NOON 29

NOON:
journal of the short poem

Issue 29

October 2026

EMPTY PAGE

Train into white mountains
unfolding a scroll

the calligraphy of bare trees

At the ryokan we walk in snow
following yellow dots
skittering through the bushes
until we find – tail like a submarine's periscope –
        a vole!

Outside the window
midnight snowflakes
erase our footprints

ACROSS THE STREET

Old ladies
nested in their three-mat apartments
like cliff owls

survive their husbands
with pleasure.

TV laughter,
eyes migrating inward.

crickets sing lullabies far into the night.

this floating world

KYRIE

Wind in white
pines:

the dead praying
for those who live.

the pulse at my wrists
snowmelt

Robert MacLean

MASSACRES OF INNOCENTS

Capella della Croce di Giorno, Volterra

Here in a chapel dedicated to the Cross
is a fresco of King Herod's crimes.
In Bethlehem and the coasts thereof
to destroy a rumoured future Lord
(who escapes to Egypt anyway)
here, his men-at-arms would slay
each newborn, put them to the sword.
And here are silent wailing mothers
kissing them, breast-feeding them,
piled babes, each with a stab wound,
every one killed close up, by hand.
But those were different times.

Peter Robinson

REVENANT

They'd cut the hearts out, hammer stakes
through the legs, nailing them to their graves.

To prevent them from gnawing out, they'd jam
their jaws with bricks. To keep one child from

ever returning, they buried him face down,
a six-year-old, who, had he tried to ascend with

one foot anchored by a padlock made of iron,
would've clawed downward instead. This, in Poland,

the 17th century. As if, then as now, in dreams
the dead don't haunt the living at will. As though

the chipped cup my beloved brought to his lips, blowing
to cool the coffee, the cup I leave on the counter

untouched, doesn't each morning draw blood.

(*The New York Times*, September 5, 2023)

Boyer Rickel

OF ELEPHANT

The tops of piano keys once of real ivory
My father playing a sad nocturne
Wrinkled fingers on the keys
Elephant legs on the run

In those times no one wept for the elephants
Poetry wandered across the African plains
We often don't know the water we have
Until some of it runs from our eyes.

1970, WHO WERE THEY FOR?

During Passover, Paul Celan
leapt to drown in the Seine, two
theatre tickets all that was left

in his jacket pocket, two for
not waiting but nevertheless
Waiting For Godot.

David Giannini

THREAD

there is time allotted
that is never used

when the theater burned
it was only
the second act

Bob Heman

WATERMARKS

in the car we are specimens in a case,
a rain beaten capsule washing down roads
like thought

a poet has died—are her words lost in this flood
that will end as puddles?

will a faint watermark remain after the sun
sucks up what's left?

there was no thunder warning:
the storm arrived before we could escape it

Jane Frank

DEATH & TRAMS & DOGS

for Marin Sorescu

The day
before he died
he wrote
four poems
I read them
then a few he left
unwritten

SOLACE

The comfort
of poems

being a lie
is not true

John Phillips

growing on us these never really winters

Paul Pfleuger, Jr.

autumn dusk
once again
a smaller house

real estate of mirrors

John Stevenson

FATIGUE

made the farmer
surrender to the overgrowth
quit the cultivation
languish at the cineplex
or his son's Xbox –
the silos so low
and his scarecrows on ZipRecruiter.

Anthony Nannetti

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD'S FATHER

One early evening, in the summer, her father went out of their house to go sit beneath the old, gnarled larch tree, leaning against it, and she sat facing him and the tree. She was five. He told her that when he was a boy, his father told him that an axe gets hotter and hotter as you cut down a tree, and a woodcutter needs to stop and let it cool down. And he said that he didn't know why it was right then that he decided he would be a woodcutter too, like his father. Before that, as a boy, he'd dreamed of travelling to the harbor and becoming a sailor and having a life on the sea.

