Tina Raye Dayton Wins 10th Annual Dogfish Head Poetry Prize

The Softened Ground Takes First Place in Prestigious Regional Poetry Competition
Letters and Notes from Our Readers

May 2013 being peace, good reading and writing, and joy to you and yours.
Warmest regards,
— Nina (Bennett)

Thank you, Jamie.
--Betty (Moffett)

I am very proud of being published in your journal. It’s a real Christmas surprise. Best, from Budapest.
— Laci (Laszlo Magyar)

Thanks man, and for Scott’s review. Swanky.
— Rick (Peabody)

I’m deeply pleased to be one of your nominees! Many thanks.
— David (Slavitt)

Hi Gerry and Jamie, Thanks to you both. I couldn’t be more pleased to have been recommended to Broadkill by a poet and friend who I admire.
— Gregg (Wilhelm)

... received The Broadkill Review and am so proud to have been included. I’m in good company. Will try again this Spring. Hope winter will be kind to you. Best,
— Si (Perchick)

Good issue. Didn’t know you nominated for Pushcart, Jessica’s “Nature” is clearly very deserving. I am very happy I bugged her to submit to you! Ciao,
— Sid (Gold)


credo

When I teach a creative writing workshop I always take in a file folder containing a single decade’s worth of rejection slips. Several inches thick and weighing over a pound, I drop it with a resounding thump on the table. “This is what you have to look forward to,” I say. I pass it around and let them thumb through the stack. “If you’re not ready for this, find another avocation, because you’re just a hobbyist,” or some such. “If you think I’m being harsh, just wait until you start getting rejected!”

A young person once came into my bookstore with some short stories. Badly punctuated and poorly spell-checked, I nonetheless found something riveting in them, and suggested the author send them to a magazine whose editor is a friend, being sure to ask for feedback. The editor’s response was very kind, but allowed as how “English is clearly NOT your first language…” and so forth, and the young author was infuriated.

I said, “Then maybe you’re not ready to be a writer.”

“I don’t want to be constrained by the conventions of traditional fiction,” the young author said.

“Grammar and punctuation and checking your spelling have nothing to do with constraint,” I replied. “They are, rather, part of the unwritten contractual obligation undertaken by writers in order to facilitate clarity. The clearer we can make things for our readers, the better. If you don’t really want to communicate, don’t call yourself a writer, and if you’re not ready for feedback like this, don’t send your stuff out!”

But then, both of my parents were editors, too.

The afore-mentioned young writer stormed unhappily out of the shop.

But seriously, folks. If YOURE not serious about your work and its presentation, why should any editor anywhere take your work seriously?

Now, whenever I get cranky like this, I try to look in the euphemistic mirror to see if I am not guilty of the same sort of behavior. And it is always a shock to me to look through back issues and find the occasional errors I didn’t catch before sending the issue out to you.

Not that editing a literary journal isn’t constrained by the same rules, but when an error in transcription is made by the computer in character recognition, and we don’t catch the error, or when a picture we’ve put onto a page doesn’t make it through the conversion to our pdf format, and I don’t catch it, these are intentionally uncorrected, not intentionally uncorrected. I like to think that, if everyone who receives The Broadkill Review took a paid subscription (hint hint), we could afford to begin to pay additional editorial staff to catch just such errors. But until that time, ALL of our “staff” are volunteers who give up many many hours every two months to help make what does appear in our pages well worth your reading.

On another note, I was talking to my old friend and curmudgeon-in-arms, Hadrow de Forge, the other day (he uses all lower case in his literary publications, but that’s not how it is on his birth certificate) about the state of poetry in this country. He and I used to be poles apart on a number of issues regarding poetry, but over the years have drifted closer and closer, and I am always surprised by, as Mark Twain said of his father, “How much he has learned.” Hadrow (‘Had’ to his friends) probably says the same thing of me.

The problem with American poetic sensibility, we agreed, is that a poetic “sensitivity” seems to have replaced, by slow and subtle insinuation into the American psyche (the psyche of the great mass of American consumers), a true sensibility. It is the feeling that counts now; craft has nothing to do with the value of a poem.

Hadrow and I agreed that catharsis does not, by itself, make good poetry, or even poetry for that matter. But there seems to be a dearth of people in this country willing to stand up and say “That individual doesn’t have a stitch of clothes on!” “Shhh,” is what we hear in response, “They’re working their way through something.” No one is willing to say, “That isn’t very good writing,” or even, “That sucks!” No, we are all too sensitive about poetry to say such a thing.

Oh, how fine that is, we agreed, to be a nation of sensitive people who do not ask that a poem actually be about a coherent subject, or well-written, or even, if only written as an act of catharsis for the author, somehow transformed into something universally cathartic! No, Hadrow and I agreed that what we should be saying is not “What a fine poem!” but “Thank you for sharing,” as if the writing of poetry only takes place within the confines of a 12-step program, like some “Poets Anonymous” meeting. Sheesh!

Happy New Year, my friends.
— JB
Visitor

He gets in even windowless rooms when
the doors are locked
and sits and stares
there are dogs and cats who never wake
while he sits there
it seems impossible to keep him out
he is always one
jump ahead
always one
jump
ahead
and when you are lying there asleep
he may touch you like a breath
the curtain stirs
or the sheet purrs
the dog yawns
and you are
on your own.

By the Sea

i  compound eyed and interested
ii  aspirationals
iii  leap sassy at the mucky waves,
iv  thrusting aside working-class paddlers;
v  savvy slicksters sit on the sand,
vi  selling surfboards,
vii  made by the Masters;
viii  she sells ...  
ix  the Surf Bard speaks to the waves
x  channels Walt Whitman, right
xi  down to his cadences
xii  in cabin'd ships at sea ...  
xiii  strums a biblical lute
xiv  stolen from a Watchtower cartoon
xv  in his bleached psyche ...
xvi
xvii
xviii
xix
xx
xxi  tsunami ...

clouds

are everywhere free and mine,
mutating in the sun,
metastasising gaily, daily, benignly
by the ton,
shifting, lifting, drifting every one,
Shelley would be proud of me and
my map of future
fields and palettes of snow-brown reflections of
thimbles and silks to come,
jarring the majesty of stasis in the packet-mix of nature
used by lesser poets
and the wielders of the gun,
nerveless enemies of the love of clouds,
who keep us cool
and warm
and wet
and dry,
sewn across the sky, strewn across the sun, silent,
windless, as they hum
sutured to the dashing shadows.
Poetry by Robert Verdun

Wakefield Gardens as Winter Comes

in the locked back-years of my brain
plunking all the pianos in Bebarfalts
embarrassing my mother,

while plodding up the shops past an oak-leaf,
cold, bowed as a Japanese bridge,
child on the bridge of the Fair Sky of the Sitmar Line,

the trick-of-the-light man,
black coat, black beard,
treetrunk-still

waits like an Ent
yin-yang —

red, the new path through the open park
worthy of Haussmann
antipode of a spot in the North Atlantic
I have never passed through

Avast, me hearties!
follow the sinking Plimsoll line
shimmering like a bike bell

in leaden weather.

Windfall

water-lacquered
leaves
glow through
a matchstick blind,
spangled with winter sun,

the ripe decades fall like cherries
the black beaks bayonet them,
thorns skewer berries not thrones,
the stone in the shoe of the new century,

shudders will spring to the scalp
as the child starves on charity crumbs
and the rill grounds down the alp.

Solar Cat

Cat in solarium
She made from a
slashed plastic
plant frame

Asleep within green walls
of shadecloth

Dear Emily,
Nobody knows you’re there,
but the sun
Poetry by Robert Verdun

Silver Van

I

as they wheeled my father out and put him in a little silver van

hardly like the police van that at seven took him to the Home on the Isle of Man

not the silver van of the Silver Lady feeding the down and out in London, ’34

nor the Wellingtons and Sunderlands like Boy’s Own tales streaking over land and sea

nor the Nissen hut the stick of bombs jumped over in Wales


ii

we watched silent as he

we paced and sat and paced

then came the general not knowing what to do or say on that unthinkable day

his last words were not famous chair, chair

for my mother to help him to the armchair he spent his last two years in but his mouth moved twice to speak, to breathe to


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all I could do an hour or so later was to kiss his cool forehead which in the chapel three days after was so cold

(stanza break)
Meeting Makarova

Memoir by Rose Solari

It was my twelfth birthday, and my older sister had given me exactly the gift I wanted: second row seats at a performance by the Russian ballerina Natalia Makarova at the Kennedy Center Opera House. I was an earnest, ambitious ballet student, and Makarova, who had recently defected from the Soviet Union, was my role model.

In a program of short pieces, Makarova had appeared in only one, the glorious pas de deux from Kenneth McMillan’s Romeo and Juliet. Her performance dissolved all possible disbelief — this was no thirty-something ballerina, but a headstrong, hormone-driven, passionate girl. I knew, because I was one myself. Afterwards, I wanted to go home, get into my practice clothes and dance — which is how I always felt after seeing Makarova perform. But my sister wasadamant about getting her autograph, so around to the stage door we went.

We joined a crowd of folks who looked like us: aspiring ballerinas with their hair in tight buns and the older women — mothers, sisters, mentors — who had brought them. We’d been about twenty minutes when a door opened, and everyone squirmed in anticipation. But instead of our ballerina, a middle-aged woman in a business-like gray pants suit stepped out, saying, “Rosemarie? “Is Rosemarie Solari here? And her sister?”

I felt my sister’s elbow in my ribs.

“Yes,” I said. “Yes, that’s us.”

“Follow me.”

She took us on a downward elevator ride, then led us through a corridor with various dancers names on closed doors. She opened one, and there in her dressing room, wrapped in a silk kimono and matching headscarf, makeup still on, was Natalia Makarova. Here eyes were like blue flames, her cheekbones shimmered. This woman, who filled a stage just by lifting her head, was tiny, but you could feel the power in her compact frame.

I can barely remember what we talked about. She had little English as yet, and I was too star-struck to make much sense. I know we talked about pointe shoes — I was thrilled to see that she and I wore the same brand! — and about the challenges of starting late. I had read that she, like me, had started her classical dance training at ten, an age considered too old to make a dancer’s body. And yet there she was, not only a professional dancer but perhaps the greatest of her generation. She gave me hope.

She talked about painting and music as much as she talked about getting her autograph, so around to the stage door we went.

When I first saw Makarova dance — at a performance of Giselle with American Ballet Theatre at the Kennedy Center, the year after her 1970 defection — the aspiring dancer in me was broken open and put back together. Everything she did made not just physical but emotional sense. The height of her jumps, the speed of her pirouettes, the slightest tilt of her head, were all dictated by the character she danced. I was weeping so loudly at the curtain that my sister, a more composed friend, was staring at me in disbelief. I was embarrassed. The performance had knocked her out as well.

I read everything I could about Makarova’s life: Her brilliance as a young soloist with the famous Kirov Ballet; her dramatic defection in London in 1970; her quest for roles combined with a “method acting” approach to her roles. That was why it was so worthwhile to see her Swan Queen or her Giselle three four five times. She seemed to be making it up as she went.

And while I had spent our visit in a cloud of perfumed adoration, my sister had been more practical. A discussion with the dark-haired lady, Makarova’s assistant, revealed that they were flying out tomorrow and had, as yet, no ride arranged to the airport. My sister offered herself, really us, as chauffeurs. And so began a few years of magical friendship with Natasha, as everyone called her, years that would change my life.

My childhood dream of becoming a ballerina was hardly uncommon, but I had the advantage of being born in a time and place just right for it. In the late 1960s and 1970s, glamorous stars such as Margot Fonteyn and Rudolph Nureyev transformed ballet dancers from modest practitioners of a classical art into rock stars. In my hometown of Washington DC, the opening of the Kennedy Center in 1971 meant that these stars now had a world-class venue here for their performances. Tickets were cheap then, especially with a student discount, and when I was between ten and fourteen years old I saw every performance I could, often accompanied by my older sister, who had had her own adolescent dreams of a ballet career that she now hoped I could fulfill for us both.

When I arranged to eth airport. My sister offered herself, really us, as chauffeurs. And so began a few years of magical friendship with Natasha, as everyone called her, years that would change my life.

Inspired by Makarova, I sought expressive power in all my young performances. In The Nutcracker’s Dance of the Snowflakes, I aimed for an embodied lacy translucence; given the treasured “Bluebird” solo from Sleeping Beauty, I felt for and found my wings. But there was more, and our continued contact with her taught me how much more there was. She talked about painting and music as much as she talked about getting her autograph, so around to the stage door we went.
about ballet. She would ask what I was reading. She said she missed, more than anything, the great cultural riches of St. Petersburg, lamented that most contemporary American dancers were all technique. They knew what to do but not why.

On one airport ride, she read a review of her previous night’s performance and said that the reviewer had got it exactly wrong: it was her first act that had been shaky, the second had been dreamily perfect. My sister, at the wheel next to her, agreed, and they launched an animated discussion of the various parts of various solos. I was impressed by how dispassionate this most passionate of performers could be in evaluating her own work. I took it as a lesson.

Perhaps the best lesson I received from Natalia Makarova was delivered by her absence. It was after a performance of *Coppelia*, a mediocre comic ballet that she elevated to high comedy with her performance of a girl who pretends to be the mechanical doll with whom her boyfriend is infatuated. We had already had one after-show meeting with her, and I didn't expect another. But my sister once again wanted to head for the stage door. And so we did.

The crowd was as big as ever, and the clock kept ticking, well past the time when Natasha should have emerged. Then a uniformed usher appeared with an announcement. Miss Makarova, he told us, was dissatisfied with some aspects of her performance that night. She had persuaded the stagehands to stick around for a while, and was back on stage, in practice clothes, working out some details. No one could say when she’d be done.

I thought of how taxing a three-act ballet was to dance, how exquisitely she had performed for us, how exhausted she must have been. And the ballet itself was scarcely a masterpiece. Yet she was back out there, practicing her pirouettes, her entrechats, her pique turns. From this, I learned never to be satisfied myself, no matter how well I’d done. Art was vocation, not career. Go at it whole hog or don’t go at all. And so I did.

But I did not have a chance to apply these lessons to my own dancing. The year I turned fifteen, my evaluation at The Washington School of Ballet told the story. My body had grown in all the wrong places. Despite my stringent diet, my breasts and hips got bigger, while my legs grew not an inch in length. Informed that I should explore another kind of dance, I threw in the towel. It was Giselle or nothing for me. In a fit of grief, I gave my sister all my ballet memorabilia, and burned my own journal of the previous year. All I kept from that time was the signed photo of Makarova that she’d given me on our first meeting.

And we fell out of touch with her, as well. I remember sending her some cute baby clothes when she had her son, but no contact after her lovely thank-you note. I went on to take my writing more and more seriously, and Natasha was replaced in my personal pantheon, by T.S. Eliot and Anne Sexton. Years later, when I was able to attend a ballet again without weeping for my lost life, I was there when she came out of retirement to dance with Kevin McKenzie, a beloved Washington Ballet alumni, in his new production of *Swan Lake* for American Ballet Theatre. It was the last production of that ballet I’ve seen. Maybe one day I’ll ready to see another Odette again.

But though I hung up my pointe shoes long ago, I continue to apply Natasha’s lessons of discipline and passion to my writing life. And when I’m happy, I seem to feel best expressing it in dance. When my husband and I first visited the house we now own, I stood in the entrance hall, looked around, and turned a double pirouette of joy. He says that the moment when he came round the corner and saw me spin, was the moment he knew we would live in this house. And on a trip to Italy last year, so thrilled to at last be in the home of my grandparents, my mother tongue, my tribe, I executed a tiny arabesque in the coliseum in Verona.

My time in ballet school often seems like a part of somebody else’s life. But I’ve still got that autographed photo on my wall, and sometimes I swear I can still feel Natasha’s lips brush my young face, hear her marvelous laugh. I thought then that she had consecrated me to the life of a dancer. Now I take it as a more general blessing, on the life in the arts that I have built instead. And I am, after all these years, still star-struck and still deeply, deeply grateful.

— RS

“Meeting Makarova” was originally published on the web at http://alansquirepublishing.com/weblog/2012/12/03/meeting-makarova/

See Scott Whitaker’s review of Rose Solari’s *A Secret Woman* on p. 18 of this issue!
Poetry by Laurie Wagner Buyer

Peeling Potatoes with a Knife

How many decades have passed since I last held the blade tight in hand trying to hold back frustrated tears and failing?

How with care I reamed out the intrusive eyes that watched our inexcusable sorrowing over the expected gunshot suicide.

How tenderly I placed the cut peels into a paper trash sack as the bloodied t-shirt, socks, and jeans spun in the washer.

How, after sitting to eat the meal, I put away leftovers and washed the dishes while staring out a window into darkness.

How these silent years later you and he return to me when the only thing I did was pick up a knife to peel potatoes.

Dung Beetle

Through an inch of red dust on the worn road she plies her trade, rolling a perfect sphere of manure by standing on her head and pushing the large ball backwards with her hind feet. How diligent the toil, how amazing her concentration and focus...and when the path tilts and forces her to lose her balance or an obstacle appears, she climbs on top of her creation to study the difficult surroundings, reassess her certain direction. Nothing stops her, not sticks or stones, cactus or a creature like me who towers over her as a monolith, or a curious god lost in the wonder of what six strong legs and determination can accomplish. What reason have I to complain about the lack of rain or the absence of love or the burden of being human? None. I turn back to the trail, face into the wind, boots firm on the ground, avoiding rocks and cockleburs, being careful not to step on an endless line of ants marching with precise purpose into the unknown.

Jazz @ Jack’s in Denver

Foreign territory with a mix of tradition and cultural nuances outside my ken:

The artificially colored flashes reminiscent of the northern lights, elegant limbs of exposed flesh the shades of ebony, teak, ivory, huge platters of exotic bar food sending out aromatic scents which waiters follow like hounds seeking out the scattered leftovers—all the while the sax wails, the keyboards pound the sound ambient bass thrums tight and the drums & cymbal identify noticeable movements of tapping toes bobbing heads and odd applause.

At dawn the mud-daubing swallows swirl and dip in nearly invisible mist, a brace of blackbirds chuck and call fighting over a sacrificed earthworm, canine toenails click out rhythms on etched concrete while bike tires swish against decomposed granite; and at the corner by the arched bridge a David-by-Michelangelo of a black man bends in half to stretch taut hamstrings as he whistles out loud, in perfect pitch, offering forth this day’s joyous secret: “Everything is improvisation.”
Poetry by Laurie Wagner Buyer

Scotland, 1954

Inception, conception,
the power of perception
even in the youngest of the young,
the first words forming on the tongue
of innocence. How could my mother
have had the insight to smother
her own goals and dreams,
to accept the startled scream
of premature labor, the earth
expanding to receive the worthy
gift of a lone piper playing on the hill
above Edinburgh Castle, the tune still
tucked away in consciousness. I wish
I had been aware enough to see the fish
the nurse brought her, a herring, head on,
mouth gaped, on a dish with a fawn
curled in sleep, the poached egg
sitting on the side as if to beg
for some attention too. What a breakfast
to receive after giving birth, the last
sustenance recalled a cup of castor oil
with warm orange juice, a competent foil
to any muscular control, the droll
unsettling of the stomach, the whole
shift of light and dark giving way
to the wish for sleep, the unsettled day,
the uncertain wakening to a puny girl
with no hair, no eyelashes, no nails,
only a sad mewling cry that sailed
forth from the unheated nursery,
the internal misery, the subtle cursing
of yet another mouth to feed, the need
to hold the tiny body grown from seed
of what had once been love...and now
the acceptance that her life would bow
to husband, children, domestic chores,
the growing clamor of a world past war,
but only now beginning to grow wise.
And I, the babe, could scarce open my eyes
and yet I kenned my mother's sacrifice,
how she gave away her truest self
with dim hope of discovering the wealth
of family. No other gift I ever received
on future birthdays could make me believe
my mother's love like this, her heavy elongated sigh,
the way something in me lived, as something in her died.

