**TBR Masthead Changes (for the Better)**

Two long-time Editors here at *The Broadkill Review* have recently agreed to accept new titles and responsibilities for what they were already doing anyway, but without the nice new titles they have been tagged with. These new titles come with a one hundred per cent raise in their salaries, which is to say we are still paying them nothing for their invaluable volunteer work here, but at least the titles are a public acknowledgement of their meritorious service to the publication over the last half-decade.

Scott Whitaker, a Member of the National Book Critics Circle, has agreed to become our official Literary Review Editor. All hard-copy publications sent to TBR for review should be sent directly to Scott Whitaker, Literary Review Editor, 25624 East Main Street, Onley, Va., 23418. All e-copy should be sent directly to his e-mail address at: esteph20@hotmail.com

Scott has long-been one of TBR’s under-credited workhorses; nearly each issue over the last five years or so has featured one or more reviews of contemporary small press publications of poetry or fiction, and occasionally a mass-market work or young adult novel. Scott was the winner of The Dogfish Head Poetry Prize in 2006 for *Field Recordings* (Bay Oak Publishers, Dover, De.), and his own work in fiction and poetry will continue to grace our pages as well.

Linda Blaskey, long-time talent-scout and Interview Editor, has agreed to take on the added responsibility of becoming our official Poetry Editor as well. Poetry submissions should be sent electronically to her attention at: linblask@aol.com and that you write “poetry submission” in the subject line.

Linda, like Scott, was the winner of The Dogfish Head Poetry Prize in 2008 for *Farm* (Bay Oak Publishers, Dover, De.), and her poetry and fiction likewise will continue to grace our pages, to say nothing of the literary interviews which she has conducted with such literati as poets Robert Pinsky, Maxine Kumin, and Linda Pastan, editor Emily Takoudes, and author and MFA Program Director Joshua D. Isard.

You will note, also, that, reflecting the true nature of our Editorial Advisory Board Members’ roles, that they have each been tagged as “Contributing Editors,” because in addition to combing the planet for talented writers to include in our pages, each of them has also become a staple for our readers. Many of them are members of prestigious professional societies, and where known to me, will be so listed. Author and photographer Edward M. Lukacs, for instance, is a member of the Royal Photographic Society, which “juries” prospective members, and is, as a result, a pretty exclusive club, Scott Whitaker is a member of the National Book Critics Circle, likewise a “juried” membership organization of professional literary book reviewers.

Who doesn’t know Grace Cavalieri, Host of Public Radio’s “The Poet and the Poem”? H. A. Maxson is Co-Founder of Bay Oak Publishers, John Elsberg is long-time publisher and editor of *Bogg* Magazine, Fleda Brown is the former Poet Laureate of Delaware, Anne Colwell is an authority on Elizabeth Bishop, and nearly all of them are, or at one point have been, teachers, educators, and/or trainers. TBR is extraordinarily proud of the fact that they have chosen to offer their talents and unflagging support to this unusual venture.

The *Broadkill Review* is a member of the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses (CLMP), the Delaware Press Association (DPA), and the Independent Mid-Atlantic Publishers (IMAP), and is listed in *Field* *Recordings* (Bay Oak Publishers, Dover, De.), and his own work in fiction and poetry will continue to grace our pages as well.

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Thank you for nominating it for a Pushcart Prize.

— Jan Bowman

I like reading your review, thank you for having me in your mailing list.

— Manolis Aligizakis

I received the latest issue of The Broadkill Review this time—it came to my spam box.

— Kelley J. White

(Editor’s note: A number of subscribers and contributors have been contacting us to ask why they hadn’t received the most recent issue—Kelley J. White, a regular contributor to these pages, among them. Because technology is always adapting, your e-mail provider may be installing new protocols which may be diverting the yousendit.com link to your spam folder. Please check that your filters allow for yousendit.com notifications! Thanks. — JB)

Letters and Notes from Our Readers

Credo: Rant Rant Rant (for Woody Strode) by Rick Peabody

I believe we need a pill that administered in grade school kills anybody who harbors political aspirations. Wipe out those bathroom line monitors and safety patrols early before they can inflict any more damage.

I believe somebody should plunge an American flag pole through Ann Coulter’s festering heart so we can all watch her vampire death twitch complete with blood and gore and crumble into dust finale.

I believe Michael Jackson has done more to harm America’s youth than any amount of drugs.

I believe Britney Spears is a femme bot.

I believe that Sergio Leone is more important than Julia Roberts and her wedding dress movies. The fact that one day people will look back on our times and think of her in the same breath as Katharine Hepburn, Glenda Jackson, and Jane Fonda is beyond my ability to comprehend.

I believe that Ennio Morricone rocks.

I believe the fact that Eminem has won more Grammys than Jimi Hendrix ever did proves how worthless awards really are.

I believe that Ethan Hawke has a book contract only because publishing executives wanted to meet Uma Thurman.

I believe that there is a special place in hell for people who like Beavis and Butthead, Paulie Shore, Adam Sandler or G. Gordon Liddy.

I believe that Tom Clancy is a creepy raving right wing lunatic asshole. How can anybody buy books by a man who just uses.

I believe Skip Spence, Nick Drake, Arthur Lee, Scott Walker, Syd Barrett, and Richard Thompson were/are all geniuses.

I believe no amount of oil is worth World War III.

I believe Bill Cosby knows more about children than William J. Bennett.

I believe that the war against drugs is one of the most colossal red herrings in American history. Shell game stuff. Distract and conquer and get rich in the process.

I believe Dick Cheney is a congenital liar.

I believe the big car makers should remake classic old cars the public craves like the ‘57 Chevy rather than retool and make losers like the Cavalier and Taurus.

I believe GRANTA magazine is full of shit for their “We don’t like literature” motto. This is so hilarious coming from what amounts to a house organ that shills for corporate publishers Viking-Penguin.

I believe the very names Dick Armey and Richard Lugar says it all about what’s wrong with America.

I believe most slam poets are wannabe actors and not really poets at all.

I believe we should legalize drugs and ban firearms.

I believe Forrest J. Ackerman is more important than Ronald Reagan.

I believe gang members look silly singing and dancing whether it’s in a film like West Side Story or in a gangsta rap video. I’m so tough, watch me dance, woo.

I believe the two-party system is damaged beyond repair.

I believe it would be great if somebody set up a howitzer in the woods opposite Route 66 from the NRA building and lopped a few rounds through their plate glass windows.

I believe anybody who harms a child is not human.

I believe I will die having never watched a single episode of Oprah.

I believe it should be legal for me to kill any driver that rides my bumper and then cuts me off when I’m doing the speed limit in the slow lane with two car seats in the back.

I believe almost all popular music, movies, TV, and books suck.

If it’s doing well at the box office or on the charts I’m 95% certain it has nothing to say to me or to you or to anybody else.

I believe one day we the people of this great country will get rid of the demons and CEOs who currently operate it.

I believe Leonard Cohen should be nominated for president of the world.

{Editor’s note: “Rant, rant, rant” was originally published in Mr. Peabody’s e-chapbook Rain Flowers (ahadada press, 2002).}
Of Gentle Wolves
An Anthology of Romanian Poetry
Reviewed by TBR Editor Michael Blaine,
with an assist from Tangee Taylor, Bridget Townley,
Sam Austin, Corey Cutsail, Amanda McGarvey,
Liz Waite, Allysia Miller, Crystal Staples, Theo Whaley,
Paul Elliot, Jermaine Harris, Tyler Robertson,
Keyontae Brown, Colby Daye, and Ashley Marvel


When this anthology of Romanian translations first intersected my path a few months ago, I quickly placed it on a pile of “to do work” and witnessed its slow burial beneath student essays, homework, tests, and miscellaneous school work. It resurfaced from the depths just as my AP Literature students were embarking on the critical reading and analysis of poetry unit in our class. I will attest my initial excitement and fear while informing my students that I would be using them as readers for a review of English translations of Romanian Poetry. I was curious how they would interact with the poems.

They seemed genuinely interested as I randomly assigned poems to them and told them they had three days to produce a short review. The next day, a revolution did not occur, but rather a montage of questions they ceaselessly assaulted me with for an entire class period. We Googled (or rather Binged – I still am angry with seeing advertisements of places I happened to look at one time) Romanian terms and names. Ideas and comments bounced from one end of the room to the next. In one poem, we followed a girl named Romania and how a pimple becomes a little man named Ilici (That’s Romania’s first president – We looked that up, too) and why when she goes to the doctor to get it removed, he tells Ilici there is something growing out of his ass. We discussed how help does not always go to the one truly in need. They struggled with that concept. One student asked how beer drinkers are the true capitalists (no, I am not promoting drinking, but the poem hit on some interesting insights).

The exercise became an interesting cultural experience for my students. They learned so much while stepping out of their American skin, if just for a moment. For me, the experience was incredible. The very process of working through this collection of translated poems with young minds was enlightening. How often do readers gloss over poems while only adding, that’s nice or cute, to a few poems? If anything, working with my students on these poems forced me to discuss, read, explain, reread, argue, read again, until by default – a lasting perspective was achieved. I did not peek at the poems as I so often do, but feasted in nibbles until full. I was forced to acknowledge and by the very act discover the depth of insight these poems provide. They are interesting and worthy of discovering.

My students mostly summarized these poems (a few are following with the student’s name in parenthesis). They, like me, will need much more time to pen the insight and experience these poem bring to the reader.

Of Gentle Wolves presents each poem first in the original Romanian version and then the translation. The reader is able to look at both, and I found this a refreshing feature often neglected with translation anthologies. The selection of the poets and poems keeps to a modern mainstream but maintains a broad spectrum of topics from political frustration to internal conflict.

(continued, next page)
“Long Letters,” by Robert Serban illustrates the speaker’s feelings towards his home country of Romania that begs for help upon his return from success outside of the country “as only poor girls know to write taught by their parents.” In the end, the speaker refuses to respond to his country’s letters (Tangee Taylor).

The poem “In Fact” by Ioan Moldovan expresses the speaker’s view on death. The poem states that instead of “doves and angels arriving at the window” when we die, in fact, only dirty pigeons come and nurses who tell us how much “light” we have left. (Bridget Townley). Sam Austin commented how the poem comes to grips with the personal clashes we often experience with religion and science.

“Dadaism versus Surrealism” by Angela Marinescu details a sexually frustrated woman seeking a meaningful romantic encounter. The speaker compares sex to Dadaism, and her lover’s fingers as a surrealist attempt at love. At the end of the day, the speaker is lonely and finds no comfort (Corey Cutsail).

The poem “Hermaia” by Chris Tanasecu uses the metaphor of being buried alive with only a book to show the frustration and conflict in Romania (Amanda McGarvey). Liz Waite notes that Chris Tanaseuw uses the idea of being buried alive with only one book for all eternity as a symbol for the repression and pain of the Romanians felt as a soviet satellite. “Ars Amandi” by Chris Tansescu shows how the speaker, internally struggling to deal with physical flaws, is enlightened by a tussling of hair that showers him in dandruff (Allysa Miller).

The poem “KAPITAL” by Radu Vancu expresses the idea that in Romania beer drinkers are the only true capitalists. These “true drunkards” become “anti-communists” only through the act of excessive drinking. The irony is that these drunks, looked down on by the intellectuals, are the saving grace for the country (Crystal Staples).

O. Nimigean speaks in “From Abroad” through a traveler who relates a maggot eating trash to Romania’s death. The poem itself decays as it progresses from longer stanzas to a two word line “death-no” (Theo Whaley).

Two students (Paul Elliot and Jermaine Harris) noted in the poem “Cardiac Weekend” by Constantin Acosmei that the “devil” in kids was in a form of passive aggressiveness that began on Monday and not the weekend as adults often believe.

The poem “In the Meadow” by Ioan Moldovan shows kids being kids and getting in trouble. An old man reflects on his past by watching teenagers acting out (Tyler Robertson).

The poem “O. Nimigean” speaks of an older Romanian man as he begins his day before going into town. This second stanza states it “is more a patriot than he seems to be” reveals that though he may not seem like it, he loves his country. He weeps all over the page feeling pity for his golden age; he feels pity for his generation being so privileged and taking things for granted. His voice is firmly rooted in tradition but is emphatically new (Keyontae Brown).

Colby Daye noted how a frustrated artist offers her neck to artists, “surrounded by chickens without personalities,” who are “foreign agents wanting nothing more than to sabotage cultural projects” of the country in the poem “Last Night” by Angela Marinescu.

The speaker of Vancu’s poem “SUMMA ETHILICA” speaks of alcoholism. He claims his “alcoholism reared from the most respectable cultural resources” which made him “think, above all, of Thomas Aquinas”. The speaker’s conversion from Vodka to beer is justified as he would rather be a “good man, not an interesting one” (Ashley Marvel).

I would conclude, though I have no idea how well translated these poems from the original versions, that this collection of poems is worth reading. My students have only brushed the surface what these poems bring to our shores. I thank Martin Woodside for the effort of guiding them here (and apologize for our hacked attempt at reviewing these poems) and to Linda Blaskey for sending them to me.

— Michael Blaine

(Note: The Editor hopes to feature further collaborative reviews by professor Blaine and his classes.)
**Cusp**  
*(for my third period English class)*

He put down twenty at the window.  
The woman behind the window gave nothing.  
The person next to him gave him ten, but he gave it back to her.  
So, when they went inside, she bought him a large bag of popcorn.  

I see a man and a woman who have gone on a date.  
I can figure that they went to the movies.  
I can figure out from the money he gave the lady and the amount that he got back that the tickets are ten per person.  
So they must be going to a matinee.  
The woman with the man doesn't want the man to buy her ticket.  
He won't accept her money because he's being nice.  
She doesn't want him to have to pay for everything so she buys the popcorn when they get inside.  
That's called making an inference.  
And it's not real.

You know.  
We don't know that any of this stuff is right.  
We're just making it up, but you made it up based on something and some that you just know—  
You know.  
Like before you read it you just know.  
Except this guy beats her.  
Uses his fists like empty words, and she takes it.  
She cooks him dinner and lets him back in.  
I don't get it.  
Me neither.  
This doesn't make any sense.  
It doesn't say anything about a movie.  
This is stupid.

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**Mowing**

A child said, *What is the grass? Fetching it to me with full hands; How could I answer the child? . . . I do not know what it is any more than he.*  
—Whitman. *Leaves of Grass* (1855)

The cutting machine that slept in the winter shed Buzzes and growls in the late spring air; its honed blade,  
Turning and turning, finds resistance but continues—  
He mimics action, my little boy, who closely pushes his toy Mower tandem to me, laughing and is himself pleased.  
Our mowers move forward with two palms that push;  
Our mowers move backward with four fingers that pull.  
By this process we trim these beautiful uncut hairs Row by row. The sound of engine grumble surrounds us  
As his moon face waxes from shade to full light.  
He now moves parallel along the rough growth;  
Seeks only the confirmation of his father's glance.  
As the day begins to settle and my work nears end,  
I have easily cut grass, twig, and leaf alike.  
I fear this casual attention I have taught him too well—  
Very soon he will depart this hopeful green stuff I've undone, that wants weight by early rise.
Fossil

What is the significance of the downy fluff and feather on this ancient Bas-relief skeleton? The soft exterior hides a more concrete structure underneath. Evolution lies exposed in the imperfections that record a history. Only translators can speak such truths. The famous British moths turned black when industrial soot darkened the trees upon which they rested.

The Past—
Flipping through old college photos pausing on a few the old parties a younger me always pushed back against a wall awkward in my skin watching girls I understood less than intelligent design. I wonder what the scientists would make of my bones and the soft skin covering me.

Jayus

On a long stretch of road, we once collected them in brown paper bags drove them home in the back seat and released them around our yard.

We would count them counting until finally none could be counted.

My childhood friend would light Black Cats between their wide lips.

He would somersault some slam others against trees count Mississippi’s as few staggered back conscious.

He would call me later after his daughter sidestepped into a car and was thrown forward. She passed there on the roadside.

After late summer showers we drive along glossy roads eyes and jumps in headlights.

We don’t get out anymore; it feels dangerous enough swerving around them.

My daughter once asked why they cross the road.

But when did toads ever get a fair shake except in fairy tales or with little girls?
Thursday, September 6, 1838

Poe and Giles McQuiggin walked briskly east on Baltimore's Water Street. They were heading to the Seven Stars Tavern. It had begun to drizzle. Both men were without hats, but the drizzle was not the only reason the two hurried. Earlier in the day, in Edward J. Coale's bookstore, Giles had run into the Bard. When he told the Bard that Poe was in town a short discussion ensued. During the course of the conversation the Bard asserted that, "I could write more stanzas in one hour than Poe could write in one day."

Giles' real name was John McJilton. His close friends, Poe among them, had preferred to call him by the name, Giles. "Giles McQuiggin" was the name he used to credit his own writing in The Monument, which was published in downtown Baltimore.

Later in the day when Giles had been scheduled to meet Poe, he did not tell him of the Bard's declaration. He simply told Poe of the newest member of their old fellowship at the Seven Stars Tavern. Poe had not visited the Seven Stars since May of 1836 when he and Virginia had wed and they had moved to Philadelphia. Poe had already known that the Bard had come from those still rugged regions of Delaware. That new member of the Seven Stars was known as The Milford Bard. Poe had already known of him from his literary reputation.

The Bard's book of verse, The Harp of Delaware, had been published about ten years earlier and had already caught Poe's attention. His knowledge of The Milford Bard was greater than mere appellation. Poe looked forward to meeting John Lofland, fellow versifier.

The sign hanging over the door that marked the place of their impending meeting was a fountain splay of seven stars against a field of dark blue. The front door beneath the sign, in actuality, was the entrance for The First Odd Fellows Lodge. Behind that hefty yet simple massive door was the Seven Stars Tavern.

