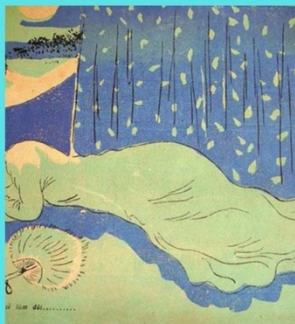
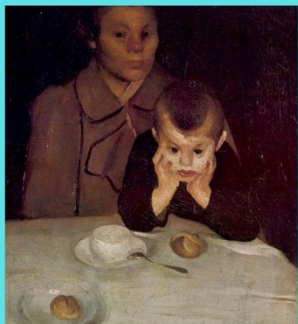
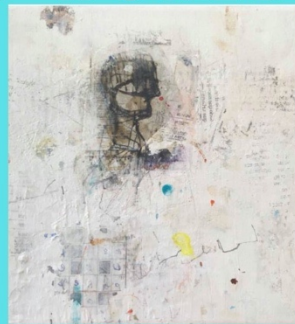


THE EKPHRASTIC WORLD



an anthology celebrating five years of
The Ekphrastic Review
edited by Lorette C. Luzajic

Thank-you to every single writer who has participated in the community and journal, *The Ekphrastic Review*. Just as important, we thank our faithful readers. There is no point without you.

The Ekphrastic Review is a very special project dedicated to art and writing and the place of their intersection. We believe that the contemplation of art makes us better writers. We believe writing is the best way to engage with art and learn its history and mysteries, and to share those discoveries with others.

This ebook is an invitation to join us at *The Ekphrastic Review*, to become part of what we do, to support the amazing writers in these pages and the other 1000 or so in our archive by reading their work. We invite you to browse the past five years and the next five, and to share the work that moves you with your peers, so that more people see the work that our writers have created. We invite you to participate in our challenges and projects, to try your hand at ekphrastic writing, or to blossom in your ekphrastic practice alongside us.

We also ask a small but big favour from you: will you share this ebook on your Facebook and Twitter, with your writing groups, in your newsletters? Will you send it to everyone you know who loves art, poetry, and writing? Let's make *The Ekphrastic Review* go viral, so that the incredible writers who make it what it is can have many more readers. THANK YOU.

Pass it on!

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

love, *The Ekphrastic Review*
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N.B. Readers can use the search function in the top right corner of the PDF to find a name, title, word, or phrase quickly.

to everyone who has been part of reading, writing, and dreaming *The Ekphrastic Review*,
with gratitude



Asking For a Friend, by Lorette C. Luzajic (Canada) 2018

Iterations

Hello, she says. Hello. I'm asking for a friend.

The way she says it adds ellipses [...] &
&. There's always more. Press send,
& she'll regret it. As when, menu in hand
she scans entrees, if this than not that [...],
but how to bear any left untried.

Hello? Hello? The connection isn't great—
like paddling through viscous space astride
a Styrofoam noodle. Hand to cheek she screams,
or cheek to stubbly jaw she coos. Hard
to pin down what she does—as in a dream's
elastic logic [...]. Hand pressed to her heart,
she radiates sincerity then retracts her vow—
vows are yesterday. Now is now.

Devon Balwit

hello friend – please be out there

let's begin at AB swap numbers
drink coffee watch TV together

then we'll change gears move on to CD
split bills wander neon streets at night

tell thousands of stories take photos
one day we'll reach PQ together

there'll be cryptic messages secrets
champagne and shiraz stains starlight glue

we'll discern each other's emotions
even when faces display nothing

we'll be multi-coloured carefree wild
full of favourite lyrics poetry

and let's see what happens together
where this will go if you're there hello

Helen Freeman

#friendship

In school she played alone
in spaces between playground games,
safer than mis-reading signs,
words slipping from poster walls.

Someone suggested a course online
to help with reading people.
She couldn't translate script on face,
mere ovals devoid of features.

She wore her frailty like a ghost.
One day while balancing bridges
a gust of wind caught numbers napping
and slipped the helpline in her hand.

It took courage to press buttons,
talk to voices hung in air
but it helped, the internet fitted
her anonymity. She sent requests,

we clicked in sync, seamlessly
and after exchanging text
felt #happy for the first time,
adding a smiley emoji.

As we touch across the table
she reads the story in my eyes.
We are wired, thoughts like stars
aligned in sparks of galaxies.

Kate Young

Asking for a Friend

What does it mean when you have that dream
you know the dream where you're in school
you forget you have a test you burst in
standing in front of the room naked

the blackboard is a puzzle a gaping gulf
your life in scraps of random fragments of
words and numbers adding up to nothing
paint and chalk scrawled and splotched

random stubs and ads images and signs of
hell- hello kitty sad comic scenes your parents
on the beach chalky sand erasures braking
distant galaxies of hazy stars and weeping

deep in that dream where nothing makes sense
where it's terrifying but you can't scream nothing
is real but somehow the truth is everywhere...

You know that dream? What does it mean?

You know that naked, fear and shame scene?
How might someone escape from this stream?
What happens to the swallowed screams?
I'm asking for a friend.

Linda Eve Diamond

On Asking For a Friend

Sometimes we'd rather just pretend.
We say we're "...asking for a friend"
while basking in sublimity
of social anonymity.

We torture truth by nervous ruse
of game we play, afraid to lose,
yet still transparent, where it's wrought,
as battle faced but never fought

until admitting who we are
in wish, perhaps upon a star,
for comfort of the healing voice
that, sensing our confronted choice...

...would have attentive ear to lend...
...and know we're asking for...
...a friend.

Portly Bard



Inclined Buddha Wall Painting at Weherahena, Matara, artist and date not known/Sri Lanka (photo by Mstyslav Chernov 2011 CC BY-SA 3.0)

Eternity and Impermanence

for Jamyang Khedrup

Have you forgotten already? There were fractals of fire spinning at the centre of the well. The dark could see you coming. Your crackling light. Well, I was prone to seeing things or maybe I could just see past the veil. You glowing something ancient. Saffron frock in a sarcophagus, eternal calm. Everyone gathered around you, wanting to touch your hem. I never doubted for a minute, even if I didn't believe.

Lorette C. Luzajic



Conversations With God, by Jan Matejko (Poland) 1873

Copernicus

*"How could earth hang suspended in the air were it not upheld
by God's hands?"*

John Calvin

*"If reality is the true dimension of things [how do we find]
doormats at the doors of perception..."*

The Uncollected Poems of Alberto Caeiro, Fernando Pessoa

Theories of stars danced in his mind,
conjugating his dreams with measurements

of the universe the way the eyes of a child
measures a parent or a medieval scientist

measures the discoveries of an Alchemist.
In reality his laboratory was on the ground floor,

the Cathedral in his background closer to heaven
than a wooden couch brought down from a hidden tower,

his instruments nearer an earth believed to be the centre
of the solar system. When light from the real stars

shined through a window they haloed a quadrant,
upside down in his sleeping hand and a triquetrum

falling away from its attachment to a shadowed wall,
its shape like that of a thin cross defining Aristotle's

idea of space -- *space (if you want to call it that)*
is merely the infinitesimally thin heavenly bodies divided

between complexity & ecstasy the "nest" arrangement
of nesting concentric spheres like a child's toy,

the Matryoshka, hand-painted Polish dolls; or a collection
of miniature planets combined to replicate celestial motion,

astronomical inventions studied by Copernicus,
outpourings from heaven juggled by human hands.

ii.

Jan Matejko woke to the sound of Cathedral bells.
He had made sketches in oil and pencil preparations

to finish *Astronomer Copernicus* for an anniversary
celebration of the astronomer's 400th birthday.

The painting, begun in a cramped studio in Krakow,
was near completion in a new space and when Matejko

was in that waking moment between night and dawn,
he was with Copernicus in a garden observatory the home

of the astronomer's childhood in Frombork; his sisters,
Katharina and Barbara were playing with Helena, Regina

and Beata (the artist's daughters) animating the Matryoshka.
How small they were the doll-figures and the little girls,

a vast sky surrounding their place in the universe.

And what was his? In his dream, the Matryoshka opened

to replicas of the planets "nesting" in the pseudo-
human figures and Matejko opened his eyes

to find himself looking at Copernicus. The learn'd astronomer
was bathed in light kneeling on the balcony of a tower.

His eyes, on the night sky, were astonished his dark hair
blown back from his face by a wind its velocity

invisible to anyone outside the canvas. His right hand,
raised in a gesture of greeting reached for something

visionary and epiphanic as if God's words
were tangible permission for Copernicus to explore

the stars... It is said to write a biography,
to understand a life and illustrate it with a painting,

an artist decides which details -- which objects --
best tell the story written with the artist's paint brush.

Matejko chooses books an open volume of Aristotle's
philosophy; and astronomical instruments. Beneath

a diagram of Copernicus's heliocentric theory (golden rings
radiating outward from the sun) there is another book,

its pages ruffled by that inexplicable wind a copy
of Copernicus's own translation from Greek to Latin

of 85 brief poems called *Epistles* letters passed
between characters like conversations offering advice

about how people should live their lives and how to love,
the poems arranged by subject (moral, pastoral & amorous)

that follow one another in a regular rotation of character's lives --
a rotation, it could be said that corresponds astrologically

to the astronomical movement of the planets -- a theory
that studies the nature of the Universe and one's place in it,

as if the pathway of the planets could be mobilized
by God's message energized by the astronomer's

new information about *heliocentricity* -- the central position
of the Sun. Before the observations of Copernicus,

the earth stood still for centuries in Christian doctrine,
the planets like land divisions in Christendom the earth

and its people created by God his word interpreted --
and controlled -- by the Church's inflexible authority.

Ecumenical voices questioned Copernicus who believed
existing explanations of the solar system could not explain

so many apparent inequalities in the heavens and certainly
not those on earth. It was a revolutionary theory,

and one that was dangerous: *how could certain people
extol such a crazy thing like that Polish astronomer*

who makes the earth move and the sun stand still...

In 1633 Galileo was convicted of grave suspicion of heresy

for following the position of Copernicus which was "contrary
to the true sense and authority of Holy Scripture." Matejko,

lost in his thoughts of Copernicus alone in a room
with his canvas knew his painting would be criticized,

historic reality shifted to a romantic vision. The tower
where he'd painted Copernicus transformed by the ecstasy

of discovery was imaginary; the astronomer's hidden tower
had never been found. During those days he painted Copernicus,

there had been hours when dark clouds crowded the sky,
nights when the stars were pale reassurance

before the Cathedral bells tried to awaken him
from images sweetened by his wife, his children,

and what it meant to paint an astronomer conversing with God.
In his dream, that morning his daughters had been playing

with *lalki do zabawy* dolls who seemed to have planets
the size of glass marbles hidden in their hand-carved bellies

as if the solar system -- the earth and sun and moon -- could be renewed
in spite of Ingoli's anger and Calvin's condemnation of Copernicus

(*wise governments ought to repress impudence of mind!*) Matejko's
eyes, like those of Copernicus, had opened, surprised as the sun

split open the dark heavens a moment when the artist
understood the dreams of the astronomer

who had come, transfigured,
to the doorway of perception.

Laurie Newendorp

Convers—ions

Tonight is recycling night
so I roll the bin to the curb
and it's good I remembered—
there's no more room for empty things.
Its hollow wheels make a sound
like thunder two or three towns away,
so not very loud, but enough
to rouse a child from the dull
Thursday of sleep.