ONE OF LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD'S MOTHER'S FAVORITE SAYINGS

Little Red Riding Hood is sitting on the floor watching her mother sew. She wishes she had a thimble too, not to protect her finger while sewing but simply as the smallest bucket, one she could fill with her happiness sometimes, or a dream when she woke up, or a birdsong. One of her mother's favorite sayings is *The most any of us can ever hope for is a thimbleful of meaning*. Little Red Riding Hood asked her once if she made up that saying or if other people said it too. Her mother said she had made it up, and that she would not say it to her husband, or say it when he was in the room, because his idea of life's meaning was so much bigger, and that's why she fell in love with him.

John Levy

THE PICTURE PALACE

In days of Empire, Regal, Gaumont and Essoldo,
beyond the flickering, backlit curls of acrid blue,
demons and heroes, villains, schemers,
dreamers and gunfighters to cheer or hiss,
should anyone happen to notice or care,
my hand in your clothing, your tongue in my ear.

You lit up on Marlboro, hot breath charged
with transatlantic glamour, my Gauloises
the pinnacle of chic. Credits rolling, we're
stubbed out, returned to the night
and the pavement and the grime,
all familiar and unreal, unnatural, sublime.

WHILE YOU WERE AWAY

the mice took up painting
intricate colourful still-lifes
on the kitchen cabinet doors

an owl broke into the butterfly drawer
and one by one devoured
all the lovely specimens you'd collected

in your shoes I might decide
never to go away again

Aidan Semmens

UNDER THE SHADOW

I will chase words into the hay bale maze
I won't read the evacuation procedures out loud
I will closely guard the fractured sky
I won't whisper when you are out of reach
I won't deny the shadows nipping at my heels
I will learn to use the wings I was given
I won't preen the dark plumage of fear
If I find myself at a loss for words, I will use smoke
I won't ask the ophthalmologist to speak louder
But I will ask the sky for a second opinion
And I will beg the forest for something I can burn

waterfall we don’t choose when we are broken

NEO

It's a slow news day when NASA reports on the near collision of a harmless asteroid. Near is a relative term. Deemed harmless because of its distance from Earth, but still noteworthy as a speck of light streaking across the early morning sky.

whale song
conducted through water
through bone

Cherie Hunter Day

SOFT PARTS

leave no
fossil trace
no brain
or ear
no heart
or tongue
to tell
or taste
how it was
then

FROM SAND TO SILICON

Sand that thinks
and sinks us.
Very
quick
sand.

Chris Beckett

a
squid's
quiddity
liquidity

Julie Schwerin

jazz on long fingernails a man she knows wanders home

golden hour the sun tosses away mossy stones

Darrell Lindsey

I WILL TAKE

all these years
and put them in a box,

and the box will be a box
full of color and light,

and the box will be everything
except memory.

And when I am alone
staring and drifting

I will go into the box
and take oranges

and I will not be sad
taking oranges from the box.

TO A SPOTTED RETRIEVER

tied to a woodpile,
neck-stretched, howling

against the passing
grey-black sky.

I have turned
fifty-five. Monks

inside of me
have raised their arms

to the sky.

DEAR RUTH AND MARK

I was sprayed
by a skunk.

He was on the roof
eating.

I thought he
was Crispin.

I knelt down
to pet him.

Please bring
clothes.

I'm in the woods,
waiting.

Gabriel Arquilevich

just after I locked up the house
for the night

a hairless
coyote its skin black with mange

walked onto the backyard walk
sniffed cement

looked at me
as I watched from the window

as if staring at its reflection in
a mirror

left a hole
in myself and the night as it left

Jonathan Yungkans

inside the shed
hung from a corroded nail
the key to the shed

Ross Moore

dark matter
my father's toolbox
one wrench short

winter library
all the commas
facing north

Travis Park

tortoise preserve …
out of their holes
every star

leaving them home my fingerprints

tent city
all our words
for rain

paul m.

