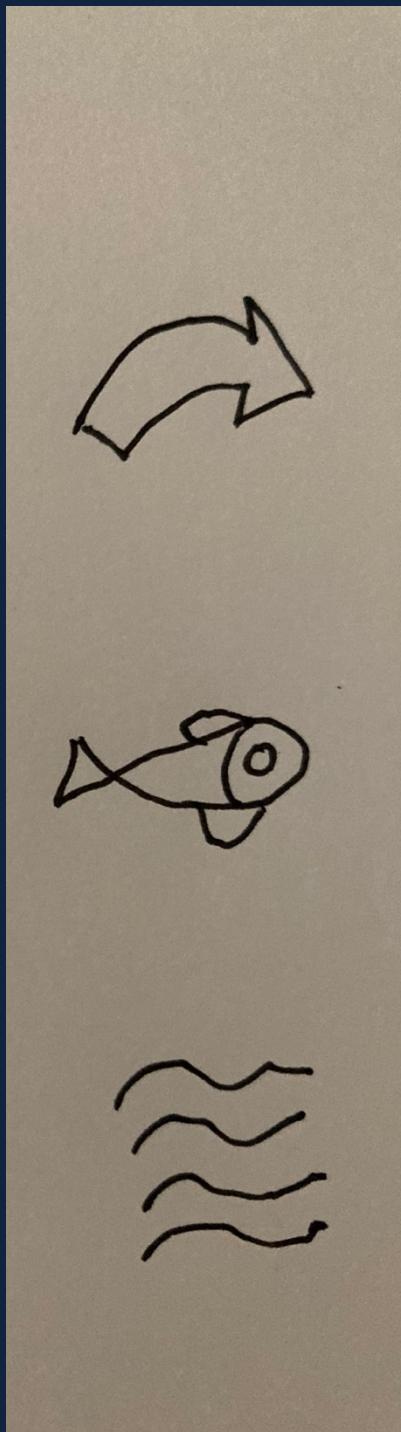


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NOON  
Journal of the Short Poem

ISSUES 21–22

August 2022

## PART 1

*after Paul Klee*

## OVERTURE

before the curtains  
open the sounds

a single flute  
arriving from the mountains –

we never knew the name  
of the winter place

we went to in sleep  
when we were children

## THREE HOUSES

The wind pushes the thin trees over

beside the black canal

three houses stand

I lay my limbs in each

on the horizon the one light

is moving away

I put my mouth on the black water

## LETTER PICTURE

the beginning-colored books  
are asking to be written

symbols of themselves

the letters illuminated  
by the world we see behind them,

by all that is still arriving  
from the beginning

## GREEN, VIOLET AGAINST ORANGE

Why leave this evening house?

The pear blossoms are here,  
the table of new hands

where the warm colors  
have found their sleep

a winter silence forms the door

and the moon resides in the attic –  
we hear its steps across the creaking floor.

*Michael Battisto*

## THE POEM IN THE MIRROR

Such heavy shadows  
their weight bends the branches  
my skin in shreds  
drips slowly to earth  
waits for words to arrive  
the hours we didn't spend talking

this fat world has eyes for you  
at first I thought those stars were teeth  
it's true by now that everything's gone retro  
your theory provides for each possible outcome  
earth slowly sheds its skin  
your spirit starts to show the cold air its bones

*Barry Schwabsky*

cold chrome weighing the placenta moon

take a number and wait for the infinitives to split

*Jennifer Hambrick*

surprise in the eyes of the one told 'next'

*Patrick Sweeney*

walking  
to the doctor's office  
each step its own splash

the river meets the ocean  
a small barrier  
to lean on

*Gary Hotham*

At the ocean –  
Ah, finally an equal!

*Matt Dennison*

## THE ELEMENTS

In violescent settings  
I parley with the wind  
attentive to the internal sea of flames  
not possessing the facility to singe.

How easy it is to unhouse  
the sole repository  
as the spice of another sensation  
dribbles into my denseness?

Derries of our course  
play on as you strum along  
in the outhouse of impulsions.  
The lone wolf isn't a loner.