The interior of the tavern displayed a subtle elegance of polished walls of dark wood. The bar, tables and chairs were also of finely polished dark wood. A touch of brass and leather prohibited the decor from falling into monotony.

Lofland was not hard for Poe to spot even though, initially, the Bard's back was turned to him. The first thing Poe saw was Lofland's wide brimmed hat with domed felt crown. He had not time to remove it, Poe surmised, before his old friend Timothy Shay Arthur had engaged the Bard in conversation – most probably something urgent and delectable.

Lofland had been slightly taller than Poe. Under his coat Poe thought he detected something of a pear shape terminating near the Bard's waist. He wore well, Poe thought to himself, a grotesque edge. When Lofland turned, sensing Poe's entrance, he knew why he wore the grotesque with such assuredness.

Poe immediately connected with Lofland's eyes as if the two were expecting one another. His eyes, to Poe's first impression, conveyed a somewhat serene fearlessness.

"Edgar!" roared Timothy when he saw Poe. Poe's lengthy absence had created enough anticipation to expect a burst of excitement upon his arrival.

In all the bubbling hubbub of greetings and introductions Poe had seen two finely grained wooden handles under the Bard's coat. His waistcoat glistened with chains and charms. A faint scent of metal, nitrate and medicine hung in the air around him. The Bard's grotesque edge had lethal tongues of machined and finely oiled metal in the form two handsome pistols hid in each waist under his coat.

"Timothy and I," the Bard intoned grinning in theatrical baritone, "we been discoursing upon the finer points of familial dynamics."
Everyone caught the gleam the Bard's eyes had cast. Poe saw it. He saw it cast a momentary and ominous glitter in Timothy's eyes, but a flash of wonder in the faces of his old friends Giles and Brantz, the three of whom had reined around them a ring of beaming, fresh and smart young men who were students from nearby Washington College. Some of the men had accompanied a few daring women to the gathering.

Giles and Brantz were old stalwarts among Poe's fellowship in the Seven Stars. Their shared familiarity with Lofland and Poe, who had been strangers to one another, warmed into easy intercourse among the five.

Brantz Mayer was the youngest of Poe's group, the most portly, and one of Poe's favorites. He liked Brantz' quiet, dark curiosity on matters not given portent in ordinary circles.

"If ever you want to discover extraordinary circumstances," Poe once advised Brantz, "you'll find them on the docks where sailors and merchants chaff to discourse upon matters found in strange and exotic places. In the context of our familiar shores these matters will compel the attentions of the unsuspecting in surprisingly satisfactory ways."

Poe became aware, as he already had with the others, of his new sense of warm kinship with Lofland. In that short amount of time of their first encounter they felt like old pals to one another.

"I was very impressed," said Poe, "with your poem from a few years ago – the one entitled 'Lines on Seeing a Human Skull with a Candle in it.' What a ghastly way to address the departed spirit and illuminate all the darkness in the human soul."

"Hope is so fleeting," replied Lofland. "Its quality has meaning only, and precisely, because it can be blown out like a candle. Darkness must always manipulate the light in a world where extinguishment is so easily possible."

"But the light of man is his strength," interjected Timothy. "The soul and the hope it embodies are the source of that strength."

"Not when the darkness is so incessant," Poe's reply was quick and sharp. "Not when man is so full of nature's frailties, and not when he denies the flaws in himself – or to even give them the simplest of recognition."

"Instead," added Lofland, "he turns those flaws into means for self aggrandizement. The greatest darkness of our age, for example, is found in the evils of slavery where the gleam of gold has blinded men so much that they cannot see humanity in the eyes of others. And still their denial is passed on in the sight of so much obvious suffering. Ask the Cherokees who are being driven from their homes in Georgia. Ask them about darkness. They will tell you they see it in our pale, white faces."

"The light that some men display is so puny," said Brantz, "that it takes such insipid quality."

"Even whiteness," began Poe, barely cognizant of Brantz' comment, "when we associate it with light, contains its own special darkness. Take the whiteness of a ghost, and you have startled fear. With the whiteness of a blizzard, fear is foreboding and immanent. Then there is the fear and dread in the white and pallid flesh of death. Fear immortal is embodied in the bleached bones that last for millennia. Only light is the purest whiteness, like the sun and the stars."

"Or the light in colors," Lofland burst out. "How the sound of the right word can bring to color a light so brightly refined, so delicate and subtle as to light up the soul. It's something so unique to the human heart. It's like magic. The human mind, because it relishes such a delicious panoply of words, can make everything shine with the light of human thought and feeling. Yet, why don't we see, by God, why can't we see? Why aren't we relishing in that magic?"

"I've seen upon thy temples," quoted Poe from Lofland's poem, "the flowing curl of pure nigrescent dye. And through the mirror veil of silken lace, have seen young Cupid laughing in thine eye. 'Tis also a woman to whom the skull belongs. She who once was vibrant and alive is now merely a mass of bone you could hold in your hand. It tempts me to wonder what her name might have been. Yes . . . 'Every beauty dies.' But now she is merely a skull while her once tender body rots away somewhere unknown. Wonderful horror! Well done, John Lofland!"

The Bard broke out in delight to hear Poe's complementary comment, as well as his own words recited back to him, and from one of such eminence as Edgar Allan Poe.

"Imagine," Lofland said savoring his own quick laughter, "had I used another color, I could not have mixed dread and desire so well. What if I had used another color, I could not have mixed dread and desire so well. What if I had used for the color of her hair . . . let's say . . . yellow?"
Everyone within earshot broke out with laughter, including those young men from Washington College who had begun to pick up on the conversation among the fellowship of the five.

"We seem to have two great poets in our midst,\" Timothy replied in response to the conversation.

"Perhaps,\" Brantz broke in, "we should seek out some measure of that greatness."

"Perhaps a friendly competition,\" Giles added remembering his conversation with Lofland earlier in the day.

"And a friendly wager,\" Brantz said, "to assure the best effort from both."

Poe turned down one corner of his mouth at the suggestion. Lofland turned up one corner of his mouth at the idea that he and Poe would be writing together, whatever the circumstance.

"What do you say?\" Giles asked both men.

It was the expectation that Poe felt growing among an audience receding into the deep corners of the room that urged him to give a definite affirmative nod and a nearly inaudible visceral groan.

"Something great may come of it,\" Lofland said when he saw Poe's acquiescence.

"Fine,\" said Giles gleefully, "some ground rules then. Let's keep it simple. Let's see who can write the most lines in a given amount of time."

"I can ask William Padgett, the clock maker, to keep precise and fair time for us,\" Brantz nearly blurted, eager to contribute. "He would be willing if we made it worth his while."

"And speaking of worth,\" Timothy piped in, "should not the wager be prudent and deserving of a literary effort?"

Timothy's query broke the pace of the exchange with a moment of relative silence.

"How about the loser pay the expenses for a wine supper to follow?\" Giles asked.

"Excellent,\" Lofland answered with glee, "a way to soothe away the pangs of competition's cruel consequence while building strong bonds of fellowship."

Poe nodded in the same affirmative manner as he had only moments before, but without the groan to weigh him down.

"Fine,\" Giles moved to tie up loose ends, "and at what hour and day?"

"I am certain,\" said Brantz, aware that its timing would have to fit in well with the supper to follow, "that I could have Padgett here for the late afternoon. How about six in the afternoon tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow afternoon,\" said Poe, "would suit my travel needs. I'm going back to Philadelphia the next day."

"And,\" added Lofland, "might we settle on some mechanics of verse so that Edgar and I might better prepare our minds? Giles, I think you might be well suited. What say you, Edgar?"

"Agreed?\" Poe responded. "I have full confidence that my old friend Giles will be fair?"

Giles thought for a brief instant, then replied, "As I said, simplicity should matter most. We should allow each to choose his own scheme for rhyme, the length of stanza and meter per line, which would be most comfortable for each, and that at the end of the time period, should a line not be completed that we allow for the completion of that line so that it might count for the final tally. Is that amenable?"

"Quite,\" was Poe's response.

"Yes, I agree with my friend,\" said Lofland.

The expected formality of shaking hands to seal the agreement was automatic, easy and comfortable between the two.

"Well,\" Timothy said as if for punctuation, "with that I shall depart. I would not want to miss tomorrow. I must apportion my time for other duties. So I must go to make room."

The act of bidding Timothy cordial departure provided the opportunity for dispersion of the remaining four. They fell into the attentions of other mutual acquaintances. However, Poe and Lofland remained with one another. Timothy's early departure also provided the initial topic for Poe's and Lofland's exclusive conversation.

"I see,\" Poe began, "that Timothy still finds family the greatest morsel in the feast of life."

Lofland chuckled at Poe's clever characterization.

"Yes, and the greatest impetus, as well, to his success both as a human being and author. I have heard that you have a pleasing family as well."

The act of smiling for Poe was always one that brought a consciously aware sensation to his face. But over the almost two years since he had married Virginia, smiling brought a delicate pleasure to the place of his soul instead of the weight of effort.

"Yes,\" Poe began, "such fragile beauty makes me a man to relish the fineries of tenderness. I feel I'm a better human being, as well, for her sake."

"Perhaps,\" Lofland said with a sly grin, "we could make the subject of tomorrow's contest that of feminine beauty. I can leave the specifics untouched so that they might plant the seeds for the best fruit of our strivings."

"That's fine with me,\" said Poe, his sudden longing for Virginia transforming into a feeling, deep within him, of bursting. Impulse led him to ask without peril, "And you, John, have you someone special to you in your life?"

Poe heard the sudden sound of the rain dramatically slap the window and felt a damp chill creep in. It was the first time that night he saw the Bard frown. "Once,\" he said, looking down to the floor. Then he added in a dreamy and almost vacant tone: "Could not that blush, that breath of sweet perfume, surmount thy fate? No, every beauty dies."

Poe had recognized the words. He remembered them from the poem they had discussed earlier:

"Let us pull the drapes,\" said Poe. "There is a cold and damp wind with me tonight."

**Friday, September 7, 1838**

By mid afternoon the sun had broken out after a night of heavy rain. They had come by twos to the Seven Stars. Poe and Giles had accompanied one another. Timothy and Lofland arrived shortly after. And just after them, Brantz had arrived with the clock maker William Padgett, who was an Asian looking young man with black curly hair. After general salutary greetings, the competition was begun. The only other thing upon which to decide was a technical detail presented by Padgett, that of how much time should pass before the act of bidding Poe a cordial departure provided the initial topic for Poe's exclusive conversation. Poe's and Lofland's exclusive conversation. Poe's early departure also provided the initial topic for Poe's and Lofland's exclusive conversation. Poe's early departure also provided the initial topic for Poe's and Lofland's exclusive conversation. Poe's early departure also provided the initial topic for Poe's and Lofland's exclusive conversation. Poe's early departure also provided the initial topic for Poe's and Lofland's exclusive conversation. Poe’s early departure also provided the initial topic for Poe's and Lofland's exclusive conversation. Poe’s early departure also provided the initial topic for Poe's and Lofland’s exclusive conversation.
thoughts. The only sound was the scratching of pens traversing paper.

"Time's up," barked Padgett in an oddly unexpected moment.

"You may finish the line upon which you are working," Giles reminded the two immediately after Padgett's announcement.

"Oh drat!" Lofland declared almost before Giles' reminder was complete, "I haven't finished." Then he went on to finish the line that would finish the poem.

"Well, I have finished," said Poe, scratching out the words of his final line.

The two samples were given to Giles in order to count lines and meter, as well as to determine the quality of the rhyme. Silence continued while Giles examined Poe's sample first. His final lines were:

"Though happiness around thee lay,
The world all love before thee."

"I count 16 lines of quality verse," Giles announced. Then he took Lofland's sample. The same abated silence ensued. Lofland's final lines were:

"Of the dark eye, that charms in the damsel of Spain,
Of the forms, that in Persia appear;"

"I count 18 lines of quality verse," Giles announced in the same manner as before, adding, "Lofland wins and Poe buys supper."

Poe's quick grimace felt heavy on his face. And though the grimace probably remained, the weight was lifted when Timothy said in an aside to him, "Worry not, Edgar, I plan to take leave early. I shall leave my share for what I might partake in the form of remuneration with the establishment."

Then Giles, who had felt the faint guilt of an instigator, hearing Timothy's offer added, "I, too, shall aid thee. It is worth it to me to have seen the two of you so genially take to pen together."

As a consequence of their contest, Lofland and Poe had garnered the attention of many in the room, but as they accompanied each other to the bar their attentions were on one another. Once at the bar, Poe ordered red wine. Lofland asked for brandy.

"So," began Lofland out of a sense of genuine curiosity, "have you embarked on any new and interesting projects?"

"Yes, I think so," Poe answered. "I've been asked to make some critical comments about Washington Irving. So, I've been re-reading some of his work and reading, for the first time, others."

"Ah, Irving," bemused Lofland, "should our nation begin to see itself anew at Irving's behest."

"I take some good lessons from Irving," Poe said. "He has found that mythology is found where the memory of a tale becomes persistent."

"And so," added Lofland, almost as if to himself, "to make a cultural contribution to the social identity of generations to come, the things we compose today would last if they were things that would be composed to be remembered."

"A lot of good tales," continued Poe, "seep up from where the dead are buried. Your dead. My dead. The dead of beautiful young women who scratch and claw in pitch darkness on the inside of their coffin lids blackened by the heart of the earth. The dead mingled with the sacredness of those already buried for eons. The dead of the supple black skin strangers from a spirit laden land."

Lofland picked up the glass of brandy that had been set before him. "Yes, even the dead who are invented out of the head of men like Washington Irving. I propose we drink to this land rich in new tales, and a new people forged in the furnace that amalgamates a new flesh. To a new people who will speak a new language. Those who will sanctify a new land populated in peace."

"A land," Poe snickered as his hand formed a cradle for the delicate wine glass, "from which to invent new ghosts to rove about and who will impart their ancient secrets in the course of their hauntings."

Lofland put down his tumbler etched with seven stars and said, "You bare yourself as a southern gentleman. How do you view those Africs brought to our shore to labor in bondage for us?"

"Well," Poe was caught off guard, "once I paid them no mind. I even enjoined in the opinion that they possessed no humanity. Now I struggle to grapple with a humanity in them that I detect is quite unique. It is a humanity, I must conclude, nonetheless."

"Ah," said the Bard, after taking a second sip from his brandy, "we are led to believe their forced arrival will leave no stamp of their traditions upon us. We must labor to permit those who are now here, who are estranged, the freedom to be strange to us. This would be the first step. We must first accept the inherent tragedy of their plight. Once we accept the traditions they brought from Africa, they will also add to a new American myth."

"Yes," replied Poe with another quick snicker, "black and white, light and darkness, strangeness and the comforts of familiarity. The tragedy is as much in us as it is in their plight. I have found that out. And," Poe added with yet another quick snicker, "I have endeavored to place on the record, with my own composition, some contribution in those regards."

No one saw Padgett as he took nearly spellbound notice of the conversation. He had lingered in the darkness of his general unfamiliarity to all except Brantz Mayer.

But Brantz had not noticed Padgett's captivation either. Padgett had lived in two of the worlds about which Poe and Lofland referred, each side within him despising the other. Padgett was a black man who could pass for white in a white world. Yet among those of African descent he was accepted for who he really was, with all the other expected restrictions that went with his unique capabilities and attributes. Some who were darker than Padgett tended to distrust him. His life was made up of one side of him nearly uncontrollably attempting to subvert the other as he consciously and literally aimed his passage as a clock maker.

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of supper, mainly of chowders made from creatures pulled from the nearby Chesapeake Bay, along with boiled and spiced potatoes, corn and late season greens. The arrival of supper was also the signal for Timothy to make his departure, and his departure gave Padgett his cue to leave. The company, as well as the smell of the company's food, had made Padgett feel ill.

During the meal the conversation remained with matters conducive to the kind of bonding for deeper friendships. As agreement among the participants about the quality of the food and drink built confidence, so did the talk about more intimate matters. Everyone got caught up on the latest trivial news couched in joking and clever asides.
"Have you," Lofland asked Poe, who had been sitting next to him, "had the misfortune to have a stay in Delaware, beyond, of course, the unavoidable passings through?"

"I have, of course, passed through," replied Poe finishing off a morsel of potato, "more times than I can count for. About staying for any length of time, I can honestly say that I'm not sure."

"You mean," prompted Brantz from across the table, "your foray in the Wedge with Armistead?"

"Yes," replied Poe turning to Lofland to fill him in, "in that little piece of land held in dispute between Maryland and Delaware. You know of it?"

"I have heard of it, certainly," Lofland replied, "but have never had the pleasure of making, as Brantz says, a foray into it."

Changing the subject a little, but a change that had been an irresistible one for Poe, "I see you carry a pair of handsome pistols?"

"Yes," chuckled Lofland, "under any circumstance, without them, I fear no man. Yet, with them . . . I fear no man."

Everyone at the table burst out in laughter, including Poe. Lofland merely grinned at the display. He was satisfied that he and Poe had kept every one’s attention.

"Just after my brother died seven years ago," Poe began, "I and my dark friend, Armistead . . ."

". . . a Negro . . ?" Lofland broke in.

"Yes," said Poe.

"Excellent. Go on," Lofland said quickly.

". . . we visited that still very wild place. There I was introduced to the remnants of some very tangible traditions the source of which was nothing one could consider pure European. Quite definitely, as you said earlier, they were traditions that originated from the forced arrival from Afric’s shores. Armistead had obtained some rare procurements from a fugitive and mysterious African girl who hid there. I suspect the spirits from departed Indian magic also contributed. Those sights we saw there were what you might imagine when sanctioned by a lawless state. Yet we saw them through other eyes. Misfortune was transformed into horror. Violence became a scene of rare and sudden serene beauty.

