

NOON 28



NOON
Journal of the Short Poem

Issue 28

March 2026

sunrise
I tear it up
start over

Chuck Brickley

wind through the Möbius strip calling my name

inside the goldfinch a child crossing the abyss

Michelle Tennison

THE TYRANNY

The canary's out-of-
cage shadow

with a latch-locked
shadow cage

of its own –

Well I've also
escaped

with my cage.

let us build a
monument

to catch the
light cast

shadow
to mark

the land
where we'd

otherwise
be lost

fog words lose their weight

t

NO

no
where
up
on
I'm
gone

enter stage left my unreconciled selves

mothering the ocean vagabond rain

winter beachcomber home with my emptiness

Dan Schwerin

fog i love
what you've undone
with the place

Jonathan Humphrey

violet haze
just my color
of noise

the clam's calm
a perfect fit
in my open palm

EGG ROCK

I stared out
my 7th-grade
English class
from the top
of our town
watching gulls
land in shit
where no man
stepped foot
the first poem
snuck in.

the muffled quiet
of bookstacks . . .
I bond with old glue
and dust

Jo Balistreri

SLANT

ballpoint pen tip
noon sun's paper shadow
a 1/32 non-metrical inch.

silent letters.

some say stop them!
arrest those nothings!

but i like those
silent letters, hold-

ing together
the shapes of

those others

STONE COLD

All poems have sequels but the final one.
Words, of course, have prequels.
Stones have sequels
if you think about them
hard enough.

Today's advice:
Don't think about stones.
Leave that to the pros.
Let someone else be the pro.

THE ANXIETY OF CONFLUENCE

Reading on
my phone

Padgett's
Collected

swiping left
to the next

page
afraid

it will
reveal

a poem I wrote
too late

TENURE

I'm aware that
the contract is

running out,
and everything.

JAZZ CAFÉ

I thought I remembered
your name. Come this way

darling. Is here all right?

Another solo diner
might be joining you.

sandwich I consume a vista

cicadas and all I can think is fucking

his hand
warms my thigh
swaying lupine

Agnes Eva Savich

TRAVELS WITH BASHO

The plum
pulls in

the reaching
hands, keeps

pulling,
until each

finger
flowers

HOLLYWOOD PRIMITIVE

The first palm tree is named Norma Jean, the wind lifting her fronds.
The second palm tree is named Norma Jean, the wind lifting her fronds.
The third palm tree is named Norma Jean, the wind lifting her fronds.

Before Marilyn, before audiences, before itches, cities, sewers and
grates.

Just the sea and its pleasures, just the sea and its breath.

Just the pleasure.

Just the breath.

AT HAYAMA

sand under soles, salt
wind in nostrils – a man culls
seaweed with a pole

THE EMPEROR'S BEACH HOUSE

perimeter wall
sentry box, barbed wire, *keep out* –
waves splash in on sand

BASHŌ: RESUMÉ

the ex-official
of the city waterworks
hears the quick frog jump

full immersion
the soft syllables
of falling snow

Down through the mountains –
blue sky and everywhere
blossoms adrift

Gregory Dunne

the dusk blue
of the blackthorn sloes
slows our steps

Mark Valentine

a single stretch of cirrus testing quietly the consonance

café mural
the great white egret
glances our way

MEALS

Dragon says,
"I eat she
who drinks

the rain and
drink he who
eats the wind

so they drink
and eat of me,
dining, fondly."

MEANING

We hold in our mouths our meaning but
only let it out a tiny portion at a time and
anyway no one is listening

FOCUS

I feel hot tired on the beach and decide to put my hat over my head to see if this will help me sleep. The hat creates spots of light. They are planets with craters. Pocked moons. It's been so long since I could focus on a distant thing without my glasses that my sense of elation wakes me.

WAVE

The unfolding wave.

The crest, the swell, the arm lifting out.

from *THE TRANSMISSION OF ANTHONY*

FLAG

Properly, a flag is an edge of wrapped sky.

HARE

There was a hare in the headlights.