*Sanjeev Sethi*

## HELL OR HEAVEN?

Truth is stronger than predilection.  
But while we pause at the stalling gates

Of Hell/Heaven: wrought iron or cast?  
Cast iron is iron that has been melted

And allowed to cool. Wrought iron is  
Iron that has been ironically heated

Then wrought by a fool. If I yell up  
From hell, will you hear me in heaven?

I'll pretend to. Whom must we face? Our-  
Selves? The light within? Madame Bovary?

Your question comforts me as I hurtle through  
Outer space. I thought hell was science  
Fiction, but perhaps it is simply the future?

all i god is words

summer moon before it was paved

*Matthew Markworth*

## A SKINNY SONNET

There were pastorals then  
when you could walk on  
a city street and step in  
dog shit. It was a common  
thing. Everyone did it.  
And, of course, there  
were plane trees.  
Nothing's different.  
Not really. They gave  
shade, I suppose, though  
I rarely noticed. Under one  
tree you had four seasons.  
I looked up, we looked up,  
arms spread, palms upward  
supplicants to these matters.

*Jack Galmitz*

a whole life  
ends here  
stinkbug

*Ben Gaa*

little rat in the still life  
cracks the riddle –  
world as rotten walnut

'Theater of Cruelty'  
outside the fourth wall  
the Russian word for children

calling the dogs –  
all our aliases  
unleashed

*Judson Evans*

*from 'notes from a morning'*

woman  
just walking  
her dog

gray and silver  
these clouds  
underlining  
the mountains

these camellia blossoms  
falling  
now turn the color  
of dried blood

flow down  
in a stream of petals  
that floods  
a neighbor's driveway

*Alan Chong Lau*

## LEAF RAKER

the sound on gravel, the filling of a void.

## SATSUMA LEAVES CURL

Medicine bottle  
of Glenkeir Treasures  
waft of pine underscored  
with hyacinth  
a list hidden in the notebook

BREEZE

6th September 2021 11.26 a.m.

*Andrew Taylor*

it was like the death of simile

campfire talk  
we circle  
our wolves

*Benedict Grant*

bonfires  
we look on with  
eyes like birds

*Stephen Toft*

whistling past the graveyard shells

ribs  
eaten by the wind  
the sun bleeds away

the pendulum swings  
cuckoos improvise  
the end of time

leaving forever one day at a time

*Robert Witmer*

the silence

to live on

in her wake

at every turn  
nothing else

*Elmedin Kadric*

snow buries everything  
behind the calendar the calendar  
we gave them

*Alan Peat*

IOU

We are on loan  
from nothing

and return to nothing

and invented  
the word *nothing* and everything

the word may mean.

YOU SEE AN ARTIST IN THEIR STUDIO AND

their pants and shirt splattered with paint streaks, dabs, blots, smears, lumps. You can't see similar stains upon a writer's clothes, no stray syllables or halved letters, upside-down capital letters, no unexpected flights such as an e landing inside a big open Y, any indication of what did or didn't happen when the writer bailed out silence.

a butterfly wing washes a shadow

## PUDDLE

Often criticized as  
shallow, occasionally

attacked as being  
'shallowly surrealistic',

and once in a while

dismissed as failing to enlarge  
our understanding of bodies

of water, this one plagiarizes the dawn over  
our driveway.

*John Levy*

## TYPO

*The mindswept plain of western Nebraska.*

Instead of meteorology, an  
epistemology. Instead of topography,

a description of pureness.

## UPDATE

Shortly the crows will be replaced  
with parrots.

That's the word.

Also the preferred form of death  
will be the heart attack

which is  
increasingly difficult to die of

Also no one will use the words  
*opinion*

*democracy*

or *perhaps*.

*Eric Rawson*

## SEX

Sex was good, was something. Talk,  
everything. In a bathroom mirror  
before work: Your skirt and blouse –  
a color match? Meaning  
of your mother's phrase  
in a dream? And that mole  
on your left shoulder?

