

NOON 24



NOON
Journal of the Short Poem

Issue 24

October, 2023

open chord the day begins in mist

SLEEP AND DARKNESS

Wake up why don't you? It's been a long time coming.
Perdita was next to me in body but not in spirit.
She's supposed to take notes but won't.
It don't really matter. Her handwriting is illegible
Like a stick insect would be if it could write.
I beaver away until I'm blue in the face but nothing
Comes of it. Perdita stole an encyclopaedia from the library
But it didn't have anything in it about anything
We wanted to know. She could've checked first but didn't.
I turned the lights on and off over and over until they blew.

BORDER / LINES

Doors slide open as I pass.

There are pelicans on the river.

Yesterday the local rubbish tip caught fire.

A pregnant woman, uncomfortable in a car, drives by.

PLEASE PASS THE SAUCE

You know the river's really running dry when the highlight of

your day is watching a magpie-lark attack its reflection in a tinted

window & you start wondering if there's enough in that for a poem.

poets' AGM
parking lot sparrows
bathing in dust

the asteroid just missed an idea's tailpipe dragging

demanding exact change in a ruined world

colliding galaxies she wants the towels hung straight

prone to confabulating a hornet's nest in her fingertips

O'Keeffe's labial irises the docent's ellipsis

dandelions
irregardless

4'33"

I am looking, not looking, out of the kitchen window. The phone is still in my hand. I am thinking of your unplayed piano.

fog
on a clear day
starts to sink in

the deep dig
through our earthly desires
worm moon

t
h
g
no *w*indow
l
of the soul

praying
the act
of weighing
the dust

ELLIPSIS

... and when, in her grief,
she broke to say
please God, please God, please God,
know that it did please God
to have created a language so sonorous

without music –
the nil song –
exhaling an ancient breath

moist self –
whisked away –
in dark and hollow light

this last affection –
the unrehearsed breath –
crossing over

ALMA MATER

1/

A new bird steals through
space between
square fluted columns.

2/

Hearting strengthens
covenant of stones.

3/

I rub my flute clean,
play it, place it back into
the plush blue velvet case.

4/

Spirit mother, soul to me
this long dry patch
of recollection brims with light.

THREE AIRS

futile ivory

*

abbey sea rose

*

honey
or three

evening chorus
one bird
flat

HOUSEFLIES HUM IN THE KEY OF F

A housefly's serenade is a single note not the whole F scale. No F sharp or F flat, no major or minor chords, just an F note rapidly repeated. Another truth is that flies can drop dead mid-flight. Three weeks of flying around then *time's up!* A life ended between buzzes. That explains the constellation of grey husks in the abandoned dairy barn. They were crossing in front of a dusty window and then they weren't. Love dies in a similar fashion—mid-flight. No gentle drift. Simply stricken. Mid-flight is when bodies are most susceptible to a powerful gravity of pinpoint accuracy.

CRUSHER CLAW/PINCER CLAW

We talk of damage and frame the shapes as two options: cudgel or rake. There's no default. My *Yes, sir* to your *No, ma'am*. We survive murky waters with a toothed claw to clobber and an oversized tweezer to tear. There's never a lack of injury. No remote-controlled settings in grief to provide a touchless wash or sidestep anger. No delicate calibrations for laying on of hands. There's never an easy way to separate from a hunger made raw. Our regimen is to capture fresh vacancies. Conjure words that scarify. Come here so the sea can swallow all that darkness.

My mouth
is filled
with stones

I polish
each one
with my tongue

until it
becomes light

torn down a temple is complete

EPIC

a woman at the window

a dog
in the dirt

meadow I express a dead horse

Paul Pfleuger, Jr.

a coyote
on the lawn
panting
contrails

the ocean down my street rising sunset

a
staircase
winds
into
the
blue
temple
ruins

ATLATL

the walls move alive with

lions, auks, bears aurochs charging

right through the mouth
of the cave

all this
twitching stone

DOUBLE ELEPHANT

invented languages
like a skein
of geese

strung over the marsh

one word
after the next

barred feathers
falling

POEM BEGINNING WITH A SENTENCE BY ELIZABETH ROBINSON

The essence of nature is to be always borrowing.

I borrow my thoughts and rarely repay anyone or
anything, it's part of my nature, is second nature

and third, and so on. Always, so on. There's no Polonius

telling me what to do – or instructing nature
to stop lending nature more nature. Dust

lends dust to the dust

that is always borrowing and returning the dust.
Bats chase bugs at dusk, what isn't

dust at the moment

is taking its time.