Father's Day

After meditation, a dawn walk
on blast-furnace asphalt as
the moon sinks like a dropped
coin into the pale blue sea of the sky,
a mostly naked man in a wheelchair
with broken leg extended like
a beggar’s hand, flags me with
a shout from the hospital's empty
parking lot and asks me if I smoke.
I don't. His disappointed face reeks
of other holidays gone wrong,
of others who have failed him,
of anger at those of us, like me,
who can not only walk, but run.

So I do. A stilted jog meant to imply
haste, not fear, the exercise bug
not the horror of some contagion,
but still he follows me home,
sitting there slumped over his sunken
hairless chest as I water the garden
and pick the day's skimpy bounty—
two tiny squash, three pitiful peppers,
four dozen grape-size tomatoes.
Thinking he sleeps in the rising sun, I
close the door on him, begin the promised
breakfast for my husband and our
friends, yet still he lingers, this time
settled into the corner of the kitchen
like a forgotten grandfather or a soldier
MIA or a boyfriend who never got over
the Dear John letter. He does not weep
or ask for anything, merely stares
at the plates of potatoes and eggs,
the bowls of beans and salsa make
the rounds with the corn tortillas.
Thinking he sleeps in the rising sun, I
close the door on him, begin the promised
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the Dear John letter. He does not weep
or ask for anything, merely stares
at the plates of potatoes and eggs,
the bowls of beans and salsa make
the rounds with the corn tortillas.
He glances hard at the nearly empty
bottle of good tequila that is passed
like a sacrament. He blinks at the pan
of brownies then looks away ashamed.
All he wants is one lousy cigarette
to stick in his ghost-slit of a mouth,
but I, poor daughter, have none to give.
“Galvin reminds us that poems say the things the way most people would say them if only they could. In conversation with the reader, each of these poems has its own voice, a voice that is usually quirky, folksy, and yet somehow surprising and hooked and lyrical.”

— Rod Jellema

“The Poems in this collection usher us into a zone of mystery — a mystery that encompasses both the sacraments and the enigmas of our secular, sexual, migratory American lives. Better than any poet I know, Larkin captures the intertwining of sensuality and spirituality...”

— Jean Nordhaus

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Straight’s as crooked a road as any

Deià, a small coastal village on the northern ridge of the Spanish island of Majorca.

In College Park I weave a routine pattern through the woods, crows right and left, and squirrels; a hawk glides by. It’s peaceful here; the going and return, and then inside. Alone not lonely, in the halls, the books, I sing ditties, tinker in the kitchen, live the middle way, picture an early chaos as kaleidoscope.

Often the things I touch dissolve into soft shadows; nothings hovering in the sinking evening’s glow, and I care less about what was, or wasn’t, and is not now, all’s at rest. Verhaeren died crushed rushing to board a train; I think about Rilke’s agony, pricked by a garden’s rose-thorn, the unpredictable.

How is it some stop just in time, or walk through walls. So what I’ve not seen Deià or any other place I meant to say I’d been. It’s enough to know it’s there, to speak of it, to see it as a firefly in the sparkling summer air. There’s nowhere now I want to go. Drink the filtered faucet water in the sink and think next spring.

Cold Clorox

The children, their games, the confusion, chaotic fights to watch Star Trek or Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, their glee at my Frankenstein monster, the one-foot drag, the arms outstretched, their squeals. Innocence is just crying and laughter. But I was thirsty for the endless overnight, desiring the peach yet to be tasted, the ever out of reach, the greener scene, new angled eyes, master of the un-finalized.

Better to sip cold Clorox for water, than watch the wreckage drift and heave.

Knowledge

Robin eggs featherless crack, squawk; one survives, two fall back.

A riddled child stands upright. Bionics hold the aging up. Some seem meant to walk like fools off cliffs; the lucky tell the tale. Science strives to scour what’s beyond, chart evolution’s meaning: talks of bang and dark energy, the universal stretch toward bursting.

Knowledge pushes/pulls, wrinkled hearts carve the shape of winter’s leaf, the naked childhood urge, demanding space to find what’s lost in being here.
Hi Jamie, I’ve been resolving to write something for you or send you something. That’s my resolution. Wonderful work on the magazine.
— Love, Fleda (Brown)

Finally publish a complete collection of my poetry. I already have the T-shirt printed. Otherwise, none whatsoever.
— Ron Baker

Hi Jamie, Happy new year! I am steadfast in my resolve, (and action, if writing is action), to complete the sequel to, “The Second Wedding of Doctor Geneva Song”; and, to usher it through the publication process. After that, I want to write some short stories. In the second half of the year, I will begin a new novel on a new subject, but only if the characters from Parts I and II, and their attendant demons, will let me be. Best wishes for a healthy, happy, prosperous, and literate new year.
— Bob (Friedland)

I resolve to finally get a full-length manuscript put together. And I resolve to learn, and retain, the correct spelling of the word "occasion". Occasion? Occasion? Occasion?
— Linda (Blaskey)

My literary resolutions are three fold: As the director of the Frostburg Center for Creative Writing, I want to continue to grow the work we do to support writers, publishers, and readers in the Western Maryland and beyond. As an advocate for literary arts beyond that, I hope to continue to promote and engage writers whose work I admire. As a contributing editor to BKR, as co-curator of a reading series in Brooklyn, as an editor of anthologies. And I want to continue to inspire my students to be the best writers they can be. As a writer and reader, I want to continue to find fresh work. I want to write better poems today than yesterday, continue my exploration in other genres, and continue to try to find the biggest audience I can for my work. How’s that? Happy new year.
— G (Gerard “Gerry” LaFemina)

My wish list is to publish a first book - I have three manuscripts out.
— Gary (Hanna)

On January 1, I unveiled an upgrade to Beltway Poetry Quarterly, with a new, cleaner design, and better functionality. This forced me to learn a whole new system: I moved from an html format to a content management system, and I am still learning the quirks of cms. One of my big literary resolutions is to finish populating the site’s enormous Resource Bank, and to continue transferring over the Archives. I have also long been working on an update to DC Writers’ Homes, the web exhibit I co-edit with Dan Vera. We are adding about 60 new authors to the site, and so my second literary resolution is to finish up the new pages and get them out into the world. For my own poetry, I hope for a prolific year, and to keep challenging myself to learn more about the craft.
— Kim Roberts

Dear Jamie, I don’t have any resolutions. They are inadequate, anyway. What is needed in this game are obsessions. If you have to force yourself to produce something, then maybe you should think of another, better career. (Almost any would be better.) A teacher of mine once told me that as a young man he set himself a minimum number of pages per day but as he got older he understood that it should be a maximum. Very wise. Warmest wishes to you. And good luck with your literary resolutions!
— David (David R Slavitt)

Hi Jamie, My resolve for 2013 is to finally assemble a new poetry manuscript comprised mostly of work finished since Loopholes won the Dogfish prize in 2009. Where I’ll shop the thing is anyone’s guess. Cheapo that I am, I don’t want to self-publish it. Happy New Year,
— David (P., Kozinski)

Greetings and Happy New Year! Glad that you did not ask what diet or weight program i would be starting and then quiting in the next few days. Easy answer here - more writing and more reading. I remember asking John Grisham if it was true that he wrote his first novel during his lunch break. His answer echoed the response every other writer I had asked - writers need discipline and most have a routine pattern to getting word to paper. I also remember my English Professor at Ole Miss telling us in a short story class that "if you want to be a writer you must first pick up a pencil and move it on a piece of paper" That was from the novelist Barry Hannah and he did not qualify good writers...just writers. I catch myself saying the same thing at poetry workshops now -so many people that want to write, or have an idea about something. Short and sweet...you want to be a poet...you must write some poems. So there it is more reading and more writing.
— best, Michael Blaine

Dear Jimbo: I resolve to be open to more work that in no way resembles my own, that I often do not like & that is written by people I'd rather not know. And the happiest & healthy 2013 to you, big guy!
— SG (Sid Gold)

Hello, Jamie. My writing group, the Transcandal Writers, is compiling an anthology of our poetry and prose. I am determined to see it published this year. I intend to write, revise, and submit poetry to The Broadkill Review. I have also set a personal goal to attend a writing conference or poetry festival.
— Warmly, Nina Bennett

My New Year wish is that Jamie Brown and Rick Peabody be cloned for all the good work they have done and will do in the future. Viva la causa, wherever it leads...
— Bill Claire

My literary resolutions... Publish a new issue of my zine Etidorhpa. Finish revising Goodbye Jambalaya. Finish reading Das Kapital. I think that's enough...
— Franetta MacMillian

I have resolved to continue working with my writing group, The Transcandal Writers, to get our anthology published this year. We have titled it "Five Bridges", referring to the five bridges over, what else?, the C and D canal. I am resolved to see this through, and to see "Five Bridges" in print in 2013. Oh, in the meantime, I am on the infamous “Third Rewrite” of my novel Dory’s Game. I resolve to keep plugging away on this project regardless of hurricanes, floods, vermin and all the other insults nature has been throwing at me! And a new year full of good resolutions to you-
— Cookie Ohlson

Jamie my resolutions are to get the novel, Comfort, on to Kindle, and to find a publisher for the first of the Quotidian books, Other Voices, Other Worlds.
— Max (H. A. Maxson)

Hi Jamie, Here are my resolutions. I resolve to finish my series of short stories about the Civil War this year way before the sesquicentennial of said event expires. I resolve to get my dead in the water Third Rewrite of my novel Comfort, on to Kindle, and to find a publisher for the first of the Quotidian books, Other Voices, Other Worlds.
— Warmly, Nina Bennett

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— Max (H. A. Maxson)

Hi Jamie, Here are my resolutions. I resolve to finish my series of short stories about the Civil War this year way before the sesquicentennial of said event expires. I resolve to get my dead in the water Sidekick Review online so I can join the legions of editors in my micro-corner of cyberspace. Finally, I resolve to join Jamie Brown in Milton, Delaware sometime in my existence to see what actually has transpired since we were officemates at GW, a millennium ago. Hope you had a great year, Jamie. I may send some stories your way and thanks for taking my last ones. Great mag. Regards,
— Cookie Ohlson

My literary resolve for this year is to dive into the half-dozen or so plays I have and start fine-tuning and whittling them down to completion. Playwriting can be draining for me (characters are always talking and arguing); poetry writing feels like I’m skipping school.
— Bernard Jankowski
Poetry by Hiram Larew

VIM

For just a split second the other day
The illness that will one day kill me
Came out looked around and laughed
Then just as quickly
Went back inside to where it came from
Oh well
I know who I love do you
I know what’s rough or smooth
And less then more
Even ice at night
I know that anything worthwhile depends
On repetition
So here’s a wish -
May the boats of such discoveries
Allow friends to swim alongside
May wasted time redeem itself
By a doubling of the vines hanging down
And may at least one among all of my stories
Get covered in sand.

Sweeney to Speak at St. Michael’s Library

The Second Saturday Speaker Series at St. Michael’s Library will feature author Gerald Sweeney on March 9 at 2pm. The title for his speech is “How Do Creative People Begin to Create?”

Sweeney is the author of six novels including five in the Columbiad series that follows an Irish-American family through the Twentieth Century. His 35-year career (plus 7 in government) was spent in the New York magazine and publishing business.

Information about the program can be obtained by calling Ellen Walsh at the library – (410) 745-5877. The library is situated at 106 Fremont St.
“Sid Gold is an urban storyteller whose poems of growing up in New York and encounters over the years in Baltimore, Hyattsville, Maryland, and on the road ride the back of a rhythmic, jazz-like line. What may seem conversational is deceptively lyrical...”

— Merrill Leffler

“Laura Brylawski Miller writes poetry in an elegantly classic style that gives us new ways to feel... drawn finely to the past, taking nothing for granted, tilting away from the expected. ... Poetry needs her, as she awakens the beauty in language and lifts it from sleep.”

— Grace Cavalieri

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Sutton Place

Baltimore high rise:
upended domino,
shading Howard Street,
up-scale Bolton Hill.
You jumped from the
ten-th floor apartment,
young man, student,
closeted gay.
Berated in class.
None of us would
save you from
professor's wrath.
Silent colluders,
scathed none the less.

Texas in June

Pet hogs in the campground
grunt at dogs sniffing,
drink from a tin,
move as shade does.
One or two hairs protrude
from their skin.
Pick-up trucks speed by;
shirtless boys jump out.
AC drones all day,
all night. Campers
nest in concrete
cabins, except
for runs to town. Dust,
dirt; flies attack.
Texas is sublime
in summertime.

Bamboo

I didn't know, when uprooting
you from a field, wrestling you home
for a boyfriend, leaves swaying,
splayed across our yard - in you
went, rooted, sky-scraping my
garage, snaking under, in it too -
that I should come to hate you and
him. long gone, for suggesting you
share our abode and plant your
fangs so fiercely in my clay soil
where nothing else will fight
you for a spot. Refusing to rot.

Vinegar, forced down your
sliced throat, but you would
not die. Cement. Pondered
giving that a try. But digging
thirty feet around belied.
Clippers sharp; snipped each
new shoot, murdering every
one before multiplied. You hide;
know I am coming. I stomp you;
you creep next door. Would I
could bury your meandering
strands and think of you no more.

Watch for Carolyn Cecil's
Forthcoming Chapbook,
Taken Away
Coming Soon from
The Broadkill Press
CT Scan

In the wait room others with tall, covered cup and straw take baby sips laboring to test concoction; grimacing, staring at pleasantly disguised space with walnut chairs, upholstered to match gray/pink decor meant to seem homey in this clinic where they expect your insides to be out of sync.

Remembering what I swallowed before, beer, wine, bourbon, more; it has come to this, past prime, where I suck gooey white stuff not for pleasure. Then a needle in my arm; time to reflect on not just any life, but mine. Is surgery next, more tests, to while away while hovering?

Bus Trip

Book Club in Manhattan, our wool caps on. Patti ahead; white bauble floating. Sea of tassels blurs into one, melded together in winter. Hollering, running, pushing, shoving New Yorkers out of the way; we locate Patti. Embarrassing.

We took the Superior bus from Baltimore. The old lady hostess singing when we got to New York, some national song. Broke the ice, sort of. Clambering off the bus we met Mary's daughter, versed in museums, restaurants, Soho. She got us in MOMA free. We tried to dress sophisticated, but Lynnda wore some old man's windbreaker by mistake. Who knows where her real coat was?
That second cup of coffee at McDonald’s seemed like a good idea at the time. Now every place he passed had big signs that said NO PUBLIC RESTROOM. To the north, down the hill, people were going in and coming out of an official-looking building so Tiny walked down there, hands clamped firmly in jeans pockets.

In the building, people were waiting in line to show their driver’s license and get a big weird sheet of blue paper from a panel of superannuated folks, fill it out furtively then return.

“That’s the best you can do, a goddamn sticker?”
“You want a medal for doing your civic duty?”
“Got more goddamn medals I know what to do with.”
The old man dropped the sticker to the floor.

“Just like John Kerry them Vietnam vets the Pentagon. You’re Vietnam Johnny, right?”

Tiny shook his head, walked through the double doors that said FIREARMS NOT ALLOWED PAST THIS POINT down a darkened hall to the bathroom. It was old but clean. He’d slept in worse.

What Tiny saw in the mirror.

Tiny took a look at himself in the mirror. He saw an old man with flyaway dead hair in a cleanish sweatshirt and jeans that had seen better days. The man had long gaunt lines on either side of his face but a tight upper bod, no potbelly. He looked like a fit 70. Who was that?

He took a closer look. There. Those grayish eyes Amelie had said were piercing, You make me feel naked. Good, he’d said.

How old was he? 35, 36? He’d lost count between the shelters and the wards and the rooms where you had to introduce yourself, Hi, I’m Timothy and I’m an alcoholic before you could get day-old donuts from the church ladies.

Why Illinois does not look like Khandahar.

Coming back wasn’t like in the movies. There were no banners and ancient vets struggling out of wheelchairs to give wobbly salutes and racing kids and soft wet wives. They didn’t even fly from Khandahar to a military base but to Krutmeier Airport south of town, never heard of it. It wasn’t even in an Air Force transport like going over there but with a carrier he had never heard of, Global Air or Global Airways.

“That’s the CIA’s airlines,” said a beefy white ser-geant to a short, slender Hispanic-looking private in the seats in back of him. He didn’t know either of them. “They’re watching us. We’re lucky to be going back to Illinois not Gitmo or something.”

“Really Sarge?” The private looked bored.

Out the window, it was green and flat with creeks everywhere. From the air, in the daytime, it was hard to pick out Kandahar. The base was a mass of low gray buildings and soft gray runways surrounded by desert. When the wind picked up, which it did a lot, it became invisible. At night it was a different story, lit up like nothing he had ever seen, a screaming galaxy, a whirlpool of light with absolutely no lights at all nearby.

The captain said the U.S. had built Khandahar in the late 1950s for a war with the Soviet Union. At the same time, the captain said, the Soviet Union was building an airport in Kabul, in the northern part of the country. Neither of these things made sense. No one ever found any old American anything – a major swore he’d found an old World War II carbine under some floorboards, but no one believed him – sometimes an old Russian newspaper with that crazy writing or old Russian Band-Aid brittle as dead skin. Tiny knew the Soviets got bogged down just like they were, got kicked out then the USSR fell apart. 80s, 90s? Tiny wasn’t sure.

Wais, the old Afghan Air Force maintenance chief said the Soviet invasion hadn’t affected the airport much. “Dirty troops,” he said, grinning. His teeth were yellow but perfectly straight. “Always sick.” There were few attacks and life was peaceful, he said. “Then come Taliban time. Airport peaceful! Taliban never problem for Wais. Peace in Kandahar, peace in country – some UN, Red Cross. Then, America comes.” He shrugged. “War, peace, Kandahar stay, Wais stay.”

The captain said that Wais meant “night wanderer” in Afghan but no one believed him.

The Biblical basis for zombies.
The reading was from Psalms.

“I am surrounded by enemies, who are like lions hungry for human flesh. Their teeth are like spears and arrows; their tongues are like sharp swords.”

The pew was hard under his butt. The service was supposed to be in Latin. Why was the service not in Latin? The priest looked tired.

The gospel was even worse.

“They have power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.”

“And when they have finished their testimony, the
beast that ascends from the bottomless pit will make war
upon them and conquer them and kill them, and their dead
bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is allegorically
called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was cruci-
fied.”

Said so right on the church website. St. Rose of Lima,
first church in the diocese to resume the Latin mass after
Pope Benedict XVI issued the Summum Pontificum.

“For three days and a half men from the peoples and
tribes and tongues and nations will gaze at their dead bodies
and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, and those who
dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and
exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a
torment to those who dwell on the earth.

“But after the three and a half days a breath of life
from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and
great fear fell on those who saw them.

“Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to
them, “Come up hither!” And in the sight of their foes they
went up to heaven in a cloud.

“At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and
a tenth part of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people
perished in the earthquake, and those remaining were terrified
and gave glory to God in heaven.

“The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming
soon.”

“Praise be to God,” the congregation said. The priest
smiled.

James Bond in Illinois.

