

Circumference



We'll be trudging uphill,
climbing over some rough terrain.

Issue 5
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Edited by
Gemma Mathewson
Mark McGuire-Schwartz

Circumference

wider circles
and wilder tangents



It starts with pink granite, a tree, islands, and immunity.



And then?

Greetings poets and friends,

Only half joking, I told my co-editor Mark that my editor's note this time would be, just by itself, the scream emoji.

Event-time has seemed to move toward exponentially out of control in the past few months, so any delay I had cowardly created to make things easier upon which to comment , appears now pathetically naive.

So, just a few thoughts - it is so easy in the virtual reality we have come to know and love, to see things from above, in pixels and at the touch of a fingertip. Replay? Delete? Share?

One thing I feel we should not waste our time on is dickering over which outrage is most worth our attention. (This is a defeatist distraction and scheme.) They all are worthy of our attention, and we are entitled to feel more emotionally related to certain ones.

I supposed some brave and foolhardy statistician could attempt to design an equivalence chart to measure individual pain or consequence among many certain and despicable atrocities, old and new, from Hitler's genocide of the Jews to Putin's attempt to do so to Ukraine, to the centuries of slavery of African Americans first by our colonists and then by our United States, (I think I can get away with saying this - not a school textbook) to the cruelty to the populations of mass migration fleeing climate disaster, or the Western Hemisphere's systematic slaughter and attempted genocide of indigenous people by the colonizing European people, and the continued mass migrations of native people everywhere starving from climate disasters and/or fleeing tyrant governments, cartels. Incarceration, abuse and exploitation of refugees from every hemisphere and all over our damaged planet.

The prejudice and laws marginalizing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual and Queer people. Women! Who continue to be denied essential rights and freedoms and continue to be murdered, subjugated and exploited in most of the world.

Asian prejudice, Religious prejudice, Disability prejudice, Geriatric prejudice.

Weapons of War in the hands of citizens is an abomination in our country. No citizen needs an AK47 to defend themselves. Ted Cruz received \$311,151 from the NRA last time I looked. The Second Amendment is a dangerous archaic artifact.

(I used to wear a button in high school that read “Ban Handguns”, more than a few years ago.

As power corrupts, absolute power is a cocktail of greed, imagined invincibility and fear. And wouldn’t you know it - the list of companies who have not withdrawn from Russian commerce include the Koch Brothers and Halliburton, those wild and wacky mega donors to some of our own most notorious ... well, go figure.

Back to textbooks. One of worst things we can teach our children is that our choices should never be examined or regretted. Not the empty regret of guilt but a constructive examination of consequences of our actions, individually and collectively, with an intention toward correction. This is common sense and is constructive when it concludes in agency to change ourselves in our behavior, as a people and as individuals.

Lets engage, donate time and resources, live as though we ARE shaping this planet’s recovery. Let’s converse constructively. Know who is calling the shots and who we need to bring forward, and how, and who to leave in the quagmire. Or send to Mars.

Writing and reading poems is a good first step. Let’s start here and be inspired ...Now, let’s take the plunge.

Gemma Mathewson



Every Poem is About Freedom

Bertolt Brecht demanded to have his books burned. Or, so it says in his poem, “The Burning of the Books.” He did not want to be left off the list of dangerous writers – those who told the truth. Brecht’s books were burned by the Nazis in 1933. And Brecht fled Germany that same year.

Stephen Crane wrote of a “Pathway to Truth” full of hazards, full of “singular knives.” And of a traveler who decides to find another route.

Laws are now being passed that prohibit teaching the truth about American history.

People are stealing Black Lives Matter signs in Connecticut. And shooting BBs at houses that display such signs.

Is it time to flee the country? To remain silent? To take down our signs, to silence our voices? Is it time that we remove Facebook posts that brand us as even the slightly leaning toward liberal ideas? Ideas such as the belief that everyone should have the right to vote. Ideas that acknowledge America’s two great shames – racism against Black people and against Native Americans. (Not to mention the myriad of smaller shames.)

As a poet and editor, I can only come to one conclusion: It is time to speak out. It is time to write poems about politics and poems about beauty. It is time to speak about whatever we feel is important. We need to remain free to say anything.

We are presenting here some poems that decry evil. And others that take notice of beauty or that promote big truths and small.