NOTE TO DON COLE AND JOAN WORTIS ABOUT SMALL TALK
(8/20/23)

There's small talk and above small talk there's
silence and above silence there's
memories of those we love who are gone and

it's easier sometimes to return to the small talk and
silence for a little while and then
go back, say, to a few minutes of thinking of Paul Matthews

and then look out the window at the weather and bring it
into our minds with words. "How many colors do you see
out the window," that's not what we ask each other, but

I begin counting on my fingers.

RAINDROP

There's one, lengthening

from the prickly pear pad
as it prepares to

fall, here

in what is tempor-
arily

my yard –

it looks silver-
white:

a comma turning upside-down.

cañon de carpintero
renamed carpenter canyon
the drumming of woodpeckers

stained glass window
in the medieval church
the clear pane

summer loosens
the schoolhouse bricks
kids with painted faces

on a city wall
indecipherable grafitti
weeds untouched by wind

softly stroking
an infant's fontanel
the wind over African plains

asleep in my arms
the part of the ocean
that slips through the net

the ethics of it first raindrops

Evan Vandermeer

hoarfrost
settling on
a euphemism

sun through fog
calling me by
my brother's name

Edward Cody Huddleston

the outsider's
outsider
paschal moon

early learning the earth round her mouth

All our own work

Helen Buckingham

AUTOMATICALLY-GENERATED LINES IN A TECH MAGAZINE
20 JULY 2022

truly
the moon
is the white of the sea
rubbed smooth
by the groins of drowned brides

data mining
our differences
buried

the hatchet
up for grabs

spam call of the void

password of the Trump church pastor jesuswept oneword

strung across the bridge frailing rain

wading toward
the reactor core
heron almost
cobalt
in the snowfall

a child asks
what is
the wind
without
its shrink-
wrapped
skin

no one at the playground
words like forever
and always

now that she knows
I'm not
a dog lover
what
about God

prevailing winds begin to shift
– telecommuting
with a toddlerf4q5twcg347668rjbhg hs

snow melt
Pooh sticks run faster
than the child within

hopping the jetty
a wave caged
between boulders

blinking back heat lightning

chemo over –
the metallic taste
of acorn rain

winter night
the crow song turns
inward

hand tremors
there is a tempest
in the teapot

Roberta Beary

Madeleines: the scent
of rotting apples, the smell
of tar

Beneath the subway grate
the slant of light, the snowfall:
angle and angel
of the instant

A PRIVILEGE

Birds at the feeder famished after crossing from Mexico
having learned their stars sat panting a yard from her
A privilege she said she wouldn't trade the world for
But this is the world breathtaking already built in

FREEDOM

Wherever the falcon sleeps
a bit of sky
nestles under its wing.

AZRAEL

Each night I head home with a new song.
No doubt this annoys him.
He's always waiting for me with a frown by the door.
One day the new songs will end
and to at least appear unafraid
I'll have to repeat a song from long ago,
as I go down the stairs that never again
lead to the door.

SONGS

Who can pluck
the songs of the dead
from the grass that grows
over their graves?

BREAKING AND ENTERING

i.m. Jerold Mann

... I'm breaking into this poem for I've just been told
Of someone's death. Someone who has taken the day
With him.

 Though he no longer holds the day. Someone
 Who has taken these hours and fanned them out in
 One last display of what he no longer possesses.
Life and its untethering. The way this poem has broken away
From the voice that first called to it. A voice I've willingly
Abandoned, whose loss is no loss at all, whose loss
 Is the least I can give.

also marking her passing stubborn heat

tag you're it again grief tacks sideways

ELEGY ON THE LINE

*It's a good drying day,
you'd say, I'm thinking
while hanging out my clothes
surprised at how I'm coping.
So what do you want, applause?*

single again . . .
the angle of bicycles
racing round the bend

THE NATURE OF THINGS

I don't know the way things are;
I only know the way they feel

as when the wind gathers me up
in the open cabin of my car

as high as my harness will allow,
and yet I'd swear it sweeps me far

over the flickering countryside,
and the road, which doesn't run, unreels

beneath me as I skim the rise
and dip of surfaces, and day,

bending to the highway's curve,
seems endless right up to the end.

IMPERIUM

Day's reign is half decline.
Sun fizzles as it falls,
routed by petty rain,
parried by parasols.

Night wins as it withdraws,
luring its victims in.
Our dreams enact its laws,
which govern oblivion.

vanishing point . . .
shortening the lines
in a short poem

winter weeds the graffiti of ordinary time

Cherie Hunter Day

The axe-
chaffed cherry

tree gashed
& girdled

still blossoms

Sitting around Sunday afternoons
talking about death, how
the next instant
you see God's face – *But still,*
mom says, *I'll miss*
cinnamon buns.