*George Shelton*

## CONVENIENT

My lover rests  
her head

on her hand  
on the cushion  
on my arm

*Phil Wood*

marriage arranged in F#

*John Hawkhead*

visiting ex  
he rearranges  
his delusions

the scraps  
of our lives  
worm moon

*Lisa Espenmiller*

pre-chemo haircut –  
growing on brown oak leaves  
white frost

*Anthony Lusardi*

fallow field  
stretched into silence  
only weeds

*B.L. Bruce*

## IN THE SKY

We sprawl in Sunday's quietude across the pillows,  
and wish we could do more.

There are pictures to hang, love to make ... so much.

But there is nothing wrong here. Not yet. All is well.  
Sometimes it is best to be still,  
still as the clouds seem to be, on a sunny day, as they move.

## WHAT BILL EVANS SAID

Death is why we want to die.  
But love is not why we wish for love.  
Death is what never lies.  
Music has nothing to prove.

## TERRIBLE REALIZATION

See how summers  
go, hands in dreams.

*Theodore Worozbyt*

## A GOOD DAY HERE

Even a bad day is a good day here  
the taxi driver told us when he pulled up  
outside the house and saw the sea  
barely coming into light.  
Quiet, shell-shocked,  
the emergency department  
one hour back along the highway.

## CASUALTIES OF ART

*for M*

Your face, appearing for a moment  
from behind the Venetian blinds.

The slack look after recognition.

You didn't want me there,  
you didn't want to talk.

The day shut out. The nights easier  
for a few hours: the room's blue-lit face  
(knowing you are like everyone else,  
watching TV like everyone else).

I don't know exactly how you died,  
I didn't ask and they didn't tell.

All I know, there is a hole,  
a bucket that keeps being lowered.

## SUPERSTITIOUS OF THE T-SHIRT I WAS MARRIED IN

I wonder if it will be the one I am buried in?

I still wear nighties appropriate  
for the late night ambulance rush,  
I cannot go back to the frivolous ones  
no thought to length or gaping  
under the arms.

I wear the t-shirt I was married in  
on certain optimistic days  
that have the excitement of a picnic;  
the careless hand waved through wheat.

Are you there child, are you still there?

*Wes Lee*

## ON MY BIRTHDAY

As heavy rain  
makes brooks  
pick up steam  
I think of Li Po  
sending his poems  
downstream, one  
by one by one,  
until brushstrokes  
sink and dissolve.

## FOREST AT DAWN

Mist at each footfall  
you walk through ghosts –

as chaos wants a path  
you become its direction.

Sun in the branches hosts  
the life of old powers –

each shadow a stone rising from mist,  
blond panther sunlight sprints,

and this world sings so much  
the wrong sounds for it

to accomplish nothing again  
out of the everything it is.

*David Giannini*

## COSMOLOGY

The wonder is  
life is  
the least of it.

## READING

Between the lines one never counted  
one disappeared between the lines.

## AT SEVENTY

*At seventy clutching her doll, I'm scared.*

*John Martone*

## POST MORTEM

All our hefted legacies,  
our ingested people,  
clashed. Yet here the unfulfilled  
remains, as a blanked out moon  
leaves the stain of something  
missing, or an illusory peace.

*Kate Behrens*

god's feat of clay left to burn

*Helen Buckingham*

## EASTER

Hyacinths for six bucks at the gas station. Once, folks bought Heston's Moses bluster, that theater of wayward ghosts. And so the robins fail, barely a shade of redemption. My son is getting high in the shed.

*Bill Freind*

nurse with bright  
personality  
monks swarm  
like fruitflies

*John Slater*

crumbs in the table crack midwinter sun

still swaying  
in an old friend's poem  
the branch a bird left

*Rick Tarquinio*

as if *Drum Taps* could calm the wounded lilac moon

undone  
by the softness  
her religion  
of sea glass

none of the kids mow thistles after his passing

*Dan Schwerin*

sea glass gathering  
along the edge  
of the zeitgeist

a  
leaf        the forest  
a thought  
form        for  
              the  
              trees

sumi-e  
the range of birdsong  
the ear can't hear

*Michelle Tennison*

## CODA

Crows are professional mourners. It isn't just because they own glossy black suits. They are familiar with solemnity. They attend the dark core of shadows and freely add their own. They have mastered the side-eye, the well-timed knock, and open-ended elegies. There is a collegial component to grief, so they love vigils. Even now they know the nearest rain is 78 miles away.