"I must also add that in leaving Baltimore, which was then filled with so much illness and the heavy fog of dread, that Armistead saved my life by leading me there; nay, added a kind of fantastic view upon life from which, ever since, I discover everyday in a wellspring of new ideals. 'Tis like prying off the lid of that which lies hidden in full view."

"Ah, Edgar," replied Lofland, "so fortunate are you."

"We witnessed a duel there," Poe continued, digesting Lofland’s compliment along with his meal. "No matter how ugly two men with poor aims can make it, that duel that Armistead and I witnessed that day, while cleanly executed, will constantly harbor pangs as deeply felt, in their irrevocable damage, as any gunshot wounds might leave in my own body."

In addition to Lofland, Poe, Brantz and Giles, there had been a few others who were finishing up the rewards of the friendly wager. They were friends and followers of the core group who held fellowship at the Seven Stars Tavern. Some of them aided in the removal of used glasses, mugs and dishes. Others came late while others would leave early to attend to separate diversions.

Lofland, Poe, Brantz and Giles gravitated to the bar to make room for the general cleaning up.

"You know," Lofland said for Poe’s edification, for the others had already known, "I am no stranger to the fine art of the duel." He patted the pistol in his left waist with his right hand. "I have offered my services as second on several occasions. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, my offer has only been accepted once."

"Let us hope, nay, drink to your continued success," Poe said readying himself for an order of after dinner drinks.

"And may I," Lofland sensing his intent and reaching for a flask hidden in his coat’s inside pocket, "offer you to join me and the Grand Turk?"

Poe felt, in Brantz’ and Giles’ sudden pause beside him, a sense of assured expectation. Asking for two fresh one ounce glasses, Lofland produced the metal flask finely inlaid in brass. Into each he poured from the flask a dark brown liquid.

"Laudanum," was the word Poe spoke, referring to that fine tincture of opium.

"Yes," replied Lofland, "from a tradition of the ancient eastern world, older than the elixir made from the cane of the Caribbean and imbued with greater capacity, as you have said, 'to pry off the lid of that which lies hidden in full view'."

The two toasted one another with the glasses of laudanum and threw the contents down their gullets. The loosening of formality was not due to the laudanum, or totally to the free flow of other beverages, than it was to the most pervasive of literary fads from Europe. One of the young men from Washington College began to recite poetry by Lord Byron:

"I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguished, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy Earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air . . ."

Several others join in, until the recitation ebbed and flowed in duets, trios, and groups of indeterminate number on more memorable lines. Some passages were filled in with readings from small leather bound books that were hidden away like flasks. They halted and stammered on for 40 or 50 lines. When the lines:

"Of famine fed upon all entrails – men
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
The meagre by the meagre were devoured . . ."

were tentatively delivered by only a few still struggling voices, a sudden wave of song washed over the room.

For Poe, everything in the room began to soften and assume a comfortable rosy glow. The laudanum had begun to affect him. An odd stillness had settled on a lake where waves rolled from swells propelled from the collective wash of recitation and song. Poe had no idea for how long he had sat detached watching mere theatrics flowing through the warm glow before him. At first, he felt some strange presence gather round him. He felt the warmth of body heat and the sound of words. There was conversation about Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Someone handed him a glass of wine. It might have been Giles, but he wasn’t sure. Yet he was sure was that Lofland was not among the group. Lofland had diverted the attention of those in the room. From the room’s center he had begun a gently bellowing recitation:

"The twentieth year is wellnigh past
Since first our sky was overcast:
Ah, would that this might be the last!
My Sallie!"
"Death does not end in stillness," Lofland began.

"Oh, Zeus!" exclaimed Brantz bursting out of the space next to Poe, "he's doing it again."

"What's that?" Poe replied.

"Thy silver locks," Lofland continued reciting, "once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Sallie!"

"The poem," said Brantz lowering his voice to Poe a bit, "is one by William Cowper. Its title is, 'My Mary.' But for some reason, he's changed it to 'My Sallie.' When anyone asks him why, he evades a direct answer."

"And," Lofland concluded after several more stanzas, "should my future lot be cast
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last –
My Sallie!"

A burst of applause followed, sounding to Poe like a rush of dry wind blown leaves. Then someone else broke out into song and several others joined in. Lofland came over after a while and filled the space that Giles had vacated, who had gone perhaps to relieve himself.

"Edgar!" Lofland exclaimed, "are you not enjoying your dividends of your own beneficence?"

"Indeed," replied Poe, "I benefit most when the rewards are useful."

"Pray tell," queried Lofland.

"That poem you recited," Poe answered, "it reminds me of a piece of my own work. Not a poem but prose, which I published some years ago but am still not satisfied with. I had heard that you are trained in medicine. Some advice on matters of dying might help me."

"Yes?" Lofland responded as if to encourage Poe to continued.

"I wanted to know what happens to a body soon after it dies. What's most apparent to the uninitiated to the phe- nomenon?"

"Movement continues. A new and slow kind of life assumes replacement. We redefine decay and give it new life by assigning the term, phthisis, to the mere decay. Thus, does not life go on in that transmutation? Over centuries a corpse might grow into stone, much as youth grows to be aged. Both resemble a movement characteristic of life. But while life from youth to old age is sentient and conscious, that longer life that's so lucky to grow to stone is merely osseous."

"For our puny vigil of a few days' duration, before the stench drives us away, what is most apparent is that the fingernails will appear to continue to grow. On men, the beard will continue its growth. The arms may seem to reach out as the joints stiffen with rigor mortis. Most ghastly of all, the mouth will open as wide as the junctures of the jaw will allow. The dead may seem to grin as the lips recede from the teeth and mock the living. To the unmournful and the jaded, matters of death may seem comic. To recover decorum is the reason for the practice of wrapping a brace around the head as if the corpse was suffering a toothache. Still," the Bard continued with a brief grin and chuckle, "the dead may display enough abstinence to resist the wishes of the living in this regard. I've seen the power of the corpse break this toothache's brace and mock the living anyway."

In the comforting cushion of wine and opium Poe thought of Virginia. In the dreaming sight of his mind's eye he could look into her leisurely fluid purple eyes, the delicate turn of her lips, the flawless alabaster luster of her skin against the dark tresses of her hair. How fragile, how susceptible, how so delicately tethered to the living.

"And may I ask," Poe began, that imp of the perverse unleashed by the fickle blessing of opium mixed provocatively with curiosity, "again referring to your recitation, who is Sallie?"

The gasp Poe thought he heard could have belonged to Lofland, except for the impression that it sounded multiple. It may have come from Brantz and Giles and maybe one or two others.

For the first time that evening, Lofland seemed to loose his good cheer and let his eyes sink gently to the floor.

"My dear Edgar," Lofland began slowly in a low tone, "I see thee daily weaker grow:
Thy worn-out heart will break at last –
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
My Sallie!"

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Than golden beams of orient light,
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had wrested from her dead husband revenue enough to open a low tavern south of Milford. She then organized and led a gang of ne’er do well on the enterprise of kidnapping Negroes, whether free or belonging to others, and selling them for profit. She also murdered anyone who happened by her tavern who smelled of money. She’d lure them by luster, avarice or lust. Then she’d kid them and bury their bodies in the cellar of her tavern or under flower boxes on her farm. But she boasted too loudly upon the tally she kept. After her gang raided some property in Dover, and her gang was ambushed by colored folk, she was arrested. She even proudly confessed, I am told, to the murder of her own husband.

"After she was dead, I have been further told, her head was severed from her body so that it might be examined by a phrenologist in Philadelphia to determine the reasons for her monstrous activity. But it is clear to me the real monster walks the earth dressed inrespective raiment."

A short silence ensued before Brantz Mayer piped in, "She should have been a good candidate for a bride for whom Dr. Frankenstein’s Prometheus begged. His dilemma might have been easily solved if he could have manufactured a bride such as Patty Cannon."

"Yes," added Poe, "vain is it to moan over playing God, when left to his own devices man is sufficient enough to provide his own devil."

Everyone broke out laughing, as much to Poe’s wit as for relief to the heavy atmosphere of the macabre.

"She would have been," added Lofland, still laughing, "a fitting bride for Irving’s headless Hessian."

"And a good cure, as well," Poe interjected while the general laughter was receding, "for Dr. Polidori’s fiend of the undead, Lord Ruthven."

"Bah!" punctuated Lofland, "we need more song. Giles!" he shouted to Giles, who had separated himself with quiet discussion among some young men in a nether part of the room, "suggest a song to break the fetters of night."

Seeing Poe empty his glass of the last of the wine, Lofland reached for the flask in his coat, declaring, "And wake the Grand Turk.

He poured about an inch of it into Poe’s glass. He had measured well. He emptied the flask of an equal amount into his own glass.

"A toast," declared Lofland to Poe, "to all those who have lost their heads and found them again."

The two men slugged down the remainder of the laudanum while grinning at one another in the steadfastness of their new friendship.

"Giles!" Lofland once more declared over his right shoulder, "where is thy voice?"

Suddenly singing erupted from the small group of men. It was a song that had already been sung earlier in the evening. But many of the others joined in nevertheless.

Poe had always thought that singing was not becom- ing to the male voice, though he believed song and music to be the language of angels. The wine and the laudanum had loosened his spirit. He allowed himself the role of observer, a few feet from the singing.

After a few more songs that had already been sung during the course of the evening, Giles asked generally, "Does anyone know, ‘To Anacreon in Heaven’?"

After a moment, while a strange wave of gentle insou- ciance overcame Poe, one of the young men in the small group stepped forth. Poe could not understand why he had not noticed the young man before. Then again, thought Poe giggling to himself, not having noticed the man didn’t really matter very much anyway.

The man was tall and gangling. His shoulders seemed almost too narrow even for his smallish head. His ears stuck out and his nose seemed too big for his face. To Poe, he seemed to have outgrown his clothes.

"Ichabod Crane," Poe almost uttered audibly, but the soft repose from the laudanum coming over him had kept the words inside.

The men singing in the room near the bar where Poe sat were almost like an audience. It was Poe who was on stage watching them perform. He looked at the curtains behind them. No, they were not curtains. They were the drapes over the windows that were embedded in the walls of dark wood. It was night in the glow of the song where, outside, the chill cut to the bone from a dark sea out beyond Baltimore. The men were in full glee. They sang. All knew the words,

"Voice, fiddle and flute, no longer be mute."

Then with the next verse, they began muffled as low as they could. The drapes seemed to absorb their words. They ended the verse in a high crescendo that seemed to tax the highest octave the best of them was capable:

"And besides I instruct you, like me to intwine The Myrtle of Venus with Bacchus’s vine."

At first there seemed to be grumbling coming from the drapes behind the singing men in a kind of muted echo. A foreboding baritone began the singing. It was a brave face who was full of strong song. They seemed to protest in jovial singing for a divine place where she, the goddess, could hide just out of reach. It was to her that they sang:

"And there with good fellows, we’ll learn to intwine The Myrtle of Venus with Bacchus’s Vine."

Poe had imbibed. He was lost in the woods high on a mountain where light shone only enough to show shadows. In the night, in the drapes that shone with their own glow among shadows, they sang at Poe in nine voices. Poe knew. He could count them. Yet behind the singing men, there were even more who sang. They were somewhere near the drapes, or, perhaps, from behind them. They sang with foreboding:

"I’ll trim the young dogs, for thus daring to twine The Myrtle of Venus with Bacchus’s Vine."

The walls were wood. Poe realized, when he woke in the woods. The elixir of opium and wine had caused a metaphor to overtake him. Poe fought back. Legions were behind him, their oaths accompanying the beating of his heart. All this is here for us, even if moving in shadows in the drapes, against the dark wood, moving through the trees. I’m closer to the truth and substance, he found himself thinking, which grace provides. He almost said the words to himself, but instead he heard them fade in audibly nearby, “Pleasure is never present except when the imagination acts.”

The words were spoken in his ear by Dr. John Poli- dori, who was suddenly standing all pink faced at Poe’s right side. He had a knowing grin.

“If we seek present pleasure,” Dr. Polidori continued almost dispassionately, “we take to the bottle, to opium, to dancing, or yield to enthusiasm, the mere ravings of folly; all of which have but one action upon the mind — that of banishing reason, and letting the pictures of the imagination pass rapidly before us.”

The Doctor displayed the place with a gesture of his hand. Poe and Polidori were in a clubroom in fellowship where all the others sang in abandon and harmony in the rarefied air...
that leaves one with the smell and sweet taste of myrtle in bloom.

"... with Bacchus's Vine!" they exploded in song that woke Poe.

The number blasted in Poe's brain. There were nine of them. Poe mumbled the names for four, "Brantz, Giles, Ich-abod and the Bard."

Poe giggled, his imp tickling him deep inside but in accord with the warmth of the fellowship.

Within the drapes, purple then black, changing in dream, was some spirit being as if billowing with a gale of discordant harmony. Even here the shadows, sailing out of darkness, is a place for discordance in the harmony of the singing where all shall, in accord, intwine:

"The Myrtle of Venus," the nine sang from deep in their hearts to the bright flush in their faces, "with Bacchus's Vine!"

Were they diamonds moving in the drapes? Or perhaps fairies, thought Poe, or exuberant fireflies? And was there a distorted echo somewhere tinkling upon glass of the windows behind them? Among the singing of the last verse and chorus, all nine men knew every word:

"Ye Sons of Anacreon, then join hand in hand; Preserve Unanimity, Friendship and Love! 'Tis yours to support what's so happily plan'n'd; You've the sanctions of Gods, and the Fiat of Jove. While thus we agree, our toast let it be: "May our Club flourish Happy, United and Free!"

Poe, feeling the pull of their fellowship, mouthed the words of the chorus in a barely audible and low, gut vibrating bass:

"And long may the Sons of Anacreon intwine The Myrtle of Venus with Bacchus's Vine!"

The tinkling echo was still there in the fading wake of song. It was against the glass of the window behind the drapes. It had become distinct, not only to Poe but to the others in the room. It was birdsong coming from outside. As soon as Lofland realized, he went over to the drapes and pulled the cord that opened them. The charms and chains adorning his waistcoat glittered like sparks.

The light rolled in and hit Poe with pink and orange light in his face like a wave of cold surf. But it hit gently, feeling like a billowy raking of light silk.

"We've made it to dawn," declared Lofland. "May our fellowship live long. And take what we know and give it to Poe. For the benefit of all, thus, shall his genius return it to us."

**Saturday, September 8, 1838**

The coach back to Philadelphia started out painfully at dawn. Poe had acquired a case of constipation. It was easy to hide the sound of flatulence but it left those passengers, who had gotten off and on during the numerous stops the coach made on its way, wondering in the covert corners of good manners which of the others was responsible.

Poe conveniently enjoyed the graciousness of napping during those stretches that were relatively calm, where the jangling of the rigging from the horses up front acted as a lull-aby. Sometime before the scheduled coach stop the following day at Stanton, or Cuckoldstown as he still heard some in Delaware refer to it, Poe fell into dreaming.

He was dreaming about Berenice, who had been one of two main characters of the story of the same name that he had published in the *Southern Literary Messenger* a few years before. When Berenice began to lose her vibrancy Poe, who had acted as the narrator in the story, called the doctor. In the dream, she had coughed twice then turned toward Poe. But she was not Berenice. She was Virginia and she looked at him, pleadingly, with watery purple eyes.

When the doctor came it was Dr. John Lofland. After examining her, Lofland offered reassuring words.

"It is just the onset of the ague," he said kindly to Poe. "I recommend bed rest. Keep her head covered. Give her plenty of tea, and place a bed warmer with her for the night."

As Lofland was readying himself for departure by placing the same domed and wide brim hat he had been wear-ing on the occasion of their first encounter, he added, "If she does not improve within the week be sure to summon me."

In the language of dreaming, when Poe had realized a week had passed, Virginia's health had not improved. In fact, her health had deteriorated rapidly. She had become thin and pale. Like Berenice, she had lost her vibrancy and grew in weakness. Panicked, Poe called the doctor. But this time the doctor was Dr. John Polidori.

"But you're dead," Poe said to him. "You hanged yourself seventeen years ago."

"All the better for my being here," Dr. Polidori replied pink faced and smiling a row of decaying teeth. "Lead me to the patient."

After spending a short time alone with the patient, who Poe was not sure was either Virginia or Berenice, Dr. Polidori emerged grim and white faced.

"My diagnosis is not good," Dr. Polidori said. "It's just the onset of consumption. The only solution – and it is slight, at best – is to flush her system using the most drastic of measures. Have her drink all this down, all at once. It is the last hope."

Dr. Polidori produced a pint sized bottle with a cork stopper from his doctor's satchel. Poe felt alarmed.

"What is that?" Poe blurted, fearing it was laudanum.

"Tis a solution drained from the vial where I keep my supply of leeches," replied Polidori smiling. Poe saw dark circles around his eyes that hadn't been there before. "Most marvelous creatures. Neither what goes into them nor what comes out of them defiles them."

Poe awoke with a start as the horses labored up the hill to the coach stop at Cuckoldstown. He was sweating profusely with the dawn. When the coach arrived minutes later, Poe disembarked for the opportunity to refresh himself. A damp chill sent a shock through him. The smell of lathered horse flesh and leather filled the air. Poe began to shiver. He sniffed the air as he walked away from the coach and toward the door to the interior of the two story clapboard building.

"Oh blast," Poe muttered under his breath, "more rain."