Tiny dreamed he was back in high school. Not the
dream where he walks into class all sweaty from practice, sits
down and they're giving a test he hasn't studied for, didn’t
even know about. The one where he and Sandi are alone in
detention.

He woke up cold and alone with weak winter dawn
not in his eyes. But over there it was fiery red and you had to
look away. Why was Illinois dawn not in his eyes?

A big rock right above him. He touched it. Cold and
smooth.

WTF?

By craning his neck – ow! - he could see what it was.

A tombstone and it said,

JIM BOND
1925-2006

No LOVING FATHER or DEVOTED HUSBAND or
plastic flowers or any of the other crap you found on tombstones. Did they call him James? Had people given him shit
all his life about being James Bond?

Tiny yawned, looked down the rolling hillside. He
didn’t remember the cemetery like this.

In memory, it was as elegantly spaced as an Army
barracks, gleaming marble rolling gently down to a mellow
Mississippi, not this chaotic concoction of crooked tombstones
tumbling down steep bluffs to a salt-scuzzed river highway
and dirty lifeless river and what the heck was that?

At the base of the ravine was a crypt built into the
hillside. A real honest-to-God crypt. He didn’t remember any
crypts. An old lawnmower peeked out of it. A crypt used as a
storage shed? That was just, fucking, wrong. But life didn’t
give a shit what you thought, went on any old how. Why
should death be any different?

The Human Barbie insults Oprah.

“Shut up! I want to hear this.”

Carin pointed the remote at the TV and turned it up. A large
doll's face filled the screen. The camera panned. The doll was
life-size with perfect skin, impossibly large breasts, a wasp
waist, Bambi green eyes. She was wearing a garish 60s-
inspired outfit that looked pretty good on her, actually.

The doll blinked.

“It’s alive!”

“In my home, Moldova,” the Human Barbie was say-
ing in blurred English. “Many are beautiful women.” Oprah
nodded. “I am not so, so --”

“Unique?”

“No. Yes, I unique! Because I out-of-body traveler.”

Oprah nodded.

“Is international school where instructor show how to
leave physical body, travel in spiritual body, yes? This is fu-
ture of mankind, Oprey! It has huge potential, make all in-
dustry no good, all things old, how you say--”

“Obsolete.”

“- car and airplane and war. All ob-soh-lite!” Oprah
nodded. “Visit any place on planet, anytime. Any planets! We
are not physical being and this body is just --”

Oprah’s perfect eyebrows shot up. “A shell? If you are
not a physical being--” she gestured – “why Barbie?”

Barbie shook her head, annoyed. For a moment she
looked like an ordinary, overly made up young Russian
woman.

“It have nothing to do with looks. Many are good-
looking young women everywhere, Russia, Moldova, Ger-
many, USA, yes? But why they are completely unknown? Be-
cause looks are not, if you forget about inner self, people will
not be interested in you because they look at you and they feel
nothing.”

Oprah shook her head. Her curls jiggled, her breasts
didn’t. “Okay.”

“I become Barbie to show this to world. Soon we all
perfect within and no one will look physical body anymore,
they will not care, all life within. Yes? Also to become Barbie
is to show how ridiculous is concept of beauty, yes?”

“Ridiculous alright.”

“On celestial plane all peoples perfect. On celestial
plane, I am time travel to Tibet in 16th century. There I meet
exalted master who makes me teachings.”

Oprah’s eyebrows shot up.

“An extraterrestrial?”

“Yes – no! Impossible to say when space and time
have no meaning, he is who give me these power.”

Oprah’s eyebrow went down.

“Tom Cruise? We’ll find out right after these words.”

The audience howled.

The tiny brass bell on the door ching-linged and the
audience howled.

“A tombstone and it said,” Oprah smiled.

“One man could change the world, yes? This is to show
how ridiculous is concept of beauty, yes?”

“Ridiculous alright.”

“One extraterrestrial? Yes – no! Impossible to say
when space and time have no meaning, he is who give me
these power.”

Oprah’s eyebrow went down.

“Tom Cruise? We’ll find out right after these words.”

The audience howled.

“Hey, Tina, can L-” she gestured, then turned back to
the audience.

“Sure Tim. You know where it is.”
Tiny slinked by the hot vinyl, shampoo and burnt hair stink and conditioner, disappeared in the back room.
“Vietnam Johnny. Think he’s a celestial being?”
“Time travels to Saigon for lunch.”
“It’s Ho Ho Minh City.”
“Why they call him Vietnam Johnny anyway? He isn’t old enough.”
“Smells too.”
“Girls!” They shut up.
Tiny came back yawning and rubbing hands on jeans of an indeterminate color. He nodded at the polychromed women. They ignored him.
“Well I, thanks uh, Tina--”
“Shh!” Oprah sprang back to life.
“We’re back with Ola Ratochenko, did I say that right?, More or less? okay, who people call the Human Barbie but who says looks are superficial, that she is a time traveler and became the Human Barbie to show the world just how futile the pursuit of beauty is.”
Tiny grinned.
“Shut up Tim,” Tina snapped.
Tiny was sweating in the superheated salon and took his coat off. He wore only a tight T-shirt under the coat. Many of the woman eyed him, Aunt Mary too, frowning hard.
“No, that is not what I am saying.” Barbie looked annoyed and human again. “Perfect the soul, perfect the body.”
“Uh-huh.” Oprah looked straight at the camera.
“Well.
“You are ignorant black woman of material world! I am pure white woman of spiritual world.”
Oprah looked amused.
“Okay! Let’s have a big material hand of applause for Ola Ratochenko the Human Barbie who is not afraid to speak her mind. Good for her, right?”
A smattering of applause. A hiss or two and Barbie teetered away on monster heels.
“Next up we have Professor William Tecumseh Alli-
son of the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. Professor Alli-
son will talk about Wools Worth, who was a – is that right?”
she looked off-camera, nodded – “okay, Wools Worth, a 17th
century Massachusetts Bay Colony Pilgrim who wrote this book.”
Oprah angled the book and the camera zoomed in on
the embossed cover. The illustration was of a winding path
through steep rocks leading to a brilliant sunrise, on either
side of which were shepherd’s staffs, one crowned with a lau-
rel wreath and the other a crown, all in gold.
“-- about the life of Christ in Latin, just reissued, The
Woeful Tale channeled by an early twentieth century house-
wife in Quincy, Illinois named Mrs. John H. Curran.”

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 eternal optimism • constant state of positive thought
our glass is always half full at 113 market street
Spring Break Reading List

- **GRAVITURE** by James Michael Robbins
- **The Girl in the Blue Beret** by Bobbie Ann Mason
- **The Parakeets of Brooklyn** by Gary LeFevre
- **LOON CRY** by Fleda Brown

- **VER** by Magyar László Andras: Idill
- **The Walking Tour: Alexander Wilson in America** by H. A. Maxson
- **2013 Pushcart Prize XXXVII Best of the Small Presses**
- **More Than Anything** by Hiram Larew

- **The Best of Times on the Chesapeake Bay** by Bert J. Hubinger
- **1812: Rights of Passage**
- **UNTAME**
- **AUTOPLANT**
Spring Break Reading List
Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

-Percy Bysshe Shelley
Dear Friends,

Literary events & great readings coming up. All the best as we look toward Spring. Trusting in the decree of the Punxsutawney Groundhog, JoAnn

--
JoAnn Balingit
poet laureate Delaware

February/March 2013 Writers e-newsletter

• Mocha, Music and More, Douglas Morea reads, Friday February 15, 2013
• Nights of Literary Prose, Poetry and Song, “Body Parts” Tuesday, February 19
• Maya Angelou, University of Delaware Trabant Center, Friday, February 22
• Bay to Ocean Writers’ Conference, Wye Mills, MD, Saturday, February 23
• Delmarva Review call for submissions, deadline, February 28
• Delaware state finals, Poetry Out Loud performances, Smyrna Opera House, March 6
• Second Saturday Poets, The Jackson Inn, Wilmington, Saturday, March 9
• Saturday Symposium celebrating William Shakespeare, Univ of DE, March 16
• Upcoming: former U.S. poet laureate Rita Dove, Univ of DE, April 18 and 19

Events

Poetry & Music—Mocha, Music and More: Friday, February 15, 2013, 7-9:00 pm


Night of Literary Prose, Poetry, and Song: Tuesday, February 19, 7:00-8:15

Artistic types invited to read original works of 300 or fewer words, theme for this week will be Body Parts, must RSVP to read: Dogfish Head Brewing and Eats, Rehoboth Beach, DE, sponsored by Rehoboth Beach Writer’s Guild. To reserve a reading slot: e-mail Maribeth at fischer.maribeth@gmail.com

Maya Angelou lecture Friday, February 22, 2013 at 7:00pm

Poet, novelist, memoirist, educator, activist. University of Delaware Trabant Multipurpose Rooms.

For more information, poster: http://www.udel.edu/udaily/2013/feb/images/angelou.pdf

Devon Miller-Duggan, Wednesday, February 27, 500-615 pm

Evening of poetry sponsored by the Department of English, University of Delaware. Memorial Hall, Room 127. Author of Pinning the Bird to the Wall (Tres Chicas Books, 2008) and Neither Prayer, Nor Bird (forthcoming 2013, Finishing Line Press).

Poetry Out Loud National Recitation contest, Smyrna Opera House, Wednesday, March 6, 7:00 - 9:30 pm

Delaware State Competition. Twelve semi-finalists take the stage; Public welcomed to attend entertaining & moving performances. Music by the Skip Rohrich Trio. DE winner receives $200 and all-expense-paid trip to Washington, DC, to compete for the national championship April 28-30, 2013. Information: http://www.artsdel.org/poetryoutloud/default.shtml or Allyson Good--allyson.poetryoutloud@gmail.com.

Poetry Reading--Second Saturday Poets: Saturday, March 9, 5:00- 7:00pm

Douglas Morea is author of Letters To You (Broken Turtle Books) and six previous collections.

Larry Kelts grew up on a dairy farm in north-central Pennsylvania and holds an MFA from Bennington College.

The Jackson Inn, 101 North DuPont Road, Wilmington, DE 19807-3105, 302-652-9972. Open mic to follow featured readings, poetry or short prose (limit 5 minutes). Must be 21 to attend; suggested cover $5. Info: GrayBEG@comcast.net

Saturday Symposium Celebrating William Shakespeare, March 16, 8:45am to 4:00pm

University of Delaware: Memorial Hall – Library – Roselle Center for the Arts

For information& to register: http://www.udconnection.com/Events/2013/Mar/UD-Saturday-Symposium--Celebrating-Shakespeare.

Delmarva Review Call for Submissions: deadline February 28, 2013

The Delmarva Review’s 2013 issue is open to all writers. Submit short fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction for the sixth edition. Guidelines: http://www.delmarvareview.com

Bay to Ocean Writers Conference: February 23, 2013

The Eastern Shore Writers Association offers 30 sessions and workshops on the craft of writing, marketing and more. Chesapeake College, Wye Mills, Maryland. Info & registration: http://www.baytoocean.com/index.html

Radio Program Latinisimo (WVUD)—Host Guillermina Gonzalez – seeks poet

who speaks Spanish to be a guest for an interview about poetry on her radio show. Guillermina Gonzalez, Executive Director, Delaware Arts Alliance; www.DelawareArtsAlliance.org (302) 425-5500 Ext. 107, ggonzalez@DelawareArtsAlliance.org
Poetry by Lyn Lifshin

ISTANBUL

she said her mother's best friend was a Moslem woman but when it came to dating she said don't go with the non Jews. Imy, her black eyes flashing, red mahogany hair dark edges thru. She loved only one Muslim boy from a big political family. Her mother cried and knelt on the floor. Sometimes she says the heart won't heal. She never says never, leaping thru crowds as if no arms can hold her. His family too she sighs, famous doctors, politicians. After him her mother says she'll never marry. She loves her work, loves history. The Bosphorus blows her hair east, the Mediterranean lulls her in dreams that even at 39, almost 40 it's not too late

INSOMNIA ISTANBUL JUNE 13

Even with the window clasped, linden scent and jasmine. Cuniform slither thru the call to prayers. I think of Inheduana, her poems to Ianna tangled as the alphabet I'll never know. Silk tangles in carpets. I need the first night's dream back, that sweet cherry honey, the sweet ness of the ones who once called me honey

CAPPADOCIA WITH JUST ONE BIRD IN THE LAST BLACKNESS

green plums, apricot. Incense and candles, ash in a room that should be for lovers. Tulip lights sun blaze will gulp. How did I paint these caves before I even dreamt them? How could I not still be the thick dark haired girl in miniskirts I still wear, making dates I'd never keep with dark eyed men who wanted to take me to see their sisters. How could it be so many years ago when everything seemed ahead?

WHEN THE DREAM IS MORE REAL

when a blue jewel drops thru blackness, startling as emeralds in Topkapi, white birds on the minarets. That's when I want to flirt with danger, dare everything I need to survive just to be Scheherazade with so many stories you couldn't not die to hold me
Poetry by Lyn Lifshin

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MIST ON THE BOSPHORUS

light house, gulls
and more gulls.
light still on
blurred ships
and minarets.
White petals
and bulbs.
Feathers, beaks
explode in the
air, the music
wilder

ISTANBUL, LATE NIGHT, JUNE

under her black cloth
only her palms open.
In her lap, a half
child corpse. Only
her eyes move,
porcelain skin, color
of the palest candles,
asking, pleading.
Resigned. Almost a
doll of ivory, caved
marble. Something
wasn't ok. Something
was too late already

CAPPADOCIA CLIFFS

rose hips, wild
almost. Black
apricots in the
blazing sun. The
nude saint and a
prostitute in a
dark corner of a
cave. Back in the
light, red table
cloth, tiger lilies,
deer chimes, goats
and aspen circle
the borders, a
bracelet of jade.
Lizards, clay white
birds nuzzle each
other as shade
moves over
glistening pears
HERE IS HOW I PROPOSE TO END BOOK-BANNING IN THIS COUNTRY ONCE AND FOR ALL:

EVERY CANDIDATE FOR SCHOOL COMMITTEE SHOULD BE HOOKED UP TO A LIE-DETECTOR AND ASKED THIS QUESTION:

“HAVE YOU READ A BOOK FROM START TO FINISH SINCE HIGH SCHOOL?”

or, “DID YOU EVEN READ A BOOK FROM START TO FINISH IN HIGH SCHOOL?”

THEN THE CANDIDATE SHOULD BE TOLD poliely THAT HE CANNOT GET ON THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND BLOW OFF HIS BIG BAZOO

TRUTHFUL ANSWER IS “NO,”

..... ABOUT HOW BOOKS MAKE CHILDREN CRAZY.

http://www.vonnegutlibrary.org/
Volume 5 Available Now at  www.delmarvareview.com
Glimpses of Eternity in Bisbee, Arizona

The second time I glimpsed eternity was in St. Elmo’s bar in Bisbee, Arizona. I wandered down into Brewery Gulch in 100-degree, mid-day heat and ducked into the cool shadows of the bar. The barkeep, her long red hair flowing down her bare back, turned to serve me bathed in a halo of light. The bottles behind the bar sparkled like diamonds waiting to be split open. The daytime drinkers sopping up the afternoon could have been from any era, wiry frames and faces etched into the mirror, guns and knives parked at the door.

I was open to them, they sat with me, told me their timeless stories of running stolen cars and goods across the border to Agua Prieta, the lousy habits they couldn’t kick, the flat-out frustration of getting by. I talked softly and drank slowly through that barroom afternoon, careful not to dissipate the glow.

Learning the Game

“There’s a trick,” the carny owner said, “You see the center of the basket, the bulls-eye? That’s not really the sweet spot. To win, you need to hit below, use backspin, see?”

As he lofted the softball into the bushel basket. “That’s the spot, right there. Practice, you’ll get it. Make it look easy. See those dogs?”

I was surrounded by huge grinning dogs hanging from the ceiling of my booth like slabs of meat. Twenty-four eyes and twelve grins glaring down on me.

“Three in a row, they get a big dog, anything less, they get this.”

He pulled out a box of runts. “Make ‘em want the big dog.”

I bounced balls off for an hour or so until I got it, found the spot.

I had landed in Yuma, Arizona, heard from a friend in Phoenix I could make 50 bucks a day cash, enough to survive. Things started moving around noon. I’d work well into the night, hawking.

“C’mon Big Boy! Win the Big Dog for your honey!”

“Yo Dawg! Baby wants a Big Dog!” Whatever I could conjure up to relieve the tedium.

Three days in, and still I hadn’t given away one Big Dog. My boss found this admirable. The routine started to wear on me. I had no use for the hard drugs the carnies favored to get through the day.

It was painful to watch the Indians and blue collar workers try to be heroes for their kids, throwing away good money they couldn’t afford to lose. I thought of a friend who lived in San Diego.

One night, before closing time, I stuffed up my backpack, bid the big dogs goodbye and disappeared down Route 8.
City of Drifters

Downtown Tucson is a city of drifters. Transients wander parks in loose groups, drink Thunderbird and Mad Dog 20-20 beneath towering eucalyptus, play cards by intoxicating oleanders, haunt vacant lots passed over by sprawl. No rain, no need for tents, beds rolled up on backs, cosmologies etched on folded paper, tucked deep — the whole world in a back pocket, a conspiracy at the core.

By late afternoon, bombed out of their skulls, they stop rush hour traffic on Speedway Boulevard with their spastic dances and hoots.

My days spent banging nails in the Sonoran heat. My contribution to society: another stucco apartment complex tossed into the blinding disarray of commerce.

After four months, we finish up our part of the project, pack up the tools and drive off in clanking pickups to the closest happy hour.

Ray and Shorty doze it off, snoring away in the stolen shade.

The hobos clap for us at the end of a long day. I nod and throw them a leftover apple, half a sandwich. Get to know their names: Shorty, Oklahoma, Ray. Then one day, right before lunch, Oklahoma bends over, clutching his busted gut, “Not good. Not good,” he growls through his matted peppered beard.

The tattooed ponytailed wasted Ray rolls with him on the ground, “C’mon Man! C’mon Man!” Shorty paces and takes swigs from the bottle, “Shit! Shit!” My boss runs over, gives Ray a dime to call an ambulance. Soon, Oklahoma is gone.

The next morning, Ray and Shorty were at it, drinking again. I call over, “How’s Oklahoma?” They both shrug, fall into their routine of wino rants and laughs.

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Ray and Shorty doze it off, snoring away in the stolen shade.
OLE BULL PA.