We believe that every poem is a poem about freedom.

It is time to speak up.

Mark McGuire-Schwartz





The work in this issue has us looking out windows, looking through doors.

And we continue to look for ways to combine visual art and poetry. There are a few visual poems here.

And, for the first time,

we are including a video. When you see it, you'll know why.

And some of our poets nodded toward the scientific, discussing muons,

mountain meadow grasses,

chaos theory, lignite, and weather.



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Mural by Pin8, member of the artivist collective Feñomenos

Turners Falls, Massachusetts

Photo by Gemma Mathewson

Our Sad Riddle

*Alive without breath,
As cold as death;
Never thirsty, ever drinking,
All in mail never clinking.**

My nephew, fresh from the pages of Tolkien,
sees a fish carcass on the beach,
predicts *Gollum!* though we both wonder.

He considers the waves left from a storm,
the wind that blows us each askew,
thinks with furrowed brow, like me
as I sift through those things I know:
the trespass of sewage
and slick film of oil,
the change of warming waters,
our persistent lack of rain.

But he's off on a new adventure now,
throwing boulders with grunts and gasps,
Take that! he yells, a holler into the wind
as loud as mine would be if allowed
to grieve the things he cannot see.

Jen Payne

*One of the riddles of Bilbo and Gollum in J. R. R. Tolkien's The Hobbit.



Count Me

Count me.

I'm with you.

I have scrawled my sign,
my bandana's moistened, knotted,
I am old but ready,
if you have my back, I have yours.

I would be counted by your side.

I was counted there in Selma,
Berkeley, Washington D.C.,
at Stonewall, Ferguson, Kent State, and Jackson.

I have been among the multitude,
nameless, with my one life shining on the line.

Broken hearted by our country's greed and cruelty,
outraged by its deadly race hate,

I have taken to the streets.

I have marched toward the cops,
their sticks and shields at ready,
the sunlight gleaming from their helmets.

I have stopped and stood my ground before the nation's guard,
their guns aimed at my heart.

I have choked on tear gas,
picked up the hot and smoking gas grenade
and flung it back at the police.

I have joined in building barricades,
and when the cops stormed through them
I was sick with fear and rage.

I have been arrested, handcuffed, led away,
I have hunched down on the floors of crowded jail cells,
frightened for my future.

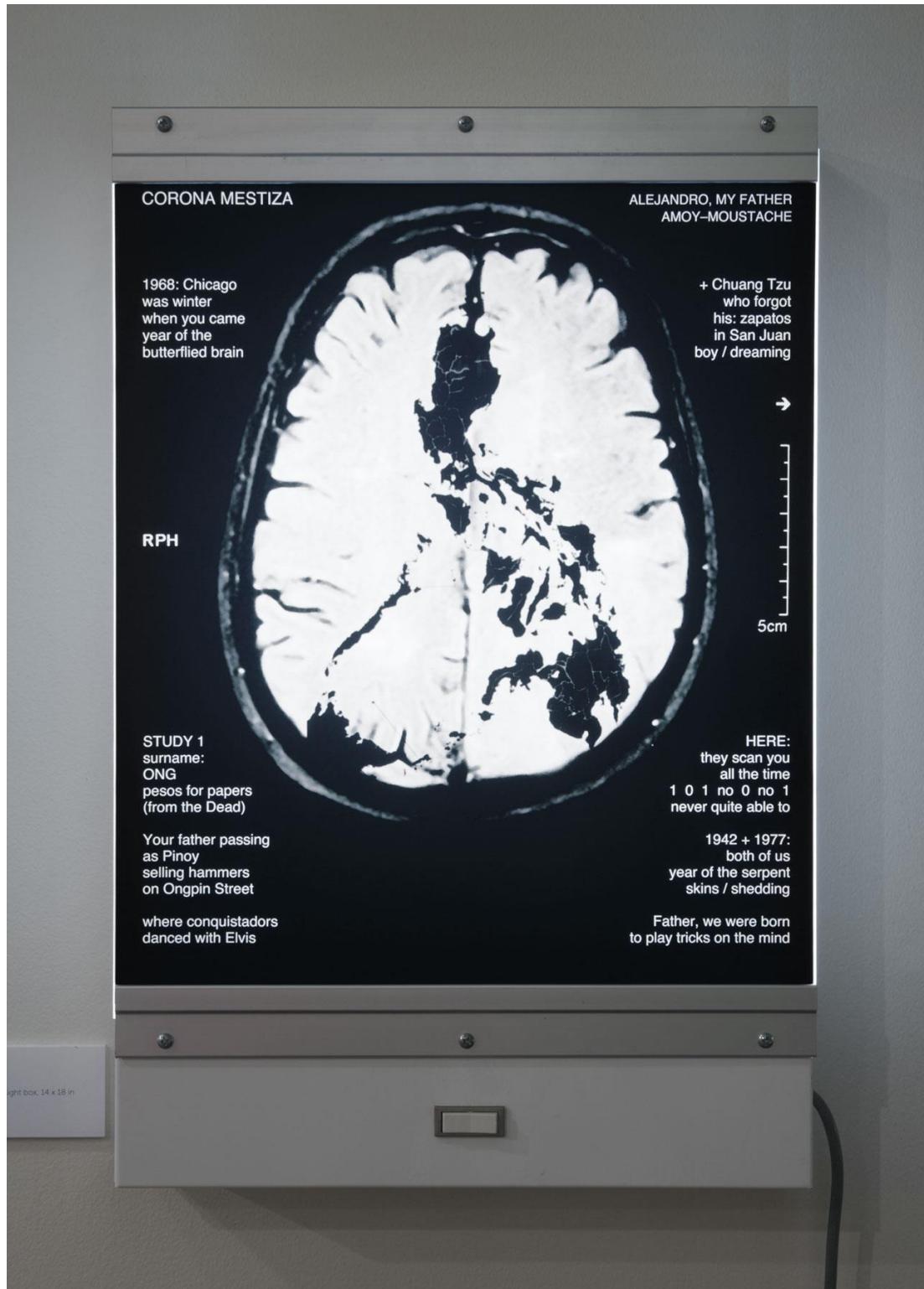
And I am here again.