Late at night, stumbling back to the motel, I saw a baby hedgehog huddled under the stairwell. Gave it a saucer of warm milk, though it didn't move. *Timrous beastie oh what a panic's in thy breastie*. The next morning, I discovered it was a toilet brush.

Measuring time
by footsteps
synched with
my daughter's
around the block
through first
snow sifting
out of endless
indigo

TO KNOW YOU ARE BREATHING

What does it mean to stop being?
I once wished to be the herring gull

borne high on a wind, blown through sky,
a leaf after the tree has forgotten

they were once one body, and the leaf
as much as a lung lost, as much as a child

abandoned on the doorstep of thought.

OPEN

warns or invites, tempts,
taunts, says *Listen* to you
within and you without,
threshold-paused, hand
extended and empty,
deciding: pull, push, go
through, go away, listen
more: the answer is not
on the other side.

FRAIL

Frail is not in the world
but in us. The breeze is light,

the light is delicate, the petal
tissue-thin, but only we are frail,

worn away by our excesses
and excuses, by our mockery

of weakness. Even as we display
the finery of muscle and bone,

our breath falls prey to air,
our hearts collapse with love.

J.I. Kleinberg

Dementia –
deep in the pocket
of her silence

UNTITLED #8

the frisson of noticing
a small tattoo at the wrist
poking from the sleeve
of a cardigan

WOOLWORTHS

The sound they made
like tickertape –
a pricing gun I got proficient with –
the tap and roll on the lids of tins.
My mother's voice, I always knew what aisle she
was in.
My father surprised me once
the way a snow leopard might look strange
come down from the mountain, away from the sleet
and snow,
and just as exotic carrying that basket.

The day's work done, he stoops
by the door like a smoke grenade
as he beats his dusty clothing,

billowing thick plaster clouds –
the colour
of ripe peaches.

Between words muttered
under his breath, he frantically
picks at the teeth of his comb
with a creased and faded ticket;
waxy flecks are flicked to the floor
in the thundering underground
carriage.

moonlit crows –
the rachis
of his still fresh scar

noon sun –
a room inside
the hummingbird

oppressive heat
a new orchid plant
on the orchid plant

stepping
into
space
the little things that hold me
together

Sandra Simpson

a box to store
and secure the tools
that built the box

in the crowd
I am one more face
and the rain starts

wallpaper people
moonflowers
in moonlight

Lunar eclipse –
the scars beneath
my sleeve's shadow

Robbie Coburn

pain refrain
the porous chorus
of her

Ellen Kom

between songs
torrential rain
falls on the arena

summer lightning
I put down
the worn paperback

“THE IMPORTANCE ...”
(for Oscar Wilde)

in comic daze of 1895
after falling into weddings
each couple might have had
an Algernon or Jack
by 1915 just the age for France –
not wicked Paris but the Somme
no Bunburying, only burying instead
at a time of pain entrenched
would they still have volleyed words
like shuttlecocks or cried out
in earnest?

Margaret D. Stetz

blowhole
whale's
a
from
stench
the
crimes
war

Debbie Strange

SHORE PERSPECTIVE

green crabs dismantling
a fish carcass –
the strange etiquette
of eating shellfish.

Michael J. Galko

from HYAKUNIN ISSHU

64.

Asaborake

Uji no kawagiri

Taetae ni

Araware-wataru

Zeze no ajiro-gi

– *Fujiwara no Sadayori*

Early dawn,

Lifting slowly over the Uji River

Mists rise and clear –

Net stakes along the shoals

Appear faraway and near.

70.

Sabishisa ni

Yado wo tachi-idete

Nagamureba

Izuko mo onaji

Aki no yugure

– *Ryozen Hoshi*

In my aloneness,

I leave my austere hut

To distractedly look around –

It is the same everywhere

This autumn evening.

94.

Miyoshino

Yama no akikaze

Sayo fukete

Furusato samuku

Koromo utsu nari

– *Sangi Fujiwara no Masatsune*

Yoshino,

Autumn wind in the mountains

Deepens the night –

Chilled, in the old capitol,

I listen to pounding fullers' mallets.

trans. Wally Swist

MT. TAHTALI,
OR OLYMPOS
IN LYCIA

without its
cloud of

belief no
offering fear nor

mystery but
an un

com
promising
bareness

of rock

(Çıralı,
1o Aug.
2023)

come to

a glacier
formed

moraine

we lay
down all

our gear

Joseph Salvatore Aversano

Edited by Philip Rowland
Cover artwork by Cherie Hunter Day
Published by Noon Press, Tokyo
noonpoetry.com
ISSN 2188-2967