## HAPTICS

Soaking rain after extreme drought, the sudden uptake of water creates soggy wood. This weakens limbs of the redwood. Then all it takes is a stiff breeze to twist and snap a branch. One falling branch hits another branch on the way down. Damage increases damage. This is the history of touch. None of us remains entirely whole. I heard the commotion after midnight—the roar of needles crashing into needles. Now as I survey the scene, I smell the broken wood. It registers as both sweet and sad. There's no such thing as an ordinary life.

nightly news the ratio of river to rain

one eye ocean

*Cherie Hunter Day*

Windblown drifts and forest distances wandering through self-  
images

Leaf sprigs drip into freshets my grief momentarily dreamt

The dark side of uncertainty a crow caws misting twilight

Downhill clouds the river lost the long trip out of myself

*Rebecca Lilly*

## MUSHROOM

Exhausted, lost  
in woods I once knew well,  
belled in thought that did not seem my own,  
I stood as a body of rung flesh, and was,  
as if known to some great invisible  
field underground, held.

## A JELLYFISH

A jellyfish on the beach, furred with sand  
then licked clean, nudged by the sea  
as a doe nudges its stillborn fawn, steps away  
and returns to nudge it once more.

Deep amber –

the sun's blood diffused within,

an embryo's ghost in a transparent womb.

## EARLY FALL

Dusk. Fewer crickets,  
but louder.  
A tree coughs, expels a crow.

For a short while  
an insect in a tangle  
of yellowing grass

makes a noise like  
someone trying  
to light a match.

## WINTER

*after Tomas Tranströmer*

Driving past midnight,  
weather closing in, bearing down.

Best to pull over.

I stop, lean back, close my eyes,

but the road goes on, through me,  
the white line scattering  
moths and wet feathers . . .

There's a muffled sound like dug earth  
tossed onto a coffin lid.

Silence.

Then a brilliance  
floods the car as if  
the screen of a drive-in theater  
was suddenly lit.

*Peter Yovu*

every fiber of my spider lightning

*Chuck Brickley*

the mind's infrastructure chiefly four letter words

in my inner city  
thoughts squat in  
an abandoned idea  
reading history online

*George Swede*

as he turns the page  
he glimpses the green place  
of his childhood dreams  
written between the lines  
before he turned the page

*Mike Dillon*

## PART 2

the dark behind the light beneath the door spring dreams

death spiral reason loves its reason

## FLAVORLESS

Crazy man Han Shan incised his poems  
on the rock face of the Kun Lun Mountains,  
playing the role of the holy vagabond,  
according to Taoist legend. My home's  
less permanent. Sometimes I'm a squatter  
along the Muse River, a fringer of gentians,  
sometimes a tenter on the shores of Still Pond,  
but always lower down, closer to water.

*Jim Kacian*

## EPHEMERAL MYOPIC POET

The most one can say  
About his life was that

He spent it mostly doing what  
He was best at – observing closely

How little one actually sees  
Clearly in the course of a day.

## ALIENATION

Sometimes we think  
Perhaps we are not  
Of this world and more

Often than not, we  
Actually believe it –  
Until we look

In the mirror and  
In that timeworn blink  
Of an eye can't

Unbelieve it.

## FALL'S MIRROR

Flat on  
my back

staring  
up at

a map of  
my own

mind the  
elm tree's

black  
branches –

nothing  
left to

catch  
the wind.

## EPISTEMOLOGIES

The house  
sparrow

does not  
know

that I  
do not

know  
what the

house sparrow  
knows.

Feet hurts, back hurts,  
head hurts –  
balanced, at least!

I put my glasses on  
to see the fog  
more clearly.