I'd drive my first car
to the school after sundown,
set up the telescope and sit
for hours in the alien, red dirt
looking for the eidos of it,
or a floating wisp of something
inviolable. I still scan the sky,
for Jupiter, some nights.

I look for the brightest point
of light and sometimes—I stop
in the doorway
to stare a while at the bright dot,
twinkling and wanting me
to remember. My hand
on the jamb of the door.
I think I must look like this man
startled by God or the moon, and then
I remember—again—
that planets don't twinkle
and I've nothing to say.

Brian A. Salmons

Beer & These Lines

for Lajwanti (a.k.a. Heena, Bindi Wali)

God has a brown voice, as soft and full as beer.

—Anne Sexton

I Said (taking the last sip from the 2nd can):

I think she is gone.

(Your love is fading

I can feel your love fading

Woman it's fading away from me ...

—"I'm Losing You" by *Faces*

continues to play in the background.)

He Said (on the other side of the line):

Maybe you should hold on for a few more ^{days/}nights.

Maybe she needs some more space.

I Said (opening the 3rd can of Carlsberg):

No. I think She is Gone!

~

We came in too fast & too furious.

And we collided head-on!

It has taken my neurons three cans of beer

to come to their senses;

& I came up with these lines.

Well, it's time to pop open the 4th one!—

What can/will happen?

We will have a few exchanges

—some harsh words, some sweet words—

& will be back on the track!

~

It's time to change the track, too, I suppose.

... Here I am, on the road again,
Here I am, up on the stage ...
There I go, turn the page ...
—“Turn the Page” by *Bob Seger*,
now playing in the background.

Saad Ali

Conversations with God

The ancient Greeks observed the heavens and thought
the centre of the cosmos was the earth.
But other minds and other musings brought
a new perspective to the universe.

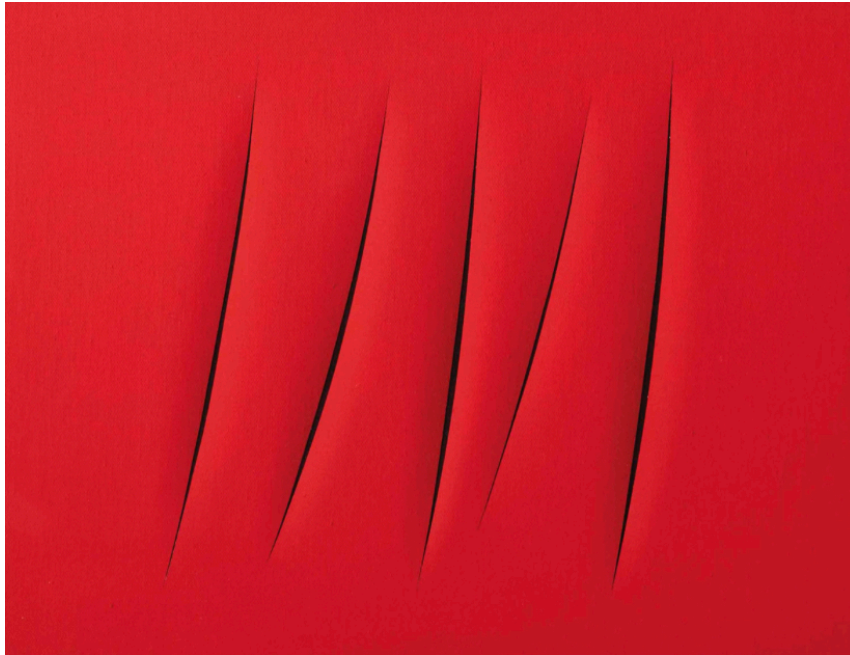
Copernicus had an epiphany
one night as he was gazing at the sky.
His searching brought a new discovery;
'twas something he would need to verify.

He knew the theologians might complain;
a geocentric universe made sense.
Was not mankind decreed by God to reign?
Genesis Day Six was their defense.

But conversations with the Deity,
and astronomical new calculations
revealed a heliocentric monarchy,
that should receive, instead, their commendation.

For if the earth and all planets revolve
around the sun God made to rule the day,
does not this cause all doubts to be resolved?
It's the risen Son, not man, who lights the way.

Sharon Fish Mooney



Spatial Concept, Waiting, by Lucio Fontana (Italy, b. Argentina) 1963

Wait

The realization that this violent red came up in me, that it had put
itself out there, against a peaceful blue

hidden underneath my skin I thought, but once the disconnection
came up, this unsafety, the red escaped

and in an instant, alien became less distant, fluid in my daily
countenance. How I've always assumed you

were the rock and I the water, how it turned out to be all the same.
Me fully capable of standing on stones

in the fluidity of waves, in this distractive creative life. And even while I
peak over the cliff edge, with the wind

in my face, drawn into depth & distance - I know the cracks of then
and the hills of now will become a passage

a progress through the fragments I breathe, for the joy I feel. You
went along with a trust to my inner world while

you wouldn't anyway. So I decided to wend my place, a furnishing to
dream up and survive nonetheless. Once

your heart has jumped out of your body, the rivers & tides will
smooth over. Structured daydreaming will bring

out the bright, fresh morning I need to scare off the ghosts of my lost
night, a subverted realism to coast through

a clear consciousness over some guilt and uneasy providence. What's
done, is done. True. One can wait for that.

Kate Copeland

Leaning In

Leaning down and in
to approximate you.
How close can my face become?
I do not ask that
you wake up. That story
is never ending.
Still, as if to kiss your lids,
I purse my lips.

Alan Bern

Waiting

I dress like an extrovert –
red silk my smooth second skin. Love
its illusion of power, wealth,
all the confidence I lack.
But I feel the rip –
deep, hidden clawing
from the inside out.

My therapist nods.

Waits.

The silence swallows me.

*Go on. Name your demon.
What are you doing about it?
Why have you taken so long?*

Waits.

*Do you think you're the only one
living in fear? No one is born
with self-understanding.*

I shiver.

*Don't you know that waiting
is the worst thing you can do?*

Alarie Tennille



Holy St. Adolf Tower, by Adolf Wolfli (Switzerland) 1919

Triolet for Adolf Wolfli, Drawing

How the mind works is a complex thing
as it draws out memories from your life.
You spirit birds, crosses, masks, a king.
How the mind twists is a complex thing.
You pencil patterns but child crimes cling.
Did your dad hurt you, waving his knife?
How the mind creates is a complex thing
as it cuts out memories from your life.

Dorothy Burrows

Fortress

No idle scribble
my art is dangerous and wise
as the secret words
and lines of power
drawn by any mage
to call up demons
and keep them safe in place.
As Dante and the prophets knew
there must be some order
even in hell,
the devils of confusion and desire
come in ranks and orders
like unfallen angels
from the worlds of light.
They still remember,
still yearn towards freedom,
eager to break through
all my walls and inhibitions
to dance naked and on fire
burning the world down
to ash and salt
in these rooms of my
bare confinement
where I draw them
again and again,
slotted into the walls and arches
of an imagined fortress
each defiant mocking face
leering back at me,
its powers of disruption,
its howls of pain and fury
muted and contained
keeping me here
not sane, but orderly enough
to live in chains.

Mary McCarthy



Raven and Whale, by Chief Nakapankam, Mungo Martin (Canada) 1960

Hunters

The bird rides
the wise whale
feeling the wind from
the whale's back
sensing the hunted ahead of them
watching the sun warm
their faces

Amy Phimister

Raven and Whale

After the sea and land were created, Raven took to the air to see them for the first time. He started with the mountains, climbing their updrafts, rising above their peaks, looking out over their snowy highlands and the green valleys between them. Weaving in and out of their peaks, Raven shadowed the foothills, following their contour, watching their changing hues, finding the flatlands, rising over the eskers, descending through the hollows, returning in one final ascent to the mountain tops.

In one direction he saw land that spanned as far as he could see. The mountains were capped with snow and the valleys below were lined with green trees and flowers of many colours. In another direction the sea lay before him. He changed direction and flew over it. The mountains and the trees grew smaller behind him.

At first, he grew bored with the sea. It was vast and blue but, unlike the mountains, it never changed. Or, at least, it never seemed to.

Raven saw Whale coming to the surface of the sea, his breath forming a cloud above him. Raven descended to investigate.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“I am Whale,” he said.

“Where have you come from?”

“From down here.”

“What's down there?”

“A whole world,” said Whale. “There is more to see down here than in the air above.”

“How can I see this place?”

“You can't,” said Whale. “If you do come down here, you'll die.”

Saddened, Raven took to the air again. But this time the land looked different. There was a horizon beyond which he could not see, and the world seemed smaller. The whale came to the surface again and again Raven came down from the sky.

“What can I do for you?” said Whale.

“Tell me what the sea is like.”

“I can't tell you,” said the whale. “But I can show you.”

And Whale blew a cloud of sea mist into the air. Raven flew through it and, for a moment, he could feel the vast ocean below him and the whale could see the wide blue sky above him.

“The world down here is not for you to know,” said Whale, “just as the world up there is not for me to know. But thank you for coming down and showing me a bit of your world.”

“Likewise,” said Raven.

And Raven took to the air again. The higher he flew the more the horizon crept toward him. He flew around the perimeter of the mountains and far out to sea. He circled the universe until he had seen all he could. Then he returned to the valley where he started and told the others what he had seen.

Paul Holler



Adoration of the Virgin Saint, by Hector Hyppolite (Haiti) 1930s or 1940s?

Waiting For Kate Bush

Her arms stretched out is
how she came back on stage
unparalleled us dancing around
her voice runs up the heights
beyond the clouds, beyond
cloudbusting she sings
of making rain to me
the sun coming out, it's coming -
promises, wishes, sexy, heaven
This voice, face, her waves
a self-drivenness so not sold
pure to her followers
a freedom so Dreaming of
jigs, dress, hills, kings
She's on my record player

like my true spirit
She's at my hair dresser's
like my true example
A comfort to this girl
who adores singing in the
shower, dancing in the attic
A saint to this girl
who still learns to curl
around her own heartbeat

Kate Copeland



Resting, by Antonio Mancini (Italy) 1887

Resting

Lying naked in Rome, Cecily considered her mother's words. She had undoubtedly been trying to warn her days before the wedding. As she had picked over her salmon in the breakfast room, her Mama had spluttered something about a woman's duty being to satisfy her husband's needs. Cecily had been about to query whether she meant the necessity for a good wife to present her husband with a son and heir when the entrance of their new maid, with yet more rosebuds from Roland, had brought the conversation to an abrupt ending.

And here Cecily lay, a married woman of six months' standing, wondering how much longer she would have to bear the weight and pain of her husband's nightly exercise. Granted, the ordeal itself was usually swift though in recent days the torment had increased in length and an unpleasant soreness had lingered. This morning she felt decidedly out of sorts. Her head throbbed; her body ached. How unfair it all was! Surely, Roland must soon grow tired of his exertions? He was, after all, middle-aged and his heart might soon be strained. She hoped that she would be with child before long so that he might desist. The discomfort of the act was most troubling, and had she not done her utmost to oblige? Every evening, as Roland had instructed, she had removed her undergarments, performed her ablutions with great care and left her nightdress neatly folded in the bedside drawer. With her eyes tightly closed, she had lain there listening to the dull squeak of bedsprings, waiting for her husband's violent

gasp before he rolled off, sighed, snorted, snored. Only then could she take a sip or two of her doctor's tincture, curl up and sleep.