The swell of peristalsis was growing deep in his vis-cera and he was glad of it.

fin
Parallel worlds of voudoun, fascism, and pop culture clash in Steven Leech’s new novel:

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What a bewitching hour
is spring on this November
day, unsettled, warm
and wet, with billowing
trees in bloom. Slim live
oak yellows, maple reds,
multivariate greens and
brown and brilliant orange,
blowing with energy, free
for a moment in time, alive
beyond my state, larger
than the geography of my
mind. I ask you only to
bear witness to its song.
A whole sky of bouncing
light, gray with rolling
clouds of undefined origin,
destined with dark accents
beyond our reach, bringing
respite and resurrection
out of season. Maybe it
was the fog last night
that brought this change,
when the moon was vacant.
It descended in massive
strokes like an alien force
with unknown potency,
redefining landscapes
before our eyes, changing
lives on a different screen.
Today there is no orientation
to the sun, and purpose
cannot be kept in place.

Even nature, when unveiled,
has a stronger season.
And so it is, as before a
storm, my blood races
to think of you, as sweet
imaginings are want to do.
And yet, as the clouds roll
on, hanging low on the
horizon, some trees stand
out against this spring,
black silhouettes opposing
sky, shades of darkness
and light, devoid of color.
Yesterday they had clumps
of leaves, today they stand
naked before the rest,
having been the first to shed
their gaily colored clothes,
yet their limbs still are wet
with hope. Why do we strive
for beauty, even at the last,
when the storm is gathering
on the horizon. In such instants,
decision has no shape, and
the heart abandons all borders.
Instinctively my arms reach
out, listening to the sky,
and I turn to you who have
brought life to me body,
delight to my eyes, taught
softness to my touch, and
gave above all, warmth to my
heart, girding for December,
waiting for light rain
to sing our song forever.

(continued; no stanza break)
Standing first upon the rock, and then upon a steel rectangular box of a higher sort, but not well made, that looks for all the world like a wooden crate encased in metal, a Cardinal rises above the concrete in a modern druidic circle of art and glass, facing west, like a Prince to be. Behind the scene, such statuary looks more like a ballistic missile in coated dominance, his eminence shawled by a hangman’s knot overlaid in union, forming a not quite perfect circle, and beneath the cape two tassels of gilded rope escape like fingers crossed when asking questions or announcing feasts and famines of belief, for parishioners who see only a kindly man in front, overweighted with burdens of the cloth, that permit just one hand to extend beyond the great shroud we call religion. Surely Manzu never meant this edifice built to meet the people who enter here, to be backlighted by such a monstrous dying sun lying horizontal on the ground, with only flares of clear water to define its history. For when the fountain’s off, in the circle, through the window from above, the mechanics of the sun behind the Pope are exposed in earthly bronze. The water canons, like small tubeworms from the sea are set, attendant to a higher central column filtered by a screen, a confessional at the center, or so it seems. Floodlights attack each beam of water, angled for effect, and when the Pope is speaking, each fountain pulsates in ever increasing height, but never takes you far enough to forget the figure of the man, whose stature, like downtown buildings, is subservient to the monuments of man. This whole entourage, mindful of the office, is ringed with leveling lights to illuminate each radiant beam, where pennies are often tossed, like hope in holy water, a collection plate of sorts, for vagrants who come at night, when papal lights are dim, and no one seems on guard, to sing their praise to Him.

(continued; no stanza break)
companions, spewing and snowballing under the water, driven inward, pushed outward, in a cycle like lives in a riot or war, mixing emotions with increasing darkness below and light above.

Only those particles caught in the vortex between the currents, will be thrown free and clear, but only for a moment in the breaking of white water and come crashing down again after tasting the sky, spreading once more on the floor of the sea. How then should we behave after tasting the sky?

You came into my life like the wind, warm and moving, sweeping me against the current, playful like white caps seeking new heights in an attempt to be airborne, uplifted for a moment, reaching for ether and light. You dazzled the eyes of my spirit like shape changing clouds dancing in the sunlit reflections on the fast moving surface.

But underneath, deeper in the mixture of movement, the forces of nature and time, like the longer wavelength of gravity, pull out to the sea to be born again in succeeding generations, and wave after wave will increase our distance in this tidal transition, like sand and water receding on the beach, dry and alone.

Yet in this one hour, in the far reaches upstream, my sediment, pushed by the beauty of your movement against the tide, will reach new rocks to cling to, wash in the eddies of a small beach, or perhaps sink to the bottom, fertilizing a sunlit pool. Only the fish will know how far we have come on our journey from the sea.
Chosen

The gulls gathered on the grass beside the river, watching intently as the wave washed over the concrete bridge abutment, holding down the water. Only one bud had yet appeared among the cherry trees although the pollen count was so early, it broke a record on that day.
The oaks and elms also waited, their red and yellow blooms were out before the flowers, and the willows wore new green, swaying in the wind against the gray and rolling sky, an eerie kind of light, as spring storms sometimes bring. But the light was still in winter, and yet no snow storms blinded the guiding eye of birds who waited on the grass and rail, until the large winged creature, roaring and overly aggressive, swooped from the warm tumultuous sky, suspended for a moment, inching toward the ground, floating like a leaf at greater than imagined speed, then with a sudden shift, it sank with the greatest splash, and one saw the water rise to greet the sound of ripping, tearing metal, sheared by wind and water, exploding like glass and lungs, and in the giant hiss of spray that followed, one heard distinctive sounds like gurgle and bubble. Everyone said they heard the sounds of gurgle and bubble, except for the surviving few, who shrieked for joy.
To Whom a Tree Is a Harp In the Darkness
Alex Comfort / The Song of Lazarus / The Viking Press / 1945
an essay by Alan Davies

I am too much at one with the dead ever to fear them again. I am too much bound to those who have lost the power to speak ever to call my voice my own.

Alex Comfort is best known as the author of The Joy of Sex / (at least he would be if anyone-who-purchased-the-book cared who the author was). He was a practicing-physician / a lecturer-in-medicine / an anarchist / a pacifist – he wrote several novels / the and pamphlets extolling pacifism / as well as numerous other books. Marguerite Young (biographer of Eugene V. Debs biography) wrote highly of Comfort’s novel The Power House. He was born a year after Robert Duncan / the same year as Paul Celan and Barbara Guest / as well as DJ Enright and Howard Nemerov. He wrote perhaps half-a-dozen books-of-poetry. He is remembered for having had a short temper.

Comfort has a kind of almost-motionless-shutter that moves the line forward (shuttle) / into the next line. There is a kind of separate grammar that keeps the words apart (the phrases). Conventional grammar (and punctuation) are not used to keep the words apart. The separate grammar is the grammar of motion (of words-in-motion). In this way (in-these-ways) the lines build-up and accumulate / toward no kind of particularly settled conclusion. A kind of pleasing conclusion comes out of such motion / though the motion is complete with what-would-otherwise-be-falterings-at-rest.

He hated the war / and for that we can be grateful. –

–I am too old to take up the threads again:
We gave two rooms habitable, we are lucky.
Though the smell of the fire is on them: there are bones
Under the rafters, in the clay grey gristle.
I think one crawled
Into the barn and died there. The thin children
Won’t play in Joiville Wood, since they discovered
A hollow thing with ribs. The trees are fallen.

and –

Red eyes tomorrow – the small terrible bundle sucking its way to fall next harvest’s hero — sleep while you can, pale girl, nursing your good surrender

for example. Which is simply-to-say that he was abreast-of-what-was-happening / and would not stay behind it. Often there is the empathy as with a-thing-that-is-uncertain (for war is that (too) / is it not?). He had a conscience / and in constancy it shows.

Many of the poems are (thus) elegiac in tone (some are so-named) / in consequence of the poems’ times. That is his modernity / his currency and the-gasping-at-it-that-at-all-times-he-finds.

Many of the poems are addressed / and often to another-not-(perhaps)-of-similar-mind – so that persons get placed / thus – we upright / clock-faced citizens / for what is springtime in a land of pebbles? The poem thinks the season / the time in which the season nods / the response / the-no-response / and the-going-on-if-it-all. There are those too – the blind attic full of broken faces – who abide.

Often much contrives to slow the whole thing down (the poem). There is a (recalcitrant) density / a-swift-turn now-and-then from-this-to-that / there is the eagerness of the words to bend down (toward what is not superficial / toward-what-the-surface-cannot-stand).

Comfort has a predilection for things-that-come-in-pairs / such as –

Across the round field, under the dark male tower drift the two horses, the chestnut and the black, aloof and quiet as two similar clouds alike and distant, heads toward the wind—

where the pair of paired adjectives (aloof and quiet / alike and distant) contrive to make (continued, next page)
the thing additionally sing. On an instance – if stars and not
the plow // had laid these furrows upon time and
not clay – where the double-doubling (start and not the plow /
time and not clay) is made even more furtive by the doubled-
negative. It is interesting to get to know the turns of another
mind (in this way).

He sees (as-often-as-not) it all-going-away / and for no reason /
save for the reason that its going is. That is his lament / often
a bright one / or made bright (anyway) by the bright things of
(in) nature that he sees – but still (under and behind (why do
we say under-and-behind?) it all) the swift going of it all.
Many of these poems were written in the time of the Second
World War / and (so) reflect that. It’s clear he hated the war /
saw it as senseless / devoid of passion and meaning – and he
says so (with words chosen with care).

Perpetual death, that falls on the single leaf
perpetual darkness, end of flower and thought
perennial country, where we are going, whither
all winds blow, all lives tend, all leaves fall,
to the blind attic full of broken faces
under the cold and heavy muzzle of the years.

Elsewhere he had characterized those self-same faces thus –
These faces – the cold apples in a loft / huddled in rows. Here
he describes them with a painter’s touch / with paint

on the faces / with the kind of discretion that comes from a
brush. It’s clear he cares for them.

There is often a kind of willed redress / a strong desire to do
something about (for) the sufferings of those suffering. This is
part of the nature of the elegy as a form (where-that-occurs).
Everything in his poems speaks this longing / the hills and the
streets alike – it is the world that is singing (it is the world
that is speaking) / and this noiseless sad muttering is its song.
And things talk-back to things / to each other in the kind of
wilderness this time (specifically – the years of the second
World War) engenders / and is. Friends come back / and trees

The merest word can evoke a thing. Can bring it here. For
you.

There is little of Comfort himself in these pages / by way of the
personal pronoun. But he does live in them as thought / as
love for a particular type of rural image / as passion for life
(and against the war) / as a-statement-made-by-these-his-own-
words.

I think he feared stagnation / and with his words fought
against it.

— AD
WILDERSTEIN newslne

Wilderstein Historic Site News winter/spring 2012

Coming Soon To A Theater Near You
A feature film starring Bill Murray as Franklin D. Roosevelt and Laura Linney as Margaret (Daisy) Suckley is scheduled for release in December 2012. Based on a script by Rhinebeck resident Richard Nelson, this dramatic comedy also stars Olivia Williams as Eleanor Roosevelt, Olivia Colman as Queen Elizabeth, and Samuel West as King George VI.

Hyde Park on the Hudson is set during the weekend in 1939 when Britain's King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visited the Roosevelt estate in Hyde Park. The story of this first time visit of a reigning English monarch to the United States will be told as seen through the eyes of Wilderstein's Daisy Suckley.

Pictured: Laura Linney (left) as Daisy and Bill Murray (right) as FDR.
CRASH

Seven of them ran through
the woods last evening,
in the park beyond the creek—
seven sets of teeth, twenty-eight
sharp hooves...
That night, I dreamed a commuter
plane crashed in the creek
below my house. Soon
the road flooded
with police cars, ambulances, fire
trucks—people trampling
my lawns, tearing up the bank
as they scrambled down to
rescue victims.
A dazed little girl wandered up
the bank, soaked clothes shredded, feet
bleeding. I wilted to my knees,
held her in a way
I never was held, the blood
on my blouse emanating
from my own heart.
We cried.
This morning the lawn is
pristine, the creek
clear, my daisies devoured
by deer.

THE BLOOD OF THE IBEX

Tonight I thought about
our last hunt – the one to
Mongolia where we almost
froze to death at night in our
round, wood-and-canvas ger
in the high mountain desert,
until they brought us quilts,
showed us how to fold them
around our sleeping bags.
I thought about the lung-busting climbs; how we
drank the nomads’ yak-milk
vodka and their famous
warm-milk tea—ladled
from the stove into bowls
first wiped with the same
apron used to collect
dried cow dung for fuel;
how I came upon the guides’
butchering ritual and drank
the fragrant, warm blood
of the ibex that tasted like—
blood, and like the earthy,
amiable people of that land,
and like its barren terrain;
and how, when we
drove out of camp for the
last time in that Russian
World War II Jeep, I knew
I was leaving part of me
still marveling at the
midnight snow.
Poetry by Patricia L. Goodman

POST-OP

and all along the way there are people
speaking but I can't make out what
they say
so I give up and close my eyes again

I only want
my husband
(dead over four years)
to see me lying here
instead it's just these
unpleasant men in the beds beside me
leering
raising their eyebrows
like I'm so sexy right now – maybe it's the
hospital gown

in the operating room awake
surgeon pounding
nurse - we are having a blood issue

I empty a bag of ice for my hip (Stryker Orthopedica Tritanium
Cup Cardio Medica)
into the basket of the freezer and watch it
fall through (don't you know - baskets don't hold ice)

my leg hurts (hardly mine anymore – half titanium now)
it's getting close to time for another pill, but
these men won't leave me alone

in the city nightscape a slash of red lights up
the side of a building—my surgeon says
it's a memorial
to where he learned to cut
Scott Whitaker Reviews
Vittorio Carli’s *A Passion for Apathy*

*A Passion for Apathy: The Collected and Rejected Poems* of Vittorio Carli, a small press gem of punk rock poetry, carries poetic traditions in its teeth. Punk rock because of the in-your-face-anti-establishment irony and earnestness in Carli’s presentation of his verse, traditional in the homage and muse tradition of poetry. He writes to and for those and that which enlarges his voice. Carli’s work reads like a cross between cultural commentary/homage to persons as varied as Lawrence Welk to Woody Allen, to snapshots of socio-political unrest, which are flags of protest. My favorite is the “The Trouble with Librarians (for Andrea)” where Librarians are cast as the progenitors of closed information; they are “all closed books/with a couple of pages missing.”

He’s a poet, and I imagine him in some stacked room typing madly, or in transit, to and fro Chicago, scribbling on the back of brown paper bags. He works it. He's out there living poetry. Proof. My copy of the book included his hand-written edits, which reminds me that poetry isn’t confined to slick, glossy, university backed volumes, but pops and sizzles in small presses. Still. Technology has infiltrated poetry so that the most cash strapped starving artist/small press can create copy that appears in design and aesthetics as if it came from a cash rich publishing house. The Press of the 3rd Mind, a Chicago based indie, bound and printed Carli’s book, which means people touched, and handled, and cared for the book. For someone who is isolated from a local poetry rich community (the region is dripping with it, mind you, if you care a two hour drive through farmland and small towns) it is evidence that poetry is alive and kicking.

— SW

Maryanne Khan Reviews
Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*

Reading *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy. An enviable spareseness. . . . difficult to achieve. Yet it’s peppered with philosophies and references to religious icons etc (usually expressed in similes, whilst the rest is metaphor.) And yet, amongst the common, repetitious plainspeak statements of fact (’It was dark.’ ’It was very cold.’ and the like,) there are some compound words that make such combined nouns read like 'labels' of some sort - artifacts from a vanished world. To me,' livingroom' is different from 'living-room' or 'living room.' There are also a great many highly-specialised terms for things mechanical or architectural. 'The man' whose tale is being told, is very highly-educated, it seems. But like the krugerrands and the Spanish coin he finds, he just witnesses them and leaves them behind because they are now artifacts (as the words are) to describe a lost past in a present that has no use for them. A chilling sort of read, when no intrinsic (read exchangeable for money) value is left in anything. Reading *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy. An enviable spareseness. . . . difficult to achieve. Yet it's peppered with philosophies and references to religious icons etc (usually expressed in similes, whilst the rest is metaphor.) And yet, amongst the common, repetitious plainspeak statements of fact (’It was dark.’ ’It was very cold.’ and the like,) there are some compound words that make such combined nouns read like 'labels' of some sort - artifacts from a vanished world. To me,' livingroom' is different from 'living-room' or 'living room.' There are also a great many highly-specialised terms for things mechanical or architectural. 'The man' whose tale is being told, is very highly-educated, it seems. But like the krugerrands and the Spanish coin he finds, he just witnesses them and leaves them behind because they are now artifacts (as the words are) to describe a lost past in a present that has no use for them. A chilling sort of read, when no intrinsic (read exchangeable for money) value is left in anything.

— MK
Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the owl.

Its ability to see at night is legend among the Native Americans, and this attribute is invoked during ceremonies when an oracle of secret knowledge is required.

Here I bring to your attention that any question the owlets asked and that began with ‘why’ I answered with confidence, even as those questions became more complex and touched upon history, philosophy, and foreign languages. I answered until the owlets no longer asked questions, perhaps because the questions revealed too much. Only then did I, the oracle unconsulted, stop answering.

West African and Aboriginal Australian cultures view the owl as a messenger of secrets, kin to sorcerers, as well as companions to seers, mystics and medicine people.

Maybe that is also why the owlets stopped asking questions—they might see their questions and the answers in print, for writers are sorcerers of words, seers of truths, purveyors of medicines—and some truths, like most medicines, are downright unpleasant.

During medieval times in western and central Europe it was fabled that owls were actually priestesses or witches in disguise.

Now that the owlets have acquired their own wisdom in more complex sectors of the world beyond the nest, the sacred knowledge is no longer required. Wisdom is a commodity to be manufactured by experience, not something to be received, like a phrase in passive voice.

You see, ladies and gentlemen, I am the owl. I have been perfectly comfortable with this—it gave some sense to my constant search for knowledge, my books, my writing. It justified the time during which I had been answerer of questions.