Count me!



Found Poem Object from Clarence Carroll Hall at CCSU, 1969

Gemma Mathewson



Corona Mestiza. Visual poem, laminated duratrans film on vintage medical light box

Monica Ong

This powerful video was shown at the 2020 Dodge Poetry Festival.
We include it here with the permission of Darrel Alejandro Holnes:

[Poder - Darrel Alejandro Holnes](#)



Window Series - Clouds

Bessy Reyna

Muon, Like Me

I did not always behave as predicted,
did not conform to the Standard Model,
distressing my parents,
wobbling about like that tiny muon,
reacting to unseen forces.

Scientists are stirred on their grand quest
to understand this four-letter word,
this muon,
along with other quivers, quavers and quarks,
and dark matter (which they are pulled into quite completely),
troubled by why there is matter at all,
unable to take a native approach,
just be grateful and give thanks.

My childhood fights were against wearing
beautiful dresses of scratchy cloth,
staying in the yard,
early bedtimes.
Youthful explorations involved having a good time,
surviving on a modest salary,
getting somewhere in a career,
and seeking that other four-letter-word,
love,
which, like the muon,
is heavy and unstable,
decaying rapidly.

The muon's "magnetic moments"
fill researchers with awe;
they suspect
it can connect
with a host of the universe's potential,
because joining with just one other
is too limiting for love,
too limiting for creation,
and this news brings me relief
as I am ready to stretch out,
increase my capacity
like this newfound cosmic crumb.

Karen Warinsky

Roadtrip

As we skitter down the Saw Mill River Parkway,
gifts of Dutch apple pie and cider secured
under parkas too warm to wear in the car,
both of us cringe a bit and duck our heads
while we slip under the low arched bridges
of war-project stonework. We swerve left
when a doe approaches the road's edge. But,
she knows the line not to cross. I want to tell
my husband to slow down, about the damage
caused by one miscalculated leap, but he carries on.
It's not the first time I've kept silent. We're going

to visit my aunt who's injured her good foot,
broken her leg while doddering for a bathroom
in the dark. Imagine the accident. I casually hold
my knee and rub it once or twice. I want her
to recover, but don't we all just live in a world
reaching for things? Her vertigo will stop her.