This morning, she took solace in the fact that Roland had left the hotel early. He wished to telegraph his office, make a withdrawal at the bank before meeting with some lord or other at a café near the Spanish Steps. She had not demurred: if truth were to be told she had been delighted at the prospect of an hour entirely to herself.

If only she could stir her lethargic body, she might have time for tea, toast and sketching! Her drawing tutor, Madame Cartier, had urged her to persist with her studies of perspective for Cecily was not without artistic talent. The view of rooftops and the Pantheon from her window would give her a splendid opportunity to focus on line. But the delights of watercolour, sketching and Madame Cartier's art class seemed a lifetime ago: she had her duties as a housewife to consider now and those obligations seemed to become more burdensome by the hour. She knew she must not become anxious again and overexert herself: Roland had secured an invitation to a ball at a grand villa this evening. Some princess or other, no doubt! She must look radiant for Roland's sake. Cecily sighed. If only her head would stop pounding, she might ring for her maid to prepare her bath and her wardrobe and order breakfast. But first, she must sleep a little longer for she felt such great weariness of body and spirit.

Cecily propped herself up against the pillow, reached over and fumbled for her half-empty bottle of laudanum, willing herself to fall into oblivion for at least another few hours.

Dorothy Burrows



The Blue Angel, by Ahmed Cherkaoui (Morocco) 1965

The Blue Angel

On Saturday night, I was sleepless and emotional at 11:30 pm. I stood over the kitchen sink shoving scoops of cherry pie into my mouth with my fingers because the slender fork wasn't hacking it. That amount of pie at that late hour was the equivalent of putting a lit stick of dynamite into my digestive tract. I slept little, and when I did sleep, it was the troubled kind. I dreamed of my older brother. A bad person had tricked him with kindness and taken his generous help only to leave him on his back on the ground with a gash in his belly. I bent over him crying with my hands on him, trying to stop the bleeding. I woke and waited up to see the dawn. After a worried call from my mother, who said my brother always called on Sundays and hadn't called, I called the VA hospital and learned he was there, in alcohol detox. Again. Alive and cared for.

My brother lives in the desert city of Tucson where boundless blue sky looks down on the earthbound. Why feeling blue means being sad when the colour is shared with sea and sky and the colour of his eyes, I'll never know. Who cares for the living between heaven and earth? I wish an angel would swallow him up, filling him with love, happiness, and healing light. I wish we all knew for certain that we are light.

Marjorie Robertson

The Blue Angel

I've never told anyone
about the visitations.
The whole thing sounds crazy
even to me.

Do you ever see amoebas
of bright-coloured light
swimming under your eye
lids? Phosphenes.
They come to me
just before sleep
and during acupuncture.

Recently the vision changed.
Now the light show fills
my visual field – animated
stained glass – all that Chartres
blue!

You see that painting –
more like comical extraterrestrials
with multiple eyes. No Michelangelo.

So how did this painter
from Morocco sense the sublime,
understand an angel was present?

Like me, he must feel the peace,
the vibrations – almost like music,
but heard through the eyes.

Alarie Tennille

Faith and the Blue Angel

Faith demands no faces—so, blue
speaks instead—
blue, hue of tranquility, of peace
becomes an angel whose mission
speaks in other shapes and colours:
Soft ovals surround to protect
life; wings, a hole in its
eyes, are a dot promising peace
as long as the green of faith prevails.

“I will watch over you,” the painting says
“Protect you from the strands of red,
from all evil.”

Yellow marks the length of protection
as until the end of days.
The painting speaks to me:

“Hang me above your bed.
I will be your guardian,
keep you safe and peaceful.
I am your blue angel.”

Joan Leotta

Morning Glory Blue

Bright blue morning glories twined in complicated patterns around the strings Mom tied. She figured flowers could camouflage anything, even the ugly metal garbage cans behind our house. There was something about the petals' pure blue geometry. On cool summer mornings, I would traipse out the back door of our 1951 balloon-framed house. Light as a feather, my house, with all its vertical studs hammered with nails from sill to rafters. *Trustworthy.*

The flowers unfolded slowly like pages of a small, precious book—only if I got to the garbage cans before the warm sun hit their made-to-last galvanized metal. My flowers hid from the sun, opened in darkness, like a blue angel's wings. I crept up to them so as not to startle the tender green leaves. I swear those flowers leaned towards me like they had a secret to share, as if the tendrils would coil around my tiny shoulders to hug me.

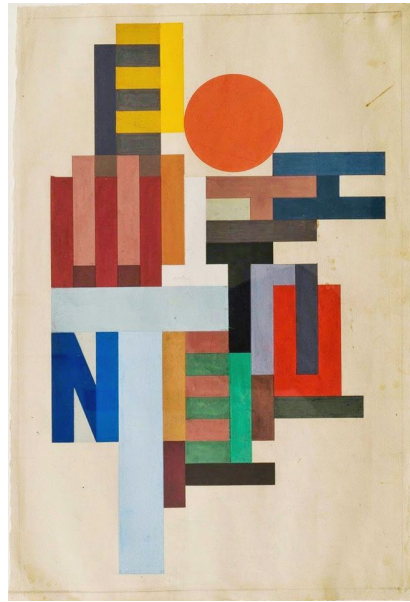
If the day was overcast, the blue would last longer. Hot days—my glories closed before I could slip out to greet them. I worshipped those heavenly-blue morning glories. They gave me a sky-blue hope, a hug, a secret Mom had no time to whisper.

Last night I dreamt about Mother. She was still alive, sitting on a couch in a dark room. But the lack of sun had not closed her. She looked exactly as she did just before she died—wrinkles, alert eyes, arthritic hands. I felt as if she had always been there on the couch, in the dark, just within reach, waiting for me to notice her.

I looked one more time into her blue eyes. She was in no hurry now. She had no house to clean, no students to teach, no children to raise.

She leaned towards me, opening to the day.

Sandra Frye



Composition with Capital Letters, by Vasylye Yermilov (Ukraine) 1915

Recomposition with Capital Letters

UNTIE
THE [br]OkEN
HI[dd]EN T[r]UTH

capITaLlZE
THOU
capITaL EyEs
ON Us as ONE
UNITEd

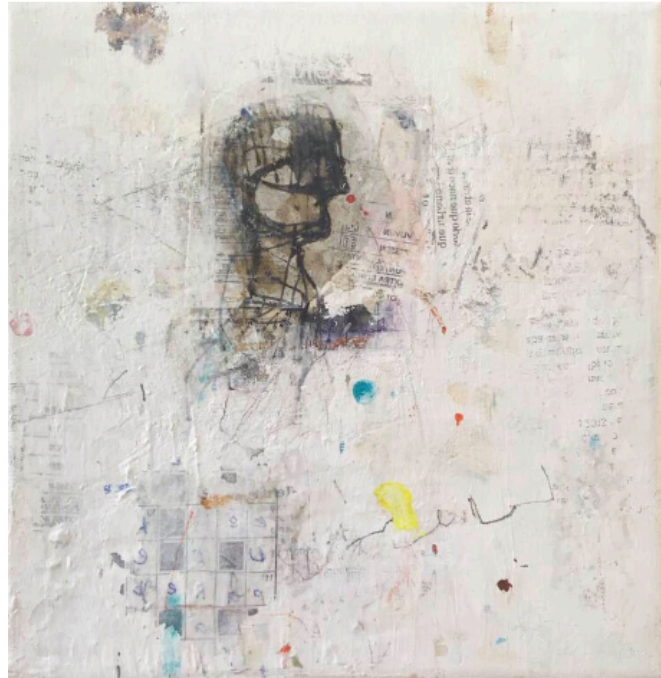
fINd EONs Of HIdden
LOvE UNdEr THE O
sO bEaUTIFUL
OraNgE MOON.

Linda Eve Diamond

WOBBLY TEETH WHITENING GONE WRONG

IIFTTT	ONNFUF
NUIEE	OOINI
NNEE	TNFN
TTH	EII
HE	TT
E	E

Helen Freeman



Somebody Looking At Us, by Ali Rashid (Netherlands, b. Iraq) 2020

My Wife Practices a Psychotherapy on Me Using the “Dissociative Experiences Scale”

“What percent of the time, by intervals of ten, do you feel you’re standing next to yourself, seeing yourself as another person?” asks the seventh of twenty-eight hypothetical manifestations.

*As in that masked head of the alien
conjured by galactic metaphysics
like an optical reincarnation
emerging from a thinly white-washed wall
of haphazard placards? “Eighty? Ninety?”*

D. R. James

A Poem Without Punctuation

for Nikolaos, George, Leonidas & Pats

this is a poem without punctuation but just not that it is also a poem without any regard for capital letters it has no particular theme or a subject it is not about any particular person or a place or a thing it is more an offspring of an idea of having a ball with words and sentences without any periods and pauses and line breaks but the very idea or the rule if you like of punctuation qualifies as a theme or a subject no i wonder though if they have invented a genre for such a composition in literature i do know of a few instances though where such a practice has been observed admittedly though in the midst of this composition i ended up deviating from the original objective and inserting mostly periods commas semicolons hyphens many times by force of habit no as a consequence of conditioning more like and admittedly even composing these few lines without any regard for punctuation has been arduous i wonder though if all the history books holy books science books poetry books and what have you were written without any punctuation i wonder though if the punctuation were not invented in the first place i wonder though if the language itself were not invented in the first place i wonder though if the page didnt have any margins i wonder though if such a page has even ever existed i wonder though if poems were composed in a single continuous line vertically or horizontally or diagonally or as a combination of three or other combinations i wonder though if such a poem has been composed ever i wonder though if i would be able to compose such a poem ever well at the onset of this composition i thought i was going to be rather successful with keeping this poem theme proof but look how many themes have popped up already and i am certain the more i continue here the more themes will keep emerging so i think i should leave it now until the sequel and maybe i should seriously consider putting together an anthology with poems without punctuation but hold on as i was about to close this case another intriguing thought occurred in my thalamus how do the sentences without spaces between the words look like maybe something like this

senceswithoutspacesbetweenthewordslooklikethis interesting admittedly this is seriously addictive let me try a few more thequickbrownfoxjumpsoverthelazydog interesting onethingonlyiknowandthatisiknownothing fabulous now what if i rewrite this entire poem without any spaces between the words i wonder though how many have thought or are thinking along these lines alright i think i need to stop by the way only if these lines were not bound by the borders of this page this poem would qualify as a single continuous sentence

Saad Ali

Fugitive

The scribbles had become embedded, suspended out of sight on the back pages of the discarded journal. Underneath, faint markings traced the original text. The lines pulled at the pieces, trying to uncover the secrets, unpuzzle what was hidden from view. The whole area looked torn, dimensionless, the corners accidentally tossed and left in layers to decay. The edges blurred.

The Watcher focused his magnified eye on everything with a dispassionate curiosity. His gaze was inscribed on the unseen shadows, a laser of inquiry that wove through all available light. He reversed and unparalleled the layers, isolating each one at its source. Aware of the implications of his choices, his head remained still. The Others could not hear the voices that offered to reveal the deeper meanings of the markings for a price.

Who would suspect him? He did not pretend to belong anywhere. He casually looked for the right time.

Somebody waits.
It looks accidental.
Who is the us?

The ordinary
is always strange.