So it was with a great deal of consternation that I watched my kindred, the Patagonian Horned Owl (Bubo virginianus) fighting with a species of long-legged guinea pig called a Mara, in order to gain control of burrows in the Patagonian plain to shelter from the roaring Patagonian wind. I am told that the Patagonian Owl is also called—most prosaically—the ‘Burrowing Owl.’

Owls in holes, I need to think about that.

The Symbolism of Owls
Fiction by Maryanne Khan

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Meleagris gallopavo  
(Wild Turkey)  
a short story by  
G.D. McFetridge  

The picture of the land we carry in our mind is always, or at least often, a bit out of date and not completely in focus. Perhaps the same could be said of life.

Houses clutter the pristine valley, some of them shabby, others self-indulgent and too large, lacking good taste and subtlety or any attempt to blend with the natural surroundings. The state of Montana expanded the two-lane highway into four lanes, and the wealthy land speculator scarred the mountain slopes with ski runs and a resort complex. What was once regional flavor is giving way to the corporate image of fast food and mini malls, none of which reflects the good old days of Mom & Pop and local small enterprise. But regardless of the changes I still love this valley, the Bitterroot Mountains to the west and Sapphire Mountains in the east; and I have a nice house, a house built by a man who had a sense of the environment and was not pretentious or overly self-indulgent.

My home sits three or four hundred feet above the valley floor, surrounded by ponderosa pines and overlooking a creek (crick), which winds along the valley’s eastern edge. The valley is anywhere from five to maybe eight miles wide and stretches to the base of the jagged Bitterroot Mountains, with their snowcapped peaks and plunging ravines. Put simply, I enjoy a wonderful view and privacy, and my nearest neighbor is several hundred yards to the west. His house, like mine, is neither pretentious nor an eyesore and it sits obtrusively on a small point of land. My driveway is gravel and my property—three and a third acres—borders large tracts of land to the east and southeast, which remain undeveloped and are a sanctuary for wild creatures.

I moved into my house in late July of last year. My first visitors were chipmunks. They realized I tossed out birdseed for the doves, and within a few weeks my yard went from zero chipmunks to at least a dozen. They like the rock wall I built to line the driveway because it offers countless little holes and hiding places. The land I live on is glacial moraine, leftover from the last several ice ages, and it’s rife with rocks ranging in size from tennis balls to basketballs—sometimes larger. I can’t dig a hole without hitting rocks, lots of them, and more rocks litter the ground. So one of my first projects was collecting rocks to clear the fields, making it easier to mow the weeds and wild grasses, to maintain firebreaks, and it made sense to use this resource to build walls—short walls without concrete.

Chipmunks are inquisitive and intelligent. They wasted little time investigating my downstairs garage and almost everything else, and it didn’t take long for them to discover where I kept the bag of birdseed. I had to place it inside a plastic trashcan or risk having them gnawing holes in the bag. Within a month, mule deer visited too—sometimes as many as sixteen, with a handsome seven-point buck and his four-point understudy. The deer, unlike the chipmunks, are wary and will move away if they see me, easily leaping over the old barbed wire fence to the southeast. I bought a bale of alfalfa hoping the deer would like it and stick around, but they only nibbled before deciding it wasn’t to their taste. They’re browsers more than they are grazers, although I don’t mean that in a scientific way because I don’t fully understand the eating habits of deer.

Along with the deer came wild turkeys. At first in small numbers, three, four, maybe six, and a mother with two youngsters. Then one day a flock of fourteen came through, females and several toms. I was glad to see them and tried to interest them in the birdseed. But they were suspicious and moved off when I stepped outside with my offering.

I constructed a feeder for the doves with long legs to keep the chipmunks from stealing the seeds, but they were clever and figured out how to climb up and stuff their cheeks. As summer ended, the doves flew south and I saw less of the turkeys. The deer were unpredictable, and I never knew when they would pass through. Only the chipmunks and a few magpies remained as my constant companions. After I’d built a wooden deck off the back of the house, the chipmunks investigated it top to bottom and learned to use the stairs. Chipmunks can spring upward three times their body length and jump down two or more feet without consequence. Gravity for chipmunks is not a major issue.

Come late September, I was working in the yard and noticed a large tom turkey walking across the yellow field to the southeast. He spotted me but didn’t seem nervous and made his way to the barbwire fence. I watched as he figured out how to negotiate the gap between the wires. Lone turkeys are largely the exception—unless it’s nesting time and the females leave the flock—so I figured this fellow had probably been vanquished by a dominant male or group of males, though I can’t say that for certain. From experience I knew bachelor toms, or jakes as some call them, stayed together three or four to a group, but I don’t ever recall seeing a single male.

I went inside and got a slice of bread and walked toward the tomb. He was in a dry grassy area about thirty yards from the house and didn’t seem worried about my approach. When I was within throwing distance I tossed balls of bread to him. He watched with curiosity before deciding to check what I was offering; he tentatively tried one, then another. I continued throwing the bread balls, each bringing him a little closer, and when I tossed the last piece he was less than twenty feet away.

The next day I bought a bag of cracked corn with sunflower seeds, knowing turkeys like it, and I hoped he would return. He did a couple days later and I scattered a handful
on the driveway. Within a week he was stopping by each morning and afternoon for his handout, and within a few days after that he was eating bread out of my hand. I was delighted. I live alone and even though I am reasonably comfortable with solitude, having a turkey visit was something I looked forward to. I named him Big Birdy and developed a special call, a high-pitch falsetto yelp that went: “Turkey, turkey, turk.” It didn’t take long until I could call him in from a hundred yards away.

Turkeys are more intelligent than they get credit for—at least wild turkeys—and within a week he’d climbed the stairs to the wood deck, peering through the double French doors into my study as if wondering where I was. A sign of his intelligence lay in his abstract ability to go beyond the simple association of food and me to the more complex association of the door and me. This action may not seem like much, but in my college days I studied behavioral psychology, and although basic operant conditioning comes easy for animals, understanding that the door through which I magically appeared was, in fact, symbolically representative of the food is a more advanced association.

In addition, his large brown eyes had a sense about them, a glimmer of what seemed to be recognition that went beyond the mechanical indifference of basic animal biology. Some might say I was anthropomorphizing, but I’m not sure I agree. He also made turkey talk when he approached. He had a particular sound in his repertoire that seemed communicative. It wasn’t a gobble or a call or a squawk, it was a friendly chirp. And he liked hanging around while I worked in the yard, preening his feathers, pecking at wild seeds and friendly chirp. And he liked hanging around while I worked in the yard, preening his feathers, pecking at wild seeds and watching me. I had the feeling he was lonely and enjoyed having someone to flock with, and despite my being a poor substitute for a female or a couple fellow toms, I was apparently better than nothing.

I don’t hunt but I enjoy the discipline of target shooting and have a collection of rifles, from a .17 caliber all the way to an 1886 45-70, with a .22, .204, .223 and 30-06 in between. I’m not a competition shooter but I’m pretty good, and at a hundred yards I can hold a pattern the size of silver dollar, and with the .204 or .223 I can reach out to two or three hundred yards and reliably hit something the size of a coffee can. The fearsome 30-06 hits larger targets at five hundred yards. It’s a rush, a feeling of power. The sphere of one’s influence grows considerably—the ability to exact retribution or protect prerogatives.

With the arrival of October, deer and turkey hunting season opens. Folks in Montana like their hunting. Humans have been hunters for hundreds of thousands of years, and I suspect in certain respects it’s ingrained. Perhaps someday in a distant future humans will evolve beyond instinctual or historically instilled behaviors. Maybe in a thousand years we’ll all be vegetarians, if we don’t kill the planet or ourselves in the meantime. Some people don’t like hunting but they don’t mind the butcher doing the dirty work. Other people object to hunting and are vegetarians or animal rights advocates. I think animal rights have a place in our world, though I find it strange that some fanatics worry more about animal rights than human rights. Even stranger, I’ve known animal-rights advocates who didn’t object to abortions. It gets complicated and I don’t pretend to have answers, but if there is a God, God created a theater of existence wherein life destroys life in order to survive. I guess God doesn’t mind killing. But I’m not interested in religious debates. Provided no one crosses me, I say live and let live; except I don’t think people should be cruel to animals, but I don’t expect this will become a reality in my lifetime. That’s that.

In Montana, if you own land and don’t want people hunting on it, the simplest way to communicate your policy is to spray orange patches of paint on tree trunks or nail orange pieces of wood on fences, etc. My land is not a place I would expect hunters to show up, but they are often down in the valley or northeast towards the Sapphire Mountains.

With each passing week I heard more distant gunfire, much of it the big booming sounds of large gauge shotguns—which means turkey hunters—and I worried about my feathered friend when he didn’t come around for two days. Then, on the morning of the third day, I was relieved when I saw Mr. Turkey walking through the field. But I also heard someone using a turkey call, not far from the creek running through the southwestern edge of my property, and I began worrying again.

I suspected it was a turkey call because it was too persistent and evenly timed. Female turkeys make their calls in short repetitive groupings, then fall silent for a while before starting back up. This call maintained constant intervals for close to a minute. I was afraid my friend the turkey would get tricked and think he had found a potential girlfriend, so I walked down to the slope that falls off sharply to the creek, thinking I’d spot the hunter; and if he was on the narrow strip of land just beyond the creek, I’d ask him not to hunt on my property. But when I couldn’t spot him, I figured he was in the large tract of land owned by the farmer who grew grass hay and alfalfa. My turkey friend would have to fend for himself. I wondered if feeding him, making him unaired of people was a mistake and I had done a disservice. But I liked having him come around, so maybe I was selfish. Sometimes living is too complicated. How does one arrive at the right way to act?

The morning of October twentieth was bright and blue and unusually warm (fifties), and I was in my study working on a new oil painting, a knock off of van Gogh’s The Sower. In high school I’d painted a little, and after moving to Montana I started again. It was therapeutic. The study door was open, a large wedge of sunlight slanting through, and I suddenly realized Mr. Turkey had invited himself inside. He was standing just over the threshold looking at me, his head cocked slightly, his large dark eyes sparkling in the light.

“You want your breakfast, I assume,” I said to him. He made his turkey talk, several small chirps. “Hang on.” I walked down the hall to the kitchen to get a slice of bread. When I returned and squatted down, he stepped forward, so I reached out and patted him gently on the back, which surprised him and he hurried for the doorway. “You’re all right, mate,” I said, in my Steve Irwin voice. He stopped. I offered the slice of bread. He ate it up, one big mouthful after another. I knew he wanted more food and went back to the kitchen to get a bowl of corn and sunflower seeds. By the time I’d come back, he’d wandered out-side to the wooden deck, and in the bright sunlight his feathers shone, dark gray-blue, black and brown, with highlights of iridescent bronze and deep emerald green. He’s a handsome big bird, two feet tall at the head, healthy and strong. He ate the cracked corn and seeds, and I went back to my painting. I had also placed a bowl of water for him, and after finishing the corn he took several long drinks. Two chipmunks sneaked up to get at the leftovers. He paid them no attention and walked back inside as if to make sense of the house. I wondered what
his little turkey brain was thinking. He craned his neck, peered, watched me, and then started preening his feathers. After fluffing himself up and shaking his feathers, he turned toward the door and went outside. I watched him walk down the stairs and out into the field.

“What a character,” I said to myself. Later in the afternoon I went to the workshop in my downstairs garage and sawed up some old plywood to make six one-foot squares. I painted them with day-glow orange spray paint I’d bought the previous day and then walked down to the creek to post them on trees at the edge of my property.

A week passed. Mr. Turkey and I enjoyed each other’s company; he ate well, I chuckled at his odd habits, and life was good in my little slice of paradise. Never dreamed I’d be lucky enough to find such a nice house in such beautiful surroundings. Never thought I would have enough money, but things went my way and not only did I have the house, I had resources enough to free me from the drudgery of forty-hour workweeks.

How that transpired, I won’t go into—it’s another story—so leave it at saying I got lucky. Between my music, painting, and tending my home and property I enjoyed an okay life. Except for the loneliness and the unsettling feelings that go along with having an existential view of life. And no religious opiates to ameliorate the isolated severity of consciousness. I faced myself daily, plumbed the highs and lows, and glimpsed the depths of what I really was.

The solitude is strange at first—at times even frightening—but as the months passed, I came to welcome it as an opportunity to understand who I was without the “me” that exists for the other. Because we are not only who we are in an elemental sense, we are beings who fall into various roles according to the people who surround or confront us. When there’s no one around, you are you without the influence of another person. An interesting shift in reality. A philosopher once said that without God all things are allowed. I say without our fellow humans, all things are allowed. You see, God doesn’t punish the wicked, doesn’t punish murders and such, man punishes in the name of God. Do you see my point?

In any case, I invested myself in friendship with the turkey, and with the other animals that came and went. I went to town once or twice a week, talked with the post office ladies, checkers at the supermarket or gas station, and of course old friends would call me or I’d call them, but on a day-to-day basis I was alone. I talked to myself quite a bit, which I suspect is normal, and I talked to Mr. Turkey. He was a good listener.

Toward the end of October, I heard the turkey call coming from the valley. This time I got out my binoculars and scanned the farmer’s green pastures. I saw a tall man, young by the look of him, stalking through the field, dressed in camouflage pants and jacket and carrying a fancy hunting bow. I watched as he hunched over and squeezed through the field, dressed and scanned the farmer’s green pastures. I saw a tall man, toward the end of October, I heard the turkey call. Oh, shit, I thought, he’s spotted my turkey. I started down the gentle slope leading from my house to the steep slope that fell off to the creek. I lost sight of the turkey, but I heard the reedy sound of the turkey call, and it was getting closer.

Making my way through a tangle of shrubs along the cut bank, I looked up and saw the hunter on the other side of the creek watching me. He was still on my property and he seemed annoyed.

“How you doing?” I said as I reached the edge of the creek.

“I’m doing alright.” He had a look that seemed to say: Who the hell are you?

So I figured I’d cut right to the chase. “This is private property.”

“I got permission from the owner,” he said, smirking. “Actually when you crossed that fence you came onto my land and you don’t have my permission and I don’t allow hunting.” I pointed at the fence. He glanced over his shoulder.

“That’s just a fence line for grazing animals. Property line’s the middle of the crick, old man Jenkins told me.”

This caught me off guard. I wasn’t sure where the line was; I’d never located the benchmarks, although I had a good idea, judging from the property map, that my land went just beyond the creek.

“Well …” I said, giving myself time to think. “… I don’t have a map here in my hand, but let’s put it this way. For the time being we’ll assume you’re right, but I don’t want you crossing the creek to hunt. Because I know this side is my property. Let’s just let it go at that.”

“Yeah, whatever.” He turned and headed upstream, which took him away from my land. I was satisfied but decided I would eventually hire a survey team to find the exact benchmarks. Land is land, and I was damn sure going to get clear on what was or wasn’t mine. A man’s home is his castle.

Later that day my turkey buddy showed up at his usual time and I gave him a slice of bread and a bowl of corn and sunflower seeds, and I warned him to stay close to my house, and I really wished he could understand. There was something very noble about him, despite his strange baldhead, his red bumpy turkey skin and the hair-like feathers growing from the protrusion on top of his head. Some people say turkeys are ugly and stupid, but I saw something special in his eyes, a strange sentience and an unlikely intelligence.

He wasn’t just a dumb turkey, maybe he was descended from dinosaurs, fierce raptors. Seventy million years ago his distant cousins roamed the untamed earth striking fear in lesser beasts. Raptors according to scientists had large brains and probably hunted in packs, and they might have had simple forms of communication. If the giant meteor had missed Earth, maybe they’d have evolved into something amazing.

A light snow fell on the morning of the twenty-seventh and I slept in late. I think a nasty little depression was moving in on me. Probably a genetic tendency combined with my difficult childhood, exacerbated by the foolish lifestyle I’d cultivated during my self-destructive days. And because I’d slept in late, Mr. Turkey was wondering what was up. While I was heating water for my coffee I heard a loud “gobble, gobble” coming from the front of the house. My house has two stories ... sort of. And what I mean by that is that the bottom half is cut into the slope of the hill, six feet deep at the back. The framing is built on concrete stem walls and bottom half is the garage.

The living half of the house is atop the garage, and to access the front door I walk up two flights of stairs arriving at
a wooden landing. In the light snow on the stairs I saw the
turkey's footprints. In his impatience to discover why he
wasn't getting breakfast he'd climbed up and then gone back
down—he has large feet, three times the size of a chicken. I
opened the door and saw him standing at the foot of the
stairs.

I called: “Turkey, turkey, turk.” He looked at me
and then started back up the stairs.

I gave him extra bread. Once again he had demon-
strated superior intelligence. I'd never fed him at the front
doors, only at the back, but he had made another complex as-
association, realizing I came and went through more than one
doors, and if one door didn't provide food, he'd try another.

What an amazing bird.

The following day I bought six trees. The nursery
had a fall sale. Three cottonwoods and three flickering as-
pons, which I would plant along the driveway to add color to
the fall. Not only was I living in my own little paradise, it
was a paradise I could continually improve. Of course dig-
ning the holes would not be easy, and I wanted deep holes
with room for lots of humus. Here's how I did it: First I'd
start with a shallow hole about five or six inches deep, then
I'd fill it with water and start digging the next hole, and so
on. By the time I had dug the last hole, the water in the first
hole had soaked in and loosened the soil.

I was planting the third tree when I noticed some-
thing moving out of the corner of my eye, on my side of the
fence line, a ways down the slope toward the creek. I didn't
have my glasses and things were a bit blurry, so I squinted.
It was Mr. Turkey, earlier than usual, and as I watched him
I noticed something wasn't right; he wasn't walking with his
usual stride, that odd contrast of top-heaviness and grace.
“Turkey, turk,” I called out. He stopped. I walked toward
him, and as I got closer I notice something protruding from
his side.