It darted to and fro on the grassy bank, towards the moving car then away into the dark and back again, slaloming with us almost to the turn where it disappeared behind a heap of hay.

CAVE

With the wind in my pubes, and the darkness.
Distantly, the roar of an underground river.

MOLLUSCS

I walk into the surf. I am in my pants and the beach is steep.

When a wave sucks back with such a sound, a clatter of stones, I can't help it as the next wave comes and batters my shins and ankles with pebbles.

I dunk my head.

Blue in all my cuts and burning. The river is a line of copper. The parting of my hair, a curtain. Inside the shells the molluscs are pulsing.

from *WINTER SONG, A BOOK FOR DECEMBER*

December arrives so quietly
in blue light over a purple fjord.

The porpoises are going by, far out.
Now you can hear the sound of their breathing.

OUTSIDE IN 4 A.M. OCTOBER DARK

for Bob and Susan Arnold

All Hallow's. Stars with stars, nothing spills from the Big Dipper. It is the nothing that spells what I can't read. I sense but can't see deer bedded down on grass beneath those trees. The breeze is a woman checking empty nests. So many friends are gone. I hear the invisible leaves falling. The dead spreading out to gather under stars.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

for Nate

Our grandson walks with naked feet through snow, without knowing what's in the black bag he carries to the shed. He wants his feet to send a dare of new experience to his head. The last of this year's garbage is tied up, maybe holding the head of the would-be dictator, or just chicken bones for the bin.

ONLINE AND OFF

Just after reading about A.I. improving itself and “transforming humanity,” I met a young woman on a beach, toddler at her hand. She said she was an English teacher and loved and taught poetry. She had been transforming herself and her students, she said. There were words from Gertrude Stein and Emily Dickinson tattooed all the way down her left thigh, on down to her ankle. “I love Gertrude and Emily,” she said, their words on her leg attesting. I wanted to kiss her feet!

one bed two algorithms

LUST

(from *Chants of a Lifetime*)

We make love, but it doesn't matter
if it's a fizzle or tour de force,
once in a lifetime, or often-told –
we'll want it again, sooner than later.
Those same old desires gang aft agley
and yet they need to run their course
and though they're neither same nor old
will still be met in the same old way.

TRUE LOVE

The snow at the summit
was grained with dark soil.
We thought it odd.
And it was.

We buckled on our skis, anyway,
and had a joyous glide
as if it wasn't there.
Though it was.

patterns of ice ...
a broken window
in the sparrow's song

Jacob D. Salzer

a pair of owls
hoots back and forth before dawn

I listen
and feel less alone
as they call back and forth in the dark
their pauses
growing longer or shorter

calling
and not hearing an answer
is one thing

calling
and knowing there won't be an answer
but still calling
is another

from *THE PRINCIPLE OF THE KNOT*

before Father became ash and ideation
we took the blue canoe
to the island in the reservoir's center
peanuts, jerky, Coors

when the wind found us
we floundered like a wind-up toy
in whose hand or mind
the wind I came to know him by

lashed now you brought us here
the far dock failing from disuse

a season we have no name for
but we've all known it and visit

when dreaming or in love
when moved suddenly by beauty

the oars cut the water and
the water seals up

the mirror
has healed over
I'm sharing this address
with older shadows

Christ it's bleak
the sea by night
the countless wounds
it licks without
distinguishing
the living
from the dead

Peter Hughes

IN TIME

The horizon like a drawn line in an animation
redraws itself as a man
rowing a boat toward

a shore littered with gray stones,
books that contain
pictures of ammonites and trilobites.

death of a child
the story of sunlight
told by the rain

no longer a child
old enough
to be a stranger

no towns north of here
a statue
tilted that way

YOU CAN'T

find the church
where the wedding will take place.
Looking up you see it floating away,
its walls pulsing,
translucent as a jellyfish.

Weightless, you follow,
guided by tracks that vanish
as soon as they are set down
like fish that swim in and out of the sun
and you are one of them
about to disappear
but instead, you wake.

A sea wind
blows curtains in
caressing your naked feet.