Kerfe Roig

Refugee in a Dutch Class

The man is wary as he risks a furtive glance.
He knows someone is looking at him, at
his countrymen. He lived this way back home
for so long it's a struggle to make meaning
of the white noise around him. Scribbled
and type-set words screened back, a mixture
of Arabic and Roman script. Dark outline
of head and neck, a hint of shoulders
and arms. He hasn't yet taken form
in this country, in its guttural language.
An Iraqi in exile, a man with deep
opinions and fierce beliefs. He hungers
for words and ears to hear them. In this pale land
of strange, blond giants, he's looking for his voice.

Sandi Stromberg



Washerwomen, by Kristin Jónsdóttir (Iceland) 1931

No Longer Thralls In '31

at late morning circa ten
they would congregate together
marching rough ground
like a squad of Víkingasveitin

off to geothermals
steaming, screaming, pungent
clothes baskets in their arms
attire rolled high to elbows

with headscarves, aprons
noses immune to stench
backs broken by their labours
week after week
just like their mothers
and their mothers too

for on this small Ísland
tradition much valued
though no longer thralls
their subservience required

to brave menfolk on boats
fighting waves and isolation
chasing cod, herring
and demersal reds on sea beds

yet in dark skies overhead
a Graf Zeppelin purrs
en route from Friedrichshafen
carrying mail from a Reich
in disarray, in turmoil
on a point of no return

yet by noon they have finished
ablution chores complete
off to their washing lines
for drying in Arctic breeze

by late afternoon circa four
they would congregate in kitchens
slaving over plokkfiskur
like a squad of kokkar, unpaid

Alun Robert

Vikingasveitin: Icelandic military

Ísland: Iceland

Graf Zeppelin carried mail from Friedrichshafen to Reykjavik in late June 1931

plokkfiskur: traditional Icelandic fish stew

kokkar: Icelandic for cooks

Strange Fire

Four fit Icelandic women
at nature's hot springs doing
what they do in a man's world.
A simple clothes-washing ritual made
as glorious as the dawn's alpenglow
by each other's presence, a simple work
from which come materials
for other worlds where Talent dictates
tasks and Imagination decrees duties.

Here, across the seas, our mothers, too, rising
early, fighting the cold, to draw water
from the creek, boiling, beating, blueing,
rinsing, squeezing, finally stringing
shirts and frocks, trousers and socks,
to dry on bushes and trees
or on lines stretched from post to post
in backyards and alleyways.
Like their sisters in faraway lands,
they fashion art with every beat
of the battling stick, pounding
away blemishes and wringing out
watery excesses, certain their work
to be judged by competitors, evaluated
by critics. With the stick's final flourish,
the women smile their shared secrets – masterpieces
sometimes come from everyday experiences,
and fire sparks fire when nurtured.

Jo Taylor



Apangai, Initiation Place (New Guinea) 1984. Photo credit: Ease/Public Domain 2009

In Search of Apangai and the Transformative Power of Paint

“[There’s] the fact that reality is our creation, and that we invent the places we see as much as we do the books that we read. What we find outside ourselves has to be inside ourselves for us to find it.” Why We Travel, Pico Iyer

My first fingersteps in search of Apangai are into the cyber jungle of Google, the modern holder of answers for amateur, housebound anthropologists. Is it the name of a tribe? A place? A religion? A language? And why does “Apangai cannibalism” come up every time I search? For whom is this an initiation place? A transition to what new phase of life?

I find almost nothing in this rain forest of words. Then, I happen onto four backpackers adventuring into one of this planet’s remaining frontiers—the Sepik River of Papua New Guinea. Here live tribes whose cultures and 250 different languages reflect centuries of life along one of the world’s longest and most unpolluted rivers.

I join digital forces with the adventurers in Wewak on the northern shore of this island nation. To their good fortune, they have been adopted by a guide who makes sure they buy groceries, gasoline, and machetes. The Sepik region is lawless, he tells them, “if you have machete no one bothers you, if you don’t, well...”

From Wewak, we bounce over deep potholes through the mountains to Maprik, where “manicured forests grow wild like a scene from the prehistoric era,” writes Stephen Gollan in *Uncharted Backpacker*. “The region is not for the faint of heart, it is a raw, lawless, tribal land that explorers dream of.... As the sun begins to set you can almost hear the beat of the tribal drums along the river.”

Eurekas #1 and #2

A few kilometers outside Maprik, I have my first Eureka. Apangai is a village. Towering over it is the spirit house, Haus Tambaran. Not one nail is found in this structure, built on a triangular plot and held together with vines and liana ropes. The façade is brightly painted with big faces associated with ngwalndu spirits, who are thought to influence the life of men, plants, and animals and accompany them into death.

Inside is the second Eureka. The place of initiation with its assortment of costumes, statues, and masks all heavily painted in vibrant colours. In front, I see the clan founder Tappoka. Behind him, female jungle-ghosts, clan-ancestors, and mythical ancestors like the creator of the yam-tuber.

“Delve deeper into the house and you will crawl into a room dedicated to the local god,” Gollan shares. “He stands six feet tall with his palms stretching forward. His eyes and face are brightly coloured and surrounded by shell jewelry.”

Eureka #3

Mention of the yam-tuber’s mythical creator brings my third Eureka—the tribal name of the people of Apangai—the Abelam. Like an abracadabra, it opens the door to Google’s secret hiding places. A pleased anthropologist, I begin to find descriptions of customs, ceremonies, arts, money, and religious beliefs.

My backpackers move on up the river, but I stay behind to discover more about the festival, its significance, and the initiations. First, to set the record straight, the Abelam people are not cannibals. They are a farming society, a yam cult that grows two kinds of these tubers:

one, ka (jaambe), for daily food, the other, waapi, gigantic yams that have symbolic and ritual significance.

Cultivation of large yams, some up to three and four meters long, determines the status of a man. And only men—no women or uninitiated boys—are allowed in the ceremonial gardens. For the Abelam, waapi are viewed as ritual “child procreation.” Special ceremonies are performed during growth to ensure that their spirits remain tranquil. Fighting and sexual activity are absolutely taboo.

Eureka #4

The secrets of the Abelam religion are carried out in several stages. Inside the spirit house, elaborate compositions of carved, painted, and plaited figures are composed and then decorated with shell rings, feathers, flowers, and leaves.

The first initiations take place when a boy is five or six years old and the last between the ages of thirty and fifty. Each one acquaints them with a category of spiritual being from the least important to the last secret beyond which there is only a boundless void.

During each ceremony, no explanations are given. It is in the showing that secrets and meaning are revealed. Paramount in preparation is the ritual painting of the body. As paint transforms wood carvings into the magical instruments found in the spirit house, men are transformed into beings from another world.

Searching for Apangai found me spinning the globe to focus my lens on a different perspective of life. Yet, as I emerge from Google’s dense rain forest, I’m reminded of the words of Sir Thomas Browne, polymath and author, “We carry within us the wonders we seek without us.”

Sandi Stromberg



Pink Café, by Fikret Mualla (Turkey) 1958

Pandemic Pink

Everyone was blue and all we could do
was paint everything pink—

skyline, bistros, bar and all the bottles,
but there was no way to brighten up

or smooth over the depths of loss,
longing, confusion and fear.

As routines slowly returned, we dressed up
and went out into the pink-washed world

though we kept a measured distance and
no one looked to see the red moon shining

or thought of dancing anymore, not like this,
across aching chasms, with our hopes so fragile.

We kept from crying but no one spoke
not even to the lost angel at the bar.

Linda Eve Diamond

Bellyache

(a Triolet)

He loved to eat at Pink Café
famous for fruit tarts and pastry
brought money with him every day
he loved to eat at Pink Café
today he got a bellyache
raspberry sodas, ice cream parfait
he loved to eat at Pink Café
famous for fruit tarts and pastry

Julie A. Dickson

In the Pink

Here in the pink café
acceptable delinquency
 is a thing.

The awnings yawn out,
the tables clatter out,
 every spring.

Deliberate drownings of sorrows
occasionally
 occur.

The lonely woman
hogs the bar
 in her coat of fur.

A blotchy, dandy gentleman
and a waistcoat-sporting barman
 watch the door.

A smiling singer
shuffles across
 the polished floor.

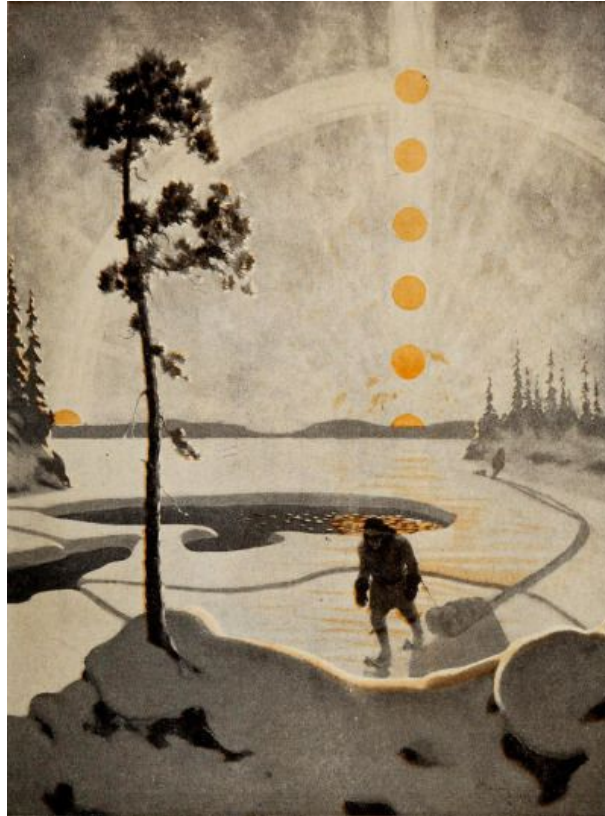
The city juts and closes
in on the active day.
 But in here
the colours are bright and good
and so is the wine
 and so is the beer.

Michael Caines

The Pink Cafe

I didn't know what you were talking about, but you kept talking anyways. That's how you were, yappy and persistent. You had to get it out. I could have been more patient, if you'd shown some restraint. I was restless while you hung your heart out to dry, stifled some yawns, snuck a peek at my phone to see if anyone else was looking for me. Still, I stayed, and no one else did. I tell myself that counts for something when I turn everything over in my head about that night.

Lorette C. Luzajic



Postmen of the Wilderness, by Arthur Heming (Canada) 1921

Deliverance

The intentional cuts in the ice
create shapes in the water
that catch the reflection of the sun rising
in seven perfect golden balls a week.

The magical light of the north
glows on the barren rink
where the postmen of the wilderness
trudge through packed snow.

Dragging swollen bags of mail
and sometimes carcasses of whales
they leave no footprints
only tracks of their sacks.

Near trees that grow impossibly
in this frozen landscape
the lead carrier crosses over
he is no longer stoic.

The patch of ice beneath him
gives way like a glacier
to the depths of the sea
where he drowns with the lives of others
in letters written on paper.

Tanya Adèle Koehnke



Mother and Child, by Josip Račić (Croatia) 1908

In Quint, Curious Croatia Of Late Summer 1908

Now is that time
for intense contemplation.
The hurt, the pain; gone. As

I look back to Agram,
to childhood at Samostanska ulica
then to Iveković mentoring
onto München and Berlin
in pursuit of self-awareness
of artistic integrity
in the realms of human spirituality
dark, strong. Yet

memories run deep, vivid,
of Mother and adolescent me
together at the table

engulfed with a torment
that grows, does not recede. For
I encapsulated our trauma
while melancholy remained. Our
torment on canvas,
pure painting of the soul. Though

in the boulevards of Paris
in my loneliness of existence
I carried a gun
I carried a soul full of shame.