The expressway opens, suddenly still, a fresh-water reservoir on my left. Because it's winter, it's frozen white and hard, tempting wildlife like deer to try to cross, sharp hooves and all, feeling indestructible this fleeting minute. We've been taught not to venture there, the ice too thin to support us, cracking under our weight. I want to try it just once; see how far I can get.

D. Walsh Gilbert

On Arriving

They arrive after a long flight
from tyranny, from oppression
from the nightmare of endless
fear, from hunger, from faith
denied, from the bottomless
depths of poverty, scarred
memories etched in their souls,
hoping for an ending as much
as wishing for a new beginning.

They have been here, a new
generation, raised on the stories,
versed in the painful history,
still residual anger born
of love for those who fled,
without the pain of experience,
who can forget when it is
others who now wish only
to arrive to the freedom they
have known since childhood.

Lou Faber

Lignite, I Think

This morning I'm a lump of coal,
lignite, I think, the cheap stuff
that heats poorly yet emits

fatal doses of carbon dioxide.
Don't come close. Mask yourself
against my influence. The day

will end in fire and ice, but then
every winter day does. You look
calm despite my confession.

Had you known I'd fossilized
a couple of eons ago when
evolution was only a mote

in the eye of some strange god?
Had you noticed that I'm smoldering
in the slowest act of vengeance?

We have errands. Supermarket
with its sadly understocked shelves,
drugstore overburdened with drugs,

bookstore where gaudy best-sellers
taunt with dust jackets employed
to conceal cheap cardboard bindings

and sexualize the innocent text.
Being fossil fuel, I ignore
the Freudian context designed

to trigger the basest instincts.

But the gradual depletion
of my only resource arouses

pity in friends and neighbors.

If the smoke ever clears, I'll thank them
for their patience and apologize

for all carbon-based life forms,
including those literate enough
to know better than to burn.

William Doreski

Mary Replies to Rachel's Poetry

excerpts from poems in *Blud*, by Rachel McKibbens

“Some of us vanish

out of habit,”

Rachel wrote

about a mind,

and Mary’s sure

memory and

forgetting can happen

that way—

without thinking about it.

And sometimes

vanish is more vaporize

than melt away,

ebb, or wane.

Presto!

The magic hat is empty.

No more

pulling rabbits.

They’ve escaped.

Mary’s mind shrinks,

grows smaller

the farther

her body vacates:

A bit left

at Sadore Lane,

her foot at Brookdale,

elbows rubbed off

on Allen Avenue,

her heart broken

in Valhalla,

the hamlet south of Thornwood.

“What’s the word
for a shadow’s
shadow?” asked Rachel.
Two bloodshot eyes,
wide-spaced,
are on the cover of her book.

Mary replies,

*Once the light is gone
you can
embalm a ghost.*

D. Walsh Gilbert



The Man from the Other Side of the Reservoir

with cinders in his pocket
pulls you into the cornfield
shows you the rent
in the earth
that was not there
last night

you cannot see the bottom
but you hear static, soft
like the churn of waves
or a thousand TVs at 3AM
before the advent of cable
and in the wall of noise
you think you hear snatches
of songs
but you can't remember
the words

Robert Beveridge



Nine More

Not all can be jailed,
not all can be killed,
and if they were
what then your worth?

Your face is puffy Putin,
and your putrid pullulations will not reach
everywhere,
a swelling resistance roaring back as before,
history lessons repeating; a required remembrance,
for forgetting is inevitable.

Navalny in his crucible says, “More weight,”
be his sentence nine or 113 years--
he will speak his mind and wait on the wire
till his countrymen stand bold,
face the venality,
bind with their global brothers, sisters,
tear corruption’s bloody covers off the body of
Ukraine,
their neighbor and relative,
demand their freedom
and rise like sunflowers in an August field,
blowing gently in a changed wind.

Karen Warinsky

Work Remains

1. Robert Desnos

The war killed him.

In a trance, he kept talking
through the fever that killed him.

He spoke his final words
in the concentration camp
that killed him,

kept listening to the feverish thoughts
that yielded his final poems,
starved into form,
with indestructible grace.

Liberation did not come soon enough;
liberation, always at hand.

He resisted the war with poetry,
a stance that marked him for death,
and his words came alive

in a voice that survives him
and which speaks to us today
in a world, still at war.