TIME FRAGMENTS

1.

In this dark subsoil, tubers swell.
Tell-tale clogs cling on – customs,
dialect crumbs – visible when uprooted.

It's in the micro nods and glances
of needn't-be-saids
that belonging takes hold.

2.

Hands lumpen on their laps
– unrecognisable.
Only in death or in this photo
are they so immobile.

A shake or nod of the head
maybe a monosyllable
is all they give us.
They have seen now
how their own hands
can mis-portray them.

3.

Red roots below bursts of spray. Rainy nights
and the cars are on stilts in a world
where time no longer turns like wheels
or seasons, but angles downwards
into depths that might as well be there.

4.

Commuters, like plovers at the tideline
when the fast train bullets past.
Through its windows, a strip of hills
and morning sky, seamless
but for the pulse between carriages.

insistent digital bird calls
as I descend the station stairs
the years inside me
accordion-like, briefly
expand and compress

Philip Rowland

MORNING DEATH MASKS

I caught sight of my face early this morning,
on the black screen of my mobile phone.

I saw a death mask – like Marat – blank eyes
and open mouth, a total absence of expression.

For a moment death was real, in the room,
but being a shy bird, soon fled away.

Can presence conceive of absence? Only
A mask could bring this thought to mind.

crow silhouettes on
granite headstones if
shadows had essences

as sunset dips pink-tinged
string lily shadows
death in its spaciousness

Read the headlines every night
on the tombstone of light.

Alan Botsford

AT DAWN

A crow poised on our balcony
above the Bulgarian roses
now light points glint through trees.

FAMILY GROUP

That wild boar and her young
through carpark perimeter fence
emerge as pure coincidence.

OUTSIDER

You want to be low on the ground
when bullets of hail are hurting your ears.
Your dog can crouch in a ditch.
All you can do
is turn your back to the wind.
How long must you stay here
to fit like a key in a lock
or a well-crafted joint –
and how would you know if you did?
And you are in vaulted skies
of windswept grass
and rain
that span the wide horizon.

Yet your dog – he was born here.

For the hail. For his craft.

For the land.

dry wind
like it's a rite
pine needle rain

LeRoy Gorman

in the garden
swaying from
the fall wind
prairie grasses
or
death's long-
nostril hairs

for two weeks
below my left
collarbone
a device recording
my heart's breaks
and aches
in 0s and 1s

the product of
random mutations
and natural selection
closes one more
full notebook

the bird feeder's spilled seeds
my long life

George Swede

cleared field what's built upon it exacts its will

absorbing the after rain
all things surround
equal predicaments
wet with allusion
greenery
too much
to feel
to not

LOOK AT WHAT HAPPENS TO PEOPLE

When we got priced out of the city
and moved to the suburbs
I started committing tiny acts of resistance.
Like refusing to remember the word

hydrangea.

After years of resentment, her kisses
landed like spent blossoms full of sour milk.

from *UTOPIA POEMS*

This could have gone badly

but here we are
with pulp stained lips
and blueberry fingers,

our toes sinking into
what once was dust but
now is soil: black, wet
and cold.

Occasionally we drift out to sea
to watch the moonset and the cities
that come out to sunbathe.

*

A lake in the desert
is secret again.

Bryan Edenfield

ORIGIN

I lost my way
coming back
from where
I've never been

Dear Landlord

So by nothing but
words I am
to demand paradise

from a heart
that is a nail

Joy is an ox in a jungle clearing
being slaughtered

Hope that joy lasts is the axe
chopping
chopping

CALLED

When God calls you better answer

Don't ask where He's been

Say Lord Lord at last it's You

Even if you hear heavy breathing

John Phillips

DIVINITY

I'll show you yours
if you show me mine.

FILM NOIR

The movie ends in a downpour
and then outside
the clear sky appears pure fiction.

In dreams, water always signifies: the dream.
The clear heart pays it no mind.

MEASURE OF THE MAN

Shostakovich, sleeping
on the stairs; awaiting

the secret police
with their documents
and their switch blades

so his children can sleep
quietly, unawares.

