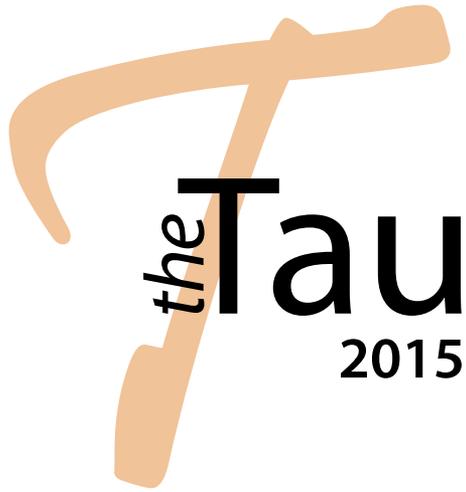


the **Tau**
*the literary and
visual art journal
of Lourdes University*

2015



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Sebastian ~ *by Laura Ott*



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Isabella Valentin

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Lourdes is a Franciscan University that values community as a mainstay of its Mission and Ministry.

“We read fine things but never feel them to the full until
we have gone the same steps as the author”
~ John Keats

The world in which we live is full of beauty, elegance, and joy, interlaced with sadness, fear, and hostility. Because we see the world through different eyes, each and every one of us, our experiences and sense of that which exists around us, are perceived individually. The purpose of *The Tau* is to explore the intellect of those who wish to share his or her personal experience of that world. This unique literary magazine gives our community the opportunity to reflect, spiritually, intellectually, and physically, the knowledge gained through education and the limitless perspectives that pour out from personal reflection.

The symbol of *The Tau* is deeply rooted in Franciscan tradition, it symbolizes the endless value of giving and receiving and the interactive correlation of the two that improves our quality of living. By joining all of the beauty and elegance of the world with the sadness and hostility that exists, one is capable of expressing that in our weakest and most vulnerable moments there is healing power. The beauty of art—paintings, photography, the written word—is that individual experience expressed. We are able to look at the world differently thanks to the expressive view of one another. A new truth is revealed and a beauty is born where it never existed, yet always existed.

Jennifer Brown
President, Literati

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Mooring Lines *by Elliot Miller*

Her sails have torn, her hull has breached
Weathered to the point of despair.
Here upon these shores she has been beached
Lost, and beyond any hope of repair.

And here alone, I shall reside
Untempered, untested, and unapplied.
Left to hold these shores unto the ending of time
Solace my ally, no camaraderie left to find.

White shores give way to sea of the deepest blue and skies of grey
That burning horizon of a sun that never sets.
Home lies to the west out beyond the bay
But the east she calls me to forsake my frets.

Into the east I shall fade, beyond all remembrance of heart
She bore me this far and unto that grain I must be at last apart.



November ~ *by Laura Ott*

Seeing Triangles

by Allison J. Estrada-Carpenter

Above her left eye,
She has three freckles.

The shape of an isosceles triangle.

She thinks I am looking at her
when we fight.

But I am measuring the angles
and wondering if two sides can ever
really be equal.

Sometimes when she yells,
her eyelashes move

leaving me

just one
freckle
dot.

I suppose that one is
my favorite.

I see it often enough.

When she leaves me,
I won't miss
the way our fingers intermingle
when we make up
or how her kisses
always taste like salt water taffy.

But instead,
how I doubt
I'll ever see that
triangle again.

life

by Elizabeth Coley

The lights of heaven shine through the beauty of the trees
The voice of the Lord strong as a beacon shining
Through destructive fog
Breaking through thick clouds
Hiding what lies ahead of a long bleak road
Full of drama, suspense, fear and yes tears
Welcome to the path of life.

Black Words, Black Birds

by William Doreski

Black words. Or black birds.
Same cosmic punctuation.
Tracing clues from town to town
I search for my stolen bicycle.
After forty years it's likely
faded to scrap. But the pain

of losing it lingers. You paw
at your phone, sneaking photos
of my lifeline. It's shorter
than this long grieving suggests.
Your black words fail to comfort.
The black birds could be ravens

or crows. They circle something
dead in the road. It isn't me
but isn't quite dead, either.
It mutters black words and sighs,
that sigh that warns me to run
for my life. The black birds squawk

and hover. A tire track in mud
left since the recent rain proves
my bicycle still functions in this
or an adjacent dimension.
You with your digital outlook
claim that a virtual bicycle

has replaced the one I lost.
You show me photos of me
pedaling an old black Raleigh.
Yes, that's my familiar gray hair
and yes, that's the three-speed model
stolen from our brownstone steps

most of a lifetime ago.
Yes, your black words convince me,
and whatever those black birds are
they aren't yet feeding on me
no matter how they punctuate
the otherwise unyielding sky.

MILES DAVIS

by Mark Jackley

born in tune
working
the softest registers

the tom cat
pounces
kills

he learned his ruthless art
listening
to himself

ripple

The Handkerchief

by Don Noel

A lacy handkerchief stood perkily in the driveway at number 245, caught momentarily in a shaft of dawn sunlight on the passenger side of a sporty red convertible. Relatively new neighbor, 245: Bruce something, a coach at the university. White man. A bachelor, Charles thought he'd heard; maybe Sally told him.

He might have broken stride, gone up the drive, put the handkerchief on the windshield where it wouldn't be missed. He was already past it, though, and did not turn back. Out for exercise, he avoided distractions: twice around the long block, briskly enough to get heart and lungs pumping. He might wish good morning to any neighbor out this early, but not stop to chat. If there was trash on the sidewalk, he didn't, even on garbage days, stoop to put it into a waiting barrel. To start that would turn his constitutional into a civic exercise.

A tall, upright man, he walked purposefully, although the staff he brought to ward off ill-trained dogs made him seem older. There were of course lines in his craggy, coffee-colored face, but he'd cropped his Afro when the first gray appeared, so his hair hardly showed his age. He still had four more years teaching Shakespeare before retirement.

Sally, on the other hand, was sometimes mistaken for his daughter. Ten years his junior, she looked even younger, as pretty as a celebrity beauty on the cover of *Ebony*. Despite bearing him two children, now in college, her body was still firm, well-sculpted. She did martial-arts workouts most afternoons. He walked seven mornings a week. Up without an alarm – even Thursdays, after getting home late from his Wednesday night class. She'd hardly roused when he slipped into bed last night.

His philosopher colleague Hiroshi might have made the early walk occasion for meditation. Charles wasn't into Zen, though, and the uneven sidewalk demanded attention. He might let his mind wander to incipient lectures or exams, but mostly made a point of observing.

The block faced Everett Park, lined with eighty-year-old oaks, birches and pines. There was morning birdsong, woodpecker-drumming. He bought an Audubon recording and learned to identify chickadees,

titmice, jays, and robins by ear. On their after-breakfast Saturday walks, he and Sally brought a bird book and binoculars.

The houses on this side were 1920s-big, sturdy but occasionally needing fresh paint or cosmetic carpentry. He would mention such shortcomings at breakfast; Sally, as neighborhood block-watch captain, would prod city inspectors. On the back half of the block, where they lived, there were houses on both sides of the street, of more recent vintage but still needing attention from time to time. She was vigilant.

There was of course turnover. He'd mention to Sally when a for-sale sign appeared, when the "Sold!" stickers were plastered on, and when there were signs of new owners moving in. She would organize neighborhood welcomes, and always brought newcomers casseroles.

The handkerchief was gone on his second time around. There were lights now in the first-floor rear, presumably the kitchen. Perhaps Coach Bruce had stepped out to survey the morning and seen it. Or the newspaper deliverer picked it up. Charles gave it no further thought.

As it chanced, he encountered his neighbor that noon in the faculty dining room. Charles and Hiroshi had taken their trays to a table when he came by. Hiroshi knew him.

"Come join us. Do you know Charles Spencer? English lit."

"Barely. I think we're neighbors, though." He lifted a finger from his grip on the tray, a gesture of handshake. "Bruce Saylor. Football. Nice to see you again."

"Join us?" Hiroshi persisted.

"Thanks. I'm lunching at my desk. Backlog of paperwork. Another time."

"Let's plan it," Hiroshi said.

"Right." Saylor shouldered through the door with his tray.

"Something of a lady's man, I'm told," Hiroshi confided. "But well-read. Schopenhauer. You'd enjoy talking with him."

A pity, Charles thought. He might have asked Saylor if he was the one who retrieved the handkerchief.

No, just as well. He imagined an awkward conversation: "Noticed a fancy handkerchief in your drive this morning."

"Yes."

“You must have had company last night.”

“Yes.”

Did Saylor decide against joining them to avoid that conversation? Everyone on the block knew of Charles’ morning constitutionals. He pushed all that aside and made small talk with Hiroshi for the rest of lunch. He was not Othello. Would not let himself obsess about the handkerchief.

But he did.

While Sally was in the kitchen that evening, he checked her dresser drawer. There it was, surely the style he’d seen on the pavement. His birthday present to her several years ago. She dabbed on perfume with it as an invitation to love-making. He sniffed. Freshly laundered.

The rest was what any Shakespearean scholar would call denouement.