2. René Daumal

He sinks into his sick bed
the depth of a coal truck,

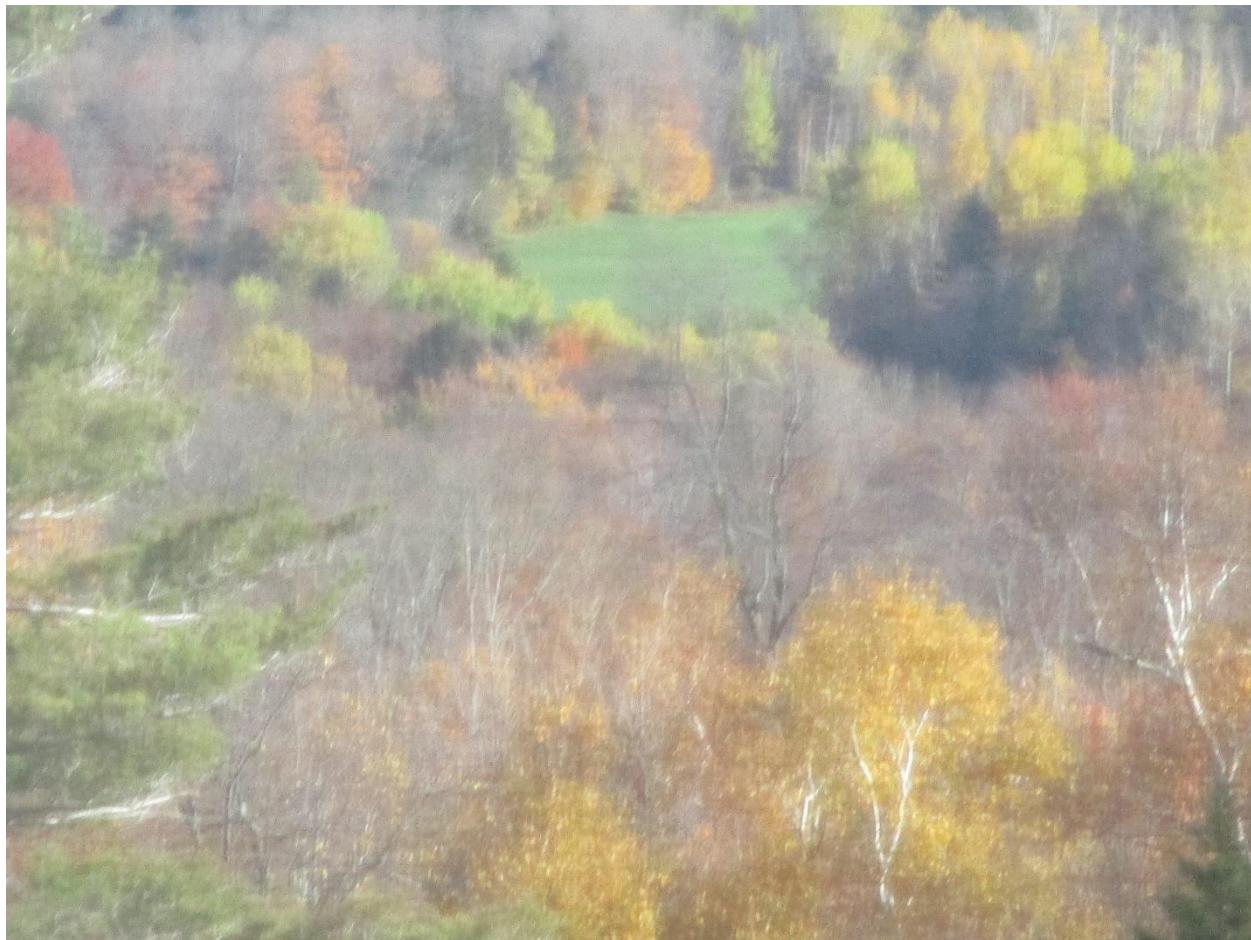
while bothersome specialists
handling intricate levers
and pulleys attend to him.

They have already missed
the moment of his soul's departure.

Stephen Campiglio



Diane Lowman



We Are All Ukrainians Now

Without making sacrifices,
Without spilling our blood,
Without watching our children die,
Or our cities being razed,
Without our families being torn apart,
Without a deadly convoy at our door.

We can still hear the piercing sirens,
summoning you to safety underground.
We listen to your pleas as you push back.
As insurmountable odds increase by the minute,
and death continues to claim those you love,
you remain tall, with head unbowed.