“Oh, shit,” I said, and realized an arrow was drag-
ning behind him. It looked like it had hit him in the shoulder
just under his wing and passed almost completely through so
that only the feathered end showed at one side and the long
bloodied shaft at the other.

“Goddammit!” I yelled.

When I was close enough to reach out, he turned as
if to run away, but I talked to him in my turkey voice and he
looked at me. “Let me help you,” I said. “Don't be afraid.”
I bent over and slowly leaned forward and then ex-
tended my hands toward him. He didn't react, he kept look-
ing at me through his large dark-brown eyes, as if hoping I
could somehow help him. And I know it sounds crazy but I
swear it's true. I gently touched his back and placed my
other hand under his breastbone and lifted him. By moving
slowly in increments, I managed to gather him up against my
chest. The arrow point was very sharp and had torn nasty
gashes in him; blood was all over my white T-shirt.

I didn't know what to do. Take him to a veterinari-
an? Pull the arrow out? I felt helpless and desperate. Then
I heard a voice. “Hey, that's my kill you got there.”

It was the same man I had confronted before.

“Your're on my land,” I shouted.
He spat a mouthful of tobacco juice. “What's your
problem, man?”

“You're trespassing—get the hell off my property.”

“I want my bird.”

I felt the turkey's body going limp in my arms.

Blood was everywhere. He was bleeding to death. I looked in
his eyes for a moment and thought I saw something almost
human, gratitude maybe, some sort of ineffable acknowled-
gment, and a look that somehow crossed the chasm separating
us. Then his neck went limp, his head fell to his chest, and I
knew he'd passed—I felt the death quiver. So I set him down
in the wild yellow grasses.

“I shot him down on the flats, in old man Jenkins' 
field and not on your property. He made a good run ... that's
all.”

It didn't matter whether I believed him or not. Part of
me wanted to attack with my fists or with a stick or some-
thing, but he was younger and larger than me and I figured
winning out in a brawl was a long shot.

“Go ahead, take him. He's all yours,” I said. “Just get
the hell out of my sight.”

The hunter gave me a look and gestured with his free
hand. “Glad we worked it out, no hard feelings. Right?”

“Sure. But get off my land.”

“It's just a stupid turkey, man.”

I headed back to my house. Once inside I had an
revelation, an sense of something I'd never before conceived;
justice does not occur of its own, it requires decisive action.
Perhaps destiny had taken the reins and what was about to
happen was meant to happen—the inertia of it irresistible.
In some sort of oblique sense it was an unlikely feeling of free-
dom, freedom to do the very thing that is forbidden.

So I went to the rifle closet, grabbed my .223 and
loaded a single round. From the wooden deck I watched the
hunter remove the arrow, toss my friend over his shoulder and
walk downslope toward the creek. I rested the rifle on the 2 x
4 railing and set the crosshairs below the man's shoulder
blade, just left of center. I hesitated a moment ... and then I
pulled the trigger.

The .45-grain bullet travels at 3,300 feet per second,
about Mach-3, faster than a jet fighter, and the impact sent
wave-like ripples through the camouflage jacket and knocked
the man forward. He yelped, a reflexive, primeval sound, be-
fore tumbling forward in an awkward motion. The polymer-
tipped bullet had exploded like shrapnel inside his chest, and
like my friend the turkey he would bleed out in a matter of
minutes.

“Fuck him,” I said aloud. I felt calm, relieved, no
sense of panic, no remorse. It's simply a matter of thinking
clearly when thinking clearly seems almost impossible to do.
There weren't witnesses and gunfire in rural Montana goes off
all the time. Nobody would think twice, never even scratch
their head or blink an eye.

But one thing was certain—everything had changed.
If worse came to worst, I suppose I could leave my home and
head east to the Dakotas or north to the arctic plains of Can-
da. I could just disappear. Because sometimes there are
bridges that only go in one direction, like a threshold between
worlds; and I knew there were many questions that would re-
main just out of focus, unanswered or even asked.

End
The Nature of Architecture
A short story by
Tomás Martin

Prompted by a small student bet, and made possible by obeying physical laws, a balanced franc piece was successfully rolled down the stairwell banister of Strasbourg’s University Palace. At the bottom, the coin hopped off and made its way into Béranger’s lecture hall, where the architecture professor collected up the still wheeling franc before it could wobble to a “heads or tails.” This unthinking stop was unfortunate, as he could have more than used any example at all of decision-making: his fiancée was in New York with a lucrative job offer and intended on leaving the old, stone weight of eastern France behind, and settling in the modern, glasslightness of Manhattan – with or without him. Fully aware of the varying “with or without” repercussions, but ignorant of the irony of an ambivalent coin, Béranger maintained the franc in his hand, curled his arm around a cracked-leather briefcase, and walked out of the empty classroom. He made his way down the banistered flight of marble stairs, through a set of carved-wood, exit doors and took to the direction of the Ancient Gayot Market Square, where he could sit at a café and write to his fiancée the letter of his intentions. At the edge of campus, he permitted himself a look back at the eighteenth-century University Palace feeling even more torn than before – following his fiancée to New York would mean, amongst many things, parting with this cherished, architectural amalgam of Franco-German politics. It would most likely fade into a simple longing.

The professor always taught his students that the nature of architecture was to satisfy human needs and wants while resisting the Earth’s gravity. Accordingly, his fiancée’s New York was comprised of an architecture of financial and social climbing. Béranger’s pessimistic New York was comprised of an architecture of speciously durable, load-bearing pylons, which despite their current resistance to gravity, would eventually crumble. In his professional opinion, this modern, American city was a flimsy verticality of glass visually multiplied by the reflection of neighboring skyscrapers while Strasbourg was an impossibly everlasting stronghold of red and black stone. Furthermore, in the Alsatian’s eyes, whereas all New York skyscrapers are imaginations of light and money, Strasbourg’s “skyscraper,” the medieval, one hundred and forty-two meter tall Cathedral of Our Lady, was an imagination of something altogether different: salvation and eternity. Béranger was not a man of Faith, but he was loath to part with this architecturally-correct implementation of height – an implementation of form and function, which he passed by everyday on his way to class and yet never took for granted. Given these thorough understandings, he had to ask himself the only question that really mattered: if I honestly love my fiancée enough to move to New York and to leave behind the Alsace of my birth, my family and my university, will I ever be able to make sense of myself in such an egotistical city of “height and fall?” He hardly knew the answer, but hoped that it would just come to him as he wrote to his intractable Joséphine. And as he clung to this hope in a slumbering walk of displeasure, he arrived at his destination away from campus.

The footprint and a few scattered remains of a medieval courtyard, the Ancient Gayot Market Square was a public social space, which had been converted from a historical bread and flour market into a modern cluster of swanky “see and be seen” cafés. As for this scene of what were mingling, upwardly-mobile twenty-something’s, Béranger couldn’t have given a damn less, but his romantic love for the old square and its view of the cathedral above made him a regular at the trendy Café Mies. However, unlike the irony of the undecided coin, the irony of the Alsatian social-climbers ignoring an adjacent, architectural height – as opposed to his social-climbing fiancée who was calculatingly aware of moneyed, New York, architectural height – wasn’t lost on him. Irony or not, the professor had a decision to make, and his deep affection for the former market in which he was now seated didn’t make it any easier.

Looking around from the patio of the unfortunately trendy Café Mies, the Alsatian native saw in Gayot yet another potential, future longing – it shouldn’t have had to fade into such, but he was willing to accept some losses if he was to make his pending marriage work, or so he convinced himself rather quickly. This being the case, and as he had hoped as well, the answer to the question of his devotion seemed to wrap up nearly before the letter had begun: Béranger would join her and work out some faculty position or another somewhere in New York. He fluttered the last lines on the page, “Joséphine, I have some concerns, but I accept the situation. Don’t change a thing, I’ll be there soon.” It was done. He would abandon a life that made sense to him – family, city, culture, and teaching job – for a life, which he couldn’t help but equate to dishonest architecture and its subversion of function. Béranger signed away the letter to Joséphine, left a twenty-franc bill on the café table, and feeling prematurely nostalgic, set off for a visit with the cathedral, though in truth, this one might very well have been the last.

In the church square, the architecture professor stared up at Our Lady’s unusually singular tower – apparently one, rather than the customary two, was all that the buttresses and the nave could support against opposing gravity. Béranger directed himself to the north transept of the church and took a quick breath in preparation for the hundreds of steps that it would take to reach the tip of the tower. Once there and pleasingly winded, he looked out across the western flood plain of the Rhine to the French, Vosges Mountains, and then east to their sister formation in Germany. Over time, the River had created and then divided one people into two countries; Béranger always felt some form of regret for this. And as this might have been a last opportunity to lament, or perhaps appreciate such a passing to his people, Béranger stretched out over the tower railing a little more than permit-
ted by the posted rules. His awkward position dislodged the recently collected franc piece from his pocket, allowing it to drop with a dinging, which caught the attention of a caretaker. Noting the unacceptable lean of Béranger, he requested him to come back somewhat. But instead, he extended himself even more in order to better consider the two shredded sides of the Rhine—it still wasn’t enough. In the least tenable angle possible, he counterbalanced himself further, though this time looking down to the crowds of tourists in the cathedral’s cobblestoned square below. There, was where Béranger saw his destiny.
Tripoli International Poetry Festival

28-30 April 2012
Dar Al-Faqih Hassan
With the cooperation of the Arete Foundation
The essential
Not the theory the statement not the roundabout confusions
Not Eliot not Pound not some other no matter who
Core-soul of core
Poem without accruements of ‘poetry’
A provoking word indifferent to what it provokes
Not even Dante its jury
Not even Whitman as flesh-brother to the line it follows
Citing nothing to support it
No justification and certainly no apology
But soul-core in naked splendour
Exact
Exacting
So pure in itself its shadow is light
If you know a page on which this can be written I’ll attempt to write it

1: Sappho

Speak of me

(You will speak of me)

being what I am

I am what I am

(I could never be somebody/anyone else)

know me if you dare.

2: A City Of Greeks
I promised I wouldn’t go back there in a poem.
I’d go there of course: some island, harbour or jetty I’d stand on in the last light before dusk and smoke more cigarettes than I’m allowed; look out at the sea and say why did I leave when in fact I’ve never left; nor would I be some returned exile or refugee looking for shelter for I’d count myself one of those whose intimacy with the land gave him the right to look and say
There are stories in other language less eloquent than yours but you can believe them.
That the Sibyl was beaten down by one to whom, for once, she was forced to speak
With an unaccustomed clarity and this is what she said

(continued, next page)
So, you have survived. Good. It does you credit. But even that’s not enough. 
Your fate is your fate and you can’t escape it so don’t even try. 
You think war is behind you but what do you think is waiting for you? 
That’s right – war. Another Achilles, petitions to cities and peoples; 
And if a bride was abducted in the past another will be in the future. 
Whatever you have known you will know again and that should be your comfort. 
For whatever happens the road you must take will not be closed to you 
And you will find what you need to find in a welcoming city of Greeks.

3: The Grain Within The Granit
A word wedged into another, a stone wedged between two more 
You handle the stone but the wall composes itself, the word has its own suddenness 
There are no predictions only the surge towards luminosity 
This is happening, you cannot deny it, don’t even think you can

Amen –but who says it Christ-like without judgement? 
And Lorca’s template as valid as ever with the as-yet unseen waiting to enter 
The tribe has made denials but some still hold to the old convictions of *decoding stanzas and silence* 
When earth sings we listen that its breath be on our breath

Everything is up for re-negotiation 
Confusion and music 
Now the forbidden texts are water stroking your thighs 
Utterance as a kiss 
Credo of *I am waiting*....
Only here and thus do we dwell

One saw a shadow, one did not -how do you tell a shadow from its source? 
Or say that the ferry-boat’s departure has no influence on those left behind? 
The world’s mirror, a cubist painting in perpetual motion like a prayer-wheel spun 
Yet no mockery is brought to the world nor are the men nor women dismissive of the questions you come with 
If the answer is one of a sparse Spartan simplicity then it is Greek for the world as it is which is the world as it is

Out of the tang of immanence a gull appears 
A fisherman is taut with nets in his hands 
You say *I’ll make a few necessary notations* 
Logicians gather to tell you why you have not seen what you saw

I plot a celebration others plot death 
These leaves will not enter oblivion 
The heart a hunter’s trophy in a showcase of rotting feathers as if Sappho singing through that woman’s song could be intimidated into silence 
A bird’s foretaste of thunder alerts me 
Let the poem outlive its shadow when there is no sun there to cast one

History hobbles –yet we are here, durable, resilient beyond plotting 
Palpable shadows by a clutch of trees 
Making for these children a boat of leaves that they be ferryman to themselves

(continued, next page)
Who makes water's music into these splendid passions?
The cadence of night lightning, the blabbering of the maimed
Out of what landscape did Homer arrive? What landscape did he see which only he could see?
Such otherness not hidden but speakable (though I have exhausted memory to the point of emptiness)
Grief is valid but does not persuade the moon to cancel its appointment with our intentions
Exhausted eyes look with expectation towards a harbour

Let only sweet presumptions sustain me
Luminous day in which the doubt of one sinner is enough to undo the authority of hell
Come I say to the harbour-poet let us leave together
He smiles but says nothing – his silence an answer no answer can give

Thus whirl me now ye stars to a new alliance that I might sing in passion, fire, wild words,
bring liquid-fire to the world
And now you will ask if this is requiem or rhapsody where the words interlace like lovers in a field who
spill gold seed upon the seed the earth is nourished by
Music is playing through a hollow-reed flute
Listen if you dare
Dare if you don’t

Everything is possible

The grain within the granite remains
The wave maintains a wave's rhythm
The poem stands before us as a messenger asking that we examine its purse

Yet What’s needed now is monstrous love to kill so as to renew
A moment bypassing happiness, sorrow, and the gravities of despair
That human cycle in which you are allowed to pause but not allowed to stop

The world is rectifying itself from No to Yes
Two poachers take the bullion of gleaming fish into their nets saying what we have taken from the river
you will take from us.
The roots of Rilke’s hair tingle as does ours who are his would-be heirs in ragged shadows cast upon the
floor
At which he smiles as if to say:

I could have, have told you this
So say what you will, and say it you will, but it will never be enough

Is, not is, etc. etc.
Our poems caress the tears of history in which we live and are?

(continued, next page)
4: Borges / Athens

I

Hard to think of anywhere so unlike Piraeus
Or anyone so unlike Sophocles
Yet no one could dispute including him here

Or anywhere which says Athens can be found anywhere
Meaning you find what you look for

Where a blind man in a library is as pertinent to history
As the chronicle of Herodias or any other written witness
Their being ‘certain features’ only to be seen in dark

Thus we are situated in Buenos Aires, early 20th century.
As pertinent or as unlikely a site as any is or might be
When talking of a city which no city has yet been

II

Has some animal escaped its cage?
Some magus thrown his cape over the world?
Some Sybil-like Sybil taken to uttering new blabberings?

When there is no precedent we look to horror
Or religion. The truth however, if I can say ‘truth’,
Is that one man sees what another does not

And tells the world what parables it is composed of

So where are we now but in the Athens we have sought to occupy
Or at least align ourselves with

Not as one of its tepid citizens
But as one who asks
Would you like to know what I know?

III

What matters is that the mirror you hold up to the world
Be free of any imposed expectation. A naked glass
For the naked soul? What else? What else might there be
To show to ourselves for what we are? Simple? No,
It’s not simple and never has been. Dawn finds you
At a deserted street corner. Night is still perpetuating itself
So not everything it brings is desirable. Simply put
What happens next is not up to you. The night has not
Outlived itself. There are still music and dreams unfolding
Like smoke from apartment buildings. Nothing is
Definitive and everything is possible. Yet for ever fact admitted
Another is refused. A telephone rings but no one answers.
The bicycle tilted by a street lamp seems invested with grief. What’s happening? You know but don’t know. You look In the mirror but its nudity answers your own. Now you know. This is the dark rich life of life before the stars disappear. And it is neither night nor morning. Neither a condemnation Nor an approval. No, it’s you at a crossroads so where will you Go next? You ask the mirror but it does not reply. Whatever it knows You don’t.

Might you, might I, have come by other means to this moment? Might we have excluded the moon, history, the demands of the dead? Ghosts are more tangible than knowledge. My family’s history Shows this but this is not the moment to speak of it. Death is as Unwinding as smoke. A history is never finished. A map never Understood when a child adds a fantastic doodle to the street-plan Of the heart. Such things are pertinent. Are vital. Are unending Because, albeit unknowingly, they are a continuation the mirror Is aware of and so jealously guards. We trespass on the living We trespass on the dead. This is our right, our requirement, the art Of which is not to make of it a crime. Reality is the counter Bribe. It says: the moon is not lucid enough for your needs But I am for I give you freedom and flesh and, of course, Forgetfulness. So forget this crossroads. Forget this mirror. Forget the seduction by that yellow rose of your heart.

But the heart does not forget, cannot and will not Skewered as it is on tenement walls with your name in blood Scrawled by some shards of glass.

5: At The Grave Of Kazantzakis

The stillness was splendid. Not one bombastic voice nor backfiring lorry from nearby streets. The minaret some blocks away visible but not incongruous. A Buddha-approved silence. A befitting testimony. What should be said when nothing needs to be said? Nothing was said as we read *I am free, I fear nothing, I hope for nothing.* Read that ye citizens And live.

6: Aegean

Atrus, Proteus, I do not accuse *IT*, I cite possible names My tears are my memories of you falling from my eyes Time, wounding time, is water’s first metaphor Seneca says it is the Secret Source Different versions are given by Jason and Ulysses Euphrates, Ganges, I cite possible names Remember me, I swam in you As did so many others who were indolent or pure Or indolent and pure.