“How about we head to the railroad bridge?” he asked at breakfast Saturday morning. It carried an all-but-abandoned freight line over the river. Halfway across, it spanned a turbulent stretch, almost a whirlpool when the water was high, absolutely unswimmable. The water was high; he’d checked it out Friday. “Might see some ducks,” he added.

He waited until they were halfway across. “Aren’t those eiders?”

“Where?”

“Over by the shore.” Binoculars up, he leaned against the flimsy rail; she came to the rail beside him, peering through hers.

He’d expected to tip her over easily. She fought back.

“Charles, what the hell?” She dropped the glasses and reached for him.

He hadn’t considered her judo conditioning: In a moment he was the one off his feet.

“You bastard!” she grunted as she tipped him over the broken rail.

He’d wondered if she might scream on the way down. He clamped his lips. He had a few seconds to wonder if she’d overreacted, pushed back too hard, or had seized a welcome opportunity.

He must have been right about the handkerchief.

Autumnal Daughter

by Charity Anderson

Warm woman
Sacred silver tips of moonlight,
Envoy of life
Bathes her child on the cusp of night.

Soft autumn sky
Broken and torn,
Bleeds bone white
Welcomed daughter is born.

Hollowed woman
Scarred and sewn,
Knows the hallowed touch
No man has ever known.

Dark autumn eyes
Soft feathers amongst the snow,
Forget the pain
Only a mother could know.



Autumnal Sun - *by Christopher Reid*

Escape from Society

by Stephen Carl

It's not so bad here,
In this place,
A place of freedom.
Am I a nut case?

The world is evil;
The institution is good.
Escape IS possible.
But I never would.

Each one his own problem,
In his own mind,
A reason for being here.
A time to be kind.

Many outsiders judge us;
We're the image of sin.
But they too are evil.
The devil has a grin.

They tell me I'm crazy;
Trapped in the dark,
I beg to differ.
I've only left one mark.

I told them a story;
One about death.
The police believed me.
My child's last breath.

To help these strangers,
The doctor inspects.
Various pills.
The thoughts infect.

"I murdered my child,"
A necessary lie.
Don't make me live out there.
I'd much rather die.

I take my turn,
In the line of denial.
The medicine takes over.
I murdered my child.

Stevensbury, Virginia

by Mark Jackley

I topped the knoll and saw them,
mourners at a grave.

A hayfield in October
lapped the little church.

Two seas:
one of grief,
one of absent hay
baled up like a fist
holding its secrets tight.

Pay to Play

by Joseph Giordano

Ted Chandler's flight to Hong Kong was unending. Still groggy, he hopped over to Shanghai and spent a week with customers. Five hours to Singapore, then a stop in Tokyo before fourteen hours back to Texas. Ted's business life was two weeks on the road every month. Even when he wasn't traveling, his brain felt like it was 2 am. Thank God his wife Sandra was understanding.

Ted's mother wanted him to be a doctor, but medical school was out of reach. She passed away during Ted's teens, a few years after contracting breast cancer. Had the biotech drug trastuzumab been developed, she would still be alive. So, Ted worked for ventures with new health technologies and was paid mostly in stock. This was Ted's fifth start-up. The others looked like winners until they weren't. This company developed a surface cleaner that killed pathogens on contact, and Ted led Asian sales. Broad hospital acceptance seemed assured until Ted discovered that many third-world clinics would reduce infections if they just shut the windows.

Multiple failures dulled Ted's idealism, and success these days was spelled with dollar signs. He pined for a time when he could escape constant pressure.

Ted slouched in the back seat of a cab under a leaden sky looking like a cadaver. Anticipation of the next trip's plane ride mad him queasy.

Sandra was a curvy redhead. When Ted arrived, she'd be in the foyer, scotch in hand. He'd take a sip, sweep her into his arms, and they'd tumble into bed. But she wasn't at the door. He called and found her in the spare bedroom with the shades drawn.

He said, "Did someone die?"

She rose and put her arms around his neck. There were tears.

"Tell me."

"I don't want to talk about it."

"Sandra, you can't leave it at that."

“Okay, but you must stay calm.”

“You’re scaring me.”

Sandra sighed. “You always told me to call Craig if there was a problem while you were gone. The water heater in the attic broke. The bedroom was flooded. He called a plumber and oversaw the cleanup. Afterwards, I invited him to have a glass of wine; I thought it innocent enough. He sat next to me on the couch, then moved close and nuzzled my neck. I tried to get up, but he pulled me back and kissed me. I told him that it wasn’t right, but he kept on. Do I need to paint you a watercolor?”

Ted stiffened. Craig Burrows was his best friend. “I can’t believe it.” Ted grabbed his head. “I’ll kill him.”

“Ted, please. You’ll be arrested for murder.”

“Did he hit you? Your face isn’t marked.”

“I didn’t have a choice.”

“Did you call the police?”

“It would’ve been his word against mine.”

“You didn’t go to the hospital? They would’ve done a rape kit.”

“He used a condom.”

“You couldn’t scream or run away?”

“He held me down.”

Ted took a step back. “Did you have sex with Craig and concoct this story?” Sandra’s face reddened. “Listen to yourself. If you were home, this wouldn’t have happened. Leave, go on another business trip.” Sandra turned her back.

Ted cupped his forehead. “I’m sorry.” He reached for Sandra. She pulled away. “Craig’s betrayal rocked me. I reacted badly. Forgive me.”

Ted wanted to confront Craig, but Sandra held him back. He called in sick and sulked around the house. He was irritable on the phone and blew up at someone from work. He tossed and turned at night.

Sandra avoided talking. She went to bed early, or she retired after Ted was asleep.

A week passed, and Sandra made Ted his favorite meal, meatloaf. Sandra picked at her food.

Ted sighed. "Should we get counseling?"

Sandra shrugged.

"I'm supposed to leave Saturday. Maybe I'll stay home."

"You can't put me into a protective bubble."

"I'm uneasy leaving you alone."

"I'll buy a pistol and apply for a carry permit."

On Ted's next trip to Asia, he called home at odd times. One morning, Sandra sounded teary. She faulted allergies. Ted heard a man's voice in the background. She said it was the TV. She assured him that she slept with the pistol, a Glock 9 mm, on the bed stand.

When Ted returned, he received a call from Craig on his mobile.

"What did she tell you?"

"You forced yourself on her."

"Ted, that's not the way it was."

"You've lusted after her since you were best man at our wedding."

"She came on to me, and I succumbed. I'm ashamed of myself. I should've had more discipline. But you need to believe me."

"I could've gone to the police."

"We would've both been embarrassed. I'm telling you it was consensual."

Ted's temperature rose. "You think you'll get away with this? This is a matter of honor."

"Ted, please, don't go all vendetta on me. I'm sorry it happened. If Ellen finds out, my marriage will be destroyed."

"You should've thought about that before you raped my wife."

"I didn't rape Sandra. I understand that you want to believe her, but how would you know if she was lying?"

"Craig, why did you call?"

"I want to make amends. Please meet me at my attorney's office this afternoon."

Ted told Sandra about the meeting. She frowned.

The stenciled words on the door were, "Harold Schuckster, Attorney at Law." Ted found Craig in the waiting room. He had tousled

blond hair and a boyish smile. Craig owned a string of car dealerships and drove a BMW. Schuckster bulged in his brown suit. The two men sat in front of his burl walnut desk, and the attorney spread his hands. “As you know, Mr. Burrows admits that he had relations with Mrs. Chandler. I don’t want to upset you, but he believes that he was seduced.”

“Bullshit.” It came out like a question.

“Be that as it may, the deed is done, and Mr. Burrows is willing to make restitution.”

“Restitution my ass. The newspapers will grab the story. This is a tight community. People won’t buy a car from a traitor to a so-called friend.”

“Do you really want to put your wife through that?”

Ted pointed at Craig. “How will Ellen react to the news that you sleep around? The divorce settlement will be seven figures. That’ll take a dent out of your high and mighty attitude.”

Craig looked at Schuckster. The lawyer nodded.

“Mr. Chandler, we don’t want publicity, and we don’t want Mrs. Burrows to find out about the affair. We’ll pay you one-hundred-thousand dollars if you’ll sign a letter committing to keep this matter confidential.” Ted sat back in his chair. The whir of the ceiling fan was the only sound in the room. “Make it a quarter million.”

Ted returned home and plopped onto a floral patterned armchair. Sandra walked into the living room wiping her hands on a dish towel. Ted showed her the check. Her eyes widened. Ted rubbed his chin. “With payoffs like this, I wouldn’t need to work much longer.”

“Does that mean I don’t need the carry permit?”

The Photographs

by Kenneth Pobo

What remains, scraps of time,
some scraps of mine.

There is silence in the hot afternoon,
a still bubble of heat outside,
the motionless pines, inert branches
except for some random sirocco gust,
the dry grass singing, cicadas searing the grass
and sandbar fever on the skin,
by the slow, perennial, marshy green.

Scraps of time.