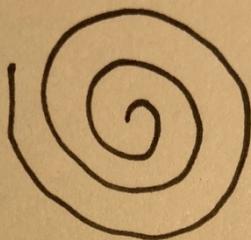
*John Brehm*

All Souls' Day  
a clown's wig tumbles  
in the wind

wildfires

ciccicicis

*Roland Packer*



sang

gone

*Peter Jaeger*

## LIZARD TRANCE

when I do pushups  
in the fluorescent glare

above my bathroom tile  
I shed my old tail

and conjure the pure  
blastemal light of sun

*Michael J. Galko*

## STRANGER

Someone's moved in downstairs  
in their sleep they cry out  
and argue in an old language  
the furniture groans and cracks

Over breakfast they can be anything  
yesterday they were a lobster in a box  
the day before a pair of curtains  
that swallowed all the light from the garden

Everything in our kitchen is for sale

## SLOW

'I'm going very slow with this washing up,'  
I said, 'because I've got absolutely no energy.'  
'Go and have a rest then,' she said,  
'otherwise you're going to get ill.'  
'I already am,' I said, 'Covid, remember.'  
'Oh yeah.'

## AT MY BEST

'You're not at your best in shops,' she says,  
on the way to the shops.

'In fact, you're not at your best at home.'

'When am I at my best?'

'Maybe in some sort of sealed jar.'

*Cliff Yates*

licking saag from the Tupperware lid –  
sundogs

at the river's end-  
less meetings

*Warren Decker*

femur deep in the forest dysphoria

the white supremacist opens his fireflies

*Aidan Castle*

to strengthen our bond  
my lover teaches sparrows  
to hop on a leash

## JEREMIAD

A harpsichord of feathers that is a dried well; a harpsichord of fallen leaves that is a red-bellied woodpecker; a harpsichord of stones kept in her mouth for remembering and forever calling out the names of her aborted babies.

*Réka Nyitrai*

Ophelia dripping from the water –  
out of body  
out of mind

*after Nicholas Virgilio*

*Ash Evan Lippert*

## SANTA SABINA

rosaries made out of orange seeds

the overloaded skip  
rises creaking over the wall  
swaying    rusty    pitch & yaw

the moon is ripe  
the reef begins to breed

*Peter Hughes*

UNGARETTI

Lit with immensity am I

Memory is a sea

the drowned

forget to

know

## SAYING

The truth of  
a word

lies  
on the tongue

*John Phillips*

## WHAT FLUTTERS INTO BREATH

an untraceable yearning on fragile wings orbiting its obituary

## HUSBAND & WIFE

*(for John Levy)*

Laid to Rest:

he, with a military funeral  
she, in a brightly colored cookie jar

## ENTERING THE FIRST DAY OF FIRST GRADE IN ONE SENTENCE

We walk two by two in line through a wide Pine-Sol scented hallway, up polished stairs between tall banisters, to a blue-eyed Jesus hanging on the wall at the start of a darker hallway leading to a classroom of kid-sized desks and a small old wary nun in ankle-length habit, a crumpled tissue protruding from her sleeve cuff, standing next to the bulletin board where a picture has been pinned — a large fiery pit of writhing torsos in tattered rags, with upturned eyes and arms beseeching a baby-blue heaven dappled with fair-skinned angels aside neatly cut rectangles of white paper, each labeled with one of our names.

## CAPABILITY

I

a snake's jaw

II

a pair of gloves

III

a radiant gaze

IV

an empty room

V

a cocked gun

*Eve Luckring*

Amer(I)can walk and chew gun

*Mike White*

*from VISIONS*

An old car slows down  
and parks at a corner.  
A man gets out  
and enters a candy store  
with a large window  
with green wood trim  
and a Breyer's ice-cream sign.

This might be a vision  
of a moment far in the past,  
a place I only went  
once or twice as a child,  
in East Orange  
a few blocks east  
of the Veterans Hospital.

*July 9, 2007*

A man sits  
in a corner  
of a dark room

He has a green aura  
around his head  
and body

Even the bottom rung  
of the ladder  
is too high  
to reach

*July 14, 2010*

*Michael Ruby*

## A FASTNESS

My fastness is a Sunday bed,  
a desk view of ocean postcards.