from BRUSHSTROKES

DELL

purple irises,
muddy pond – a hidden fold
in Tokyo's fabric

14 May 2005

JULY

tree-perched cicadas
sandpapering silence as
ants toil through hot dust

29 July 2005

FORMERLY A SEAMEN'S HOSTEL

midnight: a hundred
ghosts in narrow single beds
dreaming of the sea

Hotel Maritime, Copenhagen, 2 August 2005

RESISTANCE

hide radios in
childless houses – no one to
give the game away

Copenhagen, 3 August 2005

Paul Rossiter

a WWII ammo bunker
now devoted to neuroscience
ceremonial tea

Bill Cooper

ceasefire
taking the clothes
off the line

cloud wisp
an ink smudge
under the cause of death

Edward Cody Huddleston

sticking my head
out of the hospital window
light box world

Tim Murphy

new shadows at sunrise
used car
lot

a long way yet in the night
lights on
in the vending machine

Gary Hotham

stars dissolve
in a frost-glazed window
the compromise

Alanna C. Burke

open sea

each wave lost

retained

Jonathan Humphrey

gale-force wind the waterfall goes missing

beadlet anemone the blue sting of loss

Debbie Strange

cowry shell, gift for the teething child

Sheila E. Murphy

we loosen the bearings
of his wheelchair
a slow turn into fall

Jo Balistreri

RETIREMENT HOME

Yes, I'm quite happy here.
It's like being in the woods.

Tim Youngs

IN THE PALACE

of memories
with its many portrait-
lined hallways
and cherished-
clutter rooms
i become a tourist

George Swede

rain needles the train window
another reunion
turns into memory

Alan Yan

saudade in frays of rain Lisbon to the bone

Adrian Bouter

play of light on the river reading sotto voce

am bi valent

∴

i think

Michele Root-Bernstein

DRUNK ON THE REAL

I fall

over myself

and land

in

the reality

of my falling

Daniel John Pilkington

BRUISE HAIKU

Blued fingers pluck deep
berries straight from the thicket;
everything is proof

Iona Carmine Roisin

winter nothing sparrow
its place about special
in thicket the

low church
of beach-

combing
with her pail

Dan Schwerin

inflatable
holy
family
tethered
to
earth

Suzanne Marshall

two-thirds sky,
one-third earth:
holy dirt

Vasiliki Katsarou

cumulus . . .
over and over the word
benign

Christopher Patchel

this stretch of brook life after death

Matthew Markworth

all frequencies at once the name of the river

morning mist
given to the horses
to carry through

Michelle Tennison

MEMORIES OF A DREAM

A man riding horseback
in a parking garage.

BURNING SNOW

In the wetland grasses
I fell upon a serpent
spiraled and asleep,
dreaming someone
like me was nearby.

James Shea

EPIC

Some
dust
mote

settles
on the
dirt road.

ELEGY

you run out of a sense of duty

Elmedin Kadric

LATE

It's getting late
Tears aren't enough

Mark DuCharme

LATER

in the

light we

shuddered

& lay

still.

Mark Young

EMERGING

from the hearse
blocking my way

a meaty
tattoo-blue
forearm

motioning for me
to go around

to go around
and be
quick about it

BED

go
right
a
head
try
my
side
she
said

Mike White

SUNDAY NIGHT

We used to wake to the yeasty aroma
of Sunday love, our laughter leavening
the glutenous flour of our intercourse,
making grist of our last week's trek to MOMA
or Old Rag. If I left crumbs along the trail
from my *petit pain* it was for an evening
like this, without you, me without resource,
the butter rancid, and the whole loaf stale.

Jim Kacian

boardwalk ozone stink of bumper cars, the taste of her salty lobe

slug of cold barley tea, thunderheads above the department store

Patrick Sweeney

OFFICE COOKING

I opened my window to the cage-free sun
seeing how the rage of the light would dull.
I wanted to write and I wanted to be full
as the hole in the placid heart of a gun.
I took out my pen and scribbled a comb
and fried my eggs in the skillet of the poem.

MEANING

a merchant minding
an empty
store

Scott Keeney

Let the cinematographer handle the minutes. Light on the ceiling for an unspecified holiday. The mirth of dishonest pets. This poem will be played by two sousaphones in a vacant ballpark.

I am big meaning. No weather, only frozen confections.