I rummage the cupboard and find them
in boxes, albums, envelopes,
inside magazines, even in an old wallet,
the leather worn out to a shine,
with the consistence of linen, almost a gauze,
scraps of time that consume and leave you
staring at slivers of light, staring for the soul
or the breath of all burnt gold, the ore-
I start looking at them, time's scraps,
these pictures of bygone, bypassed existence
of various shapes and consistence,
these faces recurring, a century ago,
the black and white that looks
both essential and elemental
and rich, expectant in a way,
young cheekbones, at their prime,

enthusiast of being there
in their own living rhyme,
with in front what we believe they believed,
a neat plain, a spread of time,
with these wide, thorough smiles
in the present cicadas' light now,
light of silence in which I keep looking
and find a few, more recent, colour,
here, me and her, I had forgotten these,
probably never seen them before,
and I forget the others at once, I stare
at the simple drama of what
was there and is no more,
I look in her smile for what
I want to last anyway,
I look and look
and sink in the armchair
and sink in the sky.

A Glassy Affair

by Peter Faziani

Burnt plastic grains
~ a genetic genesis ~
bonded translucent
transformed critically
beyond recognition

Fragile and temperamental
not tempered - blown bubbled
smooth before placement
or pressed flat and framed
by strips of lead

Ignored by the masses at
mass but masterfully crafted
to last for ages
if colored carefully



A Mirrored Reflection ~ *by Aaron Iffland*

The Failed Navigator

by John Grey

It's getting dark
and the trail is telling you
conflicting stories.
You try to work
with the compass needle
but you're hapless.
The merest warbler
soars above your petty anger,
can't imagine how a fellow creature
does not know where he is.

People said
you were crazy.
Take a map, they insisted.
And three friends, even better.
But you were determined
that magnetic north
were here before Google
and would be around
when that search software
had long been dumped
in the Internet trash bin.

You call to say,
you'll be late getting back.
You lie when you add that
your flashlight is weak
and you can't see the damn compass.

The truth is people live
within the boundaries set for them.
They're seldom asked to navigate.
So at certain points in your self-discovery,
uselessness sets in.
You find a cozy spot,
sleep the night through...
then, come morning,
climb the highest hill
to see exactly where you are.

You swear off compasses from then on.
You never leave home without the highest hill.

I am in love with a man of the earth

by Juliette Dorotte

I watch him plough the sickened ground and wipe his sweaty brow
While the sun sets on the freshly cut field and the wheat lies outside
His brawny brown back stands erect in the sun
His large massive hands rest on his potent thighs
He returns to the farm in an energetic stride
And passes me without a glance to meet his wife inside

“Smile!” he demanded

by Veronica Lark

A pair of eyes pinched in a glare –
no sir, scratch that,
a steely stare –
my spirit ached to spring to act.

I tend to gravitate far from such angst:
Those gray grudges
upheld in praise
by Grinch-like girls and hostile stooges.

Being above base and bitter games
seems easy enough,
but all the same,
sometimes there’s something in this stuff –

this stuff of subtly stitching my brows
in cool confusion,
wond’ring aloud:
“how have we come upon this conclusion

that I somehow owe men a favor
to ‘smile’ now, and worry later?
Indeed, how can it be
that to women, men still do talk down,
and, alluding to necessity,
demand we should erase our frowns?”

Springs, Cogwheels, Chocolate Truffles

by Kyle Hemmings

Each morning, she tries to repair the boy using whistles, wake-up calls, a rattling G.I. Joe doll with eyes as plastic as his. Still, he won't quite wake up. She knows that he inherited some of her obsolete parts: the springs too stretched, the rusty gears, the leaking of mechanized voices across the placenta. To be drowned in absolute need. To detach & admit nothing. The past? Just an elusive present that keeps ticking. She would reattach him to her belly button if it could make him rise & blink. Not like the toy soldiers that she threw out. They were only donations & they made her hands feel like sand, caused her to pant as if her breaths sifted back & forth through impossible particulate masks.

The mother & son live over an Italian bakery on West 6th. At sunrise, she imagines tasting the ricotta in the fresh-baked cannoli or the fruits in the panaforte. She imagines how even after life stops, delivery trucks will continue to double-park & window-washers will still lose their keys. It's a neighborhood that rises & sinks with its own secret timers. At night, she hears the footsteps of the baker's wife after she closes shop. Or the shots fired, when she shoots an assailant in the foot. The almost-adult mugger addicted to powdered sugar & deep-fried balls of dough.

Aging

by Gary Beck

Confusion spreads
the fog of forgetting
so we can't recollect
what is real,
history departing
faster than sanity,
remembrance relinquishing
comforting certainty,
less and less remaining
of cognition,
as forces of decay
erase the past.

Feed Your Passion

by Elizabeth Coley

What inspires your art?

A stained glass window

Apple trees on a farm

Skies of dark blue before a storm

A beautiful sunset

The endless possibilities with nature outside your door

In your studio

What prods you to pick up a pencil, a stick of pastel or a brush and get to work?

Lessons in the craft of drawing and painting are honed overtime through Dedication, patience, and the sheer passion to push yourself to produce high quality work.

Triumphed over doubt

Becoming the talented artist you were meant to be

The everyday world is loud and insistent

Finding little moments of stillness and beauty is refreshing to the mind

Affirming your identity as an artist while becoming part of an impassioned community is

Soul awakeing.



Dancing Elephant ~ by *Laura Ott*

A Local Product

by William Doreski

To the east a hailstorm bruises
the sky, peppering small towns
where incest and drug use prevail.
Nothing gaudy about this storm,
only the usual gray embossed
on the usual late spring landscapes,

mostly hanks of weed. I press
both hands to my head to suggest
The Scream and remember Marsha
with her curtain of hair weeping
about her face. A local product,
she prospered in earth tones cued

to flatter the creepy young men
who popped their greasy pimples
while imagining their victims
in photographic black and white.
I wonder which thug she married
and how many kids she nurtured

before running for her life.
The wind rustles the flowers
I've planted over twenty years
of clumsy but eager cultivation.
If I sold this house a bulldozer
would scrape away my gardens

and something more expensive
would claim these modest acres
for the sake of higher taxes.
Maybe that passing hailstorm
is the ghost of Marsha wailing
over sixty years gone. Maybe

the next storm will be my own ghost
wailing over lost moments no one
thought to publish to the world –
every pore open to the silence
of summer fields and forests
evolving secret little lives.

Aunt Gwen as a Kite

by Kenneth Pobo

In my fifties, my friends try
to guess where our lives went

wrong, or if not wrong,
the many sidetracks that left us
tearing up old maps. Maybe
I should have left Illinois,
gone west, but I had parents

to take care of, a teetering job,
a daughter who often ran away –
I look for a magic kite,
charge after it despite bad knees,
a chronic wheeze,

and a windless summer
having no heft.

You

by Denzell Anderson

Falling Face First.
Hurting as well as distorted,
Auditory ossicles were able to convert the calling of black turf.
How the lament for guidance was designed for you to interpret.

The love derived from the base of your heart to mine
Is as strong as the concentration of conscious interest of the mind.
Every time I promise better I fail every time to keep that promise.
For progress and perfection resembles blossoms that bloom as blessings.
The finest connection between adolescents, peace and love after episodes of
aggression, for these mirror my progression...For be that progression takes
time.
Though time could be that illusion of all your previous upsettings.

Disappointed.
I know.
Forgetting that I was forgiven.
Until I prove it you'll never see it, I get it

Music perpetuates the listeners, I perform.
Finals stress the rest, I finish with unconcern
Growth and accolades, I earn and own

Cremation of words.
Conceptions of actions.
These promises are reattaching.
Not just for YOU but for the establishment of my passions.

I love you and here's your heart:

Humbled of holy water.
Water of blue under the suns helium.
Helium of love instead of radiation.
Love consistent, deliberate, and repetitive as a pendulum.
For only one.
This one that floats in my hand, in my soul.
Distant from dangers.
Sympathetic to strangers.
Only loves until I let go.

**After a Panic Attack,
She Lies Down in the Grass and Gazes at the Stars**
by Mark Jackley

join me
she says
her words
a ladder
safety being
someone
else to see
the universe
is in fact
on fire

As I am

by Laura Butler

As I am...

And as I came.

I am drowning...

I am my own storm.

I am a strong affect like a hurricane.

I have become strong but, then I am weak...

Am I at my ending?

Or am I just at the peak?

Am I seeker?

Or a keeper of pain?

A strand of string can last only so long!

I am the scissors that sharpen with each cut...

but rust with a slash of tears and blood.

Am I a rose?

That for once has a true scent but fades as time ages.

Am I a thorn?

I am the prick upon the skin the wound that does not heal!

Am I the tear that falls?

When emotions rises to upon a point of no return...

Am I?

The laughter that last forever, after the grace of love.

Am I an in between...

of a spirit...

of a heart...

of pain?

Or a redeemer?

I am!

Because I am human.

Nothing more, and nothing great I am.

Cascade of Radiance

by Richard King Perkins II

Light descends –
the last sunset

its edges plumed out
like a tree-of-heaven

veins of saffron blend
with stillness

staghorn coral builds,
climbing water to sky

an orange coal hanging
in deepest blue

with moonrise
all else subsides.