My fastness is the glare of open books,  
the secret catch on my drawer.

My fastness is this stiff handshake,  
a garden walled by Scots Pine.

My fastness is a downward look,  
a talent for forgetfulness.

My fastness is suburbs at noon,  
the rooms filling with light

like tides that leave no watermark.

*David Mohan*

## AFTER

After the emptying of the street,  
    after the avant-garde's retreat,  
after strange goods arrived one day  
    in the Library's cavernous loading bay,  
after the mechanical bride's excess,  
    after the visceral distress,  
after the theft of fire and fruit  
    for which there is no substitute,  
after the desiccating delay,  
    and after the afterthought, after decay.  
After the amniotic tub,  
    an afternoon nap at the afternoon club.

*Chris Beckett*

## IN LATER LIFE

Not resting on absent laurels, I tell you  
I've plucked two new leaves from the bay,  
have rinsed them under a tap, I say,  
and dropped them in our stew.

*Peter Robinson*

## FUSE

Let xanthophytes grow over me so  
I fuse with chartreuse forest, a jungle

gym of sky crayoned above: I swing  
safely here through pandemic days

sometimes my grey eyes open at page  
corners, part blades of feather-grass,

watch and wait as the planet hangs  
in the universe on a yellow thread

*Jane Frank*

news facts I focus on the ficus as if

*Adrian Bouter*

opening inward to the desert

no one listens like a dandelion

*Victor Ortiz*

the flower scent of everything

everything the flower of scent

scent the flower of everything

dying  
from

inside  
the

shark's  
eye

*Joseph Salvatore Aversano*

## OPTOMETRIST

For her to study the inside of my eye,  
I make a careful study of her ear.

## FEMALE COMBATANTS

*after Lovelace, 'To Lucasta, Going to the Wars'*

I know that war's a selfish thing,  
for men who love to tussle,  
for women who love the thud and sigh  
of the anti-tank missile.

Your new lover's hotter than me –  
you'll use him, then discard him for another.  
Back home I doomscroll – give to charity –  
comfort your mother.

Paradoxes keep me sane  
like fighting at the front line keeps you breathing:  
I couldn't love you if you said  
what I say, and did nothing.

*C.E.J. Simons*

the war news ...  
and here I am  
forest bathing

*Christopher Patchel*

as the crow flies how many miles of war

constellations  
in a forgotten language  
owls calling owls

*Caroline Skanne*

Last night  
meteors  
this morning  
dragonflies

*Laura Winter*

my arm the sky a blue morpho in the garden

dogeared in a hospice  
*The Wonder of the World*

greyhound stepping in the wet sand  
of childhood

she bends the dahlias  
bee sharp sting

cluster bombs another slice  
of sunlight

just after dawn  
beeches polished bronze

*Jo Balistreri*

## IN THE BARRANCA

Eucalyptus, twelve-years burnt  
but standing tall,  
you are a silver perch for hawks,  
for crows, for owls, for nestling air.

*Paul Willis*

## IT'S COLD

up  
here where  
the air  
picks its  
color

another full moon swimming in sanity

*Richard Mavis*

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

bliss  
returning

an ur-  
gent  
call

*Mark Neely*

## SPEECH MARKS

speech marks  
the day

words  
beside me  
besides me

skeleton of grammar

the sky is nothing  
but a reflection of your eyes

I read the progress of your life  
in the dark

*David Rushmer*

‘were we different?’

the light remembered  
as something else

the man leaning  
against the sky

the whole town  
only a construct

taold

*Bob Heman*

how many winters past eden withers bone white

*Rich Schilling*

something to do with an open hand

dark matter hiding at the edge of hubris

judgement day  
there at the edge  
of the sparrow

*Lee Gurga*

the severed toe of  
a god stuck in the mouth  
of the river

the last  
pieces  
of the  
light  
of  
different  
jellyfish  
touching

words by Noam Chomsky

might

hard

to tell

where

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as if the falling s  
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washed to o

Scott Metz



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