So dark there's presence
so dark it hurts the eyes
so thick it's felt like obsidian silk
on the skin
A living thing with
electric,ozone pine,
hardwood forest floor humus
aroma,a flavor
energy infusing
Dark matter flowing from
something cosmic that I cannot begin
to fathom
So I don't try

That which is out there
throws stones at the clouds
and I am restless
enthralled by this
sporadic light show

Hushed tones, shadows
ghosts of guitar note
whispers
random as stars
spiraling around a
double helix somewhere out in that
rift
That staring eye

Empowered,
I go into the nighted forest
and listen,mountain gossip
as things primordial
stir in the black
beyond my meager beam
so I douse it
letting the overall
overtake me
Not waiting for dawn
I let it catch me
on the road

NAMELESS CAMP UTAH

Soft desert beneath me
fire hissing
die ing
Clouds tap on the tent
rearrange the sand
quiet the night things
for a bit
then move on

FOUR CORNERS

Eternal red sands
There is thirst out there
a monstrous dry
unquenchable,searing
reaching into you
greedy for your moisture

I feel it watching

Stalking
eyes ice mad
cracked
tongue swollen
lolling
lapping every stray drop
from bored Navaho
selling wares from
sweltering kiosks
at all four corners
of arbitrary lines
drawn across deserts aching
to wither you
dry
Poetry by Shea Garvin

**devil's tower sunrise**

At the foot of
this tower rising
dark
holy
I look up at the mind of creation
the mechanisms of life
counting passing satellites
meteors
a rift
Density waves
spiral arms dirvishing deep time
since before this tower’s
birth
on this ancient child
we call our collective mother
as all the teeming life
out there beyond us
calls that blueprint helix
at the center
mother

**If Rain Were Coin**

Drear
and symptoms stand
holding signs at every
off ramp, on ramp, red light
and left turn

Drear
and the lost
Hood their eyes
and their dogs
don’t know any better
and hope
today is the day
cheeseburger day

Drear
and if rain were coin
the dog would have his day
If rain were coin
we’d all drown
in luxuriant mud
Having never wanted
a day in the sun

Drear
and the rain persists
and the cold
The fog
Drear

**Natural Bridges Utah**

How long staring at the night sky
can one mind keep itself in sight
with a waxing moon
bright over
scoured desert
exposed bones of
when gone
and that thing out there
over every rise is
drinking and
thirsting never slaked
in narrow canyons
it waits
on starving buttes
it waits
under every rock
beautiful sky and
torrent
It waits
for you
to do something stupid

Watch for Shea Garvin's
Forthcoming Chapbook,
*Where Night Comes From*
Coming Soon from
The Broadkill Press
Poetry by Shea Garvin

White Oaks, Los Padres National Forrest

Down and away from the
dreams of giants
old ways California past
Away and across dreams blue and gold
of California now
past hills playing tag with militant orchards
and the sun's day's end rose madder rays
past ranches hidden, houses perched
towns nestled
dreaming of where they are
a waking dream
under stars I know from
other angles
Tomorrow the ocean
a new horizon

Solid Night

The solid night here
chilled
silent
ancient enemies
cracking branches in the black
does not concern me
so much as the cold
the slow die
toes pained in morning frost
this is not barefoot country
this is mind your manners country
dry, hungry country
enticing, fierce beauty
a peace you can hear
in a river's noctern
rumors of stones
running through the time mill
mountain chatter treetops
whisper soft
soft
soft
So It Goes

*The Literary Journal of the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library*

http://www.vonnegutlibrary.org
How Do You Work?

The Creative Process: What Is It? How Does It Work? How Do You Experience it?

Our Editors’ Answers Begin On This Page; We Invite yours

Linda Blaskey:

Almost all of my poems are triggered by a specific image. The trigger may not remain in the poem but it is the diving-in point. In the case of the poems appearing in this issue of The Broadkill Review all of the triggers remain – a pot of geraniums sitting in the sun, a crow on a fence post in a snow storm, and a face reflected in glass – but the stories in the poems are pretty much made up with bits and pieces coming from my own past or from things I’ve heard or seen.

Movement seems to be key to my writing – I work in my head while walking or washing dishes or mucking out stalls. That’s how the bulk of the work takes place, where I pull things in, toss others out. Then I put it all down in black and white at the computer, print it out and go to work the old fashioned way with pen or pencil. Long hand is the only way I can revise.

Gary Hanna:

"I often write while I'm driving, sometimes stimulated by something I've seen (road kill) or just words coming together while I'm bored and driving on auto pilot. It generally requires me to pull off the road a number of times while words and ideas are coming to me. I can't remember them unless I write them down quickly before I lose the sequence, juxtaposition, or choice of word or words and how they sound together. This of course requires something to write on immediately, which is seldom there. So I grab the Kleenex box, a napkin, bank deposit slip, old grocery bill, highway map, anything. I've learned to keep ballpoint pens in the drivers side compartment. Some of my Kleenex boxes have all six sides covered with drivel. Once, when hiking, I tried to write on a leaf-- but that didn't work. Yes, I have several little pocket sized note-books and even two small recording devices, but they never seem to be around when I need them - besides writing is too spontaneous to be so organized, that would be the surest way to kill it, although I do admit sometimes it's a chore to decipher what I've tried to write down, especially if I'm in the fast lane".

Anne Colwell:

I write three pages of something everyday. Usually the three pages are just freewriting, but I find it keeps me thinking on the page and that's what's important. When I'm really trying to get poems written, I use prompts or try different forms or styles of poems to see if I can find something that way. I have to write poems in longhand -- I need to feel them come looping out of a pen -- but I can write prose on a keyboard. I have discovered that my relationship with writing is like any other relationship with someone I love. I have to keep trying to understand where it's going. I have to fight sometimes. I can't take it for granted.

Scott Whitaker

My wife teaches school. I teach school. Our boys attend school, so I have many full days which leaves little time for long writing sessions. An hour is a gift. A half-hour block is what I have learned to play with, often producing short character sketches, or a series of poems on a theme. I went years producing little, and was unhappy with myself. I had to more or less commit to writing poetry every day and focus on prose in the summer; part of my heart still yearns to compose the great American, but have little regular time to fall into an extended groove. I have had to learn to write in the living room, on a mobile device, with everyone around me in their own bubble of noise and (mostly) glee. So I'm pretty lucky. I write daily, sometimes with my kids playing around me, or even on me. And this sense of play lets me let my hair down and play on paper. These days I'm drawn to blank verse types of lyrics. Inspiration comes from a variety of sources. Sometimes it feels rote. Sometimes it feels uninspired. Sometimes it is boring. Mostly it's work. And some days are better than others. I'm sharing my "quotidian" notebook on Wattpad, and Figment, social networking sites for writers, widely populated, talent as broad and wide as the Atlantic. It's basically an online blog, or journal that people can peek into and comment upon. I try not to take it so seriously.

Gerry LaFemina:

I tend to write long hand, with gel ink pens on lined paper. Recently I've started using small, wire notepads while I'm out and about to take notes, jot down lines and sometimes compose partial drafts. This is to say that I like having activity around me when I write. When composing, I feel like the nexus points of a variety of energies: whatever's going on around me, the imagination, the emotional and spiritual energies of my life, cultural and personal histories... My job is to engage that energy, harness it and shape it in language, which is when the revision process--often many multiple revisions over the course of several weeks.
a. mclean

Words come quickly when something emotionally affects me, and if I can’t get them down on paper immediately, they haunt me until I do. This begins a process in which my poems evolve, often in unexpected or unintended ways, that surprise me. Some poems become commentaries on the human condition, values, or with a spiritual subtext. Others are inspired by observing Nature. Some are purely cathartic, and often produce poor poetry, but over time, and with work, some prove to have merit. This has taught me to set initial drafts aside for days, even months, to allow a more critical eye. Because I play the piano by ear, my word choices tend to have a lyrical flow, and sound right, but disguise the fact the poem makes little sense in meaning, and lack the punctuation needed to help the reader enter the poem’s rhythm. For me writing poetry is a seductive process, but one that always leaves me dissatisfied.

H. A. Maxson

When I’m working on a book, I write every day and try to write 1000 words plus. I write longhand in notebooks. The first rewrite comes when I transfer to the computer. When I’m not working on a book, I write whenever the god whispers in my ear. In other words I follow Rilke’s advice to be “open and receiving.”

I write most poems in my head, sometimes for days, before they hit the page, so they are usually pretty far along by the time they become ink stains. The ones that are waiting when I wake up, I jot down immediately before the days whisk them away.

Then rewrite, rewrite, rewrite. Often times for years before I send them out. That’s worked well for over forty years. I do not look back at my early published poems and cringe.
The Editor Confesses —

I have no work “ethic”. “Ethic” implies (to me, at least) some measure of conscious control over what is, for me, largely impulsive. I struggle just to make sense of each day. Writing helps that. I don’t have an attention deficit, I have an attention void. “Oooh, look! It’s snowing outside!”

Where was I? Oh, yes! Sorry about that. Now then, as I was saying... When I get to the computer early enough to jot down whatever I remember of a dream I had and can still remember (research demonstrates that everybody dreams; those who claim not to just can’t remember theirs) I count myself lucky. The flow has already started.

Other times I enter my study and check e-mails, work on the next issue of The Broadkill Review, and check e-mails again. As I am in the process of writing two novels, three plays, and a short story that may, in fact, be another novel, three collections of poetry and one of short fiction, and am also trying to prepare for publication six chapbooks of poetry by poets who have appeared frequently in The Broadkill Review (The Broadkill Press’s Key Poetry Series), a novella-length chapbook of a wonderful, bizarre, dense, poetic, and delightfully zaftig work by David R. Slavitt titled "L'heure bleu," and Steven Leech’s vitally important journey through Delaware’s rich but largely ignored literary history, Valdemar’s Corpse, all of this just forestalls the inevitable decision I must make (unless actually inspired to work on one or the other) as to which of these projects to devote some energy to that morning.

Poems, when they come, begin as an image which gives birth to a line. The line gives birth to the evolution of the poem, which is not extruded so much as vomited, so perhaps “gives birth to” is metaphorically incorrect.

My study, depending upon how recently the cultch has been shoveled out, runs from almost neat to disorganized, and I am used to it in the latter fashion, although that doesn’t make me any more efficient or productive. It does mean that what I am working on causes me to want to have materials relevant to that particular project close-at-hand. Coffee is an important lubricant.

I will often have several files open simultaneously so that I can jump back and forth between them as I write. As often happens, I will think of something important for a project I am NOT working on when I am working on another. This way I can drop a note to myself into the file about which I have had a drop of insight or inspiration, and then return to the project which is the primary focus of my attention.

I carry a pocketful of Uniball roller-ball pens at all times. I jot notes on paper napkins, the back of ATM printouts, envelopes, charge receipts, the insides of matchbooks, the backs of coasters, on scraps of cardboard, and by the end of each year, nearly every calendar page of a pocket date book I carry is filled with illegibly scrawled notes. Once I have collected a large enough pile of these, I try to decipher them; I have found that if too long a time period passes between their being written and trying to decode them, I can no longer read them, so I try not to wait too long between these sessions.

Once the “inspired” jottings are actually entered into my computer in a word file, I can begin to think about them. Thinking, however, seems to be counterproductive when trying to get back in touch with the muse — I sometimes feel that the muse has a recorded voice that says, “Your call is very important to us. Call volume is currently very heavy. Please hold and your call will be answered in turn. Approximate wait period for your call to be answered by a real muse is...approximately fifteen hundred years!”

But relax. She’s just around the corner, and stress won’t get her to your door any faster.

— JB
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Photo of Fernando Pessoa and Howard Gofreed in Lisbon, Portugal by Selwyn Berg
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Douglas Morea’s newest collection, *Letters to You,* (Broken Turtle Books LLC, $15.99) gathers a variety of voices into a single chorus that rails against growing old, against stupidity, and against mind numbing day to day consciousness.

Morea scoffs at academia in his “preramble” and offers a variety of qualifiers as to why he hasn’t attained, pursued, or settled for a staleness many feel dominate the academic landscape. He’s preaching to choir here, and instead of offering the reader sanitized “deep” poems, Morea offers up lines that are “crisp”, and that are “immediately available.”

And he succeeds. Sometimes crass, sometimes elegiac, Morea is not afraid to get in and get out. His short poems are rooted in the Romantic tradition of colloquial language. His imagery is contemporary, fleeting, and modern.

The volume is meant to be a series of letters, or rather voices speaking to us. Many of them are apostrophe poems rather than letters, but that doesn’t mean his purpose, or “message” if you dare, gets lost in the shuffle of persona poems and apostrophe poems. Morea speaks directly to the reader with frankness and, sometimes, grumpy honesty. He’s not a musician in the lyric sense, but one whose music arises out of a folksier tradition. Morea himself compares his voice to Bob Dylan, who like Morea, is not afraid to speak plainly about poetic things and poetically about non-poetic things. Consider “To An 18 Year Old Girl” where the speaker, an 18 year old boy, pines for the girl and at the same time holds a bitter self self perception of himself, “I am also a hall of mirrors with no face/to shine.”

The volume brought to mind Louis Simpson’s much quoted “American Poetry,” because like Simpson suggests, Morea’s poems are full of American objects, desires, and malaise. One must have a strong stomach indeed, Morea seems to be saying, to put up with suburbs, pretty women with their dogs, and the foolish things men do as they age.

— SW
Scott Whitaker Reviews Lenny Lianne’s
The ABCs of Memory

Lenny Lianne’s newest volume of poetry, *The ABCs of Memory*, from ScriptWorks Press, mashes two books of poetry, with opposing ideals, together, a tradition that hearkens back to Blake, *An Alphabet from An Ample Nation*, and *An Alphabet of Modest Means*. *Memory* strikes a contemporary chord, cherishing the past while tightening the belt on the future, a theme most Americans could identify with in these recent years of economic recovery.

Lianne’s *ABCs* are broad in depth and range, and touch on cultural milestones such as Elvis, Nancy Drew, Wonder Bread, 9-11, and Ty Cobb, as well as personal memories of her family. These poems are celebrations, elegies, and like the titles of the books, or parts suggest, hint at a plethora of riches, or a plethora of troubles, big and small.

Lianne speaks with authority about young men drafted into war in “Basic Training” and young boys peeking at their Centerfold cousin in “Finding the Playmate of the Month.” Lianne doesn’t just recount these memories, invented or real, but often questions them, mourns for them without evoking false pride or anger.

*The ABCs of Memory* could easily fall into sentimentality, we are talking about memories. We are talking about cultural heroes. Lost wonders of the good old days, but Lianne does not allow the poems to do so. She steers them towards a unified bridge, another great American tradition—unifying the country through poetic voice, where all emotional landscapes butt up against each other, like so many state lines running parallel and perpendicular. One of the finer poems, “Velocity and Other Variables”, begins as a memory of boys throwing olives but ends as a meditation on war, as if all the world’s violence is seeded in the youthful volley of spitballs, baseballs, and olives.

This volume manages to be both grand and humble, her form is crafted, though not too formal for non-academics, but her language is direct and frank, allowing images and emotions to breathe, puffing up, or shrinking up as they will. Mostly the perspectives are from the white middle class, a shrinking population as America trudges forth in the 21st century. That’s not a criticism, mind you, but rather a reminder that what made the country great in the 20th century was the ordinary people in the middle who built, loved, sang, drank, died, and fought for something we used to call the American Dream. Something that perhaps belongs in America’s euro-white-centric past. And in that sense Lianne’s book is an elegy for the American Dream, as it once was, for that ideal is changing with globalization and a leaner economy. *The ABC’s of Memory* is a reminder that the voice of America has gotten broader and deeper, and more complex.

—SW
Scott Whitaker Reviews

A Secret Woman
by Rose Solari

Rose Solari’s debut novel, A Secret Woman, is a double helix narrative following Louise Terry, a feminist artist seeking love and inspiration in the art circles and bars of the DC area, and her mother, Margaret, whose recent death has unearthed a mysterious manuscript about a woman with the gift of light, also named Margaret, a nun who lived, suffered, and sacrificed in the Middle Ages. It is these three women that make up the bulk of A Secret Woman, a novel about identity, love, art, and faith.

Solari sets up a mystery wrapped in a social comedy of errors, wrapped in a family drama. There are other layers to her storytelling, the doppleganger characters living in various time lines, and the characters own artistic perspectives and journeys. Solari has served up a well paced novel rich in design.

Why was crazy Mom interested in the saints? Why did crazy Mom cheat? Was there a curse? More than one possibly? Why did crazy Mom leave her family? These questions of family and character are one layer of the conflict Louise has to maneuver. But Louise has her own spiraling conflicts to navigate as well, those of art, integrity, and self-identity. And both women, mother and daughter, share many of the same character defects, struggle with what it means to be a woman in the world, and struggle with what it means to love.

Solari’s narrative has plenty of hooks to hang agendas upon—the life of artists, priests, the post feminism women’s movement, but she does not preach nor teach. The novel remains a story about people’s struggle for identity. Women are the main focus of her narrative ear and eye, and the men’s conflicts parallel the women’s, enriching both story lines with their knotty due. Her pacing is quick, and the conversation heady, often balancing sex and discussions about art, painting, music, and writing.

As Louise’s art brings her to London, the narrative opens up with regards to her mother Margaret, and the mysterious would be saint she spent the last years of her life researching. Here, with the introduction of witchcraft into the spiritual mystery, Solaris allows her characters to seek their own path, their own light. Which of course leads Louise on more soul-searching. There’s a subplot about a missing statue that gives more insight about her mother, Margaret, through the eyes of her alcoholic writer ex-lover, Lawrence Ware, who becomes the closest thing to a bad guy in the tale. Mostly A Secret Woman is just that, women discovering or hiding secrets, in themselves and in the people around them.

Reading A Secret Woman reminded me a bit of reading Bridget Jones, for like Jones, Louise just wants to do the right thing, but her life won’t let her, either her family, or lover, or ex, or even the priest she befriends offer more and more opportunities for Louise to make another mistake as she continues to grow up. This is not to say A Secret Woman is a comedy, but it is a comedy of errors and manners, especially with regards to the art and indie music scene Solaris captures so well. Solaris is writing a very different type of book than the two books Bridget Jones appeared in. Louise is not a clown, she’s transformed by her experience, not into a saint, but into a more enlightened woman.

— SW
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Finland
a poem by
Tom Mandel

I.

Although this is not my country
I do not live here.

Although this sky is not mine
with patience I inhabit it.

The water is cold here
except when I am in it.

The sand is white here
til I stretch myself on it.

Trees here were just planted; like
infant bones they grow.

Nothing here may be left behind
when the sun goes down
behind your eyes.

II.

This is your country. Because I love you
I stay here.

I always will. As all things will though
always will end.

If you walk a while you'll reach the
end of this country.

You can even walk out from under
this sky. Maybe.

Trees age and bones grow brittle
enough to injure with

their sharp ends or any ends, even the
day’s. The sun goes down too

behind my eyes.
Jazz Burned by Burns
by Roy Haymond

Almost a decade has passed since Ken Burns did a ten-episode marathon entitled "Jazz". The New York Times called it the best documentary ever. And who can argue with NYT? And even now the epic continues to get extensive exposure!

The question is: best documentary on what?

Some of us had looked forward to this epic. Seeing film clips of the great instrumentalists of the past in a logical sequence would have made this project something to treasure.

But what did we get? Talk, talk, talk. Oh, the talking heads, the experts, the eyewitnesses, the analyzers. Like the State of the Union, and then Dan or Peter or Tom, with their ever-so-brilliant panels, proceed to tell us what we just heard.

In truth, there is little than can be said about jazz - jazz IS, but it is NOT something for words (even jazz singers often ignore the words).

But this didn't stop the talking heads from saying the same things over and over: "jazz is freedom"; "jazz is democracy"; "...comes from the soul"; "...will never be the same again."

The most obnoxious of the talking heads (by far, and not only because he got more space, and therefore was allowed to say the same things more often) was Wynton Marsalles. Oh, he went on and on - even on Sidney Bechet's dog - in a delivery that was often contrived in tone, and always devoid of substance.

And, worse, he, again and again, did reprises on the Mills Brothers. He boop-beeped sounds suggestive of horns and rhythm sections, by way of illustrating to the uninformed what it was that they had almost heard. (And this, according to Ken Burns, was the jewel in the crown! Does one dare call this condescending?)

Worse: much of the chatter was completely off the subject.

Race was dealt with rather thoroughly: slavery, Jim Crow, race riots during WWII, protests and campus hooligan frolics. And FUNERALS - one loses count when there were so many.