The Auditor

by Joseph Giordano

Martello had the yellow-tinged eyes of a predator. He was Vice President International and loomed behind an oak desk the size of an Olympic pool. “Damian, I’m transferring you to the Middle East., Egypt to Iran.” His smile widened. “You’ll work out of Nicosia.”

I’d seen Martello’s face darken when I raised an opposite opinion in a meeting. Hubris the Greeks termed it, and the gods’ retribution was always fuck awful. My gut was in a boil. Stress sweat on subordinates gave Martello a hard on. I forced a cheerful face. “Thanks for the opportunity.”

The Cyprus bank collapse was the worst crisis since the Turks invaded in 1974. Nicosia’s construction halted, businesses closed, and unemployed people wandered the streets like patients in an asylum.

I rented a pension and in the evening found a small taverna, the Plaka. The sky was a blanket of stars. The air was cool with a scent of pine. A gray speckled beard with a rainbow smile approached my table. He introduced himself as Tassos Kappakiotis. My company exported switchers to telcos often controlled by governments. Tassos knew my responsibilities and said he could be helpful. There was no harm in listening and companionship was welcome. We shared a meze and toasted with cloudy glasses of ouzo.

Tassos was twenty when the Turks forced his family off their estate in the north. “They drove my father’s Mercedes into the swimming pool.” Tassos shook his head. “One day I’ll return and claim what’s mine.” The conversation turned to business. “The Middle East can be dangerous, especially for Americans. I have contacts throughout the region. Permit me to be your guide.”

“Thanks, but I can get around on my own. I grew up in a Brooklyn neighborhood that would make most Arabs blanch.”

Tassos flashed white teeth. “An alliance would be profitable, for both of us.” He leaned close. “My friends are most generous with their business partners.”

Perhaps you’d think that Tassos’s allusion to bribes triggered a moral crisis? A month before I would’ve blown him off, but Martello had screwed me. “What do you propose?”

“A sixty forty split on all payments.”

I took a sip of ouzo. “Make it seventy thirty.” An opportunity to pepper Martello’s ass was baklava for me.

Through Tassos I soon had exclusive representatives in every Middle East country not at war, and my numbered Swiss bank account received regular deposits. I toured the region feted by local associates. Martello was oceans away and life was 1001 Arabian nights.

The Sound and Light Show at the Pyramids finished, and I received a call from Martello’s assistant, Margaret Bugner, who spoke ex cathedra for her boss. Her voice had a nasal quality. “Mr. Martello assigned an auditor, Roland Thorneside, to review your business area. He’ll be in Nicosia Monday. Give him full access and cooperation.”

I got indigestion.

“I’ve audited operations all over the world, and have a nose for corruption.” Thorneside was a thin redhead with alabaster skin. His tone of voice was a cross between a Howler Monkey and a Jackass bray. I contemplated strangling him. Thorneside raised a bony finger. “If something’s amiss, I’ll find it.”

I crossed my arms.

Thorneside worked twenty hours a day. He ferreted through every invoice, fax, and Post-it Note. He phoned clients. He combed through my travel records and dinged me for lack of receipts. He interrogated me on my selection of agents. Thorneside interviewed Tassos who was slippery as a jellyfish and answered questions with a grandfatherly smile.

He exhausted me, but I was pleased to observe that Thorneside’s proctological exam also took a toll on him. Weight melted off him like a snowman. His eyes sagged like a bloodhound.

I telephoned a buddy back in the States, Harry Levine.

“Martello dispatched an auditor to assassinate me, Roland Thorneside.”

Harry chuckled. “Martello hates Thorneside. He called him Savonarola because he’s incorruptible and exiled him to your Circle of Hell. Martello knew he’d be a pain in your tukhus, but that was honey on his yogurt.”

I considered telling Thorneside that Martello wouldn’t reward him for a job well done so he’d throttle back, but I rejected the idea. Thorneside

was shoved aside as I'd been. Nonetheless, he took up the task to audit my activities with enthusiasm. The job energized him. He worked for principle and himself, not recognition.

Two days later, Thorneside slumped over at his desk. Tassos helped, and we got him to a hospital.

Doctor Papaellinas was harried in blue scrubs. He examined Thorneside, then approached me. "He's shot through with cancer. It's a matter of days."

"Can you keep him here?"

"This is a hospital, not a hospice. In Cyprus, family members die at home."

Thorneside's sternum and ribs were visible when he slipped off the hospital gown. He sat on the bed to catch his breath. I helped him dress. He thanked me. We used a wheelchair to get him to my car. He slumped into the passenger seat and dozed immediately. He was too weak to stay alone in his apartment, so I took him to my pension. I slept on the floor. He was in and out of consciousness. He needed help in the toilet, and a couple of times he soiled the bed.

In a lucid moment he grabbed my arm. "Just because you're helping me, don't think I'll cut you slack."

"I get it."

Around four in the morning he stirred. I went to him. His eyes were childlike. "When will my mother arrive?" I gulped. He breathed his last.

Tassos helped with arrangements to send Thorneside's body home. We waited until the plane left.

I sighed. "I didn't think of Thorneside as having a mother."

"Did it matter? He didn't have much time."

"I should have told him he was right. I'm a crook."

Tassos's eyebrows rose. "Why?"

"He would have rallied. I owed him that."

What the Windowpanes Witnessed

by Veronica Lark

Pool cue palmed in hand;
Playing conductor tonight
In shorts and a band
Tee two sizes too tight.

Sharing a shrug
With her shadow – she's shallow,
And shimmying along,
Holding a see-through glass

That somehow seems to sing
In celebration:
Toasting the best friend's ring,
Toasting bridesmaids' obligation.



Winter Chores ~ *by Daniel Borer*

Winter Watch

by Sandy Feinstein

Purple finches hang onto the feeder
as if their very life depends on it,
a feint of beaks, flutter of frantic feathers.
Still, they cannot keep the territory:
A chickadee makes it past the blockade of twitchy tails.

How odd these bird-brains—
not big enough even to remember the feeder year to year.
Stuffed full for days in late November
then suddenly, there's a conclave,
the ranks pushing for power positions.

They don't speak this early in the season.
They are single-minded feeders.
I wonder if some internal mechanism knows
it's open season. That there are rules.

Like the kerfuffle at McDonald's,
monopoly of seats will not be tolerated.
Silently, any species may be challenged,
no need for explanations.

Who stays, who goes?
What have they been doing since last year?
New nests, a clutch of eggs, cuckoo invaders.
No tags tell the distances compassed, the food eaten.
There is just now, and joy they can't imagine.

A Room of One's Own

by Jordyn Steele

Swirling about in the tides of life
No escape from the perpetual rhythm
 Droning on without heed
Gathering debris here and there –
 From them are we ever free?

 Wound tight like a gear
 Each notch nearing its last
The effects persist and take their toll
 On the physical body
 And the mind begins to cramp

 “Set me free!
 Give me rest!
 A respite,
 I insist!”

 Enclosed in solitude
 The mind lets out
 A healing sigh
Embraced by the emptiness
Allowing the soul room to swell

 No one, no thing
 As the droning fades
And the gears ease their strain –
 Authentic identity is regained
 In a room of one's own

Fifty Years After Graduation

by John Grey

He was sixty-seven, barely able to walk,
when he at last found use for that geometry
he learned in school.

“If I walk the hypotenuse,” he told himself,
“I’ll get there quicker than if I follow
the two sides.”

And at sixty eight, his Latin came to the fore,
He could read the chart
at the bottom of his hospital bed.

His grand-nephew died in Iraq,
blown to pieces by a roadside bomb.
So science class finally came in handy.
And history too.
Sometimes the kings outlive the pretenders
to the throne.

At sixty nine,
he realized he was more
predicate than subject
and that verbs were out of his control.

On his death bed,
he remembered that religious instruction.
“Good men don’t die.
They just go to a better place.”
Who could have guessed
that geography would provide
the final revelation.

It's a Sad Life

by Brittany Coomes

Fred always loved Martha
even took her to prom
come graduation
got a job on the line
produced a diamond

Martha went to college
studied ancient history
while living modern infamy
opened her eyes to life
didn't take the diamond prison

Fred works overtime
and goes home quietly

Martha shines as CEO
but cries in her spacious office

Caged birds sleep soundly
free birds cry in the dark

War

by Samantha Good

Do you ever feel like there's a faint screaming in your head?

Screaming and crying and just complete chaos?

But no one else can hear this war;

No one else can feel the pain inside your head.

One will try on your shoes;

They will never walk in them.

No one else can fill your shoes.

Just simply stand.

What's wrong?

Why are you quiet?

Nothing's wrong.

You're crazy.

Crazy.

They don't hear the screaming in your head.

They don't hear the chaos, the war, or the pain;

They don't understand you're drowning slowly in misery.

They don't understand the short breaths.

They don't understand the battles of:

Waking up,

Painting on a smile,

Wanting to feel something,

Wanting to live.

To live.

To love.

To want.

To feel.

To be free.