Alun Robert

*Josip Račić: Croatian artist (1885-1908) committed suicide from gunshot in Paris
“In Quaint, Curious Croatia”- title of National Geographic 1908 article by Felix J. Koch
Agram: now Zagreb
Samostanska ulica: Monastery street in Zagreb
Oton Iveković (1869-1939): Croatian painter of repute*



The Vale of Rest, by John Everett Millais (England) 1858

Last Evensong

Let there be

a striking sunset
with damson streaks
suffusing light over
a slate roof.

Nearby, lilac
cumuli that drift
above a quaint
belltower.

Poplars, cedars,
sycamores swaying
in a slight
summer breeze.

An old yew hedge,
clipped and rounded;
the fragrance of
budding peonies.

Sprinklings of
leaves, moss, earth
as fingers
lose grip.

Newly delved loam;
fertile, clumped, ready
to blanket
these bones.

Hallucinations
of angels, here to
tend to me
at the end.

When sound fades,
let bright charms of
goldfinches
roost, chirp, sing.

Dorothy Burrows

Life Always Does

I might want to be anything here—the bit of sky between bell and belltower, or even the dirt being shoveled out of that grave.

But to be the object you're beholding, the one your eyes settle on...no, anything but that. And it is because I'm not the one who took the vows—you are.

I'm not the one who owes anyone anything, not the truth, not my time, nothing. I've spent all my life making sure I didn't have to owe anyone anything.

Some might say I've made my life the sum total of nothing because of this. But it's always been important I be able to speak without feeling indebted to anyone for any reason.

So I don't owe your God my loyalty, my chastity. I'm chaste enough as it is—now go ahead and ask how this could be when I'm a man able to do anything with any woman who wants me.

It's because I can't just fall into bed with someone I don't know, someone who doesn't give a fuck if I live or die, someone who refuses to know me in return for my own attempts at getting to know her.

Part of you seems like you understand, but another part wants me to be different, I think. Maybe you'd like it if I were more aggressive, if I didn't take no for an answer. If I insisted you be my friend so things could spiral out of control and you could blame it on this instead of realizing chastity wasn't meant for everyone.

That it wasn't meant for anyone.

The one you're digging a grave for—he can be chaste, she can be chaste in their bit of silent earth.

But us? And there should be an "us"—I'll walk over to you and prove it. I'll approach you and when I get closer, you'll turn back to that grave as I read your mind.

Right now you are thinking you'd like it if I struck up a conversation with you, if I asked to speak privately with you about this or that concernment related to religion for the sake of your charge there digging the grave.

But when we were alone, I would tell you to say whatever you wanted, that I would understand and let you speak, that I would understand and be there with you the whole time as you laboured to explain how difficult this life is. How impossible and unfair it is.

But we both know it's something you chose. This is not temptation—it's only a truth, the beginning of it, the start of a whole new life that begins in words, but requires flesh to be made real. Life always does, you know?

Garth Ferrante



Unbreakable, by Moses Salihou (Canada, b. Cameroon) 2019

Walking Home

And I always walk this city
in my dreams. Hot feet, cold nose.
Drawing from corner to street lamp,
each space between.

Every layer of linen drying,
of aerials, of blank window stares,
builds the noise to my truth.

This city, that I've walked for years, flows into
the just baked smell of home,
as my feet twitch beneath the sheets.

Marcelle Newbold

Yellow on Grey

my feet stand
on concrete slab
shaped by the rapid
turn and hum
of progress

*furls of light
dapples of laughter
curl in electric sky
like a fan
in broken motion*

I do not notice Change
as she wheedles in
between wall and shard
clumsy thumbs
in the unearth of time

*a whisper of crocus
rises with greening
slender fingers
impossibly thin
poke through cracks*

city implodes
I stand immobile
toes of bronze
trapped in the whirr
of wheel and steel

*origami birds
like paper-ghosts
wing their poems
in soft symphony
of leaf-fall*

streets vacate
billboards slide
from vacant stores
wooden smiles pinned
on naked faces

*a flight of blossom
wafts its hue
lip-infused
like lung-swell
on flushed skin*

Kate Young

**Not-Still Life with Columns,
Balconies, and Gossamer**

A shrug from the universe's shoulders
spun over and strung onto the rungs, flung
unbuttoned, overlapped over all with
muffling like sleep, monastical, a see-
through silting and stowing of shafts, floating
veils that soon enough damp most meager lamps,
the panes and rails softened, swirled into orbs,
subsequent crescents: thinning to a film,
inhaled up into us, our consciousness,
they swim the black and blue cavities white.

D. R. James

Unbroken

My spirit cannot be broken -
unbreakable, fundamentally intact.
I may react to the chaos, commotion
showing emotion that briefly betrays
quietude, swathed in cotton flannel,
I channel fear as fallen snow,
melting in warm morning sun.

Face recomposed, rigidly set jaw
against outside threats, I am serene
without regrets, I can forgive transgressions,
a fistful of broken memories yet I remain
unbroken. Cleverly submerged in calm
water, ripples ebb away after rocks
are thrown, I should have known, really,

could have seen clearly the intention
was to break, but make no mistake,
intact I remain, settle into a neutral state,
a pose of meditation, when they would drain
my last reserves, I compose a lyrical phrase,
one that will raise hope, to bask in sunlight
allowing me to cope, unbreakable.

Julie A. Dickson



Composition by Milena Pavlovic Barili (Serbia) 1938

Serbia, 1938

I cannot dream a fiddle, sweep it
into your hands. Sacrifice

the wind. I tender
my body naked,

seize your scarf
as the dogs amass.

Who swept the bricks this morning?
My body twists.

Bodies hang behind red curtains.
No good faces in the rising balloon.

The war blares.
Who sweeps the bricks of mourning?

Deborah Bacharach

The Exhibitionist

“My dear,” she said, “I believe they are looking at you.”

The women turned to spy the young boys behind one of the pillars, snickering in both excitement and embarrassment at her nudity.

Why one woman was dressed and covered properly and other not wearing any clothing at all was a complete mystery- her hair loose; that in itself a serious infraction, let alone showing her nakedness outside the rooms of her husband – yes, a mystery and yet they watched.

The friends were well-known and yet, secrets well-kept, hidden from husbands, parents and they thought from everyone. Even now, her nakedness did not truly bother them; such was their love, wrapped in the translucent gauze of light, young boys could be bribed to keep their secret, explained away as the rites of womanhood – boys could not understand, nor would they elaborate on such an adult tryst.

“Wrap yourself in this, my love,” but she, the exhibitionist was left bare.

Julie A. Dickson

When Daphne Stopped Singing

I have fled back.
I tried again, Sister Sophia,
but Apollo heard my singing
cut me off before I reached the forest.

I am illegal, they will burn me like a witch.
I am illegal, golden-haired hymning in the oaks.

Hide me, quick!
His legions are listening
through the abbey windows spying
above cloisters creeping
down chimneys, around spires
over the red roof tiles
boots come howling.

Sister me in your veil
spilling silver as moon-milk.
Pious, I'll pretend,
wind the cloth so tight around my throat
I can't sing and give myself away.
I will hide until they don't know me,
until I don't know myself
silenced in our blood-red sleeves.

Dia Calhoun



Man Smoking, by Josef Capek (Czechoslovakia) 1919

Man Smoking

Nicotine or alcohol.
Purple haze of addiction.
Either will satisfy the cravings.

John Johnson

To Josef Capek Regarding *Man Smoking*

How fitting is the serpent seen
in breath opaque of nicotine
still harmful when it's next inhaled
transparent to the soul impaled

except as odor stale and stain
that yellows, where it dares remain,
the hand and clothes as telling trace
of pleasure's lethal brief embrace

that speaks to virtue vainly feigned
by health that courage has disdained
to favour more the statement made
of manliness that seems portrayed

as complement to tailored clothes
and passage braved that nowhere goes.

Portly Bard

Mental Self-Image Wherein I Smoke In Contemplation

Like smoke taking the shape
Of the banks of the ice blue
 River,
The snow along a length
Of Vlatava I've never
 Measured,
I am cornered, the coin
Of inner Empire, heightened
 Centre
To the centre, I am
At ease, a melty
 Smolder
Of cigarettes
I've never touched.

I followed a lovely girl
And her boyfriend
 Long ago
Across the sea, for what?
They'd left Bratislava before
 Schiphol
Reared up to wield the wild
Muse in my carry-on.
 And so
Began the story of habits
Imagined, easily hinged
 Apropos
Of cigarettes
I've never touched.

Brian A. Salmons



Demons in Chains, in the style of Muhammad Siya Qalam (Iran or Central Asia) 1435

Incarnations

Why follow your demons? Beat them and bind them, but still the reflections look back at you in mocking fear, daring you to turn away.

They are pitiful, these dark shadows—you, begging yourself for mercy. You, unmasked, horned. You, naked and sharp-toothed, quaking inside your own anger, carrying your deepest wishes and fears. You have traveled days and miles and years without escaping from the shackles that hold you together.

They are yours, these demons. Let them have their say. They will not be redeemed by piety or angels or the indignities of supplication. Own them and then free them.

*uncurbed by either
Heaven or Hell—it is Man
who is to be feared*

Kerfe Roig

Under Control

Keeping your demons
On a tight rope
Just makes them wild
For freedom
Locks you into step
With them
Right on your heels
Or dragging you behind
Their tether the measure
Of your short allowance
As they grin at you
And grind their teeth
Eager for a lapse
In your attention
That lets them
Close enough to gnaw
Through all your
Avenues of bone
Their growls a constant mutter
Beneath your thoughts
All your energies devoted
To the whip and rope
Your words reduced
To curses and commands
Occupied
By the prisoners
Who hold you fast
And tie you down
With fiendish glee
And not a single hope
Of freedom

Mary McCarthy



Summer Morning in Madeira by Irma Stern (South Africa), 1950

Morning in Lavapuri*

for Lavapuri (a.k.a. Lahore)

I.

Satsuma Mandarin-ish Sun

(sunglasses impede the view.

So, I take 'em off).

II.

Beggar crossing the crowded main road

(without any proper markings or a zebra crossing.

As if any markings or zebra crossings
would've had any effect on
this beggar's or anyone's resolve!).

III.

Youth at a game of cricket in the open field
(with taped tennis balls.
Critical Note: at the hands of corruption,
all manner of sports gear & sports
have become way too expensive here now).

IV.

Two traffic wardens & two bikers
(without helmets & maybe more.
Critical Note: all manner of licenses
can be procured without taking the fatigue
of taking and/or passing any tests here anyway).

V.

SUV violates the red light
(& as always, gets away with it.
Critical Note: the capitalist class & the other elites
can get away with almost anything
in this Land of the Pure, apparently).

VI.

Large Military-Truck-Centipede
with a small red flag flying
(mounted on a small bamboo stick)
at the rear of each Mercedes Benz
(*NO! No More Wars, PLEASE!*
I pray (secretly)).

VII.

Small funeral procession—
cluster of men carrying a deceased
to the local graveyard
on their shoulders & chanting the Six Kalimah**
(or at least, one or two of them)

*(I'll still prefer a cremation,
I think to myself).*

Saad Ali

*Lavapuri is the ancient / original name of Lahore (the capital city of the Punjab province in Pakistan).

