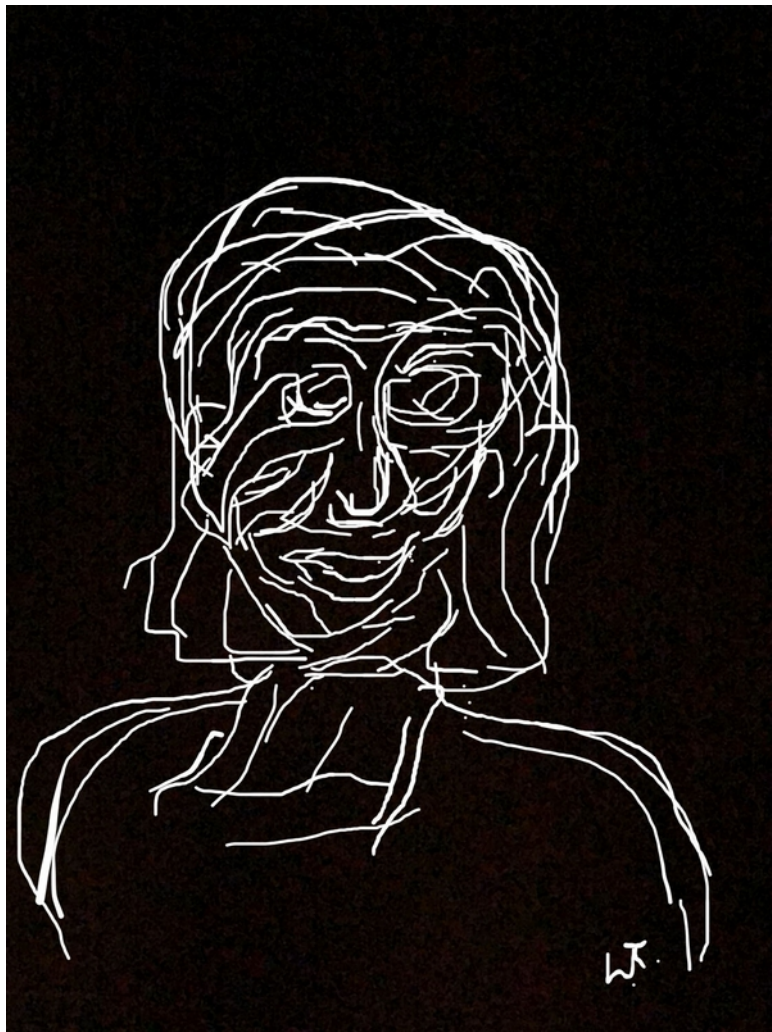
Hilary Sallick / Somerville, Massachusetts

Anniversary / Howie Good

Every time is the first time our bodies are steeped in each other,
why there are yellow birds singing in my chest, heat waves and
widespread wildfires, the three laws of thermodynamics
temporarily suspended as windows fill, ipso facto, with silver,
nowhere else for the rainy day kind of light to go, a room that
changes shape like a cloud, witches and saints, arms linked,
dancing in a circle around the bed, their robes lying in a heap on
the floor, our disorderly love the order of the day, blowing up the
paper bag and hitting it so it pops.

Howie Good / Hyannis, Massachusetts

Portrait in White / Laurence W. Thomas



Iphone Drawing, Laurence W. Thomas / Ypsilanti, Michigan

At the Corner / Marge Piercy

Summer gave us long evenings
when we played kick the can
ringalevio, four corner baseball.

Never cowboys or soldiers--
that belonged to the vacant lot
and daylight, cap pistols cracking

like sharp barks, gunpowder smell
but nothing like the real shots
we heard before the sirens.

Evenings we met under street
lights, never wanting to go home
when mothers called our names.

Even in Detroit, twilight was soft.
We could smell privet as well as
exhaust. Somebody had a ball--

worn baseball, football, tennis ball
rubber to bounce. We had little
but always some kind of ball.

The game never ended, only
interrupted, till summer was gone.

Marge Piercy / Wellfleet, Massachusetts

Tales of a City IV / Seigar



Photograph, Seigar / Tenerife, Spain

Mechanics / J.S. Absher

The brick-a-brac
of language, plumber's
helper and liquid
plumber, vise

grip, goo
remover, two-part
epoxy glue, octave
and sestet,

high school di-
ploma, biplane
strut, dual over-
head cams:

let it be a little
uneducated,
let it stick and fly
and unclog drains.