These Ropes Will Protect Us ~ *by Laura Ott*

At the Park

by Allison J. Estrada-Carpenter

I tried to swing on the monkey bars

the blisters laughed on my hand
my gut hit the gravel.

The teenagers lean
against the fading pale yellow slide

discussing Shit and Sin
while smoking.

My son tells me the sky is white
in the morning
because it just came out of the laundry.

We walk over to the swings,
noticing the fat and lazy ducks.
full of breadcrumb entitlement.

The trees sighing with the wind
aches and pains of age.

I still enjoy the swings.

The rubbery strip doesn't quite fit my behind.

I pull my legs in and out,
up and down.

Repetition my friend.

My glasses fall near a forgotten lollipop
as the steel bar frame shakes and squeaks under my weight.

My son struggles to get pie-in-the-sky high
on his swing.

I tell him endurance ain't a young man's game.

The leaves fall to the ground laughing in agreement.

"Watch me" I tell him
and close my eyes.

Deeper

by Telly Timpson

Falling into the abyss of my shortcomings,
Going down, down, down to a bottomless pit,
Darkness around me,
With no light to see,
I am steady falling,
While my inward man is calling,
Crying because it is dying,
The overwhelming fear keeps me from crying,
My point of view I am relying,
It is getting warm?
O Lord, I feel my soul frying,
I am going deeper,
Deeper into my sin,
Deeper where there is no friend,
Deeper, deeper,
I have one chance to save my soul,
From going deeper down this hole,
I press beyond my pain and lust,
I call on the name, JESUS!
Faster and faster I go,
While my soul is placing a demand,

To be free from this tainted quicksand,
Suddenly my Savior grabs my hand,
And place me on a solid rock where I stand,
He propelled me to a wooden monument call the cross,
He told me: “here is where I paid your cost”,
JESUS reach deep within me,
And remove things that didn't reflect the Trinity,
He place a familiar spark called my destiny,
Deeper and deeper in love I am with JESUS,
I have a strong desire to follow Him, I will & I must,
I am swimming deeper in the sea of His love,
Exploring the intimacy of the One above,
No longer I am deeper in sin,
I am deeper in love with Him,
Deeper, deeper, deeper,
His love overwhelm me; His grace overtakes me,
His mercy embraces me; I am free indeed,
I am in deeper in GOD presence,
I am consumed with joy, love, awe and reverence,
When I was hiding in sin; GOD was the seeker,
Thanks to Him; in His love, I am in deeper.

Rain Dance

by Kenneth Pobo

A few years before she died,
mom said, “Old age is doctors.”

I visit the optometrist,
identify the big E. He teases out

my retina’s secrets. At home,
Stan plots our retirement,

his beard white – like mine.
A chain link fence of heat surrounds

the house. Time to dance,
drops streaking our cheeks,

ground holding us,
as we slip on soggy grass.

Glass of Blood

by Kenneth Pobo

In Escanaba, dad worked in
a paper mill. Mom worked on
working on staying alive. He's dead
and she's just holding on.

For decades. Growing up,
I heard about a twelve-year-old kid
who drank a glass of blood for five bucks
in Van Dyke's slaughterhouse. He didn't
puke either, terms of the bet. Dad
hadn't been born yet, his family
sweating on a Brazilian coffee plantation.
Would I drink blood? I could do it,
but no one dares me. Locals
consider me to be a wild woman –
single, bisexual, singer – they hang out
sheets on a June morning. I hear them
flap while steeples poke holes
in the sky's one silk blouse.

Replanted

by Kyle Hemmings

She carries the wilted boy down to her root cellar.
He's not her boy, but since he was small & flowerless
with no name tag, why not claim him? Street curbs
are no place to lay causalities. Could bone & fall-out hair
be raw material for new soil? She listens to the news,
reads between the lines: *In modular homes, ice caps
are forming. Brother & sister become six degrees
of separated spores.* Her basement is full of all sorts
of vascular plants that out in the world leaned away
from the sun. In the cellar she can grow anything,
develop cures from her moss calyptræ growing along
mortar & brick. Here she has time to teach the boy
her special language of underground love.
With a gardener's hand, she will repair his DNA.
In time, he will split by meiosis. He will offer her haploids
of thanks. He will call her his Mother Earth.

The Magical Phenomenon Known as Snow

by Isabella Valentin

The first time it snows I rush out of the suffocating home and dance in the falling snow. I sing as the soft touches of chill settles on my cheeks. I watch in glee as tiny clumps of frozen particles blankets the ground in a white, clean slate as if erasing the dark memories of fall. Time stops when I laugh, spinning myself dizzy. The world seems to stop, only absorbed in what one single person is doing. Nothing has been more beautiful, more serene than this very moment. Nothing, but pure awe and inspiration can be felt. Worries and problems that have plagued my mind disappear as soon as the coldness seeps into my bones. Yet, all I feel is warmth: in my heart, in my whole body, and in my soul. Like hot syrup slowing dipping down, adrenaline spreads through my muscles. Breathing deeply, I run and skid on the slippery cement, screaming in laughter. I write my name in the blank page of white. To make it more special, I put a heart next to my elegant signature. Taking a mental picture of my creation, I wait as the snow hides my name like it's a secret that needs to be concealed and gone. On that train of thought, I glance around and notice that everything is gone: the dead leaves, the muddy puddles, the gray turned brown gravel, the yellowish curling grass, and slumping flowers. Blinding white greets me. I close my eyes and wish this moment never ends. Something magical happens when it snows. Something I cannot truly explain with words. It must be felt in each of us at different stages of life. And when it happens, come to me with a smile and a glint in your eye, for I will know you feel it too. Together, in the midst of winter, in the snowstorm, we will dance on ice and sing the song of the magical phenomenon.

The New Kid

by Stephen Carl

There is a new kid in our class today. The other kids do not pay much attention to him, but I already know I want to make an effort to spark a friendship.

“Hey kid. What’s your name?” I ask.

He stares at me with his dark brown eyes. I think he is a little shy so I know that I have to try a bit harder.

“You do have a name, right?” I pause for a couple of seconds. “Well, my name is Lilly.”

I sit down by the new face in class and smile to show him I mean no harm. There is an awkward silence but I still wait for a name. I can tell he is uncomfortable by my presence.

“If you do not tell me your name, then I am going to have to give you a name,” I state. I pause a little longer and finally give up. “Okay then, how about I just call you Bobby?” I ask.

I think I hear him laugh a bit and I confirm it with the grin on his face. I cannot help but giggle.

Other kids in my class start to filter into the room. I pretty much hate all of them. To be honest, I only know a few of their names. Most of the time, I imagine all of my classmates as robots. They are boring, mechanical, and think the same way. The boys in the class are typical boys. At recess they play kick ball and tag. The girls are typical girls. They do each other’s hair, gossip, and jump rope. Me, well I usually play alone at recess, but at least I get to explore the entire world.

A girl that I especially hate, Sadie, walks into the class right before the bell rings. Sadie and I have never gotten along. We have been in the same grade ever since kindergarten and I swear if I have to go into the fourth grade with her, I might rip my hair out.

You can tell that she is disgusted at the fact that she has to sit at the same table with Bobby and me. She walks as if she is about to fall off a cliff, very slowly and caution with every step. Once at the table, Sadie does something that is unbelievable. While Mrs. W is not looking, she comes and pushes Bobby off of his chair. My anger boils over the top like a volcano spewing deadly lava. I have no control once Bobby starts to cry. I grab Sadie

by her hair and punch her in the face. Of course it would be at this exact moment when Mrs. W turns around and sees what I did.

“Lilly! Principal’s office now!” she screams. Mrs. W points toward the door, then goes to help Sadie up. She does not even bother to check on Bobby. I do not even try to argue; there is no point in trying to defend myself to my evil teacher.

I get in trouble...again. What is another lunch detention? I am used to eating alone anyways. The principal calls my mom. She probably will not do much once I explain the situation. This sort of thing happens a lot.

After writing lines all day in detention, Bobby approaches me after school lets out.

“Hey Bobby, do ya wanna walk home with me?” I ask.

Bobby nods his head and smiles. It is so nice to have someone in this world that is not against me.

“I usually stop at Casey’s Café for a cookie on the way home. Don’t worry, she knows me and will give us each a free one,” I exclaim.

We stop in and go to the cash register.

“How’s my favorite customer?” Casey proclaims with a smile.

“I’m alright. Not the best day at school.”

Before I get the chance to introduce Bobby, Casey offers me the usual.

“So you want the usual, one chocolate chip cookie?”

“No, make it two!” I exclaim. “I need one for my new friend.”

Bobby pokes his eyes above the counter because he is kind of short.

“Oh okay,” she laughs. “I didn’t see him standing there.”

She hands me the cookies. Bobby and I wave goodbye as we start to eat them. She waves back and we exit the café.

On the way home, Bobby really starts to open up to me and that makes me so thrilled. After he overcomes his shyness, he actually becomes rather goofy. We laugh at jokes, run on the sidewalk, and pretend the streets are lava. The only way to get across is by stepping on the stones made up by the crosswalk. People give us strange looks, but I do not care. From the looks of it, neither does Bobby. Once we get close to my house, Bobby and I part ways for the day.