** The Six Kalimah are a very crucial aspect of the Islamic Faith, which include (in the order of significance):
1) Tayyibah, 2) Shahadah, 3) Tamjid, 4) Tauhid, 5) Istighfar and 6) Radd al-kufr. It's mandatory for every Muslim to know these Kalimah (by heart)—especially, the first one i.e. Kalima Tayyibah; for, without knowing/reciting it, one cannot enter the Islamic faith, or be pronounced a Muslim.



Cats, by Leonard Tsuguharu Fouhita (France, b. Japan) 1940

Maybe a Cat?

Because their lives are short relative to yours, so even if they hated you, you wouldn't have to endure them for a lifetime—it wouldn't be a life sentence.

And on the other side of things: Because they'd never leave you. Because you need someone when you have no one, and you've had no one for way too long. It's to the point where you remember your ex's dog you wanted to think was your dog.

(It didn't help that you kept calling him your son and your soulmate.)

And when you couldn't take her shit anymore and so had to stop picking him up, that's when you felt his absence. It was the absence of one who had never judged you and had always loved you. One who never doubted your love or dedication to him. One who had never abandoned you when you most needed him.

And because no one will ever replace him, you've chosen a cat for yourself. Not in reality, but in your head. You say to yourself you cannot have a cat now because your current lease doesn't allow for it.

But, really, it's because you know a cat is never going to replace that dog—never.

That dog has gone to join your dead friend who died almost twenty years ago and who also is irreplaceable.

You like to think of the two of them running around on some grassy hill, going up it and coming back down, the two of them playing and loving each other. It pleases you that they have each other, and doesn't make you distressed that you have no one, only the memories of the two of them.

That's how you know it's love. It's also how you know a cat will never do it for you. One cat or ten or a hundred. They are beautiful, but they are not the ones you love.

Garth Ferrante



The Boat of Charon, by Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo (Philippines) 1887

The Boat of Charon

are you the happy link, Charon,
between the living and the dead,
and if you are so, then are your passengers
living as they start and dying as they reach
the other banks, or are they dead already
and wake, if briefly, in the new world
where they will stay in time uninterrupted
for a new dark eternity of all lifetimes,
and if dead already, do they live forever,
there in hell's dark, enjoying such time

Alan Bern

The Boat of Charon

after *La Barca de Aqueronte*

Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo

oil on canvas, 1887

The Divine Comedy, Inferno, Canto III

Dante Alighieri

1 The River

Oh son of Gaea, foolish Acheron,
you quenched the thirst of Titans, then were thrown
into the regions of the damned by Zeus;
you're now a river called the Acheron.
Into the Underworld your waters flowed —
affliction, sadness, pain your legacy.

11 The Ferryman

Old white-haired demon, guardian of hell,
you glared at them with eyes like glowing coals.
The oar held in your hand shines like a sword
and strikes those sinful souls who hesitate
to board your barque, so terrified are they,
perhaps, of what will be their fate when they
are ferried to that dark and distant shore.

111 The Destination

The heavens opened, storm-tossed clouds rained down
upon those naked bodies clinging fast
to Charon's boat that rocked from side to side.
Then tossed by cresting waves, they headed for
that other bank that beckoned, calling them
to gloom, eternal darkness, fire and frost.

Sharon Fish Mooney



The River of No Return, by Lee Jung-Seob (Korea) 1956

Barcodes on Bridges

Paper-doll man stands on a bridge,
broken arms touching nothing.
He stares at the metal tongue,
the sheer expanse of it
connecting sprawling towns
strung like lucky bygone charms.
With the steel of speed
wheels slice through time
girder on iron,
girder on iron,
a painful separation
dissecting the heart of the town.

I see his old grey joggers first,
torn as his ragged breath.
He is no runner, I can tell
by the flap of his soles

pinning his feet to deck.
Clouds hang unusually low
and he feels the dampness
spread through flesh
head-to-toe,
head-to-toe.
He lets it settle across his back,
cradles it, shoulder to slump.

Downcast eyes freeze on track.
He feels the weight of magnetic sole,
the pull and roar of engine noise,
the drag, drag
gravity-shifting
as helpline numbers skitter in air.
Light flickers briefly, defying the sky,
a fleeting smile spattered on ground.
He observes the outline,
shadows like barcodes
patterned on pavement,
feet touching nothing.

Kate Young

Upon Seeing *The River of No Return* by Lee Jung-seob (Korea) 1956

Outside the window, a soft rain
forms rivers, sweeps away layers,
cargo cast aside,
nothing can be salvaged.

Inside, the boy's arm collapses on a sill
his helpless head hits against the will
of my poem imploring me to release him
from this picture his father created.

My words fly through the door,
my poem cannot help him and
the river takes these discordant syllables,
this rush of clamorous sounds,
this slanted rhyme.

My good intentions smudge in water,
like black-and-white charcoal in rain.
I am but a poet, no power to reunite

a father and his son, except in this line.

I am like he who drew this sketch
this mournful portrait of a son
longing to see his father.

Around the edge of the house
the artist sketched a figure
lingering like a lantern

just around the corner,

almost almost home
outside the boy's reach forever.

Sandra Frye



The Siesta, by Hale Asaf (Ottoman Empire) 1930s?

An Attempt to Sleep

The afternoon sky stirs by,
unmaking my sleep my own
through the window these pale
sand shades for which the leaves
seem darker than orange waving
against a little bedsit light

Awake at 14:12, 15:02, 15:44

A new moment wakes up
the neighbourhood, a city slowly
showing one sigh after another,
opening one eye and another.
I know the robins hoarding
bread at the Autumn trees

One house rises

It's the same problem every noon
I stay in and through the window
I see 'em sleep. I'll stay in and speak
to no one, missing out on dreams
softer than a children's song

Another house shines

Only then I lay down and try
when a new moment turns older
when my strong-mind-thoughts show
featherlight shame, then a siesta can
start, pronto like a redbreast's song

Kate Copeland



Title Not Known, by Nguyen Tuong Lan (Vietnam) 1942

Green Fan, Sleeping Lady

A swarm of swallows swallows the sun; I coax the curtain just a little to let the last light fall over you. You have been reading too many haikus. Your days have grown shorter because of it.

Lorette C. Luzajic

Siesta

Languor. No anger, hunger
or pointing of the finger.

Riding towards the mid-
summer sky, with her bed

warmed by the prospect, she
arrives in childhood's valley,

to scout out that green freedom.
A yellow path drifts her home;

sleeping blue clouds envelop
her in their spreading lap.

Her fan hushes beside her,
and a long-ago breeze stirs

wisps of her tightly woven hair;
whoever softly calls from over

that broad meadow makes the weather
chuckle beneath its breath.

The palm trees tremble and seethe.
She keeps on down that faraway path.

Michael Caines



Mrs. Wells as Hebe, by Thomas James Northcote (England) 1805

Hebe

Mrs. Wells watches from the helm of the museum's hallowed halls, shimmies off her shawl, yields her slippy sleeve to the vulture's beak. I'm with the bird- I too would stroke the soft hollows of Mrs. Wells's elbow and décolletage. She is powdered in perfume, in lavender and amber. She is what we all long for, this Mrs. Wells. Wide-eyed wonder and pale pink lips curled in a half-smile, soft thighs apart a little. If we just touch her, we could find forever.

Lorette C. Luzajic

To Thomas James Northcote Regarding *Mrs. Wells As Hebe*

How thoughtfully divine you've wrought,
in mythic guise no doubt she sought,
a rose so newly fully bloomed,
by youth perfected and consumed,

like Hebe Greeks would deify
with talon, wing, and wary eye
of alter ego ever nigh
should she descend from heaven's sky

where gods who oversaw their earth
with favour of Elysian worth
received her nectars they implored
to have their youth so long adored

as Mrs. Wells felt she deserved
and you indeed have here preserved.

Portly Bard



Popo's Shadow, by Dr. Atl (Mexico) 1942

Shadows Can Change Quickly

Over the pastel quilted expanse of countryside
Popo casts her purple shadow, now benign
her light touch, spreading, receding
as sun decrees,
Adding, subtracting depth of
darker coloured beauty as the shadows
cosset the pastel pale fields,
preparing them for night's fuller darkness.

However, I am not fooled.
I know the calm belies calamity,
invincible, implacable, inevitable
having lived in Vesuvius' shadow,
experience his pitiless rage,
I know that this seeming quirk
of benevolent beauty is guise,
a shadowy forewarning
of its heavy heat, lava,
black smoke and ash

when the pale fields
will be wholly enveloped
covered, burnt, destroyed.

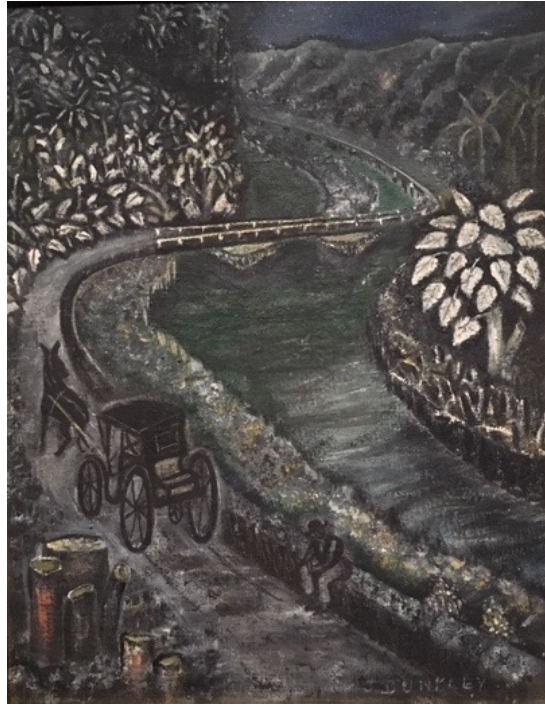
Joan Leotta

Redeeming Time

after Jim Tipton and Dr. Atl

I want to speak with Time who prompts mountains to rumble, cuts through glaciers, ravages rivers and you. I want to speak to the giant Sequoia to hear of its secrets about strength, growth, and maturity. I want to speak words with the clarity of a spring-fed body of water and with as much conviction as El Popo. I want to speak truth to crowds or a passerby, but to do that, I must know truth. Like Pilate, I ask, "What is truth?" I want to listen to the dewdrops as they prime early morning with incandescence. I want to deliver words of strawberries and cream, not of vinegar and gall. I want to write with passion and zeal, to have the confidence of a Black-eyed Susan, comfortable in torrid weather and in the hard, red earth, at home in our gardens or on sides of busy highways. Like wildflowers, I want to attract birds and butterflies. I want to hang out with mountain-climbing goats, to hear the rocks reveal the earth's great mysteries, their ancestors' tall tales. And speaking of ancestors, I want Adam and Eve's takes on The Fall and Judas's take on his fall. I want to converse with the dead to learn if they feel fear, greed, or cowardice – if fear is like a frozen locomotive engine, if greed is as infiltrating as the Great Depression's dust storms, if yellow is the colour of days-old bruises. I want to hear that the dead are okay so that we are okay. Yes, I want to speak with Time – no, to debate her – she who cuts through glaciers and ravages rivers and prompts mountains to rumble. Then, perhaps, in time I could save us.

Jo Taylor



Flat Bridge, by John Dunkley (Jamaica) 1935

Flat Bridge

in the dark
knowing the way
and the way back

Alan Bern



A Street in Oslo, by Harald Sohlberg (Norway) 1911

The Snowy Gate To

Surviving another cold winter
long, hard
with snow deep on the sidewalk
cart tracks out of sight
with Oslo village still asleep
yet logs burn on open fires
smoke wafting from chimneys
dark, pungent.