Despite neighborhoods turned to dust or charred by fire,
your courage and resolve do not diminish.
Your cries for freedom and democracy are being heard.
Your message reaches beyond your people,
embracing us as well.
We are all Ukrainians now!

Sylvia Scherer

Editor's Note: This poem is obviously very topical, yet it also echoes history. In 1961, Yevgeny Yevtushenko wrote his famous poem, "Babi Yar," in which he identifies with the victims of earlier tragic events near Kiev and around the world.



V. V. Aldebaran McEvoy

Vote for me! I would
decree three Sundays each week... .
and Justice for all

V. V. Aldebaran McEvoy



Window Series -- Blue
Bessy Reyna

Rituals Forgone

Whether you wear black or white while mourning,
Whether you pray or chant,
Whether you place flowers on a headstone or let them drift,
Whether you raise your eyes to the sky or bow your head,
Whether you pray in a synagogue, church, mosque or send thoughts to the stars,
Whether you wrap the body in a shroud or need a wooden coffin,
Whether you walk barefoot next to oxen pulling a cart or drive behind a black hearse,
Whether you bury the body or silhouette it with small stones,
Whether fire cleanses your dead or the earth opens its arms,
Whether your sendoff includes dance, drink, food, laughter or a circle of silence,
Whether your loved one has been taken prematurely or died of old age,
Those slaughtered wantonly should not have to lie in a common grave.

In Mariupol, the bodies lie scattered in ruins or contorted on empty streets.

In an a lull between shelling and bombings:

family, friends, neighbors, or strangers come out of their refuge to bury their dead.
As fast as they can, in long trenches, they dig up the earth for corpses not rigid yet.
Far away from cemeteries targeted by enemy fire, only they know this resting place.
Tears left for later, prayers quickly said.

Nobody should have to be buried in a makeshift common grave.

Sylvia Scherer



Dispatch

same thing for caves – not a big fan
store windows and their changes
additions and subtractions start
with three and walk in that direction
gathering others as they go
along the road where north
right-hand turn takes the march
into another zone of consciousness
and peace along the border fence
three soldiers pacified by pilgrims
moving into the conflagration across
rivers thawed by tawny spring moon
cities rebuilt for everyone together yeah
shopping walking enjoyment time
 flashes in night air morning dusted
corn flakes in flak in fact in cars
west and buttoned and closed and
close call ask the reservation desk
 words evolve and deepen
return coffin car return closed theater
return surprise with shaking hands
not handshake nor ploughshares
scissor-cut and stashed autocrat at
bat no strikes but has struck
would have raised a better crop
if provided with seed

Dennis Barone





Rain, Finally

I was the solace you craved
Carried in on tropic highs
Swept in on the cavalier Jetstream.

Teasing drops like heavy tears
You sighed, welcomed the reprieve
Till I careened in thunderous sheets
Torrents seizing the air
Saturating completely.

Every root and tendril soaked
Dusty gutters overflowed
Every garden stone glistened
All crevices invaded,
All day, all night.

So consumed by your need
I lost myself in your wanting.
A humid musk signaled
We'd had enough.
This couldn't go on forever,
We both knew that.

Lorraine Riess

Snowflakes

Always enchanted with the fall of dancing flakes—
Crystals forming, coalescing into magic shapes—
Even at my age, I caught them on my tongue with joy.
Now that feeling is gone.

In another country, snow adds its chill to the senseless war—
Not yet a blizzard, but a gentle constant fall.
The sight of dead and sorrow must continue unimpaired,
so the world can witness what is really going on.

Snowflakes fall on crowds of all ages, readying to flee
and join four million others their friendly neighbors have already received.
Little in possessions but holding on to their most precious ones,
the disbelief in their faces needs no further words.

The children—once eager to frolic, antsy to play—
have rushed outside ungloved, now clutching adult hands,
others—trapped or silenced under rubble
turning white—will be the missing ones.

Flurries enter buildings destroyed by bombs.
Torn white curtains flutter, not in surrender or truce,
but welcoming snow through broken glass,
as silent witness to the evil of one man.

Entering and exiting charred skeletons of cars and buses with ease,
or landing on convoys of tanks and trucks, they cannot end the war,
or put a stop to the human toll.
The chill of their silence is all that remains.