Some of this was, of course, relevant history. Louis Armstrong's disowning of New Orleans, Billy Holiday's lack of accommodations on the road, and some other examples are necessary parts of the archives. But at a point these side-trips became but superfluous detours taking up time in the series, time that could actually have been spent on jazz. Moreover, the detours became trite and monotonous.

There was a teaser in one of the later episodes: we got to hear the ENTIRE side of Coleman Hawkins doing "Body and Soul" without a single word from the assembled sages!

But when we got to Lester Young, it was back to the old talk machines. Really, now, does one have to have EXPLAINED the abrupt change in tenor sax brought on by Lester Young? So we heard very little of Prez - he was simply in the background for such brilliant commentary as: "Subtle"; "Quiet"; "Empty Spaces". Yak, yak, yak, while we strained to hear just a little bit of Lester.

All this verbal excess brought out a major weakness in the project: the limited selection of stars - so much time was spent digressing and regressing on several of the figures (even the questionable Sidney Bechet), many greats were barely mentioned, others left out altogether.

For instance, trumpet jumped from Louis Armstrong to Dizzy Gillespie. This omits the work of Bubber Miley and Cootie Williams, and even Roy Eldridge.

Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young have already been cited, but there was no mention of Eddie Miller and Bud Freeman, who came before them, and scarcely a mention of Stan Getz, who came after (or Flip Phillips, or the current practitioner, Scott Hamilton).

And with alto sax, Charlie Parker's space was justified (though not enough space had Bird actually blowing his horn), but no mention of Willie Smith or Bennie Carter, nor Paul Desmond and Lee Konitz.

The great Art Tatum got less than two minutes, and if Oscar Peterson were there, anyone who sneezed would have missed him.

Trombone was scarce in this study. Jack Teagarden was seen (but scarcely heard), but Dickie Wells, Bill Harris, J.J. Johnson and Urby Green were bypassed.

Other greats like Charles Mingus, Jerry Mulligan and Wes Montgomery were overlooked, but the most glaring omissions were in the big bands.

Surely Duke Ellington was on a plateau alone, but there was some outstanding jazz coming from other stages. Woody Herman comes to mind, or the Les Brown crew in the mid-fifties, and the Claude Thornhill and Charlie Barnet groups of the late forties.

Imagine the nostalgic thrill of hearing a few bars from each of these icons. Consider hearing a few measures of Bud Freeman and then making a quick comparison to Lester. Think of hearing a little of Teagarden followed by some blasts from Urby Green.

And there would have been room for all this in the Burns pantheon if we had had fewer social commentaries, fewer funerals, and less solipsistic rhetoric.

And the rhetoric itself, beyond the monotony, often tossed extraneous questions into the mix. Does art have to be popular (we had Armstrong doing the purely commercial "Hello Dolly", and Miles playing R&B)? Are there limits to harmonic extension? Are some of these free association things simply the thumbing of the nose (Coltrane)? Must jazz be in parallel with societal changes?

And then the "classifications": Dixieland; Swing; BeBop; Hard Bop: something called Fusion; Avant Guard. Could this an exercise in opportunistic pedantry?

Would that the talking heads had had a separate venue so they could have said the same lines over and over to each other, while someone gave us a TRUE documentary, with hours of old film and sound, so that jazz could be lived instead of being talked to death.
Emerging Writer's Contest Opens

Submit now to the 2013 Ploughshares Emerging Writer's Contest! The contest is open from today to April 2 at 12:00 noon EST. One winner in each genre—fiction, poetry, and nonfiction—will receive $1,000 and publication. The submission fee is $24 and includes a one-year subscription to Ploughshares, so it's a win-win situation. Psst, if you are subscribed through the 2013 Winter Issue, you can submit for free!

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For more information, or to submit, visit www.pshares.org/EmergingAward.

You can read winning submissions from last year on our website. We look forward to reading your work!
Poetry by Lisa Mullenneaux

Luna Moth

Your landing on our lamp eclipsed the room and after-dinner cerebrations about planets that had yet to find us as you found us, rising on the night air above the shag-bark hickories, your hatching spot, to follow a new constellation through a broken window pane. Now fettered to an artificial moon your tufted forelock twitches, pale green, eye-spotted wings taper to streamers or a ballerina’s pointed toes.

No sun spun through broadleaf lies with such ceremony— your airfoil cape spectral on the hooded shade.

Monet at Giverny

Who knows why as I sat by the pond and reached to light my pipe, your face, paler than the nymphéas, rose to greet me? At that early hour the mist hangs above the water, everything is wet, even the tobacco. You floated up at me, Camille, as clear as in a mirror.

Alice is kind, Camille, tender but firm with her own six and our two boys—10 mouths to feed at our farm table. We have planted ourselves in a village called Le Pressoir, after the potent local cider. It is changeless and ever-changing—

the line of the hills where two rivers meet, their back-lit beauty teasing my brushes; meadows of orange poppies, clotted with haystacks that purple at dusk. When the land rages, darkens and explodes in sheets of rain, it reminds me of the rages you called my tourmentes.

I have hired six gardeners, six! Yes, the gardens will be my signature, a frieze of flowers that burn their petals on my retina so that blind I can paint them, make them open. As the world grows dark, my canvases will grow light.

What I steal en plein air, I will carpenter from memory—the wooden footbridge, archways of wisteria and roses, balletic willows— they will never leave me, nor the lilies nor you in my looking glass.

The Fan

I saw your face on the book jacket and decided to write because it’s such a pleasant face and what made you write such a mean book?

There’s not a ray of light in its pages, not like your happy home, the beach house in the background of the photo. Surely,

you earned it, the African art and teak furniture with small children decorating the shelves. How do you make them sit so quietly?

To keep them out of the dogs’ way, of course, those jouncey Irish setters drooling on the sectionals and that noble platform your spouse, who at the moment of the photo shoot was caramelizing parsnips or maybe forming a limited partnership with the Roomba—

everyone with good teeth, a winter tan, and a civility so deliciously cruel to your readers who only want to love you.

Waking the Dead

They, too, need exercise and we their shadow strength as it’s freed from the negative onto the page, exposed in dark rooms of houses that smell of the camphor in handmade quilts. We watch them find sunspots on the carpet where they unfurl like chrysalis, sing duets, jitterbug, and complain about weak tea. They ask for Tarot cards and shuffle our memories, then offer to forecast our futures, roaring at the joke, knowing there is only one final address no matter how many detours.
Wishbone

This is the bone you broke,
my husband says, holding up
the slick, triangular version
while preparing our dinner,
as if it were a prize
genetic specimen. As children,
we’d shriek with delight
on spying one in our soup,
as if luck were already on our side
for having found it.
Mother instructed us
to put the fragile bone aside to dry,
for better breaking.
We pressed our small thumbs
to the soft indentation
on the north side of our wish,
a perfect fit, designed
for our merciless fingers,
snapping it over ice cream
to see who got the larger share.
Now, we merely pause

to sip our Chardonnays,
continue measuring out
flour to pats of butter.
At least the chicken’s bone
has a function—unlike mine,
which I don’t use
to read or write, or watch
a red-tufted bird stealing straw
from my window box,
or even to jump a horse—
which is how I broke it.

Painful, but not useful nor symbolic;
I can’t even wish away the pain.
It’s just a bone, trussing up my frame,
unlike the charm held
in a roasted chicken’s carcass,
what the bird, unbeknownst,
surrendered his life for:
our dinner and the rich,
earthy fragrance of tomorrow.
My husband tosses the one
onto a pile of many,
while I stir his curry.

Blood-Letting

A cut from paper’s edge,
Razor-sharp and shocking—
it took six years
for the blood
to rise to the surface,
seep its way out.

First, she teeters downstairs
on Father’s thin arm,
in a floor-length Mary Jane,
tenting what is left
of her spent body.
Then, she floats
from her auditorium seat
in a red taffeta gown,
lifting its voluptuous skirts
up the few short steps
to the Steinway.
I rip a piece of paper towel
to blot the sliver wound
as Granados’s nightingale
trills its way out of my flesh
just as it did from the raised
dark hood, forty years ago,
just as she rises within me.
Teaching English in Issan
where Thailand’s farmers stand knee-deep
in rice paddies and local housewives shred
unripe papaya into a blisteringly hot
salad called som tam
my mother thought of me so far
from Stop & Shop’s delicacies
and sent a care package:
spices, brownies and a large bag
of marshmallows. Wisut, my
Thai roommate, found some
of the spices actually growing in our
yard and we both laughed at the irony.
Then we stared at the marshmallows.
_They are plastic, are they not?_ Wisut asked,
squeezing one over and over.
_No it’s like candy_ I said.
(no stanza break)
He shook his head and walked away.
It was boy scout weekend and
students were scattered around
the school and my house
lighting fires and cooking pots of rice.
Some of the more skilled among them
packed their own dessert of
nam-dok-mai mangos to slice alongside
sticky rice balls with coconut sauce.
Out there between buildings, in lush
growth they seemed indifferent to the
possibility of cobras.
Suddenly, I had an idea.
_Let’s make a really big fire_ I cried.
So they did under such a full moon
shadows of palm and guava trees
were etched around them as the
tokays lizards called out tokay tokay tokay.
With a long stick I pierced a
white orb allowing it to darken,
burn and drip before pulling it out as an
offering only to be met by stark disbelief.
_It is plastic, my teacher, a student said_
echoing my roommate’s first thought.
I cautiously nibbled the bubbling treat
leaving one faintly burnt smidgeon to share.
Somboon, the bravest, brought
it to his lips and tasted.
In this The Land of Smiles surely
Somboon’s smile broke all records.
Quickly, many sticks pierced the treats.
After the first go-around there was
a joyous attempt by all to join
in the first Thai marshmallow roast.
I thought _this would make a good picture_
When one of the students shouted
_This better than sticky rice balls_
I momentarily lost my joy and wondered
what I had started.

_Not Exactly Eden_ is part of the book
_Thai Comic Books and Other Poems_
to be published in the future by
Big Table Press.
“Richard Peabody writes poetry as if every day could be his last. With no time for waste or empty prettiness, he cuts straight to the chase every time. By turns tender, tragic, and legiac, these large-hearted, achingly human poems take my breath away, deliver necessary lessons about loving and losing and loving again. This is a brave and beautiful collection.”

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Quantum Mechanics

About physics I know little. About love, ditto.
But I’ve been watching the Science Channel again, &
clarity seems possible, at least on one of these subjects. For instance, in a
different dimension I might not have made the mistakes I’ve made;
even though in another, I would have made more. Have you

figured it out: this is a love poem, frustrated, because
god, I’ve wanted & tired of wanting & wanted more. The
Hadron collider exists to answer the big questions like a fortune telling machine
I saw on the boardwalk once. This was New
Jersey, years ago. If I were a believer in such things I’d say

kismet has brought me together with this woman who was a girl I loved then.
Look, I have a picture of us from that time. It’s evidence. Proof.
M-theory suggests the universe is a membrane with 11 dimensions.
Next year that could be replaced. Like god, the universe has a complicated
omnibus of explanations. Years back they taught us a trinity of

particles: neutrons, protons, electrons. Soon the lab coats were talking
quarks, strings, super-gravity, but I was listening to college radio instead,
requesting love songs that I was never sure she heard.
Some things I do know, however: her smile is one theory of everything &
the day I asked that mechanical swami about my future I was

undoubtedly thinking of her. Don’t worry. The future is bright.
Verisimilitude is what keeps us all going, yet we still ask
what’s behind the mysterious. M-theory? Solve for
X, & other variables remain. What value can we assign to
yearning, for instance? If we collide two protons, what’s left?

Zed particles, muons, neutrinos... things we can’t see but trust should exist.

On a Local Station Watching
an Express Train Pass

If there’s a heaven
it’s that other world, the one
I imagine right
before slumber, the one
in which you breathe, droway,
pillow-bound beside me.
Summer Wind

When the waitress says, “It’s such a sad occupation eating alone,” there’s no discourse. I can’t disagree: it’s the curse of summer in Manhattan, the curse

of loving someone with other commitments, the curse of Wednesday nights. She is pretty & pregnant, & she has delivered a second mojito

as a courtesy. Hers is the curse of one more bad boyfriend, the course of pity. All over this city, humid July has weakened the knees

of hot dog vendors; therefore, the jazz musicians play off the root notes of thirst & longing, those minor, sustained chord structures. The melodies

echo in the canyon between West Village brownstones—a medley of sad ballads. My waitress seems to sway. I try not to think of her

weeping, but for some reason I can’t stop myself. Three mojitos into this evening, she & the bartender consult & point my way. They must wonder

if I’m married or gay or being stood up or all of the above because it’s such a sad occupation: eating alone. Who would believe I’m almost happy

for just each drink’s slight minty kiss of rum & lime, grateful, too, for the freedom to say goodnight & thanks. She mentions she gets off in an hour.

A squad car scours the storefront in swirled light. Who doesn’t want, sometimes, the contact of bodies? I can imagine the swell of her abdomen beneath

my palm. I know tonight I could kiss her, walk her to a jazz bar where we could slow dance until our private sorrows became one long, diminishing note.

A man outside sings Sinatra—“Summer Wind”—& I apologize for having loved poorly & too often & for my dignity I tip too large as if to suggest

Yes, I was tempted. Is it a lie if it is only implied? A coming storm blows the lanky trees into conversation. Some one is crying. Someone else begs for change.
Psalm

Pity the woman on today’s news who can’t forget anything—pinpoint a date, a year, and she’ll say who she was with, the news of the day.
Pity the woman in the hotel lobby holding her head, her visible cheek streaked.
Pity the victim & the witness.
Pity the perpetrator, too, who even as I write this crumples up his guilt & tosses it into the confessional of St. Stanislaw’s.
I’ve seen them all & kept walking, for what else could I do?
I’ve seen the businessman feeding pigeons & starlings at the corner of Broadway & Wall, tossing them the bread of his sandwich.
I’ve seen the way he looked at Trinity Church across the street but, even now, I can’t describe the expression sculpted into his cheeks.
Then came the sound of bells from its steeple in the melody of a hymn.
Then came the taxi that whisked me away from that drama.
Pity the cabbie & his family in the Ukraine with whom he’s lost all contact.
Imagine his wife holding her forehead half the world away.
Then came her tears so much like all of our tears, like all of our griefs & our happinesses, too.
Then came a cresting wave of sirens like trumpets: one squad car. Two. Three. An ambulance also.
Pity the family & the children in the nearby parochial school asked to pray.
Then came the voices of six year olds in prayer.
I’ve seen those kids playing hopscotch & tag in the courtyard at recess.

Imagine to have been that free to laugh.
I’ve seen the ambulances outside the building, a gurney covered by a blank sheet, the EMTs silent.
Then came the sobbing relative consoled by a neighbor.
I’ve been the neighbor, counseled the crying mother of a dead friend.
Imagine me walking with her, her left hand at her forehead, her right hand clutching me, praying or cursing—I couldn’t tell which—in the old language.
Imagine walking the streets a week later, how good it felt, the hot wind blowing on such a hot day.
Creating Categories — a Work of Fiction?
non-fiction by a. mcLean

I have been thinking about the bombshell popularity of Fifty Shades of Gray, today’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover, perhaps best categorized in a group described as “lust between the lines.” It’s always risky to try and categorize creative writings, yet many categories already exist (fiction, non-fiction, drama). There may be other ways to categorize writing than through those traditional labels, as suggested below.

1) Transformational-transactional works. The author extrapolates from a very specific, often personal and contemporary framework of social norms to write about an individual, or groups, circumscribed by such boundaries. Although the work may be fiction, its impact on the reader is transformational, altering the readers’ perceptions of his/her world, and which enables new interpretations of specific conditions. New awareness often leads to challenging social norms, and can instigate transactions in society that result in social transformations. Examples of such work are Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Sloan Wilson’s The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, James Baldwin’s Go Tell It On the Mountain, Anne Tyler’s The Accidental Tourist, John Updike’s Rabbit, Run, F. Scott Fitzgerald’s This Side of Paradise, and Jane Austen’s Emma.

2) Experiential-transitional works. These writers experiment with transcending social and physical experiences, transiting into fantastical realms that web reality with an almost hallucinatory sense of existence. These works are potent in enabling escape from otherwise predictable experiences, and allow the reader to link reality to “new normals,” such as Peter Pan, by J.M. Barrie, Norman Mailer’s, Ancient Evenings, John Irving’s Hotel New Hampshire, Erica Jong’s Fear of Flying, Gore Vidal’s Creation, Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye, L. Frank Baum’s The Wizard of Oz, and Lewis Carroll’s Alice In Wonderland.

3) Wisdom works. These authors are usually older and more subtle in their work, which reflects self-actualization and insights forged through time, producing a deeper and more tolerant understanding of the human condition. The stories are often about survival, and ways of living with life’s eternal companion, mortality. They tend towards the philosophical or existential, and, even if fictional, the contents often provide teachable moments, such as in Hemingway’s Old Man and the Sea, Melville’s Moby Dick, Nikos Kazantzakis’ Report to Greco, and Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot.

4) Lyrical-transcribing works. These authors work on the edge of prose/poetry in writing fiction, transcribing the flow of words not unlike musical composers. Their readers are captured not only by the story, but also by the lyricism, and the essence of description. Good examples include On the Road by Jack Kerouac, Annie Dillard’s Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, Kahlil Gibran’s The Prophet, Vladimir Nabokov’s Ada, and the short stories of Clarice Lispector.

5) One-off/formula works. Story tellers with formulas and creative orgasms, but whose work has little literary staying power, such as Fifty Shades of Gray, romance, and other “genre” fiction.

— a. mcLean
“David Kozinski is a Renaissance man; if you speak with him for more than a minute or two you soon find out that he is an accomplished painter with several shows to his credit, and a journeyman poet who brings his painter’s eye to the verbal realm. His poems have appeared in a score or literary publications and have earned him national and regional recognition.”
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Steam Alley. Early Morning. Flower Girl. 1903.

Walkups, built up
twenty stories,
crowd sunlight
from alley breaks,
as if they were fingers
that could, at any time,
snap shut the deep shadows
that frame the flower girl
as she rises from the basement
room she shares with her sister,
hers twin boys from a marriage
which ended with a blind horse,
a dead child, a debtor's funeral
eating at the pockets
like a rat at a sugar sack
stored in the corner where she sleeps.
She has her back turned.
As if she understands sunlight
will find her as she moves
deeper into the alleywalks,
toward the train yards
where the morning shifts
will spill out and towards her blossoms.
But it is dark still
in the early morning.
There is enough light for her
to buy roses, and tulips,
which will sell enough
for her to buy a small pheasant
from the abattoir. Her twins
follow her, each of them
out for sack, a quick pinch
when some gentlemen
pauses to hitch a red rose
from the bunch. She sees
so many lovers
now that she works
beyond the stitch house.
She’s heard it before,
but couldn’t believe,
so many wives love
when they should grieve
the men that leave them every day.

Adam and Samantha Share Licorice in the Park

and like cuttlefish plot their mark. They share napkins
and pens. Oh, to be sunny and wise with money,
they’d have the lint in my pockets doubled by morning.
As if the beautiful need money, their lawyers
are handed down generation to generation;
that way murders and deceit grow long memories.
The licorice eaters peel their candy back
with their teeth, a trick Samantha learned
in Italy when translating Dante and slicing apart
lovers spirits with her wit and ballet muscle.
Together they are happy with cruelty, French cigarettes,
Bavarian wine. They will divide a heart, in time,
tender and cut the dense meat, wipe their lips,
serve with raspberry tarts, ginger ruffles, a slice of lime.
Break in the Sawgrass. The Salt Baker. Black Narrows. 1902

Skiff: skinny, narrow as his favorite gal's thighs, enough to cover his own body, no more; bare and tight and long. Copper kettle boiling drum, screwed to a frame of drift and shark bone, brings enough steam power to troll for bait fish, red drum, an occasional shark for parts and oil. He chugs chugs chugs. Squat paddle wheel pushing through four foot seas or a channel's icy chop.