Christianiafjorden frozen over
metres deep
sun rising over Østmarka
orange, overbearing
trees bereft of leaves
no steppemåke on flight.

From where does this gate come?
To where does it go?

Will you walk it without me?
Alone, gone.

Can you be as hard as ice
when you claim soft like snow?
Why are you leaving now
for the winter still cuts
hurt, pain
of short days, of long nights?

Promise you will write me.
Promise you will care.

Alun Robert

Oslo: village in eastern suburbs of Christiania (known as Oslo since 1925)

Christianiafjorden: salt water inlet in the Oslo area

Østmarka: forested area east of Oslo

steppemåke: black headed gull

gate: Norwegian for street

On a Street in Oslo

“If not, winter ... longing / floats around you”

— Fragments of Sappho, *Anne Carson, trans.*

Solveig lives on a street in Oslo though I met her on a street in Geneva. She is rich. Her father’s family escaped from the Bolsheviks, jewels sown into pockets. Her mother’s family owned whaling fleets.

Solveig owns houses all over the world but has grown too old to visit them. She has no will. A man once had her sign papers. Later she realized they entailed leaving her fortune to him. She’s in court, getting them annulled or whatever that process is called in Norway.

When we first met, Solveig told me her name means “she who has the strength of the sun.” She has always appeared indomitable. She speaks Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, German, French, Italian, and English. Her father convinced her teenage self that men would marry her only for his money. All her days she has been alone, never free of her name.

Her brother hates her because their grandmother left her a picturesque farm in the mountains of the trolls. So he wheedled his father to cut her out of his will. Solveig, in turn, wheedled her mother to cut him out of her will. Kroners, dollars, and francs throttled any love between them.

This autumn, she writes me, a ferocious thunderstorm raged. Lightning skittered down her chimney. It exploded, blasting both eardrums. Contractors, with whom she can no longer converse, are repairing her villa. In the winter, there will be snow, ice. Deaf and alone in silence, she will turn eighty on her street in Oslo.

Sandi Stromberg



Adam and Eve, by Mohammed Said (Egypt) 1937

Knowledge

Strange how what you did and what you saw
and what you heard
don't always match--
like a portal you have
stepped through
and tried to forget--
on one side what happened, and on the other
only memories
of the landscape
closest to what
you wish was real.

The synapses are flooded and papered over
with before and after, inseparable
from the words spoken, the ones containing
concurrently truth and lies.

It's not a matter of

sorting things out--
can you remove the salt from the goose once
it's been cooked?--
or reattach the apple
to the tree after
it has been digested,
its nutrients reconfigured and redefined?
When the mind confronts
all its contradictions-- the
evidence both for and
against--it has no choice: it
constructs a story.

Kerfe Roig



The First Mourning, by William-Adolphe Bouguereau (France) 1888

Morning Breaks

*And the Lord God said unto the serpent...
and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed;
it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. – Genesis NASB 3:14-15*

How do hearts beat on, twice-branded
by hot irons of grief, recalibrating again and again
to heaves and sobs, to could-haves and should-haves and
what-ifs? What if we had spoken of Eden one more time?
Had told yet again of our own disobedience? Of death
decreed? O, Creator and Lord of Life, where now
is the seed of your promise? The earth totters,
the light recedes, and we are all undone.

But through the morning's low-lying clouds, a voice, undulating,
full-throated, over the lifeless form, assures, *Though dead,*
he still speaks, and celestial voices like the sweet smell
of rain on dry ground reverberate across time,
O come, o come, Emmanuel.

Jo Taylor



Early Morning Work, by William H. Johnson (USA) 1940

Bread on Our Table

My brothers and I
have all that we need to eat.

A sickle to cut weeds
buckets of chicken feed for eggs and meat
seeds to sow row on row
a mallet to pound wheat
a cart to sell sweet corn and black beans for succotash
an ox to plough land the colour of pea soup
a deep-well hand-pump for water.

When the sun rises
we join our hands in love and labour
and do our morning work.

At night we put bread on our table
in our ramshackle shed with a bent stone chimney
a broken picket fence
a lopsided tree.

We are family.
We are grateful for all that we have.

Tanya Adèle Koehnke



Harmony, by Malvin Gray Johnson (USA) 1933

Sunday After-Church Picnic

After Sunday's sermon and song
has filled their souls,
folks gathered round in groups
laughing, talking, pick from
a wagonload of watermelon,
open baskets of cornbread,
fried chicken, and other southern staples,
lay out on blankets
in trios and quartets
basking in the warm sun
of friendship. Someone will
strum a banjo soon and voices will
chime in singing,
the truest harmony.

Joan Leotta

Union

What happens to family when you are taken,
sold, bought, owned,
used, beaten, broken, crushed?
When man is torn away from wife,
child from mother,
when the law of commerce
outlaws the law of love
when even finding each other
is a weary life long slog
when all the weight of power
tips the scales away from union
to separation?

Resistance can be many things-
like family, like community,
each one found and treasured back-
resistance can grow in the church
meant to keep you
humble and down
in your songs of joy and righteousness
the shelter of congregation
the surety of grace.

Found here in an innocent picnic,
a reunion, a celebration
whose burden of meaning
is abundance
not scarcity, not mere sufficiency,
but richness
endless, unmistakable-

not a crate of melons, a truckload,
not enough food, but more

than anyone could imagine
not one family but many
together
all the people a foundation deep
and undeniable
strong and solid as the earth they walk.

Mary McCarthy



Trail of Tears, by Jerome Tiger (USA) 1966

Seven Queries on a Sacred Direction

1. Why not guns? One brown stick? A rod? inadequate, breakable.
2. Note their red weathered faces and windswept hair like raven feathers in need of purification. The displaced human beings, not the horses. But the horses too. Can you hear them neigh? No. Just the storm. All mouths are frozen shut.
3. Great Spirit, where's the balance on these white slopes?
4. Is it the snow, pale as pox, making them squint? Over the hill, all colour drains to icy blue.
5. Ahuli and Fola turn round to stare as Auntie falls again, her heartbeat like a fading drum in winter thunder. They watch her chest heave. They gasp. What would we do if we'd been there? Big Brother with his head full of yellow corn, stoops to carry her onwards before a bayonet prods them. Hawthorn roots stir in the frigid soil, itching to crack through and bring healing. Grandfather doggedly trudges forward, certain of the gold he found back on their farm before soldiers came.

6. Praying for willow wood to make a cradling board, Waya steers Atsila on their one remaining steed while she hunches over baby trying to share warmth. What will they call her? When will they name her? Will she even live? Where? I wonder. Nothing green ever grew in this kind of wilderness.

7. See there's no sign of a trail. Not really. Tiger left it blank. It was never meant to be there. He only painted the word in his title. Question me about reservations, greed and cruelty, a flag with a black star.

Helen Freeman



Briar, by Qi Baishi (China) 1951

Briar

Two Koreas torn...
limbs of common bloom and thorn...
unending winter.

Portly Bard

Fin
www.ekphrastic.net

Contributors

Saad Ali (b. 1980 C.E. in Okara, Pakistan) has been brought up and educated in the United Kingdom and Pakistan. He holds a BSc and an MSc in Management from the University of Leicester, UK. He has authored four books of poetry. His latest book of poetry is titled *PROSE POEMS: Βιβλίο Άλφα* (AuthorHouse, 2020). He is a regular contributor to *The Ekphrastic Review*. Some of his influences include: Vyasa, Homer, Ovid, Attar, Rumi, Nietzsche, and Tagore. By profession, he is a Lecturer, Consultant and Trainer/Mentor. He likes learning different languages, travelling by train, and exploring cities on foot. To learn more about his work, please visit www.saadalipoetry.com.

Deborah Bacharach is the author of *Shake and Tremor* (Grayson Books, 2021) and *After I Stop Lying* (Cherry Grove Collections, 2015). She has been published in *Vallum*, *The Carolina Quarterly*, and *The Southampton Review* among many other journals. She is an editor, teacher and tutor in Seattle. Find out more about her at DeborahBacharach.com.

When not teaching, **Devon Balwit** sets her hand to the plough and chases chickens in Portland, OR. Her most recent chapbook is *Rubbing Shoulders with the Greats* (Seven Kitchens Press, 2020). Visit her website: <https://pelapdx.wixsite.com/devonbalwitpoet>

Portly Bard:

Old man.
Ekphrastic fan.

Prefers to craft with sole intent
of verse becoming complement...
...and by such homage being lent...
ideally also compliment.

Retired children's librarian **Alan Bern's** poetry books: *No no the saddest* and *Waterwalking in Berkeley*, Fithian Press; *greater distance, Lines & Faces*, his poetry broadside press with artist and printer Robert Woods, linesandfaces.com. Alan earned a runner-up award in *The Raw Art Review's* "The John H. Kim Memorial Short Fiction Prize" for "The alleyway near the downtown library." he won a medal in 2019 from SouthWest Writers for a WWII story set in Italia, "The Return of the Very Fierce Wolf of Gubbio to Assisi, 1943 CE [and now, 2013 CE]"; and he won the 2015 Littoral Press Poetry Prize. Alan has poems, stories, and photos published in a wide variety of online and print publications, from which his work has been nominated for Pushcart Prizes. Recent photos: include: parliamentlit.com/alan-bern, unearthedesf.com/alanbern, thimblelitmag.com/2020/08/10/emptying/, and wanderlust-journal.com/2020/07/01/around-the-few-blocks-nearby/. Alan performs with dancer/choreographer Lucinda Weaver as *PACES* and with musicians from Composing

Together, composingtogether.org/index.php/sample-poetry-from-our-musical-storytime-performances/

Based in the UK, **Dorothy Burrows** enjoys writing flash fiction, poetry and short plays. Her work has been published online by various websites including *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Words for the Wild*, *Another North*, *Failed Haiku*, *The Poetry Pea* and also in *Mslexia's* newsletter. *The Ekphrastic Review* has nominated one of her flash fictions, "Four Horses, Two Friends, One Postcard" for *Best Short Fictions 2021*. She tweets @rambling_dot

Michael Caines was longlisted for this year's National Poetry Competition and highly commended in the Sentinel Literary Quarterly competition for winter 2019.

Dia Calhoun is the author of seven young adult novels, including two verse novels, *After the River the Sun* (Atheneum, 2013) and *Eva of the Farm* (Atheneum, 2012). She won the *Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature*. Her poems have appeared in *MORIA Literary Magazine*. One of her poems is forthcoming in the winter 2021 issue of *The EcoTheo Review*. Calhoun is a mentor in the Children's Literature Fellows Program for Stony Brook University. She is a co-founder of readergirlz, the literacy social media project, recipient of The National Book Foundation's *Innovations in Reading Prize*. She writes beside the wild Nisqually River in Washington State. Learn more at diacalhoun.com.

Kate Copeland started reading libraries at the age of five. Her love for words brought her to teaching and translating some well-sounding languages. As of late she has dared to dedicate herself to her own poems. The subsequent writing waves have resulted in happiness and in some publications...leaving a craving for more! She was born in Rotterdam some 51 years ago and adores housesitting in The United Kingdom and Spain.