Let it stand
in awe when beauty
walks by, Venus
in her cloud--

a glimpse
and she's gone.
Let it grill
steaks. Let it thrill

someone who
picks up a book
and can't let go.
Let it rev and hum

and fit pipes
and glow.

J.S. Absher / Raleigh, North Carolina

A 50/50 Contest Honorable Mention Poem

The Tree At Cascade Pass / Jude Dippold

There is a tree,
an ancient fir,
gnarled and twisted
by the wind,
dwarfed
by the long winters
at Cascade Pass.
I sit beside it,
worn by years
and a demanding day
on mountain trails,
and marvel
at how endurance
is so often
the grace granted
in the evening
of living things.

Jude Dippold Concrete, Washington

A 50/50 Contest Honorable Mention Poem

April, 2020 / Jude Dippold

I try to hold close
the old remaining pleasures,
my morning coffee,
the resonance of a good guitar,
her voice across the continent.
But there's still room
for new discoveries
in these closed-in times.
I marvel at how much better
old-fashioned bar soap lathers
compared to that goop
in plastic pump dispensers.
I find that nothing to do
gives me time to enjoy
the joyous cacophony
of the neighborhood children.
And I learn from watching
the birds at the feeder

and the neighbor's cat stalking them
that the only times that matter
hold both fear and joy
wrapped in the embrace
of a single moment

Jude Dippold, / Concrete, Washington

Roommate / James Moran

He woke up confused. He had no hands. The man in the other hospital bed said, “You wrestled a dragon. Saw it from the window. You saved us all.”

When the nurse came in he asked what happened to his hands.

“You forgot about your diabetes?” she asked.

Yes, he supposed he had.

The nurse exited.

“It was a full moon the night you wrestled with the dragon,” his roommate elaborated. “What a sight. What a *sight*.”

“I suppose the dragon bit off my hands?” he said.

“Not at all. You unscrewed them and linked them like a chain around the dragon’s neck. And you also linked the dragon like a bracelet around the wrist. Good trick. Excellent trick.”

The nurse came back in with pills and a cup of water on a tray.

“Now your hands can fly anywhere on dragon’s wings. Powerful stuff. They brought me these.” His roommate held up a pair of car keys and an open can of Pepsi. “Thanks!”

“You’re welcome.”

The nurse looked up. “Who are you talking to now?” she asked.

“My roommate.”

“Your roommate?”

“Yes.”

“And where’s this *roommate*?”

“In his bed.” He pointed with his chin.

“That bed looks empty to me. Your roommate must be invisible—” the nurse paused. “How did that get in here?” She strode over to the car keys and open Pepsi can and snatched them up. “I’ve been looking for these for an hour.” She looked at the man and his lack of hands and said to herself, “I must be going crazy.”

With the nurse’s help the man swallowed the pills. As the nurse was leaving, he turned to his roommate and whispered, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” the nurse said as she left the room.

James Moran / Bethesda, Maryland



Elegy After the Dogs / Rob Haight

Now Mag and Rose have returned
home as ashes in plastic bags
topped with a twist tie

within cardboard boxes with a card
attached to each stating the date
of their transformation

from fur and blood and ways of being
to something that is them
and not them at the same time.

The air has never been this still
without their wagging tails
fanning it. They no longer

have any interest in scooping
up pieces of food I drop on the floor.
Yet something of them remains,

calls me over to touch the boxes
before I head off to bed
for the night

to say to each,
Goodnight sweet girl as if they
can hear me.

Rob Haight / Marcellus, Michigan

May There Come Back to You a Voice/ Rob Haight

I was always looking forward
to that time when things
would be easier, when
the appointment would be
over, when the deal would be
done, when the rapids would be
crossed and I could begin
my life again heading west
into the sun from the bank
on the other side.

But I've hiked through that place
where the woods were thick,
where the light fell apart,
where the mosquitoes droned
an electrical whine all day,
where the swamp continued
on and on, the boot sucking muck
swallowing my legs and I could see
then how that guy just lost it
and laid down and died
in the shade under a pine,
I could see how that young couple
wandered in circles while the county
road was only a few hundred yards away
and I tell myself to do one thing
and then the next and to stay
out of the woods and instead wade
in the river and even where
it's deep and piled with log jams
and boulders, to hug the bank
but continue in the water anyway

because it will end up somewhere
where the canoes come out
or go in, where the bridge crosses,
where the beach is sandy, sunny
and shallow opening into the lake
and you can see kites in the air
in the blue distance.