(continued, next page)
7: Seferis

Wherever I go Greece keeps wounding me

I

They took my house, they took my past. 
Stateless now I compose an intangible history
Which no one can rob.

Violets and jasmine grew in pots, their innocence was beyond dispute, 
Their colours adding glory to the world; so that even the sun hesitated 
To pass by without admiring them. They were living lessons 
In the values of simplicity; how something’s need to be nothing but 
Themselves; how even fragile identities were essential; how even 
The brown glazed pots were part of the city’s beguiling authority. 
The life they led was not dependent on me. If I had my business 
Then so did they. Not interfering with the other nor imposing 
Conditions of colours and shapes. We lived respectful of the differences 
Which bound us. Friends said we began to resemble each other.

But peaces—the peace as we lived it; the serenity of evenings 
On which neighbours gathered to talk to each other; the rush 
Of children towards a scatterings of nightingales or larks; 
The laughter, sometimes bawdy, of women sharing private jokes; 
How could we suspect it was a prelude to destruction? In all 
Our laughter we made no calculations that the perfect sum of the world 
Would be an abomination to others, a crime against which 
Not even Biblical lamentations prepared us.

Now my memories are stripped back to the barest essentials; 
Violets and jasmine, children and larks, a poem or two from Ritos 
And a line from Kazantzakis: what else have I to take to the world? 
What else have I to step into changing waters with 
Except two empty pots stamped with the date: April 21st, 1967?

II

God-speak is cryptic. 
Greece speaks the solid language of itself. 
The ‘past’ is merely water’s disguise for the present. 
As Heraclites knew who comes now with nets in his hand and a sprig of basil in his hair and casually 
asks are we going swimming today?

III

Everybody saw it but no one believed it. 
Statues took to bowing low before the lilies. 
Even in the museums the erotic shivering shuddered the stones 
And the anxious looks often exchanged between couples 
Turned to sweet lechery and expectation

(continued, next page)
Priests called it an aberration
Physiologists insisted nothing had occurred
Politicians drafted news laws against it

But the lovers—ah, the lovers knew
That the blood in their veins was the pulse of the world
And that flesh more holy than prohibition

And so it continued.

In secret and silence
In side-chapels hidden among trees
The new believers gathered to celebrate
Rites the traditions were unable to equal or proscribe

And so, though everyone saw it and no one believed it
The new heresy spread through fingertips and vines
Wound about the trellis of those willing, human hearts

IV

Sails
Between here and horizon
Suppositions as to who the boatman might be
Some shipwreck survivor
Some forgotten one
Perhaps one for whom we have not sufficient syllables
It mattered
It didn’t matter
The world was happening
That was all
Nothing spectacular
Nothing alarming
Merely a boat returning to a harbour Odysseus once set out from

V

I have everything to say but no means of saying it
Other men have used all my words
Women have taken the vowels of my heart

I do not own the sky
Larks scatter when I approach
The lily reserves its colour for others

I see what the world allows me to see
I have my suspicions but cannot prove them

I could go on but what can I say that has not been said somewhere else?

I only have that country which always eludes me:
Wherever I go Greece keeps wounding me.

(continued, next page)
8: Beyond The Open Window

1

Everything depends on the possibilities within itself
Or within you as you witness from a given angle
A side-shape of a cube, a shaft of its light

What inquiry does a leaf need to make of the oak?
What explanation does a shadow need to ask of itself?

The poem is its own before it is yours
Yet without that inquiry, without that question
What shadow would an oak-leaf cast into the world?

*Riverrun, riverrun*, the sap is entering the world
With its own credentials and we are its witness

Or should be where others have failed to see
The Parthenon shadow, the Christ-empty tomb

2

What I wasn't prepared for was to see, *exactly*, what I expected to see
Harbour
Boats, ferries, funnels and sails
The long-robed priest
The beautiful handmade earrings I bought on the spur of the moment for my wife
The coffee brewed and sweetened as Greek coffee should be
The shuffling tourists
The extravagant flowerpot on a window sill I took a photograph of, out of focus, but somehow more pertinent, more alive, more essential, than would have been the clinically-taken souvenir postcard

Whatever you look for you find
What you bring with you shows itself to you in the place you expect to see it
Therefore Greece was Greece and no less than that and the joy was the fact that it was so

By now you're quoting to yourself scrape of texts and phrases of prose which are as natural as sunlight

The Turkish bath-house at Gania harbour showed that history could reconcile every anomaly it is composed of without appearing bothersome or off-balance

A woman was about to show her breasts to the world in a way that would have scandalized the fathers – but who, who I ask you, has any authority to cancel the beauty which the world exposes of itself?

I don't care if I'm a voyeur
I love to see what I look to see
I now know as much about the Aegean as any man does

And eating a platter of mixed fish as the shadows took over their portion of creation held another *exact-ness* which needs neither description nor explanation

When the world is what it is then the world is what it is

(continued, next page)
You make love to your wife to the rhythms of sunrise in a room of carved wood and a most inviting bed

Suddenly (or was it always so) her body is Greece—not as metaphor, nor parallel, not some substitute for something more human that I have no name for, but Greece in itself as I wanted it to be and found in her

Was this known to the world?
Did some passer-by hear the love-cries of flesh sanctifying the day beyond all condemnation?

What do I know and what do I care?

Only she and that harbour were Greece to me and nothing, nothing else mattered
Neither then nor now
The out-of-focus photograph kept with those others of fountains and caves and a monastery where the nuns sold lace

Look for whatever you want but look for love first
Let the gravity of the wife hold you to the world
Not to the next one nor the one after that but this one, this one, the here and now world of harbours and sails, funnels and priests, of her love-cry fluttering in your arms

The way the swallows did, and now do, beyond the open window

9: “What Can’t Be Translated Must Be Invented”

Marble
Porous stone
Human flesh
Which is the mask?

Women were dancing
The mountain a necessary mask of creation
When you write of the god you are writing of an orgy in which the fragments of personality, identity, dislocations and longings, form more than the sum of themselves

Song and flesh
The past achieves itself in the present
Orpheus sings for Eurydice
But Eurydice sings also

Women were dancing
Nothing of the past was required by the present
Love needed neither silence nor expression
The white page needed nothing for it was not blank
Body witnessed body
Shudderings and murmurings
Something has begun which has begun before

Song and flesh
A stone split open shows a stone
Is there a mountain?
Is there a god?
Or a mask Orpheus covers the nudity of creation with?
I don’t know and have no preference for what the answer might be
Flesh and song are enough
I need nothing else

I throw away useless, worn-out masks
I sing a nakedness she willingly shows

**10: From The Greek Anthology**

1
A battle-field is easy. You win or you lose. It’s as simple as that. Words are harder. You never know the end nor what it will be. You think you’ve won but you haven’t. You think you’ll win but you won’t.

Pressing the nib like a spear through the page—red-ink and black-blood to write the chronicles with

The lords of misrule easily satisfied, the lady muse most rightfully demanding

War and poetry—they would seem to be inimical, yet for both, to engage in both, I have to adopt similar attitudes

Not that tactics are always successful. You can only guess what the enemy or the goddess might be up to. You plot and make plans. But others are doing so also

Everything depends on what happens next.

You think you’ll win but you won’t.

2
Forget the ornaments—they are false, I tell you, false! Her nakedness is enough to tell creation what it already knows—that it has nothing to match her

And don’t talk about sheep-herders or princesses in certain gardens and pools as if I didn’t already know those stories or imagine they contained something I’ve unwittingly overlooked

I haven’t

I’ve seen what’s to been seen and it’s not worth a toss compared to what she is and if you don’t see this then I pity you

The hard-on you have when you dream is authentic. You can tell yourself it’s for your wife or that it only a dream, but you and I know better

You have dreamt of her stars and her glittering dew and longed to drink it on your tongue

3
I laugh because the tragedy is so comical

She sells roses and verses but will bed with you for a penny; he calls the wine-god to bless his laughable drunkenness as ritual or vision; as for the priests—pay them enough and they’ll sanctify anything you do

As for myself—here I come with an empty jar for the gods because that it all I have

(continued, next page)
I'm not drunk but I'll soon be dead. That's life's most irreversible end. Do what you like, then do it again – what does life care? You're food for worms and know it. However (and there is always an 'however') life in itself is not without its rightful, splendid joys

Friendship and love, especially love, why I'll even take death on its own terms if that's the price for being able to love and be loved

Even the dark earth carries a 'certain splendour'. Poets aim for it like a general seeking a weak point in his enemies' defence

And I have heard it said that the tactics for one are equally applicable to the other

But I have never been to war, never written a verse, and even my 'morbidity' is something I've learned to acquire from others

As for myself –well, I live here and now; a life that no one would write about nor do I want them to

I have a jug, I have that wench –all the rest is sterile speculation I forget about when looking at her thighs

I'm blathering, it's all I can do where others will prove to be the ageless mouth of the world

11: Argonutika
Then to the sea
The ships' seeing-eye as my eye
The planned possessions
The expectant crew
I thinking I have never been in better company
And I thought this will be the signature I shape my house to
At which I mistook the laughter of the sea for approval
Fixated as I was on returning with the treasure of the sun

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Lost Moderns
(when Poetry left a generation behind)

It long ago occurred to me that, what with the radical departure from tradition represented by Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, a great number of worthy writers just disappeared from the record. Rupert Brooke died, John Masefield faded from view, Edna St. Vincent Millay just disappeared from the record. Rupert Brooke died, Pound and T. S. Eliot, a great number of worthy writers — who had started out being lionized for her verse — was marginalized as someone who wrote in forms which were suddenly declared passé. This is a shame, really, though if you try you can sometimes find a volume by one of them at a used bookshop that specializes in literary works.


Of the seventy-eight poems included in this slender volume, there is a single poem (each) from Archibald MacLeish, A.E., John Hall Wheelock, Vita Sackville-West, Conrad Aiken, Babette Deutsch, D. H. Lawrence, Alfred Noyes, and Witter Bynner. Of the remaining sixty-five poems, G. K. Chesterton is remembered for his mysteries, Van Doren for his having been an influential teacher of John Berryman, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and Thomas Merton (and as the father of Carl van Doren, who participated in the rigged television game show, Twenty-One), Robert Nathan for having written the films “The Bishop’s Wife” and “Portrait of Jenny,” and R. P. Tristram Coffin for having won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1936. Many have names which sound familiar, but few except relatives or students at schools with awards named for them will recall them at all. And that’s a shame.

A smattering of fair-use excerpts will illustrate that these poets dealt with the same themes as their more famous counterparts; that they were thought by their peers to have penned the best poems of the year speaks to what, at least, editors of their generation believed would be lasting contributions to the world’s verse.

From Roy Campbell’s page-and-a-half poem, “Horses on the Camargue”

In the grey wastes of dread,
The haunt of shattered gulls where nothing moves
But in a shroud of silence like the dead,
I heard a sudden harmony of hooves,
And, turning, saw afar
A hundred snowy horses unconfined,
The silver runaways of Neptune’s car
Racing, spray-curled, like waves before the wind.

That Campbell, a vocal opponent of racism in his native South Africa, laces his poem with combinations of words which would not make sense in anything other than a poem (“shattered gulls” and “sudden harmony” for instance) with allusions to and understanding of classical mythology (Neptune, the Roman Poseidon, is shown in mosaics and frescos in a chariot being drawn by horses precisely because tidal waves in the Mediterranean were associated with earthquakes, thought to be horses running under the sea), suggests that there is, to the poet, a linkage between the salt wastes of the Rhone delta and the desolation of a battlefield in World War One. Campbell, however, was staunchly anti-communist at a time when the literary world had not yet become disenchanted with Stalin, and he became a supporter of Franco who only broke with the dictator when Franco allied himself with Hitler and Mussolini. Nonetheless, his work was highly regarded by Eliot (and Pound, of course), and he participated actively in World War Two, first as a home guard and, later, enlisting for active duty even though too old and unfit for duty from his osteoarthritis, participated in the British Army in Africa and was about to be deployed to Burma when he was injured in a motorcycle accident, and cashiered out of service. He became acquainted with C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, and was a frequent attendee at meetings of the Inklings.

Bernice Kenyon’s poem “Quiet” would hardly suffer from comparison to Frost.

Out of confusion, out of conflicting voices,
My song was woven. Forever in my head
The wild sounds were drawn together, and twisted
Into a moving music, a secret language thread
Which the mind followed, wanting a far ending —
Wanting a joy, like silence. Now the bright strength
Of the song is done; I am done with all confusion;
The thread is spun to its length.
Harriett Monroe, reviewing Ms. Kenyon's second collection, *Meridien: Poems 1923-1932* in *Poetry* (April, 1934), writes that Ms. Kenyon's work is "technically proficient" if somewhat "journalistic," but since she seems critical that so many of Ms. Kenyon's poems first appeared in newspapers rather than literary magazines, perhaps this criticism reflects more of Ms. Monroe's particular bias than a real critique of the work itself.

Oliver Jenkins wrote, in his poem "New England Coast,"

People who live along this sturdy coast
Revere the sound of water in their ears;
When they go inland they are spirits lost
Within a labyrinth of lonely fears
And forlorn yearnings. O most bitter years
Away from water and its mighty thunder!
Only to gaze again at sea-worn piers,
And look upon the water swirling under,
Were better than a lifetime's plunder.

and follows by several pages Evelyn Scott's "Voyage"

Upright and proud and isolate,
The mast; already past, the slow land.
Gulls cleave the sky
Into clean remnants of a lost earth motion;
The hooting gulls
That are the carrion angels of the ocean....

Moon, fine as a shrill whip,
Lashes the clouds,
Shreds gloomy gold
From bitter tendril curled,
Excites a sodden world
To moving tremors.
I feel the waters sway with me.
And all the giddy universe with stars
Beats vastly, like a pale-flapped banner.

Evelyn, though a regular contributor to the pages of Poetry, fared little better than Ms. Kenyon as styles changed. Where Ms. Monroe and her coterie had lionized Ms. Scott in the teens of the twentieth century, by the thirties their opinion was a little less fervid.

Another Modern poet who has been, I think it is fair to say, nearly forgotten, is Paul Scott Mowrer, whose later volume of poetry, *High Mountain Pond* (The Golden Quill Press, Francestown, NH) I browse when I feel the need for the mountains and greenery of northern New England. From the title poem:

This pond of jade, cloud-shadowed into mauve,
Breeze-crumpled, cupped where intertwining rills
Through clean turf trickle from green ice above,
This pond — does it remember as it spills
In eager streamlet down wild marble stairs
To pools and falls among the larches' shades,
The gods who roamed of old those peaks, those glades?

But here is more than New Hampshire scenery and the classic pantheon; here, too are poems situated in North Africa, Europe, the American south-west, the northern plains.

If Spring should come, should come once more for me,
As comeit must, and with a splendid sweep
Of yellow buds where willows yet will weep,
I only ask it come abundantly;
Bring scented hyacinth, the purple-red
Of quince, white tulip's hollow square,
And star magnolias bursting everywhere.
Cathedral pines will stand against the dread
Of sudden frost to slay my daffodils,
Like little hopes that crumple in a breath,
And, while brave trees stand off the winds of death,
Azaleas rally on the westward hills
Where we have walked arrayed in joy so fair
If Spring and I should come, you would be there.

Her poem, "The Failure," might have been written by Dorothy Parker.

He knew the birds by name and all their calls
Were on his tongue and lips. He bound the first
White snowdrops. And when redbud burst,
He fished the pool below the Scenic Falls.

Poor Tim, he never laid by anything
Except he glory of another spring.

Pick up that old spine-worn volume of poetry you find in a used bookshop and thumb through it. Remember that, though not by Eliot or Pound or Frost, or Wallace Stevens or William Carlos Williams or Frost, or Millay or Parker or Amy Lowell, some editor somewhere once thought enough of their work to publish it in a book.
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**Poetry by Lyn Lifshin**

**ROSE**

when it’s behind my knees
you’d have to fall to the
floor, lower your whole
body like horses in a field
to smell it. White Rose,
Bulgarian rose. I think of
sheets I’ve left my scent in
as if to stake a claim for
someone who could never
care for anything alive.
This Bulgarian rose,
spicy, pungent, rose as my
16th birthday party dress,
rose lips, nipples. If you
won’t fall to your knees, at
least, please, nuzzle like those
horses, these roses, somewhere

**IF THOSE BLOSSOMS DON’T COME**

if the tangerine doesn’t
fill the house with thick
sweetness. If you put
your hands over your
ears one more time
when I’m talking. If
there’s another month
of wanting to sleep all
day, the cat the warmest
sweet thing I can imagine.
If this damn rain doesn’t
let up, I’m going to
have to rewrite the story
you’ve got in your head
about us and I don’t
think you will like
the ending

**LETTER**

the other day made it
hard not to think of
you reading in rooms
with strange light
and magical ceilings
so with water crashing

near the bed and a
green wind biting
the glass I wanted
to send you in the
damned poem. You
could press it
against a small cut,
it could make prisms

in your window spin
ivy into 12 slices
of the room. My
Swedish ivy is
dying, I forgot
what you said it
needed, but not
the rest

**HOW IT SLAMS BACK, A LETTER USED
AS A BOOKMARK**

who could figure out
love? Not the old
blues men with
their whiskey and women,
women who’ve changed
the lock on the door.
Not Robert Johnson,
busted and poisoned.
Blues all around the bed,
the blues dogging,
dusting his broom.
How could some old
words make me remember?
Baby, won’t you follow
me down. Old words.
No words. Even before I
started thinking of
him I knew if he
read this it was way
too late
Poetry by Lyn Lifshin

THE WAY YOU KNOW
suddenly something is very changed. It’s like that snow smell in the air. You’ve noticed it, haven’t you? And know the way it sends you tumbling to decades ago? Smell is the one sense that can’t be censored. But sometimes just a word in an e mail, the slightest dry brush of lips lays the whole scenario out. One shrug of the shoulders of the man my mother loved, one I may have a Yiddisher name but that doesn’t mean I’m not goyim and my mother knew, as I do, tho we go on living quietly.