Bill Freind

SUMO WRESTLERS

Sumo wrestlers are competitive athletes
Despite consuming around 7,000 calories
Per day and weighing up to 180 kilograms
Per day, they almost never develop
The conditions associated with obesity

The main reason is that despite their sheer
Girth, they almost never develop. They also
Carry almost no visceral fat and very few
Regrets. Regrets are stored deep inside
The abdominal cavity, surrounding the
Internal organs. CT scans reveal that
Such regrets can be deadly. In short, sumo
Wrestlers are taller than you might imagine

THE PROBLEM WITH THE POEM

The only problem with the poem is
Not only how it is enacting the future
But also how it so far sort of makes
Sense. As the poem is enacting what
It's doing, it also tells a story: "is there
A picture here?" Notice how it works
On a physical level: the comma, a gust
Of wind, the annihilation of enjamb-
Ment. This is Cubism. The speaker is a
Child. I will respond if you have any
Q&A. Too late, the students are gone.

Loren Goodman

CONTEXT

There is a boat drifting down the river – empty, oarless – the mild current carrying it forward like goodwill instead of an alternative. There are ripples arcing from what the bow breaks, and these almost travel to the shore. It is white and unnamed, not *Take it Easy* like that moored seaside one. Soon it will be out of sight and this is all we can know about uncertainty in such a context.

Mike Ferguson

affirm what started as a hunch
a quick flick in the corner of an eye
reflections in a rainy Rome shopwindow

today a leaf abseiling to the street
through autumn glow
on web thread

the speed of light
the relatively static

woven into
consciousness
of being

just another cockle in the soup

beans are also available

Peter Hughes

reincarnation
another step
on my shadow

voters
all ears
mushrooms on a rotting log

Robert Witmer

the chosen one day at a time

Mary Oishi

weightless
in this leaf-fall
of sobriety

Joanna Ashwell

New Year's Day
she crushes the rest
of the candy canes

Randy Brooks

SUNSET

Bird-like, the lady perched
at the hospital stop. The driver waves
her on for free. She's fashioned
a shawl from a tired sheet.
She smiles absently
at the vice-president on mute.
Radiant little sun.
How the beatitudes leak out
all over the place is a wonder,
isn't it? The bus stops
and I get off to a chorus
of starlings. The bus and the lady go on
around the corner.

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

The clerk at the superior court where you file
for divorce does this every day. Shuffles papers,
double-checks signatures, asks each one – mostly alone,
but sometimes a pair – to confirm if this is really
what they want. Some folks fluster or curse,
others weep quietly. He doesn't have to ask;
it's not an official question. He asks anyway,
then counter-signs on the empty 'Witness' line.
Small accompaniment on any given weekday.

Graham Murtaugh

SIN TAX

'is that a Henry hoover – or a Hindu deity?'
– Ben Eastham, Debjani Banerjee review

Pay your tax now or risk a fine;
the gods get angry if you don't
keep it clean. It's hard to right
wrongs and wrong to be right
all the time. Will you adopt
our customs, what makes us
British, or let dust accumulate
in the corners. My advice is
to integrate, cleanliness being
next to godliness. Henry
is my hero, so suck it up.

Rupert M Loydell

MORNING HUDDLE

yes, we violated your civil rights
on february sixteenth, but here's a
box of donuts and a water bottle
with the company logo on it. please
don’t report us to the EEOC.

Cole Roulain

high humidity
so many syllables
in a dismissal

Alan Summers

muting Musk
outside the scrub jays
squawking

Lisa Espenmiller

foxglove
spilling its teeth
across the breakfast table

Stacy Nigliazzo

lecture on
evolutionary psychology
no man is worth it
you whisper passing me
a packet of tissues

Farah Ali

third-shift sunrise
the thump of a library book
in the drop box

NEXT TIME IT RAINS

I open a coloring book
to a bear and a chick
sharing a mushroom umbrella.
They're watching gentle
drops ripple in puddles
with a spotted frog
who seems content
with no umbrella. It's so easy
to squander our lives
trying to prove
they haven't been squandered.
I have a big umbrella.
Are you free
next time it rains?