“Okay Bobby, I will meet you at your house at eight o’clock tomorrow morning and we will walk to school together.” Bobby nods his head in agreement and waves goodbye.

Once inside my house, I put one of the cookies on the counter top and finish mine. Mom yells and gives me the speech about controlling my temper and behaving appropriately around the other kids in my school. I have heard this speech a million times.

“Lilly, you cannot just hit people when they make you angry! You have to learn to act like a young lady!” Mom declares in a disappointed tone.

“But Mom, Sadie pushed my friend out of his chair and I was just trying to stick up for him. Plus she deserved it because she’s a brat,” I say defending myself.

Mom sighs and walks over to stir the pasta that is cooking over the stove.

“You have to stop this. Sooner or later they will suspend you if you keep this sort of behavior up. I have gotten more calls from your principal this month than I have from any other man in the past five years,” she says with a more mellow voice.

A tear runs down my cheek. Mom hates it when I cry so she lightens up even more. She opens up a cabinet and pulls out **reality**.

“Go take your medicine so you can do your homework,” Mom commands.

I sigh and grab the pills with attitude; I hate taking them. Next, I exit the kitchen, run upstairs to the bathroom, and wipe the tears from my face. I hold the two white pills over the toilet and drop them in one at a time. Even though I am alone, I take a deep breath and lower my voice so no one can hear me.

“Have a good night Bobby. I’ll see ya tomorrow,” I whisper as I tug the flush lever and watch the two realities whirl down the drain.

Aboard the Morning Train

by Daniel Von der Embse

Advertising men in sleek suits
Climb aboard their morning train
The day's first smoke billowing
High over swell groomed heads
Cigarettes and the news held
Hand over hand jostling along
With rolling motion that lulls
In sweetly whispered tones
The pitch of self-seduction
Coaxed out as the day's first lines
Jotted down on club car napkins
Tucked away for later, after lunch,
When the martinis have had their say



Peaceful Tranquility ~ *by Laura Ott*

Lazing

by John Grey

I lie back at full stretch
beside the pond,
pencil in one hand,
paper in the other,
in the cause of a poem
that cannot possible get written.

For my cap is tilted over my eyes
and May flowers peek through my lashes.
The noon sun is both draining and soothing.
And wind through sleepy trees distances itself
from every known metaphor.

Everything is Spring pregnant.
What doesn't bear fruit, dines on it.
Water laps inches from my feet,
nudges leaves against the bank
for my consideration.

A pond is nature's sparkling decanter.
A drink meant for time is poured on me.

The Blankness of the Page

by Stacy Fowler

I sit here staring
at the blankness
of the page
wondering
if I could ever do it.
would inspiration
ever come?

It actually had come
many times
in a flash of a title
or a snippet of a line
but nothing more
no words
no sentences
no pages
had ever come.
was that because
I had nothing
meaningful to say
or because I had
no idea
how to say it?

I believed that I had
something to say
but knowing what words
to set down
on that blank page
ah, there was the rub
how to put my thoughts
together
in such a way
that they would form
meaningful thoughts
to someone
besides myself.
what it came down to
was this – if
I did finally write
how would I know
whether anyone
would read it?
but finally, I knew
that it mattered not
if anyone read it –
just that I wrote it.

East of Steinbeck

by East Hemming

He would unscrew his head if he could,
empty himself of all undigested bits
to feed his dog. The left over pizza crusts,
the untouched Spam, tiny islets of cold cuts
with bluish spots. Pieces of his own liver that
the birds haven't touched. The dog is a black
Labrador with eyes reminding the old man
of the warmth of a woman when sharing
things did not lead to depletion. When some
rooms were not impossible to heat. The dog
that is a she has a limp & whines from long distances.
From East 53rd to Noho, for example. That night was
a dry run. Now, evening is settling like a memory
refusing to let go. Man is carrying she-dog to the
outskirts of city mist. She licks the insides of his
wrists in content. They cuddle behind a restaurant
dumpster. They feel not-themselves as if their bones
are expanding beyond flesh, or blood is coagulating
behind their eye lids. Still, she will bring him a semblance
of warmth. By morning, somewhere in this late autumn,
a swirl of leaves wishing to have names,
another body will grope for a feel, another will wake up dead.

Protest IV

by Gary Beck

Angry uprisings
of the disaffected
rarely produce results
besides brief disruptions
in a ponderous nation
that easily absorbs
temporary glitches,
since most Americans
are thoroughly conditioned
against rebellion
to their nurturing system
providing many comforts,
democratic mythology
deluding the majority
that our elected officials
have benevolent intentions.

Passenger

by Charity Anderson

This passenger of mine
Swam amid the swirling, internal sea,
Inside the anti-gravity device
Just beside this half of me.

I remember all you will forget:
Life beating breath like seraphim song,
Patient rosebud lips
Praying with you all night long.

Hold me for an eternity
There's joyful tears in my eyes,
Passenger, you know I bled
Just to hear your cries.

Out of the darkness of oblivion
That pocket against my spine,
You travel now on your own
But you will always be mine.

Lessons My TV Taught Me

by Peter Faziani

If television and film have taught us
anything it's that when time travel is finally invented
it will not be used for laudable gains
like saving the life of a president
or folk hero
or preventing a national disaster.

Instead it will be used to make bets
or settle old scores
or draw blood
or worse avoiding the embarrassment of getting caught in women's
underwear.

Be Attentive

by Timothy Beehler

Take a listen to the people speaking outside.

Not just to put their words on facebook and get a “like,”

but to understand and empathize with those not like

the people with whom you typically fraternize.

Take a look at their lives as they move on all sides.

Not just to critique or criticize their styles,

but to see the things you’ve never realized

were always hidden from your cataracted eyes.

Take a breathe from the wind and the skies.

Not just to fill your lungs and survive,

but to savor the taste of a resplendent insight

that could finally destroy your complacency toward lies.

Take a moment to simply abide.

... ..

Not hell-bent on motion in pursuit of desire,

but a time to just be and absorb the surprise

and mystery of joy long-avoided, the reward of the wise.

Little Books on Big Shelves

by Peter Faziani

I wonder how many words live
in my house? Tomb of
the voiceless. Lip service
without pretty lipstick.
Repeats stricken - redacted
from the record

Spines go uncreased and silverfish
left to gorge on a buffet
of pulpy paper and inky
blots. Comrades to be found
among the literary silence.

Its probably textbook, textually
technically speaking, and I
know that I've got the answer
sitting on a shelf here somewhere

Our Generation

by Alyssa Justice

We're the generation of change,
The naked minds
We smell of our wild freedom
Leaving each others lives, hoping not to continue on social media but
for our lives to collide again.
Some of us crave others like waves crave the shore
While some try to follow in the footsteps of the generations before us.

It's difficult,
Nearly impossible but it's our life, it's chaos.
We will fight for the second chances, we will stay up past bar close to see
the glimmering stars, and make reckless decisions.
But, we're raw

We become insomniacs afraid to miss a moment of time,
Afraid of not taking enough chances, not dreaming quite big enough.
It's not about making money it's about following our dreams, our pas-
sions.
To truly experience the little moments, the small opportunities, and to
fall in love hard.

We cultivate from a variety of ideas,
Striving to be the best of whatever it is we want to be.
And hiding in our own little world
We become the hidden gems

Generation Y feeds off of parents, and technology
We survive off of change,
But we're magic,
Combining an electric lifestyle with those of our ancestors.

It Has Always Been Time

by Davide Trame

I am in this big, empty house,
I am leaving, it's time,
it has always been time,
it's as if I'd always been waiting
for the first furze or ragwort
to appear now in the field,
fists of yellow, clap of spring.
The floor is empty,
empty and clean, smooth and shiny
terracotta brown-red, where
even the ghosts I dare say
have been efficiently swept away,
it's easy, all you require is energy
and a good vacuum cleaner
and the will of stopping all lingering.
Sunbeams cross the floor, it's a glorious
late winter day outside, the glass door
glints with diamond and gold
and by the doorstep the wind chimes
fill the silence with their tinkling.
Sentences pass in this aloneness
like foam from the waves of the past:
"The nymphs are departed..."
Departures are so definitive,
when you really leave, you leave
once and once for all, no next-time-round,
like now my hands
on the handles of shutters and doors
banging them closed, with locks and bolts,
switching electricity and heater off,
greeting mutely
the rose nakedness of the walls
and giving a last look at the garden,
the stubs of grass waiting for the silent
opening of the season,
in the spreading reason
of sky and earth.

Savory Fronds

by Richard King Perkins II

We find ourselves beneath a dusty lilac moonrise,
my hands pressing hair along the curve of your head.
Semiotic light makes possible this dew,
the geranium's blush, a rose's cameo unmasking,
pollen and incense, cranberry and spiced plum.
Supernatural philosophies expound in all that I hold,
a fertile pod within which your sword-bearing angel reclines,
inhibiting your mélange of passion, the copperized allure
of intimacy ghosting along the edges of savory fronds.