HAVEN'T YOU EVER WANTED
The kind of lover you will never get enough of and if you did, you’d have to die in his arms? Haven’t you wanted, especially on a day like today with buds on the edge of unfolding, to dance to death with a passion you’d never find in a normal lover’s arms? Don’t you want a dark fairy tale? Admit it, not something out of Desperate Housewives but an all consuming love with the power to destroy those who love too much? I’m asking you if you haven’t wanted to care so wildly, letting anything come in the way would be heresy, get out your red shoes. If you can’t give me one good reason not to give up everything for passion, let me try them on.

JULY 23
she lets dread take the form of tulips, bulbs planted before white camouflages sky. It’s too late to remember forgotten camisole, lace. Only papers torn from confetti on the 2 by 4 floor, the abstraction of terror, other cities people left at night, herbs never picked, running through ephemera, writing the footnotes before the text.

MAHO BAY, NEAR THE ASTROLOGER’S TABLE
yellow bird on the table, two curious lizards. At the next chair, Neptune is rising, a fire luring vibrations, a time to invite in. “You are over whelmed, even cosmically,” she drifts off. I go back to the piece I’m working on, the secret my mother never told me, as mysterious.
Poetry by Lyn Lifshin

HERE IN VIRGINIA, THE MAGNOLIAS ARE ALREADY LOSING THEIR COLOR. OR, THE UN-AFFAIR

Even so, there was collateral damage.
Paris was a diversion, yes.
The last night in Austin we drove and talked
till 3 A.M in mist.
I would have named that night
the last chance motel

Paris was a diversion, yes.
It wasn’t the first time with someone who
cared, mourning another.
Other bad news dogged me those weeks of rain

It wasn’t the first time with some who
cared more for me while I longed
for another.
Sunset from Pont Neuf would have made me
ache more if it hadn’t been raining

Could it have been so long ago I was
here with my husband?
It would not be the only time
dying for one tortured man or another,
writers so tortured they could only torture

Longing seems so much more intense
than skin on skin.
Wine helped and the beautiful Parisian girls
with tight asses. Everyone was kissing in
the street. In Austin in thick heat the almost-a-lover
only grazed my lips with lips dry and cold

Wine helped. I thought with the Marguerites I was
unfolding, wanted so wildly my fingers ached to but
I took my leather jacket from his hotel room
as if it was my body.

A year later, in the rain, what could have
felt as lost as the magnolias already losing their color

AFTER 9 DAYS OF COLD RAIN, A NYTHING BLOOMING TRAMPLED

“Still west,” you write, “with a PO in Hell.” A jolt, like the wild pear exploding hours after Sunday snow.

White crystals, white petals. “On the tip of the spear” you said. “Hard to unplug, wired for weeks, dreams like war games.” The green of our words out jade the geranium.

A jolt, your words after almost a year. Not even the spears of pink leaves I could smell from the road as much comfort. “Might be in your city.”

Darvon, codeine, - warm as the cat coiled in my knees. “Still west” you wrote. Then you didn’t. War dreams hang in branches. I think maybe

Jakarta, he wrote me once from there. The geranium that should have died spreads thru the sun room. Last year’s oak leaves hang on the branches. The petals I smelled from the road smashed into mud. Pink spears gone, the tips of the spears he wrote about dissolve. Rain, the branches, pink lace over, I

watch for his screen name. I was over that. The cherries are over, the nine days of cold rain aren’t, the paper says, over yet
A Poetry Workshop for Novice & Experienced Poets
Sponsored by
The Delaware Literary Connection
Saturday, April 21st, 2012, 10:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Hockessin Public Library, 1023 Valley Road, Hockessin, DE

Workshop Leader: Diane Sahms-Guarnieri
Poetry Editor of The Fox Chase Review

Poems are words. These words are uniquely the poet’s and may, through the revision process, become poems that will merit a place in any publication. In creating, there is always room for revision, as T.S. Eliot writes in Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, “for decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.” The poet always has final say in the completion of his/her poem(s); however, “workshopping” can be a means whereby a poet is joined by other poets in the tedious revision process. This workshop will afford each poet a unique opportunity to read/perform one of his/her own poems in front of others; to hear their work read by another; and to have constructive input from others, while being guided by the workshop leader. Revisions by peers are only meant as suggestions (to be regarded or discarded). This workshop may be just what you’re looking for to assist you in the revision process, and ultimately help you finish a poem, or it may move you just one step further along in the revision process. Whatever the outcome, this will be an enjoyable event.


The workshop will be provided at no cost and will be limited to 20 participants. Please send one poem as a doc, txt, or pdf attachment to Bob Davis: rhambline@verizon.net by April 14, if possible. If you don’t have access to a computer or e-mail, send a typed copy of your poem to: Poetry Workshop, 273 Polly Drummond Hill Road, Newark, DE 19711. Bring your own lunch or plan to eat at one of the nearby eateries within walking distance of the library.
Loved one

Last night
you stumbled
around the kitchen
drunk
fumbled in the dark
tried to make a sandwich.
I wanted to be angry
but your pants hung on you,
too much room,
you, shriveled up inside your clothes
lost and tired, so far away
I don’t know where.

This body in front of me,
not the real you
but some degraded copy
like you’d cloned yourself over and over
trying to make a lesser version
to live inside the pain
to take the pain
to run with it held high over
your head
to hurl it far out
into the dark
before it could
explode in your hands.

What are you doing, I said.
Come to bed, I said.
Your head twitched
up and down
on the stalk of your neck,
eyes twitched
back and forth in their
sockets as if capacitors were leaking,
leaking acid,
burning up all the wiring.

You breathed
your voice rising up from the dark deep
a stream of bubbles from a sinking ship:

“Give me a kiss, you silly goose.”
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-Percy Bysshe Shelley
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Wildenstein Historic Site News  winter/spring 2012

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Coming Soon To A Theater Near You
A feature film starring Bill Murray as Franklin D. Roosevelt and Laura Linney as Margaret (Daisy) Suckley is scheduled for release in December 2012. Based on a script by Rhinebeck resident Richard Nelson, this dramatic comedy also stars Olivia Williams as Eleanor Roosevelt, Olivia Colman as Queen Elizabeth, and Samuel West as King George VI.

Hyde Park on the Hudson is set during the weekend in 1939 when Britain’s King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visited the Roosevelt estate in Hyde Park. The story of this first time visit of a reigning English monarch to the United States will be told as seen through the eyes of Wildenstein’s Daisy Suckley.

Pictured: Laura Linney (left) as Daisy and Bill Murray (right) as FDR.
Michael Blaine’s
*Murmur*

is available from
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The Walking Tour:
Alexander Wilson in America
by
H. A. Maxson

Is proud to announce the publication of
H. A. Maxson’s
*The Walking Tour: Alexander Wilson in America*
The Reflection Pool

a prose poem by

Todd Budd

I looked far, and seen near
here was closer, and there was even better

And to the better is this spoils of a man who educates his mind with reason,
With the personal need of reflection and due process of needs and wants,
With clarity and just cause.

Truly ready and steady, do we always say that the pin is mightier then the sword,
Ones resolve and calm is the mans need to value the near and better of the day,

Many of fault lose sight, would this always mean a road and bridge not build means a mans resolve is of no value?
That this road not traveled is the means to a end,
Mighty is the mind to find growth of the equal and common to build those bridges and roads,
So that education can be ready and learned.

So today when those moments that road by, may it be said " That today I learned, studied and ready,
for the refection of the next man"
Mountain City Traditional Arts presents

Leaf is Form: A Visual Odyssey

Part 1 is an investigation in the history, philosophy and poetry of botanical inquiry. Part 2 provides new or experienced artists with an opportunity to learn and improve their natural drawing ability using the complex forms of plants. Class discussions form the basis for investigating each student’s unique style of communication with the natural world in the field, guiding them to the creation of a unique final project of their own design. $25 materials fee, Saturdays 10AM-2PM.

About the instructor

Amanda Vickers is a broadly trained naturalist and artist residing in Frostburg, MD. She is a graduate of Frostburg State University’s Master of Science program in Applied Ecology and Conservation Biology with a passion for wild plants of the Appalachian region. Amanda studied drawing, painting and biology at the Johns Hopkins University, has taught drawing for Baltimore City schools and plant identification for students of herbal medicine, ecology and art.

Contact Amanda to register by March 24: amandajunevickers@gmail.com or by phone at (828)399-3651

Class Schedule

Mar 31  Everything is Leaf: introduction, history & philosophy of botany, spire plant pressing project.

Apr 7  Drawing the unsolved: Studio drawing of natural forms for beginners, visual perception of nature.

Apr 14 Field trip 1: meet at Mt. City Trad. Arts 10 AM. Bring journal, drawing materials, lunch.

Apr 21 Field trip 2: meet at Mt. City Trad. Arts 10 AM. Bring journal, drawing materials, lunch.

Apr 28 Frostburg Art Walk--Final projects presented at MCTA 5-6PM, open to public.
Don’t forget to leave

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Literary Birthdays

**March**

Mar. 1, 1917    Robert Lowell
Mar. 2, 1942    John Winslow Irving
Mar. 3, 1800    Evgeni Abramovich Baratynski
Mar. 5, 1922    Pier Paolo Paolini
Mar. 6, 1885    Ring Lardner
Mar. 6, 1806    Elizabeth Barrett Browning
Mar. 6, 1917    William Erwin Eisner
Mar. 11, 1544   Torquato Tasso
Mar. 12, 1863   Gabriele d’Annunzio
Mar. 13, 1892   Janet Flanner (Genet)
Mar. 14, 1823   Theodore de Banville
Mar. 16, 1858   Gerbrand A. Bredero
Mar. 18, 1842   Stephane Mallarmé
Mar. 18, 1932   John Heyer Updike
Mar. 19, 1933   Philip Milton Roth
Mar. 20, 1823   Edward Judson (Ned Buntline)
Mar. 20, 1828   Henrik Ibsen
Mar. 24, 1919   Lawrence Ferlinghetti
Mar. 26, 1911   Tennessee Williams
Mar. 27, 1746   Michael Bruce
Mar. 29, 1831   Amelia Edith Barr
Mar. 29, 1885   Dezso Kostolanyi
Mar. 30, 1844   Paul Verlaine

**April**

Apr. 2, 1725    Giacomo Casanova
Apr. 2, 1805    Hans Christian Andersen
Apr. 3, 1798    John Banim
Apr. 4, 1785    Bettina von Arnim
Apr. 4, 1574    Gabriel Bataille
Apr. 5, 1834    Frank Stockton
Apr. 6, 1866    Lincoln Steffens
Apr. 9, 1821    Charles Pierre Baudelaire
Apr. 10, 1950   H. A. Maxson
Apr. 11, 1905   Attila Jozsef
Apr. 14, 1900   Karin Maria Boye
Apr. 15, 1856   Jean Moreas
Apr. 16, 1871   John Millington Synge
Apr. 17, 1863   Constantine Cavafy
Apr. 18, 1837   Henry Francois Becque
Apr. 20, 1807   Jacques Louis Napoleon Bertrand
Apr. 21, 1837   Frederic Baje
Apr. 21, 1816   Charlotte Bronte
Apr. 22, 1816   Philip James Bailey
Apr. 22, 1819   Friedrich Martin von Bodenstedt
Apr. 23, 1564   William Shakespeare
Apr. 23, 1926   Eva Janikovszky
Apr. 24, 1825   Robert Michael Bollantyne
Apr. 24, 1815   Anthony Trollope
Apr. 25, 1914   Ross Lockridge, Jr.
Apr. 27, 1874   Maurice Baring

**May**

May 3, 1912    May Sarton
May 5, 1867    Nellie Bly (Elizabeth Cochran)
May 5, 1909    Miklos Radnodi (Miklos Glatter)
May 6, 1861    Rabindranath Tagore
May 7, 1812    Robert Browning
May 7, 1857    Jose Valentim Fialho de Almeida
May 7, 1776    Daniel Berzsenyi
May 8, 1698    Henry Baker
May 8, 1985    Edmund Wilson
May 9, 1860    Sir James Matthew Barrie
May 12, 1907   Daphne Du Maurier
May 12, 1812   Edward Lear
May 15, 1890   Katherine Anne Porter
May 17, 1873   Henri Barbusse
CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

Michael Blaine (Winner of the 3rd Dogfish Head Poetry Prize) is a working poet, editor, and teacher from the Delaware Eastern Shore. His work has appeared in The Baltimore Review, Rivendell, Chesapeake Bay Magazine, English Journal, and numerous other publications. He has won awards in poetry, art, boat building, sailing, gardening, and teaching. He devotes a considerable amount of time to writing and studying Japanese verse. Blaine was born in Oxford, Mississippi in 1968 but grew up on the Eastern Shore in the mostly agricultural town of Laurel. He returned to Oxford to study English at Ole Miss and recently finished a Master’s Degree in English at Salisbury University. He is currently teaching in his eighteenth year at his high school Alma Mater. For six consecutive years, he was the editor of the Delmarva Review, a sixtypage publication featuring writers from the Eastern Shore. He was the recipient of a 2006 Delaware Fellowship of the Arts Recipient in Poetry. Blaine lives in Seaford, Delaware with his lovely wife, Sara, and their children.

Jamie Brown is the Publisher and Editor of The Broadkill Review.

Todd Budd is a Non-Commissioned Officer in the National Guard currently serving in Arizona. He has been writing since he was a teenager. He is married and a new parent.

Martin Burke is an Irish poet/playwright living in Belgium who has published twelve books of verse in the USA, UK, Ireland, and Belgium. He is the founder/director of the bi-lingual theatre group Theater Zonder Thuis (The Homeless Theater Company), and he is associated with The Green Door - http://thegreendoor.net and blogs at burkedelphicghost.tumblr.com

Alan Davies is the author of many books of poetry, including Signage (Rood), Candor (O Books) and, most recently, a chapbook called Book 5 (Katalanche).

Patricia L. Goodman is a graduate of Wells College with a degree in Biology and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. She has had poems published in Ariès and has poems forthcoming in an anthology titled The Widow’s Handbook. She placed third in this year’s Delaware Beach Life poetry contest and is currently seeking a publisher for her first manuscript.

Gary Hanna has received fellowships in poetry from the Delaware Division of the Arts and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, won three small national contests, and published over 150 poems in the last nine years. He was the director of the Poetry At The Beach reading series and the Writers Library in southern Delaware, and on the editorial board of The Broadkill Review.

Maryanne Khan is a writer living in Canberra. Her work has been published in literary journals and anthologies in the US and Australia. Her first collection of short stories, Domain of the Lower Air, was published by Broadkill River Press in 2011.

Steven Leech has been an editor of the Delaware literary periodical Dreamstreets since 1980. He is also the producer of the radio series “Dreamstreets 26,” which is podcasted from WVUD.org. His latest novel UNTIME was published in 2007 by Broken Turtle Books.

Lyn Lifshin’s Another Woman Who Looks Like Me was published by Black Sparrow at David Godine October, 2006. Most recent books: Ballroom, All the Poets (Mostly) Who Have Touched me, Living and Dead. All True, Especially the Lies. In Spring 2012, NYQ books will publish A Girl Goes into The Woods. Also coming For The Roses poems after Joni Mitchell

Tomás Martin is a former lecturer in French language and literature at Yale and Columbia Universities and has been an on-site director of Dartmouth College programs in France. Prior to my teaching positions, I earned an M.Phil. in French literature from Yale University and a master’s degree in French literature from the Sorbonne/Université de Paris. As an undergraduate at the College of the Holy Cross, I also spent a year studying in Alsace. Similarly to my protagonist, I was born in Puerto Rico and adopted as a child. Therefore, I believe that with my personal experiences and my familiarity with Paris and French culture as a whole, I am uniquely equipped to tell this story with a convincing and compelling realism.

G. D. McFetridge, iconoclast and working-class philosopher, writes from Montana’s majestic Sapphire Mountains. His short stories and essays are published across the U.S. and in Canada and the U.K. His latest novel, The Jesus Genome, has now been rejected by over forty NYC literary agents because of their deep insight and intelligence and understanding of American Literature.

Rick Peabody is cofounder, and has been for over three decades publisher and editor of Gargoyle. He is the author of the forthcoming collection of poetry, Speed Enforced from Aircraft from The Broadkill River Press

Pamela Hatfield Webster is an Eastern Shore native who lives in Salisbury. She attended Goucher College in Baltimore and University of Virginia in Charlottesville, getting degrees in medieval literature, languages and history. She was an English teacher for many years, and has been active in the ballet community as a ballet school owner, as a performing member of the Eastern Shore Ballet Theater, and now as the president of the Worcester Youth Ballet. Webster has been writing all her life, but only recently began to make her work public.

Scott Whitaker grew up on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. He attended Emerson College and was a creative writing fellow at Boston University, where he worked at Agni Magazine. His poetry has appeared in PIF Magazine, The Coe Review, The MacGuffin, and others. In 2002 he was a NEA recipient of grant for his rock and roll adaptation of Romeo and Juliet. In 2003, “A Third World Christmas,” a comedy co-written with his wife, was a finalist in the Richmond Playwriting Competition. Finishing Line Press published his first chapbook, The Barleyhouse Letters. He currently teaches literature, drama, and psychology at Pocomoke High School, and lives in Onley, VA with his wife Michele, and his two sons. He was the winner of the 2006 Dogfish Head Poetry Prize. He is a member of the National Book Critics Circle.