Outlanders pay extra for salt goods, sea salt, saline drip, byproducts of the little engine that puffs puffs as he jags into the bay beyond the break in the sawgrass. He breaks his fast with beer, raw oysters, little nicks, and grinds the meal between his teeth, sucking their butter sweet into his dry mouth. It is the only prayer he can manage, except those quiet nights at his bakery when he is sober, in love with a new recipe. Narrows noise goes round round round that big skull of his, but in marsh, building-deep and tall, he is loose, a single voice among sandpiper song and loon call.

The dead buried there bother him not, a thief or two, his ex-lover's bully, somewhere socked in the channel mud below his prow. The very silt of his fattest oysters come bedded on the backside of a murder rich mudbank. He serves them hearts up with a wine-sour bread, and upon them feeds, feeds, feeds.

My Glory Is Going To Be My Name

river whispers, river moans
river and river and river
over all the green lapstones

moves moves
bird in the sky crosses like an eye
they watch and watch

and track and thistle
down my hair
my wild river gestures

i am filled
with river calling
my hands tremble and shake shake

my hands
in the wind
under eye teeth, and the magpie rush rush

I am called to move move
down the river
singing copper,

tasting silt like a lover
in my mouth,
my nose,

the earth on end
my wild wild hair
my river love and voices

Watch for Scott Whitaker's Forthcoming Chapbook, Black Narrows
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Brian & Mary Bennett
Poetry by Scott Whitaker

Poem in Which the Black Narrows Are Identified

Black Narrows twist like the cramps of the blind man who deals cards because he can't cheat.
Tonight's plot is as thick as the marsh that borders the Atlantic. Black Narrows, the oyster shack town of trading houses that spine Birdwhistle creek. Only, no birds here but buzzards, their stove black plumes and peach beak gapes. Occasionally a hawk, and of course gulls, but they aren't birds, not really, eating what oystermen leave behind in their drunken shakes. Tonight is no other, drinks and cards, women wild enough to take a chance of what passes for love in the Narrows, which twist a man's heart towards money and port as sure as any smuggler's diamond is sure to work on a marsh harlot.

At least at the edge of the land, before ocean swallows all hope, we know what we want, don't confuse it with high window charm.

I'll Lick Yr Knife

because i want my death on my tongue
because i like bright lights, sweets, skin to skin and gin in insane quantities between beers
because i want my death baby
my death hips and curves

backroad between the railyard and nursery, that one curve that cut like a copperhead in the leaves

the color of that bruise the color of dying peach

beatback
tell me where you want my death

my back, how it can break for you if you only have to courage to let me prove how much i love

knives hold a special charm for me

perhaps all children of disguise like the feel of heavy steel ready like a prayer but, oh so right in the palm, so heavy, so hard

bones know the truth of mass

because i want my death locks, and bright death make-up because because because because because*

(*Meant to be sung as if you were on your way to the Wizard)
Poetry by Scott Whitaker

Too Lean for Too Long

I know my mind has leaned from a path that could not be called anything but failure. Hopelessness staring back from the balding mirror, its corners becoming shadow, what is mirror, peeling away away. Like an ash from a cigarette I shared once with a beautiful girl in a country where wine in park was a given, and the trains rolled every hour. Sometimes I long for wide spaces, a train just leaving the station is a promise I can keep. What I did not know when I was twenty-three, in November, hungry on the way to Berlin, was the man who shared our boxcar, had beat a woman to death, and that he knew of more than one way to make women suffer: “I don’t even have to raise a fist, I just ignore them. If they believe they are in love with me they will start to stink and die in the heart. You can tell you’ve won when they hurt themselves because they believe they deserve it.” They plain way he turned it over in his hands as he spoke, as if it were a stone, a block of wood. He had hurt everyone he had come into contact with because it was easy as a lighting a cigarette, which he did, and offered me one as he tried to buy my extra jeans. What I didn’t know was that one day my heart would turn upside down as if it were a dumb thing, something inert, blunt, made for crude labor, that one day I would be no better truth than riding alone on the subway, miles away from a smoke. And mirrors? They would be no good, for only a shade would return the gaze, the true face looking away, just enough, to not appear at all.

Black Narrows December. Victor, Skating on Ice. 1903.

Skating on the frozen pond, sea foam, brown and white, gathered like furs cast off from a winter party. He skates alone, because there is only one pair of skates left in town; everyone’s house is the same after a hurricane, rebuilt. The shacks haven’t been broken in by too many shipments from the city, yet. In two weeks there will be more, more, more. The watermen will return in steam skiffs, long boats, Ally’s tavern will diminish and return to kegs and whiskey. On the marsh, winter’s ribs are hidden by brown sawgrass, gray salted pine trees that hide the frost and snow. Only at this pond, a breakaway from the bay and eddies, just big enough for a boy to skate sunlight away, chewing on a mint stick and gum root, in late December, alone, for a moment, and away, silent save for the scraping of runners on ice, a gentle pushing, pushing away from human vice, this boy, a pair of skates, a single pond of sea ice.
“Constructing Fiction is a gift to the young or would-be writers of short stories and novels. In plain, no-nonsense prose, Jamie Brown takes the reader for a walk through the world of fiction writing—avoiding the alleys and dead-end streets that so often lure new writers with promises of shortcuts. Here is advice that all writers—those young in the work, and old hands—can actually use.”

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Poetry by Gary Hanna

Even Steven

There were hard black skid marks all four wheels, squirrel flattened, metal parts all around, big gouge on the tree, a three way tie.

The Significance

I swerved my car to miss a butterfly but the suction must have been too much. It flicked off the fender and disappeared from night. Imagine the impact, a two thousand pound car and a less than quarter ounce insect, but oh, how much beauty for its size. Kind of like sitting on a cloud and getting rammed by a 747, not much impact, just a small noise. Kind of like an average individual in the great expanse of history one glint in the sun.

Squirrel Pie

Bristly tails don't flatten nicely
They stand resolute
in the wind
even after a car has passed
But soft round bodies give in easily
platter like buckshot
Still it's hard to separate the bones from the fat

Watch for Gary Hann’s Forthcoming Chapbooks, The Home- stead Poems And Sediment Coming Soon from The Broadkill Press
Poetry by Gary Hanna

Cold Snap

Full winter fur
with that tawny down
deep between the black
and brown bristles that
make up his coat,
he almost looked fat.
You couldn't see his
mask, black tipped nose,
or sleepy eyes, sunning
himself on the side of
the highway, body
undented. Someone
must have come along
in the night, or early
morning hours when
he was foraging for food.

A Matter of Time

Red fox, ears up
spring coat glistening
in the sun, galloping
across the highway.
A gentle lope, not a
print, confident
as all foxes are,
four lanes, green
divider. Another one,
not far away, crumpled
in a ball, could have
been companions
locked in old ways
traveling nature's
thoroughfare, or was it
coincidence? One free,
one not, same spot.
Timing is everything.

Design

Four pink feet and
a tiny pink nose,
the possum is faster
than a tree climbing
sloth, takes 60 seconds
to navigate both lanes.
At that rate, the car
that will get him
is a mile away when
he starts, and his eyes
are so weak. Not a
well designed plan.

At that point he looked down at me, his eyebrows arched. I must have swum into clarity because he suddenly gestured for the bag I was holding. He opened it and glared inside. He looked down at me again, but this time the smirk waggled back and forth on his giant bemused head. He handed back the bag and motioned me toward the door, this gesture was as minute and subtle as the other, graceful, I thought, for an ox-sized guy. He had let his suit jacket slide back to show just the hint of a canon on his hip. Now it was time for my eyebrows to dance. His look said, don’t try nothin’ you.

I walked toward the office door, his eyes like a tractor beam guiding me. I knocked lightly.

“Yeah,” thundered out of the room and shook the door, frame an all. “Come.”

The room was lit by table lamps. An old fashioned, hard wired, black, dial telephone hunkered mid-deck like a Galapagos turtle. “Do for ya?” he asked.

“This, here, for you,” I muttered, suddenly nervous and unsure what I thought this visit might accomplish. I reached the bag toward him and he sat back against his chair.

“What? Why? They like Christmas cookies or something? You have a big score or somethin’?”

“Na,” I said.

“He looked into the bag. “What the...?” He pulled the Star Wars lunchbox out. He gave the same look as the goon. His eyes narrowed. “This gonna blow, I open it?”

“Na,” I said.

He opened it very slowly. Found a thermos intact, an ancient napkin, and piece of tape in the lid scrawled in crayon: Joey “Big Boy” Campanelli. He leaned his elbows on the desk, his hands held the lunchbox like a relic. “What are the odds,” he said half to himself, “what are the odds?” He looked at me, his smile rang louder than the Ma Bell on his desk.

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**Poetry by H. A. Maxson**

**Hansel and Gretel**

They have gone to the woods, though I forbade it. Gone, and with stolen bread.

They just don’t listen. Pre-pubescent and a registered pedophile living in there.

There’s no telling what might befall them—odd word, befall, so few uses really, hardly ever say it—

like dale and fro, when you come upon them, you stop, perhaps hesitate to be sure

what you heard, perhaps mutter it a few times before returning to thoughts of Hansel and Gretel,

before worrying again that there might not be enough bread for supper.

---

**Hearing in Tongues**

I listen, listen. I don’t understand, but I listen. I cannot name the tongue, the many tongues that I listen to, but for a little while each night I dial in the world’s cacophony, close my eyes and ride the cadences, the occasional meters, the points and counterpoints that speak beyond the words to meaning other, other than the dry denotations, even subtle connotations to common rhythms of the blood, the drum of the heart, translated into pulse and breath and the blink of an eye. I ride a human voice to Timbuctu, to Sao Paulo, to Kinchasa or Beijing. For a moment I tumble on a burst of breath formed and shaped and blown across the globe. I listen, listen. I understand, And I listen—hard.
Poetry by H. A. Maxson

Isabela de Torres: Puerto Plata

I.

Today we rode the teleferico
800 meters up Isabela de Torres
to take pictures and observe the city below
And the improvements to nature above.

II.

I can only imagine what the Taino people thought when they climbed
into the clouds to speak with Cita while looking out upon the whole world.

Islands

Islands forever rearrange themselves,
their hooks, coves, bights and points
shift or disappear, rise and fall becoming
Islands forever rearranging themselves.
Sand wanders. Rocks, shells, the odd
Remains of life meander the shape-shifting
Islands. We forever rearrange ourselves,
Our hooks, coves, bights and points

On the Trail of a Ghost

National Geographic cover Feb. 2008

1.

I read of Master Basho’s journey of a thousand miles
as my armchair rocks

2.

I have traveled farther than he—taking his path and my own

3.

I dream of travel stripped to clothes, shoes, a pen
to write on the wind

4.

Rucksack half empty—or half full of what I find
in unguarded moments

5.

Travel is the art of going forth unprepared,
returning undisappointed

Short Wave

I.

And now the dogs are fed.
I am sitting on the deck facing south,
The sun is at four o’clock.
Dinner smells ease out of windows heavy with garlic and ginger.
And now the Pinot Grigio lays its cold metallic fingerprint on the back of my tongue.
My body whispers of arroz con pollo.

II.

And now the lights are on.
The fire’s laid and awaits a match.
I close the drapes, check the doors.
I hang the dishtowel on the sink, leftovers put away.
For a brief moment I see the day’s arc.
And now, in another moment just over there, I will turn the radio on and listen to the world.
Poetry by H. A. Maxson

The Last Diving Horse

Before the gambling and Trump
Atlantic City was innocent
and poor as any town
aspiring to city.

Taffy,
Boardwalk, Planters Peanuts
ubiquitous as sand; the diving
bell I was convinced would snap
from its chain the one trip
down I was shamed into each year
and drown us all

And there was the
Steel Pier and the gut-tightening
leap of a girl on a horse. Down
they plunged each daylight hour
into the Atlantic, clowns in 19th century
swim suits to assist.

In some
more enlightened year it stopped.
But there had to be a final fall
of a pretty girl on horseback
into green water.

Sometime in the ‘70s
I watched a news story about the last
gandy dancers straightening some length
of track in Alabama or Mississippi.
Their long iron poles, I remember,
danced a ballet—six, eight men
perhaps, side stepped in unison, jabbed,
lifted, then moved into extinction—
just like the diving horse must one day
have, knowingly or not, hurdled
through fifty feet or so of air
to breast the water, his rider, arms
raised until the final second,
for the last time.

No news story
as when the last Drive In Movie
closed in Holmdel, New Jersey.
One day the soft collective
intake of spectators’ breaths gave way
to the bells of slot machines, music,
glasses clinking in celebration or despair,
A silent fall from a hotel rooftop
of one who lost it all.

The diving
horse gone unceremoniously to pasture,
the pretty girl to the altar.
The steel pier torn down, I think,
making way for gambling and Trump.

Temple of the Warriors

The temple is back lit so it looks
as if the sun god glows within—
just an illusion, or an allusion.
The massive columns cast long legs
of golden light and charcoal shadows
on the Yucatan night—early
or late, the sky shades from pink
to purple to blue.

The ziggurat glows
and the forest shrinks back
from the shining handiwork.
Poetry by Linda Blaskey

Shipping Creek Farm, 3:12 A.M.

Lying on her side in the bed
she looks out into the night.

She sees her own countenance
reflected in the window pane

but knows the water
is out there, large.

She tries to dream
that she is paddling a canoe
to that little crescent of land
just over there. It beckons

like an embrace, and she is sure
that’s where butterflies land

on sunflowers, open and close
their wings with a certain melancholy.

There are some things
that she just knows – like

how you can’t force a dream;
that broken plates can be mended

but are never the same; that he
will soon leave. She can feel it

in how he turns his back to her
in sleep, the way he eats breakfast

behind newspapers. She already misses
the tiny scar, new-moon shaped,
that rests on the blade of his shoulder.

Previously published in Delmarva Review

A Farmer Searches for His Livestock
During a Snow Storm

He imagines them huddled
together by now, long

eyelashes rimed with ice.
Their hoof prints blown over,

making them hard to track.
Guernseys and Jerseys.

Like his grandfather,
only Guernseys and Jerseys.

Sure, there are others
that produce more,

the brash-colored Holstein,
the Norwegian Red, but it’s the muted tones

of his girls, their dark points,
that stir something in him.

He loves to slide his hand
along their warm flanks,

feel the contour, like he loves
to run his hand over his wife’s hip

as she lies on her side in their bed.
He thinks of this as he trudges

through drifts, whistling, calling,
listening for the lead cow’s bell.

A crow sits on a fence post, its caw
like a knell. Its dark eye

watches him pass as snow sifts down.

Previously published in Delmarva Review
Bayard Avenue

for Annette

An Atlantic breeze makes a run
up the side street, riffles the two-toned leaves
of geraniums in clay pots, dances
the blooms of blazing red.

On the porch, two friends talk of the spice
the crimson flowers give to the air,
the beauty of the sycamores that line the street
and the blight that threatens them.

Their fingers idly turn slick pages of magazines
and they rub fragrant ads on their wrists.
There is the tick of tea cups placed on saucers,
the tap of spoons stirring sugar.

One of them has a heart that beats
all wrong; the other looks up at the spread
of trees and hopes they survive.

News of Note

Poetry editor, Linda Blaskey’s poem Rest Stop, Eighty-seven Miles from Asheville has been selected for inclusion in “North Carolina Poetry on the Bus Campaign”. The selection was made by The Raleigh Review in conjunction with Raleigh’s Capital Area Transit. Her poem, along with several others, will be placed in the placard channels of the Raleigh R-Line buses and will travel the streets of North Carolina’s capital city for National Poetry Month in April. The campaign is funded by a New Generations grant from United Arts Council of Raleigh & Wake County.
When the Boat Comes In
Fiction by Maryanne Khan

She walks the empty house. Paint peels below the water-mark in commas, a scaly flick of fish. She checks cupboards, counting, dividing provisions into days.

Close the cupboards, lock them.
A curtain lifts in a limp breeze and she sees the floodwa ters have fallen further.

It will lift, she tells herself. This blindness will lift.

She pauses in a listing doorway, laying her hand on the jamb as though it might speak a reassuring name. A little shoe in the corner says Edie, Edie before she was a bundle in a blanket.

There was a boat — too small, too full.

“Take the baby,” she'd said, “come for us later.”

There had been no later.

She emerges onto the veranda with Gilbert’s rifle. She’s aware that the man is moving soundlessly beyond the garden, a flicker in a sudden patch of light. Perhaps he lets her see him. Like herself, he patrols alone. Perhaps he waits for when she won’t come out, assume she’s dead. Perhaps he won’t wait.

No matter, first person comes near, she'll shoot.

She hasn’t checked the outbuildings, nor the washhouse where snakes might have fled. She wonders if the limping man has looked into the barn.

She will not enter the nursery. A red shoe begs to be paired with its mate but she cannot do it.

There is no order in mud and loss, and no pity.

“Well, girls,” Gilbert says lifting his glass, left arm clasp ing Ellie's waist. “This is it!”

Ellie sees Flo’s face crinkle, her eyes brim.

She shoots Flo a look, not now.

Nell chinks her glass, “Good luck, Ellie darling,” her voice flat.

Gilbert notices.

“Come on mopokes! We're celebrating! Last night in the city.”

“We’re celebrating Gilly,” Ellie says quickly, “see?”

She touches glasses across the table.

Flo’s eyes are on the cloth, her fingertip mashing crumbs.

“We're going to miss you, is all,” she says without looking up.

Says it to Ellie.

“Of course you are,” Gilbert says, jigging up. “You girls, I know what you're like.”

A few beers and he's a card. He clamps a hand on Ellie’s shoulder.

She flinches.

“Now it’s you and me,” he says to her.

“And Edie,” Ellie says.

“We’ll be having Christmas there,” he says. “Edie’s first.

And in a better place, more suited to a tribe of kids.”

Winking at Ellie.

Nell opens her mouth, shuts it.

Ellie thinks, you can’t provide for this one, let alone any more.

Nell drifts a dry smile across the table. Poor you, she mouths. Then catches Gilbert’s eye and says, “So even the bank is finally letting people go?”

Ellie drops her eyes.

Gilbert bristles.

“Got the farm for a song,” he says, rebutting.

More like all our savings, Ellie thinks bitterly.

The city falls back, mile upon mile fading to rutted tracks until the last bend and a slope where the river sheens in the sun. And that’s it, the incongruous house, innocent as a babe amidst trees and the seething scrub that want it down.

The land in the first state of creation, she thinks.

He pulls the brake on the Willys.

“Think of it, Ellie, a fresh start!”

Stiff from the jolting and lurching, she sits transfixed as Gilbert unloads a frenzy of battered suitcases and provisions onto the verandah. She smells a latent musk of rot and mildew and sees listing verandah posts and the drooping eyelid of roof. Windows opaque with dust and broken.

Abandoned, she thinks, that’s why, but Gilbert is all haste and clatter, shouldering open the latchless door that has swollen shut.

“Needs airing, of course,” he calls from within the empty shell, a phantom ocean sound one hears pressed close to the ear.