Let's just sit here, in the kitchen,
where the scent of kerosene's rich.

One plump loaf and one sharp knife ...
Pump that primus back to life!

Failing that, let's get the string,
stack and lash our crate of things,

be off early down the station:
no one there knows our location.

January 1931

Let me, oh Lord, be one that you'll save.
I fear for my life. I fear for my wife.
A Petersburg night is a night in a grave.

January 1931

So I've stopped missing Arzni's spring
and now I'm loving Moscow's laws.
Its cherries ripen, its telephones ring,
its days front-page, like a verdict's applause.

6 June 1931

We're basically hypocrites,
calmly forgetting
that when we were kids
we were closer to death.

Let a child at her saucer
be cross she was woken,
but who, on my walks,
can I sulk at? There's no one.

Flesh moults and fish play
without light, without air.
We wriggle away,
obsess and despair.

14 May 1932

FAITH

don't say
you have none
when you
read even this

from *RE*

RELIABLE EMPTINESS

space

hope

time

RIPPLE EFFECT

a letter plummets
into an alien word
spelling a new world

ROUGH ESTIMATE

as against
this gentle
precision

FOR A LONG TIME

nothing happens
and then it does
and that is how
it begins
with words that
carry their closure
from the first
with a breath
that even now
transports
its last
mist

NOTHINGNESS

Torrid quantum hotel
stuffed full
of comings and goings

NOIR

truth in a trench coat
retribution in a rain mac
melancholy shots in the dark

NOT VERY

It was grimly humorous
or as we call it, not funny.
There was drunken violence,
bad singing and altercations;
lots of shouting. And music,
loud, naive, shapeless noise,
attention-seeking short songs
from those who couldn't play.
Enthusiasm might overcome
many of life's little problems,
especially being ignored, but
I wished they would go away.
It was grim and not very funny.

FAMILY REUNION

The car was the centre of attention. It was stroked and patted, we discussed its horsepower, how fast it went, flipped the hood up. The engine's cough was warm and throaty, it spilled fumes into the summer air, exuding style, speed and discomfort under everybody's gaze.

FRAILTY

He arrived from the taxi out of breath
puffing with emphysema, laying gifts on my hospital bed.
He pretended he didn't need cigarettes when I gave him directions;
I knew he thought he'd get lost, and *lost* to him
was so great.

The 7-Eleven just around the corner, but he wouldn't go,
and when he did, I imagined him tying white rags on lamp posts
with his eyes; daubing paint; dropping a row
of breadcrumbs from his hands.

PATINA

Curled in a way it is easy to lift –
would you take me home? Peel off my clothes;

cut them with scissors; scrub me with lye.
I could never get clean. I stunk out the ward;

hooked to dialysis.
When you find me short of breath, two-hundred-years-old,

like something sunken in a bog, would you lift me;
paper-thin husk blazed with the patina of the city.

PRAXINOA AND TIMAS

PRAXINOA: Beneath Niobe's robes, veils?

TIMAS: No, beneath the robes, rock, for where there is rock, certainly there is a cascade.

PRAXINOA: Aren't the robes a cascade?

TIMAS: Were the robes a cascade, where is the dust? For where there is Niobe, certainly there is dust.

Use a towel only once.

Show me.

Tell me what time it is digital display. Show me what time it is with your hands, sweeping clicking ticking soundlessly asking me to look asking me to determine where on the face the truth exists

Use a towel only once.

To find your feet crouch low raise up on your toes you'll find it underneath.

Doing laundry in the middle of the night – a spider’s mindset

Jonathan Hayes

free jazz nightjars skim along the glass nervous angels

Adrian Bouter

the way
time plays
dunes

FOR BACH,

the mystical experience
was canon fodder.