Julie A. Dickson has been a poet since her teen years. Her work comprises love, pain, nature, environment, animal rights and current events. Her full length works [available on Amazon] address issues facing teens, such as bullying. Dickson's poetry can be found in journals such as *The Ekphrastic Review*, *The Avocet*, *The Harvard Press*, *Blue Heron Review*, among others. She was nominated for a Pushcart prize for her poem, *The Sky Must Remember* in 2018.

Linda Eve Diamond's poetry has appeared on stage at The Dancing Poetry Festival, on display at The Museum of Art – Deland, and in the pages of numerous literary journals. Her creative works have been honored with several awards, including a Grand Prize Award from Artists Embassy International "for exceptional poetry that inspires dance and for furthering intercultural understanding and peace through the universal language of the arts." Find Linda Eve's poetry, photography and more at <http://LindaEveDiamond.com>.

Garth Ferrante is a complete unknown who writes and makes games out of challenging his own creativity. He writes because he loves to, because he finds meaning and purpose in it, because if he didn't, life would be lifeless.

Helen Freeman started writing poetry during recovery time from a serious road traffic accident in Oman and got hooked. She has been published in several magazines and supplements including with *Corbel Stone Press, Ink, Sweat and Tears, Clear Poetry, Algebra of Owls, Ground Poetry, Your One Phone-call, Open Mouse, Red River Review, Barren Magazine, The Drabble, Sukoon, Poems for Ephesians* and *The Ekphrastic Review*. Some of her ekphrastic poems were published alongside related Diane Rendle paintings at an exhibition in Open Eye Gallery, Edinburgh. She taught English for many years in Kenya, Tanzania, Oman and Dubai and now lives in Durham, England.

Sandra Frye is the author of two memoirs, *African Dreams*, about serving with the Peace Corps in Africa from 1969 to 1971, and *Fatherless*, the story of her unique childhood in the 1950s and her yearning for a traditional family. Recently she published her first book of poetry titled *Leaving Lessons*. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin, where she loves to write in coffeehouses. She has always been drawn to fine art, loves to visit art museums, and appreciates the opportunity to respond to art prompts shared by *The Ekphrastic Review*. She's a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, a retired high school English teacher, and mother to four sons.

Paul Holler is a writer of short stories, poems, articles and interviews with noted authors. His previous work has appeared in *The Ekphrastic Review, Flash, The MacGuffin, Freshwater Literary Review, Eclectica, Write City Magazine, Bookslut, Critique Magazine* and other on-line a print journals and anthologies.

D. R. James's latest of nine collections are *Flip Requiem* (Dos Madres, 2020), *Surreal Expulsion* (Poetry Box, 2019), and *If god were gentle* (Dos Madres, 2017), and his micro-chapbook *All Her Jazz* is free, fun, and printable-for-folding at Origami Poems Project. His work appears in a variety of journals, often including *The Ekphrastic Review*. He lives in the woods near Saugatuck, Michigan, with his wife, psychotherapist Susan Doyle. <https://www.amazon.com/author/drjamesauthorpage>

John Johnson is a writer and entrepreneur from McLean, Virginia. His recent poetry has been published in *Sundial Magazine, the Boston Literary Review, What Rough Beast*, and the *Daily Drunk*.

Tanya Adèle Koehnke is a member of The Ontario Poetry Society (TOPS) and the Scarborough Poetry Club. Tanya's poems appear in *The Ekphrastic Review, The Canvas, Big Arts Book, Canadian Woman Studies, Foreplay: An Anthology of Word Sonnets*, and other publications. Tanya taught English at several post-secondary institutions in Toronto. Tanya also has a background in arts journalism.

Joan Leotta plays with words on page and stage. She loves to write ekphrastic poems, adding a new story to the one the artist has put down for us, a collaboration possible across time and space. Her work has appeared frequently in *The Ekphrastic Review* and in many poetry journals such as *Pine Song*, *Hobart Review*, *Silver Birch* and others. She is also a performer. Her poems, essays, articles, short stories and performances often focus on food, family, and strong women.

Lorette C. Luzajic is from Toronto, Canada. Her prose poetry and small fictions are widely published, with recent or forthcoming appearances in *Gyroscope*, *Free Flash Fiction*, *Bright Flash*, *Club Plum*, *Red Eft*, and *Indelible*. A recent story won first place in a contest at *MacQueen's Quinterly*, and she has been nominated several times each for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize. Her most recent of five poetry collections is *Pretty Time Machine: ekphrastic prose poems*. Some of her works have been translated into Urdu. Lorette is founder and editor of *The Ekphrastic Review*, a journal devoted to literature inspired by art. She is also an award-winning visual artist, with collectors in 25 countries from Estonia to Qatar. Visit her at www.mixedupmedia.ca.

Mary McCarthy is a retired RN, who has always loved writing and the visual arts. This has made ekphrasis a particular favourite for her own work, which has appeared in many journals and anthologies, including *Earth's Daughters*, *Praxis*, *Third Wednesday* and *The Ekphrastic Review*.

Sharon Fish Mooney is the author of *Bending Toward Heaven, Poems After the Art of Vincent van Gogh* (Wipf and Stock/Resource Publications, 2016) and editor of *A Rustling and Waking Within* (OPA Press, 2017), an anthology of ekphrastic poems after art in Ohio museums. Her ekphrastic poems have appeared in *Rattle*, *First Things*, *Modern Age*, *The Lost Country*, *Common Threads*, *The Ekphrastic Review* and digital and print anthologies published by the Toledo Museum of Art and the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, OH. She has presented ekphrastic poetry readings and workshops in multiple locations including the Arts in Society Conference, Paris, France and Groningen University, the Netherlands. Her poetry translations of French artist and poet Jules Breton have appeared in *Transference* and *Common Threads*. She is poetry editor of *Journal of Christian Nursing*. Website: sharonfishmooney.com

Marcelle Newbold loves poetry as a way of exploring inner digressions. Her poems have been published in magazines, and in recent anthologies by Wild Pressed Books and Maytree Press. A poetry editor for *Nightingale & Sparrow* and a member of The Dipping Pool writing group, she lives in Cardiff, Wales, where she trained as an architect. Twitter @marcellenewbold

Laurie Newendorp lives and writes in Houston. Her book, *When Dreams Were Poems*, 2020, explores art and its relationship to poetry. She was listed as one of ten Ekphrastic Fantastics by *The Ekphrastic Review* in 2019, and her poem, "French Pumpkin Soup" was

nominated for Best of The Net in 2020. After 9/11, her poetry about the bombing of Dresden in WWII received honourable mention for a Pablo Neruda Prize, and in 2018, she received 2nd Place in the Ekphrastic Poetry Contest, Houston Poetry Fest. A graduate of The University of Houston Creative Writing Program in Poetry, her poems have appeared in *Art Houston*, *Nimrod*, *Dogwood* and multiple poetry festival anthologies.

Amy Phimister is a writer who resides in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. She is a member of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets and has been published by WFOP, Yardstick Books and the Ekphrastic Review, and was a finalist for the Hal Prize. She was also included in a new anthology called *Halfway to the North Pole: Door County in Poetry*. She has written a children's book called *A-B-C the Animals* which will be released by Sand Beach Press in January.

Alun Robert is a prolific creator of lyrical free verse. He has achieved success in poetry competitions across the British Isles and North America. His work has been published by many literary magazines, anthologies and webzines in the UK, Ireland, Italy, South Africa, Kenya, USA and Canada. Since 2018, he has been a member of *The Ekphrastic Review* community particularly enjoying the fortnightly challenges. He is a member of the Federation of Writers Scotland for whom he was a Featured Writer in 2019.

Marjorie Robertson is an essayist, story writer, novelist, and multi-linguist. Her first novel, *Bitters in the Honey*, was a semifinalist in the 2014 William Faulkner-William Wisdom Writing Competition. Currently, she is working on a second novel and a series of Gen X prose poems. Her other interests include traveling, creating art + text, studying how visual and sound affect the written word, and teaching English language learners.

A frequent contributor to *The Ekphrastic Review*, **Kerfe Roig** enjoys transforming words and images into something new from her residence in New York City. Her poetry and art have been featured online by *Right Hand Pointing*, *Silver Birch Press*, *Yellow Chair Review*, *The song is...*, *Pure Haiku*, *Visual Verse*, *The Light Ekphrastic*, *Scribe Base*, and *The Wild Word*, and published in *Ella@100*, *Incandescent Mind*, *Pea River Journal*, *Fiction International: Fool*, *Noctua Review*, *The Raw Art Review*, and several *Nature Inspired* anthologies. Follow her on <https://methodwomadness.wordpress.com/> (with her friend Nina), <https://kblog.blog/>, and <http://kerferoig.com/>

Brian A. Salmons is a poet and translator from Orlando, Florida. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Eyedrum Periodically*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Arkansas International*, *Levee Magazine*, *NonBinary Review*, *Memoir Mixtapes*, *Sunlight Press*, *Poets Reading the News*, *O:JA&L*, *The Light Ekphrastic*, *Eratio*, and others, including anthologies from *YellowJacket Press* and *TL;DR Press*. He is on the Social Media Team at *The Ekphrastic Review*. He can be found on IG @teacup_should_be, Twitter @brianasalmons, and FB @brian.salmons.

Sandi Stromberg is a poet, award-winning magazine feature writer and editor, columnist, and translator. Her poetry has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and 2020 Best of the Net, been featured on NPR's "Voices and Verses," and included in Public Poetry's 2019 international competition ENOUGH. She has supported the creativity of other poets as editor of two anthologies: *Untameable City: Poems on the Nature of Houston* and *Echoes of the Cordillera* (ekphrastic poems on the photography of Jim Bones). Her work has been published and is upcoming in both print and online journals and anthologies, among them *The Ekphrastic Review*, *The Ocotillo Review*, *Visual Verse*, *Snapdragon: A Journal of Art and Healing*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Still the Waves Beat*, and *Enchantment of the Ordinary*. She has been a juried poet in the Houston Poetry Fest eleven times.

Jo Taylor is a retired, 35-year English teacher from Georgia. Her favourite genre to teach high school students was poetry, and today she dedicates more time to writing it, her major themes focused on family, place, and faith. She says she writes to bear witness, to give testimony to the past and to her heritage. She has been published in *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Silver Birch Press*, *Literary North*, *One Art*, *Snapdragon: A Journal of Art and Healing*, and *Heart of Flesh Literary Journal*.

Alarie Tennille was born and raised in Portsmouth, Virginia, and graduated from the University of Virginia in the first class admitting women. For Alarie, looking at art is the surest way to inspire a poem, so she's made *The Ekphrastic Review* home for nearly five years. She was honoured to receive one of the Fantastic Ekphrastic Awards for 2020 and a Best of Net 2020 nomination for her poem "War." She has also served as a guest judge for two ekphrastic challenges. Alarie hopes you'll check out her poetry books on the Ekphrastic Book Shelf and visit her at <http://alariepoet.com>.

Kate Young lives in Kent, England and has been passionate about poetry since childhood. Over the last few years, she has had success with poems published in webzines in Britain and internationally. She generally writes free verse and loves responding to art through ekphrastic poems. If pushed, she would name T. S. Eliot as her favourite poet. Her poems have appeared in *Ninemuses*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Nitrogen House*, *Words for the Wild*, *Poetry on the Lake* and a Scottish Writers Centre chapbook. Her work has also featured in the anthologies *Places of Poetry* and *Write Out Loud*. The pamphlet *Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite* was published by Hedgehog Press in 2020 and her poems feature alongside two other poets. Find her on Twitter @Kateyoung12poet.

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