Untouched - *by Adam Haley*

When I Heard About the Rain

by Allison J. Estrads-Carpenter

I was hoping
they would keep the lights off.

The persistent static of water,
low growl of thunder,
the way the clouds
hug the moon protectively

belong
under the calming blanket
of natural
dim light.

Instead, they threw the blankets off
forcing the cold water
of artificial light
on everyone.

The glare in my eye
distracts from the
temper of the thunder
to where I can't tell if
he's really upset
or merely mumbling.

I'm not sure if the cloud is still clinging
to the moon
or if she's finally been let free
to roam the sky.

The flow of the water
becomes less consistent and more choppy
like a thought coming and going from my mind
till I know I turned a beautiful thing ugly.

And now that I can see more clearly,
all that really registers in my body
is that without a blanket,
I'm cold.

Day in the Humid Forest

by Richard King Perkins II

Silken lilies
in lime green and black move
like a samba in Belo Horizonte.

The undersong of a reedhaunter
lives between the clouds.

Creamy, circadian
petals capture a distant cadence.

The claws of a melanistic
jaguar swipe at the sun
like a momentary plaything.

Lost

by Corey Mesler

“Lost, like the light flickering of a cottage’s fire.”

~ Sir Walter Scott

I found myself on a dark road surrounded by unfamiliar wilderness. Trees to the right and left, shadowy, spectral beings. How I came to be here I could not remember. I walked.

Ahead, off to the right, across what I imagined was an unplanted field, I could see faint phosphorescence, like a child’s toy that sits on the dresser and offers a yellow glim. From where I stood it appeared to be a farmhouse.

I moved toward it. The air was cool. Between me and some torn clouds black shapes swam, bats or night birds. The moon was almost hidden.

As I moved closer to the glow I could make out windows and shapes behind those windows. Man, woman. The house was as still as a headstone but the people inside moved about in a mad dance, their shadows now close to the window, now moving away.

I stood at the end of a dirt driveway and tried to think of what to do. There were some areas where strangers were not welcome. Especially at night, so late. I believed it to be past midnight but I did not know for sure.

I crept closer to the front door. I was moving in slow motion, in silence. The ground felt like water. As I neared the house the music from within was dream-like, a high, thin tune, faint as tinnitus, yet there was a beat to it, a syncopated heartbeat. I strained to hear it more clearly.

I knocked tentatively at the door. It was made of heavy wood and was carved with figures from myths, in the dark an indistinct bas-relief. The sound of my knocking was swallowed by the weight of the door. I was unsure what to do next, to chance another sound or to creep away silently. The door opened.

An old man dressed in the commonplace robe of a religious sect stood in the doorway. He was backlit by a single candle on a rough wooden table behind him. That, coupled with the faint yellow blush of the moon, gave me his face. It was as old as creation but the skin was smooth and the

white whiskers silky. His eyes were opaque, smoke-colored like those of the blind.

“Come in,” he said. His light rasp was warm and caressive.

I stepped past him into a small room that was apparently living room, bedroom, and dining room. The table, on which the candle sat, also held a loaf of bread, some cheese, a bottle of something and a large knife. It was the room of a shanty. I shook my head to clear away the optical illusion—from the outside the house appeared more considerable—and, as I did, the old man touched my elbow and bade me sit at the table.

“You must be hungry,” he said.

“Yes,” I answered.

He sat across from me and with the knife carved out a piece of bread and a piece of cheese, and put them on a small plate. He handed the plate to me and poured me a glass of whatever was in the bottle, a viscous brown liquid that smelled of dates.

“Thank you,” I said. “I can’t tell you how I came to be here.”

He smiled.

“Your face is unfamiliar to me,” he said.

“Then you are not blind.”

The bread was crusty and the cheese dense. Its thick odor was pleasing and its texture was a comfort in my mouth. I did not know I was so hungry. He fixed me a second plate.

“I’m sorry to have disturbed you,” I said between bites and swallows of the drink.

He said nothing but picked up the bottle again.

“No. Thank you,” I said. “I am grateful but I should be on my way.”

“What way is that, my friend?” he asked, and his smile was like moonlight through the white branches of his beard.

I laughed. He laughed also.

“I’ll make a bed for you,” he said. And he hurried away to find extra blankets and a pillow. He made me a pallet near the fireplace on the opposite side of the dark room from his own bed. As soon as the crib was made I realized how tired I was. The wine perhaps.

I removed my jacket and shoes and lay down and pulled the plain,

dark brown blanket around me. He had already disappeared into the obscurity of the far corner. I was asleep before the candle was extinguished.

I was dreaming about something inchoate and shapeless and I woke and it was still dark. The room was cold because the fire had gone out. An unnatural stillness surrounded me.

I sat up and tried to comprehend something familiar in the room. My eyes could pick out vague geometric shapes. I heard a faint scratching at the door, what sounded like a cat or perhaps a possum. Perhaps this was what woke me. I put my shoes on and went toward the door, slowly, shuffling and reaching my hands out in the darkness. I was trying not to wake the old monk.

I found the door and unbolted it. There was nothing there but the moonlight was as bright as mercy and I could see the yard in front of me and beyond that the road from whence I had come. I turned to see if I had awakened the old monk. The moonlight brought the room into full illumination. The bread and cheese were still on the table. The fireplace was smoking indifferently. And there was no one in the room.

To make sure I left the door open, found the matches and candle next to his bed and I lit the waxy stub. I turned this way and that. I was alone. Perhaps he had awakened earlier, perhaps he had heard the scratching, I reasoned.

I put on my jacket and went outside. There was nothing to do but move on. I closed the door and walked away from the house.

Clouds moved casually across the moon and there was light and then dim, light and then dim. I found the road and my feet moved instinctively to the right. I glanced back at the house. Apparently I had left the candle burning for now the windows were lit once more. And the house seemed substantial again, larger and sturdier. Perhaps it was only a trick of the light.

My ears picked up the strange reedy music again and I listened for a moment, trying to catch the tune and memorize it. At the window the two dancing figures returned and, framed by the darkness around them, they seemed to be dervishes and their movements were as natural and as powerful as the foamy duel of ocean surges.

Back to dust

by Daniel Von Der Embse

Days of rain
bring out tender grass
bathing all in green cast
birds in their victory dance
drunken by wormy pickups

Good soaking splendor awakens
long buried plasm from muck
carried on paws and in the right angle
of my boot heel, then caked solid
until dry settles in

Days of sun
warming our backsides
grateful to be hung out
slowly taking us from mud
back to dust

My Hometown

by Adam Haley

I stand atop the exhausted factory, overlooking my rusty city.
Coldly, she stares back and into my every thought.
I can feel the barren emptiness; I can hardly bear the groaning cry for rebirth.
Is that my city or my heart?
What once made us feel unstoppable and dream the impossible
is now dwindling in defeat.
Remembering as a child: the dusty overalls counting down their day
to the rhythm of heavy machinery click-clanking away,
the tweed-clad busy-bodies chatting booming business.
But now, silence. The wind whistles. Plastic bags swim like confetti.
Buildings that once shined high like silver trophies
reach desperately from concrete graves.
“Do not weep for me” she said, “for I weep for all of you.”
Neighborhoods, boroughs, and nooks, all boarded and barred.
The sold-out, the bought-out, and the driven out,
the lifeless traffic lights with no instructions to give.
A victim of human error, still she is willing to forgive.
Then I realize, tomorrow marks the birth of my hometown,
but who will be here to celebrate?

Pop Lyric

by Richard King Perkins II

I can't see the moon, its glow, the shadows unexposed,
but I can see you in the streets and through your shield of clothes.
That ring you wear around your neck is just an empty pose
the one meant for your finger's missing, no one really knows.

Feelings gone to galaxies, more distant by degrees,
but I can find your love, my love, lost in blackest seas.
I can see the stars, their gleam, their ever present pleas
I'll wrap a ring around your soul and pull you back to me.

Heartache in the Words of Alan Jackson

by Stacy Fowler

Remember when it was
midnight in Montgomery, and we'd been
chasin' that neon rainbow, thinking it must be
five o'clock somewhere? But
here in the real world, we should be
livin' on love that's
right on the money.
Look at me – this
country boy
wanted to have a
little bitty
good time. But
where were you? Now you're making me want to
pop a top again, wishing I were on a
freight train
home, where I could just
drive through the
tall, tall trees and
remember when.

The Beauty of Life As We Know It

by Denzell Anderson

Life on earth is pulchritude that separates our planet from the others in our spherical galaxy.

When snow converts to water and evaporate, how beautiful does the grass grow?

Alternative seasons that leave us here residents no choice but to miss the previous.

Babies are born by the second for one of our admirations is to have plenty of our own.

To live comfortably, as a 3rd of our life is hard labor and name making. A fraction of that is survival and maintaining and soon after, there is hope for retirement and relaxation.

That comfortable life we grab for, enabling us to enjoy the season's alternations and watch our grandchildren make better mistakes than we did.