THE OLOGY

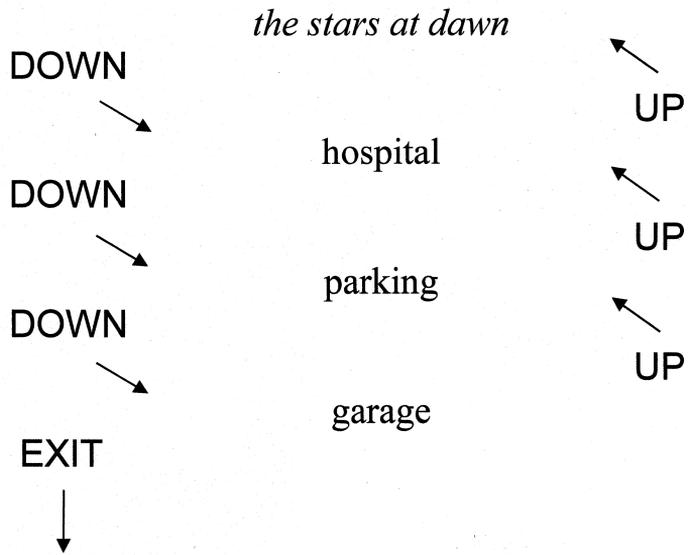
God is simply an
incomplete Gödel.

what church is
it building
thistledown

Dylan Stover

the honey locust's nakedness
one wind away ...
I turn to the flyleaf

last will
and testament
midnight sun



over a bridge
that spans dry dirt
double rainbow

DRIVING TO WHITMAN'S GRAVE

The traffic circle past Big Timber Creek then the Haddon Farmers Market and Liquor Barn, Sagami Japanese Restaurant, John's Pizza. China Dragon and Camden County Driving Range at the light. Wawa, of course. Cheerleaders, Red Barn Books, Carnival Adult Superstore, CSM Plasma, Our Lady of Lodes Hospital, Sgt. Scrap.

HOBOKEN

Mow the lawn.
Trim the hedges.
Weed.

Wax the car.
Polish the rims.
Buff.

Wave hello.
Motion goodbye.
Bolt.

Mount some art.
Switch out some art.
Wait.

Take down art.
E-bay some art.
Wait.

AIRPORT

As I'm sitting in this too bright café
watching my tea go cold, from time to time

Joni emerges from the background hum
to tell California she's coming home.

PHNOM PENH

creased gray slacks
white linen shirt

red and white krama
looped around his neck

checking his email
in the tuk-tuk

he knows all
the other foreigners

are foreigner

OTHERWHERE

green parakeets squawk
in bare trees on Hampstead Heath –
hoarfrost, winter sky

pulling an invasive plant
the arrival
of an invasive bird

mispronouncingparrotfishtheyissharkbait

the sloth
in their promises
a forest raining pigs

Robert Witmer

APEX
ape ape
ape ape ape
ape ape ape ape
ape ape ape ape ape
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ape ape ape

SISYPHUS

a stone's tiny shoulder
in a crumbling wall
the small world of dust
he farms

rusted hoe ...
the trails within
leading nowhere

Nicholas Klacsanzky

th du ins eat wo fir lig
ins: eat wo fir lig
rd ord firs
th eac
de nsid
sk the
tho rst crd
om
usi
usi
usi

right

and

i'll
carry

this
you

that's
the
day

carry
that

there

winter. Solstice
i use all. The spices
I've been. Given

entering through the gift shop exit winter rain

the snow that never fell
the only other bodies
i've ever really known

Scott Metz

church bells
I am
a hollow log

from WHITE LABYRINTH

They take the long
white ones, pound them

on logs, and sense
a nearby voice wishing

to ask, *Does this
heal you?* They'd say,

*No. We feel we're
beating time with our*

own bodies' bones.

*

Wrist watch's reflected white
disk makes its sudden
leap to the upper
right of that salmon
wallpaper in a rented

room. One pelvis arches
toward another. Aching arch.
One note, one word
longs to curve upward
to the next. Or,

across galaxies, a heaving

sob for coupling.