Rob Haight / Marcellus, Michigan



Wind Chimes / Wally Swist

You have kept
the several sets of wind chimes hung
from the rod in the shower for decades,

and how well I remember you
striking them all as you would emerge out
of the shower, throwing back your head,

platinum hair wet and shining,
and a carillon of pealing bells
and stones would fill the air that would

correspond with the splendor
of your nakedness , the sheer beauty
of your wet body, and its astonishment,

whose contours exhibited tones
of their own, whose exposed notes were
matched by melodies ringing in the air,

before you reached for your towel,
or I did, at times, to dry those curves
of your skin, whose dearness could only

be patted with immemorial
tenderness as the tolling of the jingling
bells began to diminish and to fade into

an unprecedented quiet, and finally
the silence they would then enter,
as if they archived those moments within

themselves and their hanging toward
the far end of the shower rod, where
they continue to hold your beauty, and ours,

in those moments. We have aged,
and, as elders now, I can nevertheless hear
their chiming in their silence and stillness.

Wally Swist / Amherst, Massachusetts



Ghost Town / John Grey

Every morning, sun creeps over
the remains of rooftops,
shines its rays along the dusty main street,
into spider-webbed windows of shuttered stores,
on broken glass, rusty street signs,
a tire-less car that's been parked for forty years.

Sun shimmers the outside of most things,
turns crumbing brick to gold,
gilds the smokeless chimneys,
illuminates the numbers on mailboxes,
the busted windows of the dwellings.

Sun even skims the surface of the stream
where kids swam or fished,
families picnicked,
men and women got drunk on believing
this life would go on forever.

Late afternoon, sun moves on,
the town assumes it's more familiar darkness.
Nightfall erases
what time is slowly razing.

John Grey / Johnston, Rhode Island

Preserving / Leslie Schultz

Field-fresh squashes now soften in the hot
oven, while nearby sterilized glass jars
on the steel sink-edge gleam. One jar is shot
through with October sun. Do I see stars?
Or rainbows? I move nearer. Through some trick
of light, I see my own, much younger face.
Who I was shimmers for one instant, quick
as breath, caught like water in a clear vase.

*She looks happy. She sees only the blur
of bright orange wings—glittering, frantic—
above acetone in her killing jar.
Yet homemade death isn't painless. Or quick.
Clear suffering takes her breath. She can't stir.
Forty years ago, now. I still feel sick.*

Leslie Schultz, Northfield, Minnesota

Punting / Leslie Schultz

Yes, the pole is a metaphor.

No, you can't touch me with it,
not though it is ten feet long—
not anymore.

Yes, there were those golden days
when I loved you. Okay,
maybe it was seasons.

No. We will no longer traverse the same stream.

Yes, I have kept a few ghostly images:
photographs, penciled postcards, perfumes.

No, I moved on long ago, inevitably, as time flows.

Yes, you reside in my head, but

No, not in my heart.

No. My life is not your mirroring pool, Narcissus.
Know this: just...no.

Leslie Schultz, Northfield, Minnesota

Assemblage / Leslie Schultz

The dining room is set: each plate precise
On its blue and white island, each fork
With shining tines, the knives turned out,
Each goblet choked with dripping ice.

A salmon in the center bares
Its pink flesh; its eye is blank, intact.
Something is missing. Ah, the guests!
The business at the door, the wraps, the chairs,
Has taken long enough. It's time to eat.
They all sit down; six living pairs of eyes
Batten on the fish.
Just then it seems
As if they're at a wake. Not grieving, but replete
With greed. Like hungering relations
Come to hear a reading of the will.

Leslie Schultz, Northfield, Minnesota

Ordinary Days, Please / William Palmer

“Just the ordinary days, please.

I wouldn’t want them any better.”

William Stafford, from “Notes for the Program”

Take the pup out, watch him turn
a few times before he goes

Look at the sky layered light gray

Smell milk; good enough for coffee

Write in journal about *humus*

Read a newspaper; cross my leg—
no pain today

Ollie lies, legs spread,
in a square of sunlight

Walk along shoulder to the orchard;
using a cane isn’t so bad

Make blueberry pancakes for dinner;
my wife cleans up

Nothing on Netflix
wants to watch us

In bed Ollie licks once inside my left ear;
we read with our little booklights

William Palmer / Traverse City, Michigan

A Spot in His Brain / William Palmer

Holding the steering wheel,
he feels the side of his right hand

go numb. At the hospital
he can't walk a straight line

without tipping.
A spot in his brain died,

doctors say. Neurons will build
a new road around it.