The boarding-house gas ring now replaced by a monstrous Argus wood-stove proffering a host of enamel doors and the appetite of a farm-hand army. No copper or mangle in the lean-to at the end of a blackberry-choked path.

First couple of weeks, Glibert’s busy tackling the surly house, then tired or disheartened, it’s a change.

“We're going to town!”

“But I don’t know anyone,” Eleanor says.

“Then meet them!”

Then she’s standing with the baby under a tin awning ticking in the heat. The only “General and Fancy Goods” on the street.

This is Town?

She feels their eyes on her, lean children, flies about their eyes and mouths, whispering.

“Hello children,” she calls, neighbourly.

More giggles.

Hot enough already, she’s now conscious of her stockings and heels, her georgette frock and careful hair.

The pointedly disinclined women, barelegged and hung about with babies, hold back.

As the car jangles back along the road, she says to Gilbert,

“Next time, do your business by yourself.”

“What? You lost the taste for being sociable?”

“They don’t like me.”

“Suit yourself.”

Next time, he does go alone, returning—passenger—in a truck full of lambs.

“Made a cracking deal on the Willys!”

Pleased-as-Punch.

“Enough to start the flock,” he shouts, jumping down, “And if Australia rides on the sheep’s back, then so shall we.”

He stomps dust from his shoes.
work!" says Gilbert. "No need for an auto. This is Free Enterprise at latches.

"Brought a bit extra. Rain in the air." Woolcock nods at her but doesn’t offer a hand. She lets hers fall, pretending to adjust the baby’s shawl. Gilbert helps unload.

So sure of yourself, she thinks. Everything like clockwork. A damn clock ticking away in the fearsome wild.

With a shudder, she realizes something more—You believe that resolve alone is enough to take this country in its jaws, crack it like a walnut.

“Pretty baby, Miss,” Woolcock says next visit, thumping sacks onto the porch. "Tha shall have a fishy, tha shall have a fishy, when the boat comes in!”

Snaps back as Gilbert comes up from the barn. “So he’s been? Should’ve called me. Give you a receipt?”

Eyeing the sacks of flour, sugar, beans, bottles of oil and kero, tins of lard, slab of bacon, the latest newspaper reposing on the porch. He rifflies about, hands shaking.

“What! I never ordered the half of this. Why didn’t you call me? You daft?” Kicks a sack of flour. “Filthy cheat, you have to keep an eye on the likes of him, and that’s a fact! At least another five pounds he’s done me for!”

“Hardly five, Gilly,” she says, “you’re exaggerating. He said it was going to rain.”

“What? Too precious to get his boots wet?” Silent, she’s counting—weeks, not coin—and the sum means just one thing.

As rain pounds on the roof and continues until she might go deaf, the swollen river comes up, a bruise spreading over the low-lying paddocks then stretching out for miles. Everything submerged and stinking, soaking wet and no escape.

Gilbert’s watching also.

“It’s all right, El, I’ll think of something.”

Attendant to the “something,” he pokes at a section circled in that last newspaper now lying on the table.

“Relief works? Madness! You see that? Shelling out to the unemployable masses—give ‘em useless work. Disaster! No matter what Lyons thinks.”

He stabs the paper with a finger, the nail black-rimmed. “It interferes with the natural engine of enterprise.”

Drag his hands down his face so she sees him haggard, old.

“I said it then and I’ll say it now. Commie bastards.”

He burns to outshine the kerosene lamp. “You see?” he says, wiping his mouth, leaning forward, jaw working like he’s got too many teeth. She shrinks back, but not so he’d notice.

“Don’t know what I see any more Gilbert,” she says, averting her eyes.

“You haven’t my experience,” he says, “Cut you down like a weed, a rank weed, they will!”

Down comes his fist.

“You’re tired, darling.”

Best say it like that. Keep him calm.

He flings back in his chair, face mocking. “What can a man expect? Women have no clue.”

He doesn’t mean it. Let it go.

She says, “You need to rest. You shouldn’t be out there with that leg.”

He sneers, “Are you’re suggesting I go without it? Chop it off?”

Oh God, she’s tasting salt on her lower lip, teeth biting down.

Look around you for the love of God! she thinks. You try to build a levee when it’s too late and now you’ve gashed your shin and god knows what will stop the infection. Insist on wading about in that stinking water. What for?

Her nails dig into the palms of her hands.

And this ‘enterprise’ nonsense! Make it your enterprise to find us some dry wood and you won’t be gagging on uncooked-food.

(continued, next page)
She’s about to stand up, say something, but all that steals into her mind is, what kind of mother brings her baby to a place like this? We’d have been better off on the street.

She shakes her mind clear.

He’s raving.

I can’t toss it in now.

She says aloud, “Gilly, why don’t you lie down a bit, dear? It’s dark. Shall I look at your bandage? It hasn’t been changed in a while.”

But no, he won’t lie down and the bandage he ignores.

The following night, their raised voices wake the baby.

“Shush,” she whispers, “shush,” rocking the cradle.

Don’t hear that other terrible crying. Please.

“Can’t you let them out? Maybe they can swim to somewhere higher.”

Taking up the rifle, grim but without rage, he heads for the door.

“Gil, you can’t!

Then she’s running after him, tripping, getting up and running again.

Favouring his good leg he stumbles on towards the barn.

“Go back,” he shouts. “You’re only doing this to yourself.”

Inside the barn, hand over mouth, she breathes only the stink of fear and shit.

He’s got a match, the kerosene lamp.

Her eyes black out in its sudden light, then he’s back, under a golden dome in the surrounding dark.

She throws herself down between him and the sheep.

“No, Gilbert. Please.”

“Get up,” he says.

Headshake, not getting up.

“Get up I said!”

He cocks his ear for something beyond the bleating.

“Listen, the baby’s crying.”

I’m not falling for that! Not leaving you to do this.

She swallows and says, “She’ll be all right for a minute, it’s only for a minute, Gilly. We can go back. Let’s just go back.”

“You go back. I have my responsibilities.”

Responsibilities?

The baby, Gilbert. Crying.

Watching as he takes rope from its hook, uncoils it and cuts it to lengths.

Then he’s wading in to snatch a sheep, looping one end around its neck, tossing the other over a beam. Heaving.

“Gilbert!”

Her voice splits the darkness yet he gives no sign he’s heard her.

“Gilbert!”

He steps back, aims and fires. Hits it in the head. The body jumps, twitches and hangs still.

Panicced now, the mob plunges and surges against the wall. Eyes glint, but it’s not foxes or rabbits in his wretched temple.

“You’re scaring them!”

He glares back.

“Don’t scare them Gilly.”

One by one, he catches them and strings them up. Then he’s lurching along the row and her head is splitting with the sound of shooting.

With the thing done, he’s standing in the bloodied water, a black cutout silhouetted in lamplight.

Under his dome of gold, she thinks, God himself, bestower of life and death.

Wiping his sleeve across his face, he breaks the rifle and pockets the remaining cartridges, turns and limps past her.

She flattens herself against the doorway.

Don’t touch him, he’s filthy with it.

Woolcock’s face is a pale oval moving gently up and down.

“Gilly, let them take the baby,” she says. “At least the baby.”

And to Woolcock, “Mr. Woolcock. Please, I’m begging.”

She thinks, a boat on the tide of outrageous fortune. Too small, it’s full. Just the baby.

Please.

As though her throat will break, she repeats, “Please take her, come back for us later, if you can.”

Little hands tucked in, a tiny finger curled around hers.

So tiny, I’m sorry.

I’m sorry. I’m sorry.

Don’t cry angel, let them make you safe—not safe here, little love of mine.

Her hands don’t want to let go. Holding on too tight.

Let go for God’s sake, she tells herself. You have to.

And she does it, heart jolting.

Gilbert stumbles back inside the house.

She remains outside and she’s fading, like the boat, into rain.

What had Woolcock said? “Leg’s in a bad way, mister.” But with all this muck, he couldn’t smell it.

Gilbert’s back with the rifle. Stooping, he feels for yesterday’s nick in the veranda post. It’s submerged.

“Still rising,” he says. “Better get to the barn. I’ll pile up bales.”

Closing her eyes, the sheep are swaying to a lullaby in the air. She grips the veranda post to stop the whole world swaying.

“Everything’s soaked!” she says, still clinging to stop from falling. “You’ll never lift them.”

“Will if I have to.”

Despite that putrid leg, she thinks wildly, despite the fever poisoning your brain? Thank God she’s away from you, away from this.

“You go on,” she says, slowly loosening her grip. “I’ll get some things.”

He stretches his neck, eyes flinty.

“We’re going to the barn,” he says, swapping the rifle to the other hand.

His breath is on her, a hot stench. Her stomach heaves into her throat.

Going to be sick.

“I packed some food. I’ll get it. You go on ahead.”

He sets his chin at her.

Her spine aches with wanting to lean forward and push him down.

Be calm.

He steps down from the veranda, lurching towards the barn, turning halfway to call, “Hurry up and come!”

“In a minute,” she shouts.

Quick, inside! The box of cartridges.

Empty.

All right. All right, so it’s like that then? We’ll see if you can make it back.

To herself, Think!

Card table up onto the other one in the dining room, that’s more solid, and blankets, preserves from the pantry and clean water in the enamel jug. Pile it all up, safe, safe from the rotting carcasses in the barn, safe from the rifle.

(continued. next page)
Flying around the house, locking doors and windows.
Still no sign of him. Getting dark.
Think! she tells herself, get a match, light the lamp.
A sound.
What's that?
Her arms hurt. She tenses, listening. Nothing but the rain.
Put the lamp on the table to stop it quivering. And the matches, keep them dry.
He'd said, “Hurry up and come.”
“I can't come Gilbert,” she shouts into nothing. “I can't.”
Her voice has barely died and there's a great thud against the wall outside, so loud she almost screams.
It's a log, that's all. A branch. Something floating.
She blinks, the door is wavering. She's scrubbing at her eyes that are streaming water as though she's become the ever-weeping sky. Her fingers feel a bunny-rug in her hand. Holding it against her cheek, she leans against the table and buries her face in pink flannelette and the scent of talc.

... Tha shall have a fishy
on a little dishy,
tha shall have a fishy,
when the boat comes in . . .

Boat's come, Edie, she thinks, come and gone, my angel, and there will be no fishy. God knows what there'll be for us, Edie.

She stands still.
Stop sobbing. At least he's not come back. Breathe, breathe steady.
She breathes, more deeply now.
Breathe.
It settles upon her, the finality, her finality.
God forgive me, I have to.
She's commanding herself—get the lamp. The door.
Careful now, he might spring out. Down the steps, feel for the steps, careful. It's deeper now.
Struggling toward the barn as if through treacle.
Here's the door.
Shut.
Something glints, hanging from a nail. It's the rifle and her stomach leaps.
Must have forgotten it! Oh thank you God! Grab it.
Thank you God. Sling it over your shoulder.
Thank you God. Thank you God. Thank you.
Pull yourself together. Stop shaking! Where's the damn bolt? Please don't be rusted. Careful now, shush, shush, he mustn't hear you. Put the lamp up and work the bolt. Push hard with both hands.
The long iron bolt budges, then slides firmly into place. Locked.

(“When the Boat Comes In” was preciously published in *FourW22*)
In the Ladies’ Bathhouse  
-- Cape Henlopen State Park

Like a rainforest,  
water always drips somewhere  
from showerheads, faucets,  
in sinks and toilets,  
from breasts and bellies,  
coursing rivulets  
down thin brown legs  
of girls huddled  
beside skirt-suited mothers.

Sun through skylights  
and the brick oven  
of yellow cinderblock bakes,  
makes it all steam  
dark puddles on the concrete floor  
yellow drops sprinkled on toilet seats  
fine webs of drying soap in the porcelain sinks,  
our stink rising with water that rises in the heat:  
piss, suntan lotion, sweat, sea.

Water in us  
pouring out of us  
pouring over us  
where we have hauled our bodies,  
not quite wholly water,  
to the sea, the body  
of water we cannot wholly bear,  
we cannot wholly leave.

previously published in Gargoyle #56
Lute
-- for W. D. Snodgrass

The lute you lent me
hangs on the wall upstairs,
"I'll never play it again," you said.
And music books came every day,
brown boxes waiting on the stoop,

Measure after measure for me
to struggle through.
Your music in my hands.
Until, in the dry December air,
The brittle glue gave
bridge dangling crooked from curled, useless strings.

Under tension always
it relaxed at last
to muteness

as you will
before winter's out --
the strong chords

wrenching free every anchor.

Late Snow

Freak snow
in the West Alleghenies
kills whatever bloomed
in last week's heat.

Paperwhites, daffodils, jonquils,
all the careful bulbs
planted last Autumn will
fail,
freeze transparent,
fall.

Hyacinth sag. Blown crocus
fold in half.

Only forsythia live,
leaf.
Hardy weed, useless,
like your affection,
easy, not to be cultivated,
lastingly.
Poetry by Anne Colwell

Skeleton

Lying tangled almost awake,
all walls erased by the dapple drab
near day. Your hand on my head,
your hand on my hip. I imagine
the intricate small mechanism
in your tapping finger,

imagine our skeletons, stretched
together, couched for a space
in this soft skin, soft light,

imagine how they grew: fontanelles,
our soft skulls hardening, joints
closing, a history of movement:

basketball and ballet,
what we shouldered through
what we didn’t have the spine for.

When the dusty deadline comes
and there’s nothing left between bone
and bone, tangle me up again.

previously published in r.kv.r.y (and was nominated for a Pushcart)

Titus’s Hand

Lavinia leans over the grave,
the hand in her mouth,
the flesh sour and stiffening.

Her brothers’ heads lie
side by side, eyes staring up
into her eyes. Imagine

the soundless scream
as the hand drops from between
her teeth. Imagine what’s given

uselessly for love won’t rest,
moves with crumbling flesh
and rotting empires
to caress.

previously published in Gargoyle #56
My father said, “You’ll go right back
and return these.”
Two coins, the thirty-five cents I’d stolen
from Kathy Louderback. She had a big room
that she didn’t have to share, bunk beds,
more Barbies than a toy store,
and I took the two coins
from a pink tray on her bureau, the thin dime
like a piece of jewelry, the quarter
heavy in my hand.

“How can I?” By then I was crying hard,
my seven-year-old palm sweaty
when he’d pried it open. The age
of reason, he’d called it. “You took them.
You’ll take them back.”

He watched me down the hill --
dusk over the split-levels, a suburban
Sunday regular as church pews
closing in.
I walked through it like
like I was neck deep,
heavy with shame, floating
in fear,

until finally I raised my hand to knock
on the red door below the pane
of frosted glass.
I couldn’t draw one breath. Then,
a car pulled into the drive
and the whole family – Jesus Christ –
the whole family, inside,
me standing with the burning coins,
caught in the headlights.

I threw them, heard them ping
off the hood, saw Mr. Louderback
open the door and stand confused
and I ran.
I ran
still holding the invisible coins in one fist,
I ran
until I thought I tasted them.
Ojalá America!
La la la America!
Oh, be, America
Oh, that America be!
that I should be free
this moment
and this moment
that I should be free
that I, Jacobo,
a boy who stumbles on good intentions
whose name breathes from the heart
right at the start
jota of my Inca mothers (jatun, great)
(a little bit softer now)
of Arab fathers (habibi, darling)
be free
this moment
and this moment
free!
Insha’Allah!

Now, this moment . . . Ok, this moment,
I,
with my senses imprisoned, my eyes and ears and hands
and mouth smothered in the darkness of no sight, no sound,
no touch, no voice, the darkness of hallucination, of swarming
bats, numb to time, and scared as an abandoned baby (if I
could breathe, I would cry),
tell my story.

This is the story of Jacobo the Turko, who discovered
America in a postage stamp by the Rio Papallacta in Ecuador,
left his dear mamacita to pursue an American dream at the
beaches, chicken plants, and Mr. Patel’s donut shop in Dela-
ware, fell in love in Wilmington (mi querida habibti negrita),
was deported to his father’s ancestral homeland in Libano,
and arrived to suffer this moment . . . and this one.

He was given light (as we say, dio luz) in the town of
Baños, Ecuador under the protection of Nuestra Señora de Agua Santa . . .
this moment . . . whose silvery waterfall springs from the flanks of smoldering Volcan Tunguragua . . .
this . . . pours into the mineral pools populated with tourists
and pilgrims housed in his father’s posada, and empties into
the thundering Pastaza as it courses brown and boiling down
the mountains to the Marañon that becomes the Amazon.

This is the story that I, thirsting for light, for air, for time
will tell. . . this moment . . . This . . .
¡Nuestra Señora de Agua Santa, salvame! Our Lady of the
Holy Waters, save me!

Mamacita, save me.

¡Oh, mamacita! His dear little mother, his earth, his
spring. She is Pacha, of the Otavalo nation, named for Pacha
the Shyri queen, bride of Inca Atahualpa, Huayna Capac’s
Ecuadorean warrior son who matured on bivouac, defeated his
Peruvian court-loving brother Huáscar, was betrayed by the
conquistador Pizarro, christened as Juan Bautista de Atavalvia—hence Otavalo—and burned.

She was Jacobo’s father’s domestic.

In Baños is a church, the Basilica de Nuestra Senora del
Rosario de Agua Santa, where there are today many paint-
ings of the Our Lady’s miracles. (Or at least I believe there
are paintings there. The whole world could be destroyed out-
side this box of pain, and I would not know.) Paintings of dis-
asters and accidents and salvations. Of a man’s car tumbling
off the narrow road high above the Pastaza, with the man
flung from his vehicle, plummeting before a backdrop of sheer
cliff with orchids and bromeliads and other epiphytes dan-
gling from the ledge. He calls out “¡Nuestra Señora de Agua
Santa, salvame!” And sure enough, opening the blue sky in a
lacy oval, Our Lady materializes and with a glance commands
a few dangling epiphyte tendrils to lasso the man’s ankle so
he is withdrawn at the last impending second from the unfor-
giving boulders along the riverbank like some Yankee bungee-
jumper. Or when the whole town of Baños is shrouded in fal-
ling ash and pounded by burning stones vomited up by angry
Tunguragua and all the townsfolk shout together their infalli-
ble prayer, and the black sky clears and the last few pebbles
fecklessly pelt the ground like dropping walnuts and Our
Lady smiles on her grateful and faithful children. Or the
woven bridge suspended mountain to mountain over the raged
Pastaza begins to unravel, and dozens of travelers grasp
the handlines in anticipation of their waterward plunge, cry-
ing in desperation, “¡Nuestra Señora de Agua Santa, sal-
vame!” And Our Lady steels the threads of that one last un-
severed twine long enough for her children safely to reach the
farther shore.

Perhaps that’s why she did not hear you, Jacobo, because
you were not in Baños when you first called her, you pilgrim,
you Perigrinato, and you are not in Baños, now. You were just
on the other side of the Andean Cordillera, near Papallacta,
where sat, as if deposited among the elephant plants and im-
patients by some giant Yankee helicopter, that postage stamp,
that pale green hectare of American suburbia beside the pipe-
line that siphons petroleum from our Amazonian rainforest,
the selva.

Salvame.

Actually, a helicopter did appear that day Jacobo decided
to spy on the American oasis. He was twelve, but he looked
even younger. He had gone to stay with his uncle Ibrahim
who lived near the Rio Papallacta, east of the town of that
name. He had told Jacobo about the pumping station for the
Sistema Oleoducto Trans-Ecuatoriano that ran near the river
and looked just like the houses in the gringo TV programs. He
hiked the huaquínán, (the path we Indigenous used, although
I was called the turko or the mono—meaning monkey—or
worse) to an overlook where he could see on the shelf over the
Commonly known as Elephant Garlic this is a monster garlic from the leek family which is the undisputed king of roasting garlic.