John Wojtowicz

VAST

in keeping with the vastness of the sky

an onslaught of tulips, a runaway train,
an afterlife, just a kiss away

Jan Conn

marigolds to ghost this godless errata

Rich Schilling

moonstruck
moiré patterns
of katydids

Christopher Patchel

hanging low how long this winter moon

Hifsa Ashraf

blue
planet
ammo
nite

Helen Buckingham

low tide
fossilised footsteps
led us here

John Hawkhead

no
land

breeze
no

sea
breeze
we

check
our
pulse

THE FAMISHED TRAPPER

I set words out
as a trap

and sit back
and wait . . .

but there
is nothing to
trap as the world

is much too clever
for that. I'd

have to lie . . .

Joseph Salvatore Aversano

the poem
a moment
between
forms
still
a shadow
on the photo
under-
exposed

*

sharing
what remains
the twilight crows
ghostwriting
negative space

Rebecca Lilly

the shadow of my face a chalkboard

Victor Ortiz

the end
a snow
of hands

LeRoy Gorman

dawn breaks what I thought I knew of death

raspberries in a raven's beak the placenta expelled

more offspring close to extinction a star stitches the grief

Rowan Beckett Minor

stars and people
to the chatterbot
all the same stuff

PLIGHT

Few places are more utterly Octoberly
depressing than the makeshift nursery
set up in The Home Depot parking lot
where unsold shrubs and root-bound
fruit trees wait to die or else for some
hapless consumer to take pity on
this/their/our all-too-short life.

NOVEMBER MIDTERMS

neighbors on both sides
vote to cull
the nuisance bear

Peter Newton

after the seal's trick
the crowd slaps
their hands together

Seth Friedman

LIMITATIONS

we're lucky geese aren't more powerful
they'd kill us all

James Bussell

HUXLEY IN GAZA

All the witnesses
Were present
But no one able

To distinguish which ones
Were eyeless.

AMBIVALENT UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

Many the battles over
Common ground till

One finally approaches
A poem on its own terms –

Tattered white flag in one hand,
Fingers crossed in the other.

Vassilis Zambaras

Hope springs
then lurches
then spirals
then flails
then stills
then opens
one eye.

Now that robin's singing
we know what we've done
what we're made of
how far we have to go.

Caroline Clark

practice makes perfect sleet in six eight

Agnes Eva Savich

what music
becomes when
it is incomplete

Bob Heman

PERFECT

a wind is just
a wind, a thought
is just a thought –
dishes sit dirty
by the sink

Peter Jaeger

some
sunrises
beg
to be eaten
or
at least
stirred
into
the yogurt

Kit Kennedy

making room
for a counterweight
nightfall

muonw

Roland Packer

cottonwood seeds
a brief summary
of trust

David Watts

final mass
the deconsecration
of moonlight

family funeral
a vaguely familiar
hymns off-key

frontal-lobe
dementia
we step
inside the
snow-globe

Roberta Beary

how many acres of cloud
drift through one body

in a lifetime?

THE PROBLEM OF RESIDING IN TIME

Every place
is a palace

with one vowel
removed:

the little ‘ah’
of the a-ha

comes slowly
unglued.

Michael Bazzett

AFTERNOON

Jerked from a lake, the fish
writhes on dry ground –
not a muscular, largemouth bass
or slim, rainbow-striped trout
but a thick, bottom-feeding sucker
the length of your shoe on it.
We throw these back. It wriggles
slimy in your fingers, wiping a dust coat
off pus-colored scales, and there's
the barbed hook you'll twist out
the upper lip now meets and parts
with the lower repeating one word: Eloquence.

George Shelton

Zen corpse! Spew poison
into the duck pond and watch
how old frogs grow wings.

Walking from the train,
there's fresh puke in the stairwell,
sunrise on new leaves.

John Pazdziora

Hope is the perch
strewn with feathers

in the station rafters
you walk beneath

daily without
getting shat upon.

Philip Rowland

laundry day
wedging a memory
between colored socks

Sondra J. Byrnes

ALONE

Hanging up the laundry
in blistering August heat—
late afternoon and quiet.

Hang the T-shirt
and watch it lift
into the breeze.