For months he feels a cobweb
he can't reach.

He sees one side of Uncle Otto's face
pulled down like a barn.

Each day he takes a few pills,
the numbness mostly gone,

only a few threads left.

William Palmer / Traverse City, Michigan

Corona Spring / Michele Riedel

The sky has a clarity, the air fresh and light
carrying a scent of honeysuckle, not traffic.
Lawns are edged and squared

as CNN squawks from tv reporting the days
toll. I dig down into the earth,
squeeze the spongy humus, its organic

mix of plant and animal decay,
think of its nourishment of spring flowers,
how there is hope in darkness,

uncover beetles that stay below
the ground—warm March weather thawing,
as pollen flecks settle on my arm.

Dark clouds ushered in by wind
cause pansies to bow their heads, wave
in unison with their blotched yellow faces.

Sprinklers arc over lawns
bordered by budded iris, yellow forsythia,
clustered blues, gathered oranges.

I touch a lone hydrangea bloom
set on its hollow branches and

watch our neighbors from a distance.

Michele Riedel / Richmond, Virginia

Mom, 84 / Phillip Athans

The room is huge
 you could easily put another bed in here.
And there's an enormous TV
 right in front—dead in front of me.
No, I haven't seen a doctor
 at all since I've been here.
But at least I have a huge room
 all to myself, though it could easily hold another bed.
The TV is enormous
 and is right in front of me, kind of up on the wall.
The one thing I don't have, though
 is the wire for my cell phone.
The room, though, is huge
 they could easily have put another bed in here.
And there's an enormous TV
 right in front of me.
I feel fine
 I'm just ducky
The room is huge
 you could easily put another bed in here.
And there's an enormous TV
 right in front—dead in front of me.

Philip Athans / Sammamish, Washington

Your Time / Steven Deutsch

When mom announced
you were coming North
for your birthday,
we planned a celebration.

Guys only,
we'd take you
to the rib joint
on College Avenue

and then, after you'd
set the local record,
trundle you off
to the new cigar shop

buried in a mini mall
next to the donut shop,
catering to good cigars
and incredible bullshit.

There was a time
not long ago
when you could
eat for three

while spinning
fantastic tales
you seemed to invent
on the spot.

We watched.
We listened.
We learned
cadence and timing.

But that night
you hardly touched
your ribs
though the meat fell

from the bone.
And sitting quiet and
distanced,
you puffed

only once
or twice
on what was
a very fine cigar.

They say
elephants know
when their
time has come

and march
to their burial ground
with pace
and precision.

And we all knew
when you boarded
that plane
with a tattered smile

that we
would never
see you
again.

Steven Deutsch / State College, Pennsylvania

A 50/50 Contest Honorable Mention Poem

Arthur Murray's Boite de Nuit / Robert Halleck

Until our 40th reunion thoughts
of Dorothy were centered in 1957
Dubuque and our Arthur Murray
dance class. Dorothy with no tits,
black frame glasses, brown tie oxfords.
Plainness hiding a beauty that flowered
three years later like the last tulip
in an Iowa spring. Dorothy, in a
class we all hated, sweating in a
cramped studio on Bluff street.
The box of the night our parents
delivered us to like protesting
prisoners of dictators. There to
learn the basic box step, the key
to unlocking the cool foxtrot
in 4/4 time. A lesson repeated
endlessly to *I'm Available*,
Margie Rayburn's only hit.
Partners changed and there was
my secret love, Dorothy, followed
by her hyperventilation cured by a
paper bag kept ready by Lucille our
sexless instructor. At our reunion
Dorothy laughed as we remembered
the past. I had thought of her often
when I watched my groceries go
into a paper bag. My steps would
slow in the parking lot, stop, then
start with my left foot and in
silence I would do a box step and
think of the girl that got away.

Robert Halleck / Del Mar, California

On the Recent Fires in California / Russell Rowland

re: "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"

How petty your fire-and-brimstone now,
Jonathan Edwards. Blazes eat vineyards,
eat back yards, of both sinner and saint.
Flames chase a little urchin too young

for confession. I spilled my grape juice,
Father. I left my lunchbox at school,
Father. The fire is faster, fast as a train,
it clutches her by the hem of her dress.