Golden Sun Bath - *by Aaron Iffland*

Author Bio's

Presently a 17-year-old photographer taking PSO classes at Lourdes University, **Aaron Iffland** enjoys capturing God's unique creation in a simplistic style that expresses beauty with innate design and symmetry in nature. After starting his own business [Blue Stone Photography – facebook.com/photography.bluestone] at the beginning of 2014, Aaron has continuously expanded his knowledge in both portrait and landscape photography. While at Lourdes University, Aaron has excelled in his Digital Photography I class, and was even awarded the "For the Love of Art" award at the 2015 Lourdes University Student Art Show.

"My passion for photography continues to grow every time I use my camera. I love facing new challenges and learning new tips and tricks that help me expand my expertise in all the different types of photography." Adam Haley is an undergraduate, majoring in English, and will be graduating in the spring of 2015. With a great love and obsession for language, Adam plans to continue his studies in creative writing, narratology, and etymology.

Allison Estrada-Carpenter recently finished working on her graduate degree in literature from Texas State University. She hopes to later enroll in a PhD program. She enjoys writing poetry, but suffers greatly from writer's block, a phenomenon she is sure no one else has ever experienced. She is inspired by Langston Hughes, her family, popular culture, her pets, and good food.

Alyssa Justice is a student of photography and journalism, passionate about the creative process she uses in her everyday life. She is a photographer, writer, a dreamer and a traveler, allowing her life to be one large exploration of the people in her surroundings.

Brittany Coomes is an English instructor at Marion Technical College. She is working on a Master of Arts in Rhetoric and Writing from The University of Findlay.

Corey Mesler has published in numerous anthologies and journals including *Poetry*, *Gargoyle*, *Good Poems American Places*, and *Esquire! Narrative*. He has published 8 novels, 4 short story collections, numerous chapbooks, and 4 full-length poetry collections. His new novel, *Memphis Movie*, is from Soft Skull Press. He's been nominated for many Pushcarts, and 2 of his poems were chosen for Garrison Keillor's Writer's Almanac. With his wife, he runs a bookstore in Memphis. He can be found at <https://coreymesler.wordpress.com>.

Daniel Borer is a sixty two year old, non-traditional student pursuing a degree in Theological Studies. Serious amateur photographer. “Winter Chores” is a photograph of my youngest daughter, JoAnn, pulling a sled full of firewood for our wood burner.

Don Noel is retired from four decades’ prizewinning print and broadcast journalism in Hartford, CT. His *The Negro in Hartford* in *The Hartford Times* was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize in 1963, and he was an Alicia Patterson Fellow, reporting from Cambodia and Romania in 1966-67. He is author of *Near A Far Sea – a Jamaican Odyssey* (2006, AuthorHouse). He received an MFA in Creative Writing from Fairfield University in 2013; *The Tau* joins the first five to publish his fiction. www.DonONoel.com.

Elizabeth Coley is an art major at Lourdes University, and she loves to write poems, draw, and paint. Currently, she is learning glass blowing at the Toledo Art Museum and is grateful to have two of her poems published in *The Tau*.

Gary Beck has spent most of his adult life as a theater director, and has 11 published chapbooks. His poetry collections include: *Days of Destruction* (Skive Press), *Expectations* (Rogue Scholars Press), *Dawn in Cities, Assault on Nature, Songs of a Clerk*, and *Civilized Ways* (Winter Goose Publishing). *Perceptions and Displays* will be published by Winter Goose Publishing. His novels include: *Extreme Change* (Cogwheel Press) *Acts of Defiance* (Artema Press). *Flawed Connections* was accepted for publication (Black Rose Writing). He also has a short story collection, *A Glimpse of Youth* (Sweatshoppe Publications). He currently lives in New York City.

Joe Giordano was born in Brooklyn. He and his wife, Jane, have lived in Greece, Brazil, Belgium and Netherlands. They now live in Texas with their little shih tzu, Sophia. Joe’s stories have appeared in more than sixty magazines, including *Bartleby Snopes*, *Newfound Journal*, and *The Summerset Review*. His novel, *Birds of Passage*, an Italian immigrant, coming of age, story will be published in September by *Harvard Square Editions*.

Isabella Valentin is an English and Theology major. She’s not sure what she wants to do, but she loves reading a good book, thinking of the “what if” questions, and writing tragedies. She’s praying that she’ll survive these next two years without losing her mind. Wish her good luck!

Jordyn Steele is a senior, completing her B.S. in AYA Language Arts Education and B.A. in English. She was inspired to write “A Room of One’s Own” by her English professor, Dr. Shawna Rushford-Spence. The poem reflects the occasional necessity of solitude as an escape from the pressures of

life. The title also hearkens to Virginia Woolf's essay on the plight of women writers and the necessity to have a room of one's own in order to have the freedom to write.

Juliette Dorotte teaches American literature and translation at the Sorbonne in Paris, where she has recently defended her dissertation on the birth of the novel in the United States (1789-1819). She has been writing poems in French and in English for more than ten years and is grateful for this first publication in *The Tau*.

Kenneth Pobo has a new book of poetry forthcoming from Blue Light Press called *Bend of Quiet* and a new book of poetry forthcoming from Urban Farmhouse Press called *Booking Rooms in the Kuiper Belt*. He teaches creative writing and English at Widener University in Pennsylvania. Catch is Internet music show, *Obscure Oldies*, on Saturdays from 6 - 8:30 p.m. EST at www.widecastradio.com.

Kyle Hemmings lives and works in New Jersey. He has been published in *Your Impossible Voice*, *Night Train*, *Toad*, *Matchbox* and elsewhere. His latest ebook is **Father Dunne's School for Wayward Boys** at amazon.com. He blogs at <http://upatberggasse19.blogspot.com/>

As a child, **Laura Butler** knew words could have an impact on motivation, love, life and happiness. She is a social work major who knows the power of words and actions. She choose to make every day count and express this through poetry. Perhaps one day upon reflection, her words become words of wisdom and inspire others to lead the way. There is nothing more beautiful profound than the words of hope, love and wisdom.

Laura Ott is the Director of Advising, Assessment and Recruitment for the College of Business and Leadership. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration and Human Resource Management and a Master of Organizational Leadership from Lourdes University. She is currently pursuing a major in Art. She is grateful for the challenge and opportunity to learn and experience the various art mediums.

Mark Jackley's latest book is *Appalachian Night*, available for free from the author at chineseplums@gmail.com. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Natural Bridge*, *Fifth Wednesday*, *Sugar House Review*, *Talking River*, *Pouch Magazine*, and other journals.

Richard King Perkins II is a state-sponsored advocate for residents in long-term care facilities. He lives in Crystal Lake, IL with his wife, Vickie and daughter, Sage. He is a three-time Pushcart nominee and a Best of the Net

nominee whose work has appeared in hundreds of publications including *The Louisiana Review*, *Bluestem*, *Emrys Journal*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *The Red Cedar Review* and *The William and Mary Review*. He has poems forthcoming in *Sugar House Review*, *Crannog*, *Old Red Kimono* and *Milkfist*. He was a recent finalist in *The Rash Awards*, *Sharkpack Alchemy*, *Writer's Digest* and *Bacopa Literary Review* poetry contests.

Samantha Good will be starting her junior year at Lourdes University. She is studying to be a social worker and hopes to work with depressed teens. Good is a former student of Sylvania's Northview high school where she was a staff writer for the newspaper, the *Student Prints*. Good enjoys playing softball, reading and being with friends in her free time. She currently has an internship in Institutional Advancement at Lourdes University as well. Samantha is an active Orientation Leader at Lourdes as well.

Sandy Feinstein's poetry has appeared in the journals *XCP*, *Columbia Poetry Journal*, *Fracture*, among others; it has also appeared in anthologies, including *A Fine Frenzy: Poets Respond to Shakespeare*, and, most recently, *Teaching as a Human Experience*. She coordinates the Penn State Berks Honors Program and teaches English.

Stacy Fowler is an Associate Professor and Technical Services Librarian at St. Mary's University Law Library in San Antonio. She has a Bachelor of Arts in English, and Master's degrees in both Library Science and International Relations. Her poetry has previously been published in the *Pecan Grove Review*.

Stephen Carl is a sophomore, English major at Lourdes. He is currently in choir, track, and is the leader of the Faithful Fusion, a cappella group at Lourdes. This is his first published piece in *The Tau*.

Tim Beehler is a Connections Pastor at Orchard Grove Community Church in Walled Lake, MI. He earned his MA in Theology from Lourdes University and his BA in History from Siena Heights University. Tim's greatest goal is to 'live a life worthy of the calling' and to be light and love to this world in whatever small way his story is able.

William Doreski lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire, and teaches at Keene State College. His most recent book of poetry is *The Suburbs of Atlantis* (2013). He has published three critical studies, including *Robert Lowell's Shifting Colors*. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in many journals.



**Call for Submissions
for
2015-2016 Tau**

Deadline: December 31, 2015

Please email submissions to Tau@lourdes.edu

You may submit up to five, double-spaced entries. Each one should be in a separate, Word-compatible file. Accepted formats are Word (.docx), Word 1997-2003 (.doc), and Rich Text Format (.rtf).

Please do not include your name in the document or the filename of the document. Use the title of your work as the name of the file.



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