And now the bark
of one dog, distant
and sounding bored

makes the afternoon
drop off further—

blue sky
and the moon
already there.

Gregory Dunne

BUFFALO STORY

Buffalo's a cold and dirty place.

No one knows who named it. There were
no buffalo, all hunts happened west
across the plains. *Beau fleuve*, one said,
shivering, staring out over that water,

praying for fish. If you say a name long enough,
you'll forget it means a thing. You won't remember
how you came to Nickel City, how you were born here,
like your name. It doesn't mean a thing, and if it does,

the meaning falls as wrong as snowfall in May.

OHIO, 1977

Aunt Cinda took her time, dying.

The oxygen mask gave her room a look of war.

My mother stubbed her cigarette before entering.

I touched Carter's seal. It was official: she'd lived

a century. My father tapped his foot:

Let's get this over with. Bouquets sent by friends

who were also dying. *Such a good boy*. I kissed

her talcum cheek; she seemed like a woman

of another country, where children are born old.

We were distant relatives, not expected to stay.

We were headed west, where no one lived

who shared our name.

Keith Ekiss

AFTER LIGHTNING

The train rolls past the house; the oak is a tuning fork to silence; the storm amplifies the song basket behind the eyes; the train announces itself before itself, a call from another stanza.

a rumble
in the rigging
the spider faces its molt

The slipstream turns the leaves of grass; day and night shall not cease; rocked tracks rattle any idea of dominion; a memory can be weather to a body, distilling it to cracks of sky.

thunder
planting acorns
in our spare and ample time

VIA NEGATIVA

The sand holds the previous day's heat like mouse guts hold mouse heart's heat; the sun splits open the ridge; let the trees on that mountain dance out their trapped souls: down in the valley we wake sifted and sorted, vessels daily baked clean.

on the wind
an empty bottle
for my thirst

Sabine Miller

ARS POETICA III

No longer am I the light torn from the trees.
No longer am I the stones of the water or the creek of the sky.
No longer am I the song of birdcloud.
No longer am I the fire inside the wood or the wood inside the stove.
No longer am I inside or out,
                or even the window.

DEAR OLDER SELF,

I notice you have become gray on the inside.
Your heart balding,
                your soul confined to a wheelchair.

The beautiful people of your imagination are walking past you to admire the
    ocean.
The ocean,
            which has always ignored you, is more itself now than ever.

Death is pushing his red scooter back and forth in front of your house.
You are standing in the window,
                coffee mug in hand.
He winks and starts doing wheelies on the sidewalk.
You raise your cup like a toast and drink.

Dean Rader

i listened to Elvis
on the way up
your driveway

we cried ourselves
to our knees
for good

i listened to Elvis
on the way down

Eddie Donoghue

re:
why people
don't

Nadejda Kostadinova

slutty camo
I practice
unconditional love

extended family
the swimming pool/ocean debate
grows salty

David Green

erasing father's tremor-trail solar eclipse

Sheikha A.

THROWN

spring evening
stepping off the train
into the smell of rain
father gone
a skimmed stone away

Philip Rowland

THE SUBWAY

My father in his muffled bed
home from working all night
underground. And I about
to go to school.

A big man. I was small.
There is so much sleep, his sleep
would say,
so much body to undergo.

a full length mirror
a pair of shoes
on the floor

a dried rose next to my bed
the history of
my insomnia

thunder –
the floor
scratched by a startled dog

first grade 70 years ago –
AI gives me the names
of all our bones

rain after long drought
the stones shining as
if they had roots

stars above the sea
a sperm whale dives through
an exultation of salt

Peter Yovu

one

sea

one

star

leg
ged

sea

one

leg
ged

sea

gull

leg
ged

da
wn

spin

es
of

le
av

es

sp
ok
e

up

and
go

ne

thr
ou
gh

stone
chimney

what's
left

of
the
song

from the
creek's
mouth

Scott Metz

Editor: Philip Rowland

Assistant Editor: Haruka Sophie Rowland

Cover photo: Victor Ortiz

Published by Noon Press, Tokyo

noonpoetry.com

ISSN 2188-2967