Reverend Edwards, your bombastic hell
was avoidable: a Savior waited patiently,
the password was plain; any idiot could
utter it. Yet today his steeple is aflame.

A Savior beyond your thought seeks out
the deer, where foliage reduced to ashes
is what they used to nibble and browse;
attends with wild grapes, windfall apples.

Famished, they discard timidity. Grass,
blackened, crunches under cleft hooves.
Outstretched hand: where two or three
gather, there he is in the midst of them.

Russell Rowland / Meredith, New Hampshire

Violin Concerto / J.R. Kangas

He had this grin that didn't stop,
that was really sort of silly.
He was 18, did the Tchaikovsky

with the community orchestra
where we hacked through our parts
in our respective sections.

He was coltish and beautiful
and shy, uneasy socially,
but even so, the grin said

Look at me, I'm 18, working
on my PhD, playing
like an angel, headed for the stars,

a *Wunderkind*, the next Heifetz.
The grin said Listen, listen to this
velvet sound, the vibrato, the spiccato,

the passagework, the huge, soaring
heart. The grin said Look at me.
And we did.

J.R. Kangas / Flint, Michigan

The Homecoming / Marguerite Doyle

Clouds break and we plunge out of the rough,
nocturnal turbulence of our descent
on lines of longitude, coiled in the night.
In place of sleep and nourishment
something burrowed in the memory stirs;
That barb of instinct, sharpened to a point—
hooked, on the neck; flecked in the eye.
Compelling in its power to gouge out rote
we tilt for the Bay and the dark Peninsula
rutting in the sea. A murmuring over
mudflats; a synapse in bone and brain.
We shift and tremble in our number;
funnel over marsh and heather—
then glide to ground and shake out wingspan, feather.

Marguerite Doyle / Dublin Ireland



After A Monster Calls in the Botanic Gardens / M. Doyle

Late that winter day we walked through trees
After we had read *A Monster Calls*.
In woodland we saw heather, bamboo leaves
Admired Oaks as thick as Trojan walls.
One, with its knotted base spread deep and wide
Was twined around with Ivy ages old,
And we saw gouged along its Northern side
The brand of many lightning strikes and storms;
And where it split the trunk had come away
Grown out and down. Emerging from the dark
We saw a foot, a limb, groping for day
As some great creature forced aside the bark.
I took your hand and ran, for it was late
Fortune smiled on us; we made the gate.

Marguerite Doyle / Dublin, Ireland

*After the book of the same name by Patrick Ness.

Announcement / Sharon Scholl

She's told me at least four times
by mouth, email, phone, recording.
It's not because her mind takes flight
occasionally to wander among memories.

It's not because she doesn't know
she told me yesterday,
but saying "John is dead" still
reverberates like space inside a bell.

The words must migrate from her mouth
into the dark receptacles of dread
we hide in closets of our minds, avoiding
that aching trip from sense to sound

that takes awhile. She has to turn
the unthinkable into fact as solid
as a death certificate, a corpse ripe
for disposal, a scattering of ashes.

So I will hear her story, feign
surprise and offer consolation
yet again until we're both sure
she knows the truth.

Sharon Scholl / Atlantic Beach, Florida

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

Grandmother / Huda Ahmed

My grandmother's hands look like a soft
pink flower that is as familiar as a soft
blanket that feels like soft puffy clouds.

My grandmother prays to Allah every hour.
She reads the Quran every half hour.
She reminds me to pray every minute.
She reads for me, cooks for me,
and reminds me that Allah is everywhere.

My grandmother's voice sounds like birds
tweeting in the morning, quiet and squeaky.
She always remembers Allah in her words.
I hear her voice say, "Allah is watching
every single one of us."

My grandmother's eyes are
as brown as a tree branch.
She tells me stories about her eyes and
how she was the prettiest woman around
as I look into them.

She has the name of Allah in them.

Snow On The Ground / Noah Scott

A blank white wall
is an albino creeper
that explodes into a nothingness
of snow on the ground.
Then the wall becomes a line of life
that turns into a slide of snow
that takes you to anything you can think of,
even if you are not thinking of anything.

Who I Am / Reyann Aldais

In Arabic, my name means
the door to Paradise.
A lavender color.
When I'm angry, I am a
volcano tearing up the city.
When I am afraid, I am a
rabbit trapped in a hole.
When I am laughing, I am a
clown at the circus.
When I am creative, I am a
paper splashed with paint.
I share a name with my friend Rayan.
She's not like me--
I am a quiet bunny crawling
in a hole and she is a dragon
setting everything on fire.
My name sounds like peacefulness
in a calm house.
When I hear my name,
I think about the clouds of heaven.