The Romance of Garlic

One of the oldest known foods, there are records dating back over 5000 years of garlic being used as food and medicine. The Egyptian Kings fed their slaves garlic to keep them strong and healthy.

Our Monster Roasting garlic is over twice the size of its largest cousins and has a milder taste, but with a sharp onion-like edge to it. It averages five very large cloves that are somewhat golden compared to the milky whiteness of other garlic cloves. It stores very hard and clean and much longer than other garlic. Even when separated into individual cloves, it will store about a year at room temperature.

Our Chef Ready product takes advantage of this unique characteristic. We have already removed most of the waste - the roots, the stems, and most of those annoying bulb wrappers that stick to you and everything else in your kitchen. This gives you a convenient-to-use packet full of plump monster cloves - the same full flavor without the fuss and mess associated with traditional bulbs.

Our Chef Ready cloves are so mild you can slice them into quarter inch thick steaks, sauté or grill them in butter or olive oil and serve them as a vegetable. But beware! The more you chop it the stronger it becomes.

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Roasted

Take a few monster cloves out of the bag and pop off the skins. Place into a suitable container and drizzle with some olive oil. Cover container and bake at 325° for 60 minutes. Squeeze out of skins and spread like butter on toast or crackers.

Puréed

Just pop several cloves into a food processor or blender. Add olive oil and spices and process.

About Us

Ribbon Road Farm is a fifty-acre family-owned farm tucked in the gently rolling hills of western New York, where the winters are long and the garlic is hardy. We use strictly organic methods to grow our hand-cultivated garlicks and shallots, which grow big and strong on natural foods and spring-fed water. No harmful chemicals or imported diseases. Our Monster Roasting Garlic is milder than our other Garlic and if you want a bit more bite in each bite, ours is the perfect choice. We know that garlic has many medicinal uses, but we just love to enjoy its many unique aromas and flavors...and we hope you will too!!
Papallacta the oleoducto disappearing into a tangle of pipes and machines before it reappeared beyond the station and continued up the cordillera until out of sight it passed Quito and descended through the valleys to Santo Domingo de los Colorados where the healers lived and onto the port of Esmeraldas. Beside the station was a house looking nothing like the homes of painted cement block or tapial mud Jacobo’s people lived in or even the nicer buildings in Baños. Sitting like some cathedral purified of its ornamentation amid a perfect garden of short, uniform grass, the house rose on walls of neat overlapping panels arranged like a wash board and painted in a light turquoise color. Along the roof edges and window frames were gleaming molded borders painted flawlessly white. The roofs were steeply peaked without the terracotta tiles or thatch Jacobo’s people used but with interlocking flaps, looking to Jacobo like road tar encrusted with millions of tiny jewels. In front of the house like stately blocks of malachite on either side of the main door were bushes trimmed perfectly square on all sides. Attached was a big garage designed much the same as the rest of the house except for two wide doors in front. Just below Jacobo, right in the middle of a big area of asphalt, was a basketball court with an orange hoop, a new rope net, a glass backboard, and a professionally painted key just like on television. Jacobo preferred fútbol.

Brazil was his favorite team.

Beyond the asphalt was a big cement plateau with a big red circle around a thick H. Behind the house was a patio with a circular glass table covered with a big umbrella and several chairs hung with a taught green fabric. And what should be seated in one of the chairs but an American, the engineer who ran the station, probably, wearing a baseball cap and sipping what appeared to be a large glass of tea with ice. He seemed very happy in the garden of his American cathedral and without cares. He had no idea Jacobo was watching him (did he, Jacobo?), so Jacobo decided to get a closer look.

He slipped down through the tangle of vines, orchids, impatiens, and other wild vegetation to the thick, gray wire fence topped with a spiral of steel ribbon looking like the sharpest of knives. Clearly, thought Jacobo, this sanctuary blessing its perfection and its purpose, assuring Jacobo that neat by a smoothened edge. The sun seemed to bounce from every surface at an even angle like billiard balls off the banks, blessing its perfection and its purpose, assuring Jacobo that in America, reaction followed action predictably and things done right and well would gain.

Across the perfectly level slab and basketball court, the garage doors beckoned with their slim, rectangular portals of glass. What was inside? Quite without caution, Jacobo approached to peer through the windows. An unexpected breeze began to kick up an eddy in the corner between the garage and the house, but Jacobo barely noticed as he drew near, except he felt a cool breeze of air conditioning being sucked out from under the doors and onto his feet. Enjoying the air conditioning inside the garage were two vehicles, one a big four-seat pick-up with that squashed Chevrolet cross in front, and the other a big Jeep.

The wind began to pulse in that corner, and Jacobo turned to see rising above the shelf like some great huffing whale shedding the sea, a dusky green helicopter, whose pulsating propellers buffeted him and whose pilot, looking with his helmet and goggles like some insect inhabiting the whale’s transparent forehead, surely saw Jacobo intruding on this American space.

Jacobo just stood there, shading his eyes and transfixed by the looming aircraft as it swiftly descended to within inches of the pad, peppering him with tiny grains of sand. Suddenly, leaping from a big door in the side of the helicopter, four American soldiers in camouflage and with big rifles came rushing straight for him. At first he thought they did not see him, but were approaching his spot for some other reason. It was as if he were watching a movie about American commandos, a very realistic movie where you felt like you were actually there. It was no movie, he finally realized, and he began to bolt, but slammed immediately into the engineer, who grabbed him by the arms, which he crushed in his strong American fingers.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Jacobo believed he screamed at him, although he did not know much English at the time. He only knew that he was in big trouble, and that maybe he was in grave danger. The soldiers arrived immediately. He was so scared, but even more so was he disappointed that his American dream was so soon over forever, and he began to cry. “What are you doing here?” the engineer repeated.

“No intiendo,” Jacobo replied, meaning, “I don’t understand,” and he began to cry harder. At that time he did not have so much faith in Nuestra Señora, but deep in his heart he gave that prayer a try, but She was far away in Baños. Only later did Jacobo recall that the soldiers were not aiming their guns at him. One of them addressed him in Spanish: “What are you doing here?”

“Sir, I was just looking at the camionetas, the trucks.”

The soldier who had spoken—the officer, apparently—handed his rifle to one of his comrades, gently pried the engineer’s hands loose from Jacobo’s arms, and then told him to lean his hands against the garage, so he could searched him. He took his cedula, laminated in plastic. “Who are you, young man?” he asked.

“Jacobo Bitar,” he answered. “I come from Baños where I live with my mother. She works in a hotel there as a domest. I was visiting my uncle Ibrahim who lives over this mountain, near the town. He gave the cedula to one of his comrades, who took it back to the helicopter.

“Who is your father?”

“He is Abdullah Bitar. He owns the hotel in Baños.”

“Don’t you know this is private property? How would your father like it if I walked into his house without asking?”

Jacobo began to cry again. “I want to go home to my
mother, mi Mamacita Pacha.”

The officer raised his eyebrows slightly. “Go stand over there with this man,” he said, nodding at one of the other soldiers to take Jacobo over by the basketball net.

The officer spoke a while with the engineer. Jacobo overheard him mention the Napo River as well as the Rio Papallacta. There seemed to be trouble on the Napo, and he feared that he was a part of it.

Finally the soldier came back with his cedula and the officer beckoned for him to come back.

“What is your birthday?” he asked, reading it off his cedula.

He told him.

“Listen, Jacobo, there are some very bad people in your country, do you know that?”

“No, señor.”

“Well, there are. They want to overthrow your government and kill soldiers.”

Everyone wanted to overthrow the government, reflected Jacobo, but they did not want to kill soldiers. He hoped this soldier could not read his mind. “Sí, señor,” he replied.

The officer and the engineer spoke some more. Jacobo began to calm down and look around. So he was surviving his first trip to America, Nuestra Señora or no.

A housemaid suddenly came out the main door with some glasses of tea on a tray and passed them all around. She even offered Jacobo some. He looked at the tall glass filled with the brown liquid, ice cubes showing like moons breaking through clouds and with drops leaving a clear streak down the frost, and he took it gratefully. It was cold and sweet.

As he drank his tea, the engineer went into the house and the garage door began to open with a metallic, yawning noise. The big Jeep rolled out and the engineer gestured for Jacobo to get in. The maid took his tea, as well as the empty glasses of the soldiers, who headed back to the helicopter.

“This nice man will take you to your uncle,” said the officer, and he ran to the aircraft. Then Jacobo realized that he had not given him back his cedula and he tried to hop out of the Jeep but the engineer grabbed him by the shoulder hard. The propellers wheezed into life, thumping wind and accelerating until the helicopter levitated a moment and then wheeled up and away over the ridge and out of sight, and the thumping quickly subsided.

“Alright, get out!” ordered the engineer in English, but he needed no translation, and he pointed toward the gate. He drove the Jeep behind Jacobo as he walked, speeding up a little to make him walk faster. At the gate, the engineer got out and then pointed into the Ecuadorian side. Jacobo climbed down from the Jeep and shuffled to the gate. Behind Jacobo as he stood on the threshhold was his American oasis of calculation and comfort, his basketball court to professional specifications, his patio and tea and purified cathedral. As he stepped off the tarmac, it seemed as if he stepped down from the Jeep but the engineer grabbed him by the shoulder. The propellers wheezed into life, thumping wind and accelerating until the helicopter levitated a moment and then wheeled up and away over the ridge and out of sight, and the thumping quickly subsided.

“No Beirut! Filistine! No Beirut! Filistine!” The two men screamed as three French policemen each pressed them into their seats with elbows and knees. They were just across the aisle from Jacobo in the Air France plane. “No Beirut!”

Beirut, Lebanon was where he was heading, deported from his beloved America. He and the ICE agent had changed flights in Paris, and now he was halfway to a country he had never known. He rose up in his seat to see better what was going on just as the commotion brought his ICE agent down from first class.

“Just settle down,” he said, laying a firm hand on Jacobo’s shoulder.

A very attractive woman before him, well-coiffed like the Ecuadorian middle class he’d seen in Quito, was looking back over her seat, straining to see around the ICE agent and reporting the events into a cell phone. She seemed to be speaking several languages at once, including a little English, but no Spanish. Jacobo guessed it was French and Arabic, which is what the two men were shouting from their hearts as they gaped and strained to get out of their seats.

He had not heard much Arabic before, although his father used a few expressions: yallah! for example, when he wanted him to hurry up. Yallah, habibi. Jacobo marveled at how the words expressed by the men struggling in their seats came from deep in the throat where the breath begins and where the heart pumps against each syllable so that words seem to emerge from the soul, as if they were trying to tell a story you heard even if you did not know Arabic, a story in a universal language of pilgrimage, exile, anger, escape.

“Oh, shit!” said the lady with the cell phone, in American English. “He says he has a bomb!”

The way you might think an audience in an American movie about Noah would react, when after months on a flood-covered world, Noah has almost given up hope, and there is nothing but an empty sea before him and after, and a dove lands on the gunwale with an olive branch in its beak, and Noah climbs the mast to see if he can see any land, and the theater manager has decided to play a joke by wiring all the seats with electricity, and he controls the switch that will turn the electricity on, and he switches on the switch, and everybody in the theater rises from their seats with their hair standing on end, so everyone in the airplane rose from their seats when they heard the word “bomb.”

Almost as suddenly, a French policewoman arose from her seat a couple rows forward and began to speak calmly as if it were some kind of an explanation. She went on even though the two men, Palestinians from Lebanon, Jacobo was to be told, continued to press, purple-faced, against their captors and shout explosively in that universal language, “No Beirut! Filistine!”

“Are we hostages?” Jacobo asked the ICE agent.

He was too shocked by the question to interrupt the lady with the cell phone when she explained that these were Palestinians from Beirut that somehow had made their way to Paris without proper papers, and they were being turned back on the plane they came in on. Their only hope was to abort the flight, so that they would then come under the jurisdiction of French courts. She did not say any more than that, but
Jacobo understood. The flight was delayed forty minutes, but still they got off the ground. The Palestinians seemed resigned, and most of the police had either got off the plane or had taken a seat beside Jacobo’s two fellow deportees, who, as was he, were going to the wrong home. His ICE agent stayed by him for a while, disappeared into first class, returned to check him a couple times, and then left him alone when dinner came. Jacobo only ate the bread rolls and the desert, a bright berry pie. While he was eating, he tried to pick a movie on the little touch screen on the back of the seat of the woman in front who had been reporting events on her cell phone. Most of the films were French. Jacobo was curious to see what his Palestinian comrade across the aisle was watching. The Palestinian, whose face was round and boyish, met Jacobo’s eyes and held them for several moments, wondering perhaps how much Lebanese Jacobo had in him. Jacobo smiled.

“Do you speak English?” the Palestinian asked.

“Yes,” answered Jacobo, “I have lived in America for five years.” He saw that the Palestinian was done eating. “Would you like this?” he asked, offering his untouched dinner.

“Why don’t we trade our trays,” said the Palestinian, in exilic solidarity, “and you will tell me why you are on this plane, God willing, Insha’Allah.”
Remembering Anne Hathaway

On the Shakespeare unit test
He remembers missing at least one question, Who was Shakespeare’s wife?
his answer, Mrs. Shakespeare, received no credit, only Anne Hathaway was right, an answer he will not forget for a long while.

Married at 18, 3 children at 21, the future playwright left for London. His first will left her nothing, a later one belatedly his second-best bed. How much he remembered her is seldom asked.

The answer, Mrs. Shakespeare, early on became a favorite tale of his, evidence of wit, self-deprecation, an ability when wrong to recover.

Welcome Center

It’s late Friday afternoon in the Appalachians of western Maryland, The third week of October. On lower slopes, trees are half stripped for winter orange/brown/gold in the slant light. Higher, they’re gray against bare earth, cold-fearing and elderly. I’m bound from DC for a wedding in Indiana, PA – halfway – just stopping at the Warfordsburg welcome center for a leak and a coke.

I’m headed back from the soda machine when a sixtyish man with a weathered face and salty hair approaches, says: Did ya see that kid? Vaguely I respond: I don’t think so.
He rolls on: Disgusting! He didn’t lift the seat and he peed all over it. How’re people raisin’ their kids these days?

I laugh. It’s television, I tell him. Kids are just watching TV all the time, seeing their heroes not lift toilet seats and then peeing all over them. What’s a parent to do? It’s just terrible what kids are learning.

As I’m saying this I see the lines in his face rearrange themselves until they say he thinks I’m half-cracked. He edges away, loose-legged as the long haul trucker he is, never taking his eyes off me or saying anything more. My head rolls back, and I’m cackling alone in the parking lot as two stiff leaves swirl by going no place special.

The Hangman’s Word

Six-letter word. Six slashes and a gallows. _A_ you say.
The hangman draws your head. _E_? No _E_ either, a downward gash, a torso shows.
No _I_ nor _O_, both arms sprout.
What about _U_? One leg drops.
No vowels you howl, then shout Why, Why, Why. Three magically appear. The chasm yawns, the hangman grins. He knows 20 consonants, and one leg, 2 hands, 2 feet to go.
Tourin’ Sco’land wi’ Ed Miller

First, Ed and Charles met half the Edophiles at the Edinburgh Airport, then – you recall – Ian picked up the rest aroon the toun. We soon ken our first bits and pieces o’ each other, as we passit the Yak and Ye’i and lit out for the Borders wi’ Ed singin’

The Yellow’s on the Broom. Soon had us singin’, too. Next morning, Ed and the Edophiles (remember tha’ auld rockin’ chair band? – Yeh, I do!) and Kathy Hobkirk o’ Hawick (you betcha!) sang Twa Corbies and other bits and pieces at Smailholm Tower ‘fore we gang aroon tae Melrose Abbey, magic but a ruin.

John Kane told us tha’ when the discs was singin’ a bizillion bituminous bits and pieces cum out the colliery we tourit. Edophiles – how many times di’ Ed or Charles say, “Yoo hoo, a bird?” – Micht well as been yak or ye’i frae the back o’ the coach. Nae yak, nae ye’i but lang-necked yowes we saw acumin’ aroon by Traquair House. Sic a stramash you coulda haird back in Edinburgh – singin’ and drinkin’ past midnicht while Edophiles slept, genealogical bits and pieces dancin’ in thair heids. Many bits and pieces o’ Aberdore lore makit me wish for the sea, ye’ I would ne’er board rola-pola Ola. Edophiles, would you? Sae up the brae tae get aroon the Daviot Stones tae pray for sun, singin’ the Yellow’s on the Broom, and fa’ dae you ken? We get it! Edophiles, lucky you are!: Bonnie Prince Charles wi’ wee bits and pieces on Sco’land; Ed, our ain balladeer, singin’ sae many o’ its songs; our ain friendly yakkin’; ye’ I maist in awe o’ the wa’ Ian drove us aroon, a’ for th’edification o’ th’Edophiles. Sae for th’Edophiles, I cannae thank you too mic. Though I’ll miss many bits and pieces, ye’ I and a’ o’ us are gang awa’ singin’.

Author’s Note

I seldom provide an introduction to a poem, believing strongly that the poem must speak for itself. However, this is an occasional poem, and without a bit of commentary quite a bit would be lost. In 2010, I took a 10-day folk music tour with Edinburgh born and educated Scottish-American balladeer Ed Miller. He picked us up at the airport, and before we got out of Edinburgh he had passed out a 77-page collection of songs and was leading a busload of singing tourists. We would be singin’ Scottish songs on location with guest folksingers, who performed in the evening. Within a few days, he advised us at breakfast that each of us would have to perform something after dinner the last night. Some had brought fiddles or pipes; I had only brought a pen and a lousy voice. So three days before that last night, I pulled out the pen, found some hotel letterhead in a desk drawer next to the New King James Bible, and started pulling together “bits and pieces” – a favorite introductory phrase to Charlie’s anecdotes about Scotland – from the tour into this sestina. Of course, it had to be in dialect, at least as much as I could muster after a week and decades-old memories of reading Robbie Burns. A glossary follows the poem. By the way, it was a terrific trip, and I strongly recommend it, though I only sing the songs alone in the shower!

Glossary

Edophiles - what the groupies around Ed called themselves

Yak and Yet’i - Yak and Yeti, a restaurant, probably Mongolian, in Edinburgh, pronounced with a guttural stop instead of a ‘t’

John Kane - guide and former miner at the Lady Victoria Mining Museum in Newtongrange, once a coal mine where he worked

Yoo hoo, a bird - a little tease of your poet, also a bird-watcher, until a tawny owl was spotted on a roadside post three feet from the bus

yowes - sheep

lang-necked yowes - Charlie’s joke: alpacas

stramash - noisy racket

Aberdore - from Aberdeen

rola-pola Ola - from a folksong from an evening performance about a round bottom ferry on the Firth of Forth
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Tom Mandel Tom Mandel is the author or co-author of 20+ books, including To the Cognoscenti (2007), and The Grand Piano, an experiment in collective autobiography by ten San Francisco Language Poets, chapbooks, and two novels. Out of this constellation of events, he came to write poems which have appeared in obscure rags (Dien Bien Phu --> Khe Sanh). The Sorry Flowers, a study of Robert Frost’s sonnets (The Sonnets of Robert Frost), and seven works of historical fiction for young readers. He is adjunct professor at University of the District of Columbia. He now writes for the University of Maryland, where he is an Associate Professor of English. He divides his time between Maryland and New York.