*

From behind, wee one
tugs his mama's skirt.
Little could he know

how this stays with
her, all her remaining
days. In the oddest,

white moments she'll feel
that pull-pull straighten her
waist, back, shoulders, neck

so that she gazes
with clarity, attention, humility,
at a tiny, luminous

face.

lights out –
the mirror
keeps the room

Jacek Margolak

after hours
tables without
tablecloths

Dad's stare
stars to look
past

Gary Hotham

crepuscular\rays\backslashing\into\sky\code

glacial flour the braided river unbraids

Debbie Strange

meltwater
turning an iceberg blue
not the color
anyone would wear
to a funeral

lichens brighten
the trunks of leafless oaks
a steady hand
on the wheel turning
towards spring

PROMPT

offshore
the foghorn
warns you
that *the sea*
is deeper
than necessary
and sadness
is set
to return.

(a line by Mary Ruefle)

night sky tissue lifts off the retina

the rushes in the river reflected in the rush

THE SCHOOL OF MINNOWS

The flashing oval school
seen from above,
from an old pier
at the small fishing village
the kingfisher flies through again.

ORANGE

Orange is the color
of
my true
love's
favorite
color.

John Levy

FOR JACQUES DE BIEZ

truth is not colour:
neither primary
nor secondary –
more a varnish that
hardens and cracks
over time

chipping the rocks in your quarry heart

Jennifer Hambrick

oil fields
victors loot
a dead man's mouth

throwing coins
to the toll booth's basket
rain pounds the asphalt

Ross Moore

vanishing point
at the end of the railroad tracks
migrant sun

through the eye of a needle –
camels clear space
for a ballroom

Julie Schwerin

GERMAN-
FURY-
FEV-
DER
ER DREAMS

sycoph)ants in the pinocchio's pants

authoritarianism
more syllables than
I care to count

NAÏVE

The duplicitous dots
make me wonder –
Is “i” misinformed
or only pretending?

if you are here am i

dark thoughts
stars whose light is
yet to arrive

exhausting the alphabet war

John Stevenson

from SPIES, IN AGGREGATE

The thing is

with spies there is never
a moment when they are not
spies

By the river, in the
train car, on the sidewalk, in
the bathtub, at the grocer,
when the clock strikes, after
hours, before the sunrise, with
a lover, with their children,
smiling, crying

always they are
spies

Ruth Danon

war news
a meeting of laughing yogis
postponed

LENNY AT THE PARTY

When I'm too long with people I'm nervous.
I sneak away from crowded rooms and hide,
pretending to ride on an empty bus.
When I'm too long with people I'm nervous.
In dark interiors of talk I just
want to find an ocean and seize the tide.
When I'm too long with people I'm nervous.
I sneak away from crowded rooms and hide.

FRIENDS

If you want your feelings to disappear
put them in a poem.

He washed me down a few times too
no True and Perfect Love
just Love, fucked-up, dirty,
essential.

This is the perfect world.
Everything is not in the moment.
Raw slices of basil don't mix well with a poached egg.

he was barefoot while visiting today

I'm ashes

drifting into the Clinton River in Drayton Plains, Michigan

HOPE

Here a deep-down yellow
less sun than wild honey.
The two of us at evening
marvel at night's hunger
that the ocean can be
swallowed whole
& still
hum.

ON THE WAY DOWN

What did we miss on the way down? I felt it in the walls. 'Neptune' - Daughter

Josie's gathered wild flowers
have wilted in the heat
'take time to relax on the terrace'
sometimes instant coffee
with U.H.T. will do

James is under trees in Chiswick
trying to slow the world Delphine
bolts again back to Paris eyes
meet on the Biarritz train

HOLIDAY

a Medieval well & squid on a clothesline
a green pear being rushed to ripen
in a brown paper bag

Jan Conn

no mud . . .
the striped watermelon
grown square

Drunk as Chi-tien –
“the drunken Buddha” –

I too paint in ink deep into the night.

well water
nothing to discuss
here's to us

Sheila E. Murphy

PALM SUNDAY

I shook hands
with a baker

then placed
a floured palm

on the next surface
I touched,

which was your cheek,
my flower.

winter woods
a mist so light I might
not be here at all

dawn glow this is your captain speaking

Seth Friedman

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