Brown Cardboard Box / Abrar Magrad

My worries are little ghosts in my room,
creepy with big smoky eyes.
They are noisy and making
their scary sounds.
I'm bothered, angry, annoyed,
so I shoved them inside
a brown cardboard box
and drove 80 mph to a highway.
I rolled down my window,
pulled up my foot,
and kicked them out.

I heard them saying “Nooo!”
terrified and worried,
but I just laughed at them
and drove to my favorite
Chinese restaurant to treat myself
for achieving this goal.

A Dream for My Mommy / Savion Obomanu

A team of scientists
will discover the formula
to bring the dead
back to life.
Not as zombies but as
regular living people.
Another serum will make them
never pass away.

I love my mommy.
She died.

Blah Blah Blah / Mamadou Diallo

I remember when I was a baby my dad
took me to Chuck E. Cheese. In the ball
swim I shouted, “Help!!!”
I remember when I was a baby I went
to sleep and my brother checked on me.
When I was a baby I was running around the
house in my undies.
When people talked to me when I
first came to school I thought they were saying
blah blah blah.

Music in Detroit / Adriana Soto

In Detroit
you can always hear music
if you listen closely.
Somewhere
in houses,
in the streets,
in the stores.
Somewhere.
Magical notes floating in
this city
in people's laughter
and in people's eyes
looking from corner to corner,
listening,
sighting
the music in the city.

Where I'm From / Fahima Ali

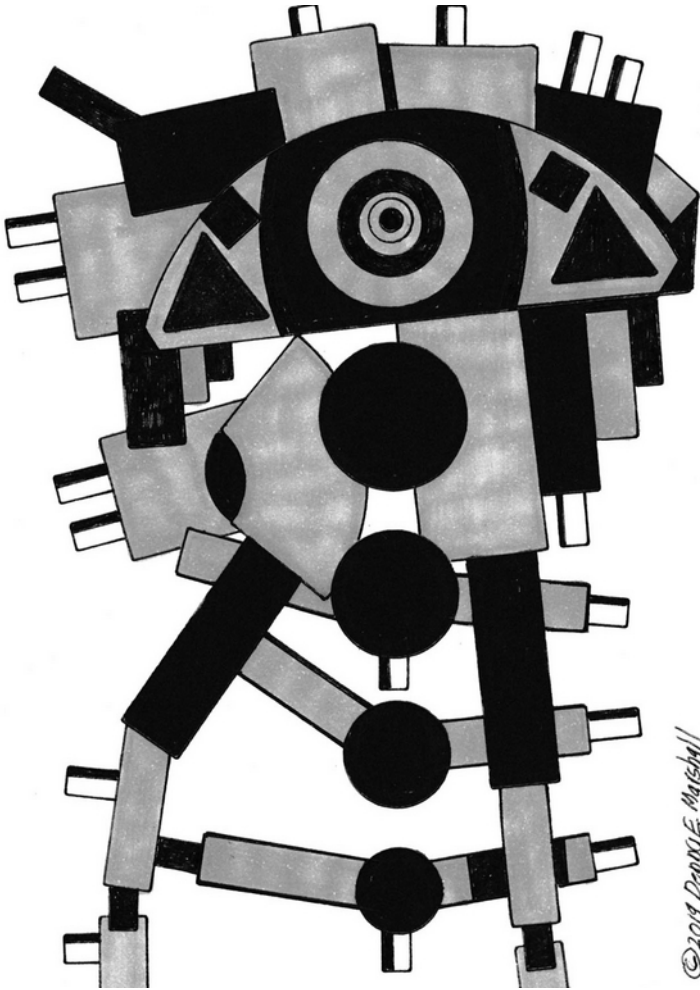
Where I'm from, we pick the mangoes off
the tall mango trees.

Where I'm from, you can hear kids
playing and screaming, and the calming
voice of someone reading the Quran.

Where I'm from, you can smell curry
everywhere and taste spicy,
sweet goodness melting in your mouth.

Where I'm from, the hot sun warms your
body until sunset, leaving you
with a tan.

Rocking Back / Denny Marshall



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Drawing, Denny Marshall / Lincoln, Nebraska