A young woman, thinly dressed, with frozen hands
scoops snow into a dirty bucket,
to quench the thirst and quell the hunger
of her abandoned student friends.

The incessant pummeling from the sky is the order of the day.
Families running for their lives
are viciously shelled, women and children falling
on the snow, which slowly turns to red.

Sylvia Scherer



Old Red Barn Down the Road

Karl Traichel



Second Growth

This home I have lived in before:
rigid red oak, gray birch, granite.
In dreams, in flesh, in something more
than life and death, I find respite.

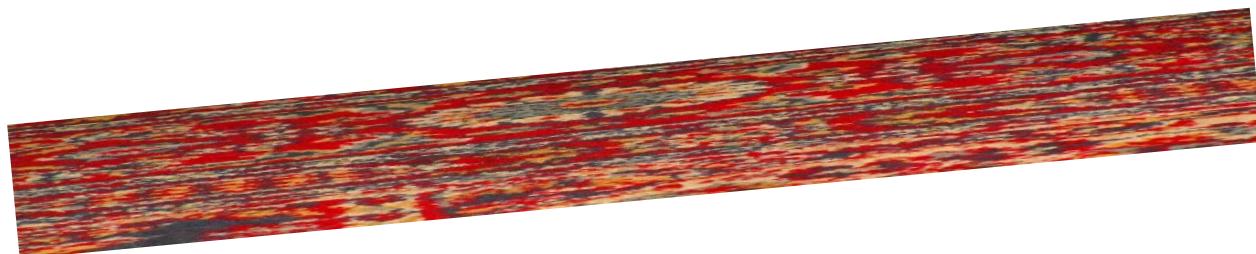
On red oak, gray birch, cold granite
lichens fan drab and faded greens.
In life, not death, I find respite,
release. Rain-drenched slate, steep ravines,

dull lichens fan with faded greens.
Thunders shear through wind-whipped aspens
release rain, drench slate-steep ravines,
fell trees to shelter autumn dens.

Sheer thunders rip wind-whipped aspens,
hickories shed coarse sheets of brown—
trees fall and shelter autumn dens.
Trunks swell, bark splits, sweet saps seep down.

I hear huge curls of deep keening
in dreams, in flesh, in something more
than this bleak time of trees bleeding.
This home I have lived in before.

Claudia McGhee





Dancing through the Clouds

Karl Traichel

**All Must Come to Pass,
Each Leaving Love's Memory
as Our Permanence**

*(for David Pilot
on his continued journey
as bodhisattva)*

Your name was/is/will
always be Pilot. Goddamn,
You have flown your last!
Taking words not shared,
art not made, breath from our lungs...
Leaving hearts crumpled.
When I see you next --
all the time, everywhere --
We'll both be grinning

V. V. Aldebaran McEvoy -



Industrial Relic with Some Freshly Applied Color

William Crawford

Interiority

I must leave predictable places.

I've become invisible to myself.

A sharded landscape

salted with specter trees –

silent, misshapen, rotted out –

smothers me in a cold void.

I'm underwater with my life,

engulfed.

What's left to say:

trying to move a mountain

is like trying to split an atom

with your teeth. And no song

can be a covenant when sung

without love.

No angels

float in the starlight; no

demons chasten with words.

What is this time that spirals

throughout the night only

to settle with the dew

before crystalline dawn?

All that remains is memory

whose fractal paths burgeon

into a sea of dimensionless shapes

where instincts rise to the surface

to begin their eager swim toward shore.

David Cappella



leaves waiting to emerge

Bessy Reyna

The Border

The president of Belarus,
outraged at EU sanctions
of his corrupt election and persecution of dissidents,
issued visas, permitted flights
from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon to Minsk.

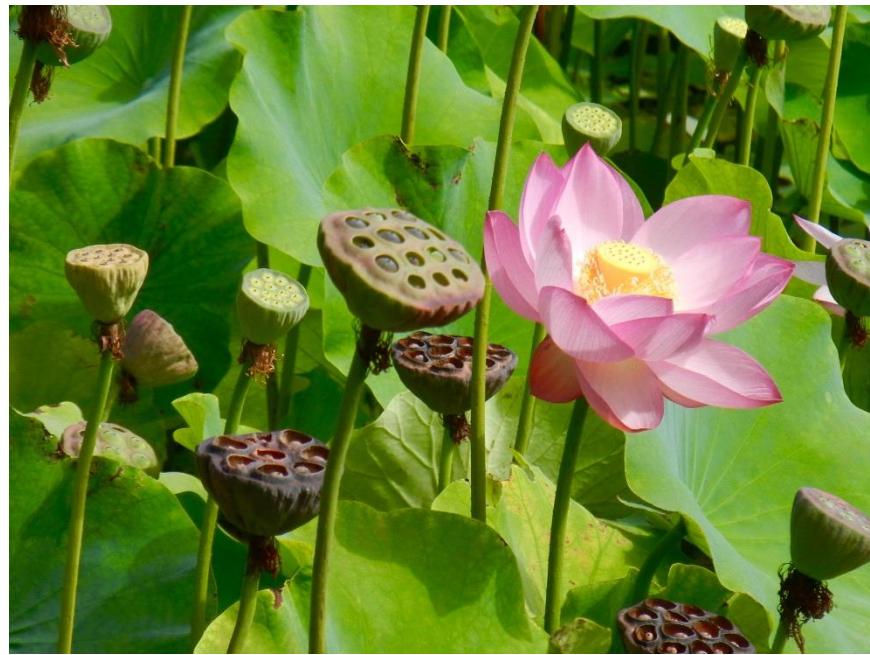
When 4000 desperate refugees arrived,
they were hustled to a camp on the Polish border
and issued barbed-wire cutters;
thus invaded, Europe would understand
that it was he, the president, who shielded her
from savage hordes and lift sanctions.

The Polish soldiers forced the Moslems back
to their tents. Some died in November cold;
all were hungry. (Later photos
of the ground show abandoned dolls and shawls,
blankets.) In the melee,
lasers and strobes were aimed from Belarus
at the Poles. It remains unclear whether
this tactic came from the president himself
or a colonel's operatic sensibility.

One day the Guatemalans and Hondurans
waiting, variously preyed on,
south of El Paso, Rohingyas
in Bangladesh, Libyans on islands
will note a quiet in the air
and on whatever radios, an absence
of guards. And tentatively
part the wire, walk through gates,
find empty roads and houses,
more sand, then the first fields.
Some will already share
a language in which to express

the shock of miracle, or perhaps
a more generous horror; others
will have to develop one. And to farm
when the freezers and shelves are empty.
Nations will grow
from the borders of those that were;
of the old stories will remain
that of Hagar and Ishmael.

Frederick Pollack



Gemma Mathewson

The French Club Goes to Chicago

This is for Jim,
a 20-something waiter
at the fancy French restaurant
Miss Larkin took us to in “the city,”
a busload of boisterous schoolgirls
feeling every bit of 16,
bold after viewing *Claire’s Knee*.

His funky round glasses
framed an alert look;
he knew the power of women,
observed us warily as we flirted and sassed
beyond Miss Larkin’s reach,
the other girls trapped by her presence
at their end of the table.

Poor Jim!
He offered us tangerines
after the meal
which we took like treasure.
Later, some girls threw them out the bus windows
captive to an inexpressible wildness.

And this is for the middle-aged man I saw
as he walked along Wacker Drive at 5 p.m.,
his workday done,
the bus taking us back to our country town,
our waiting parents.

He looked up, adjusting his neck scarf,
our eyes met and I swear we had a moment,
each wondering about the other's life,
he, having no idea about Jim, or Miss Larkin,
and me, holding my orange
like a tiny globe.

Karen Warinsky



Blue Sweater

(apologies to WCW)

To wear his sweater
is to don his scent,
wear his history;
nestling into emptiness
with a looseness that recalls
the weight he'd slowly lost.

Where his barrel chest
did it justice, now her breasts
barely push forward
if memory or mirror
can be trusted.

Not much depended then
on the red glazed gift box
with pert white bow holding
a bundle of blue cashmere.
They inhaled the same air,
brushed their cheeks against
the folds of silken wool.

Blue wringing out the blues
cocooned in silence
washed with the weak sun
of this winter afternoon.

The shawl collar cossets her
its swaddling comfort
belies what is lost.

She has resewn the shoulder twice
to keep her memories whole.

Lorraine Riess

Lovebirds

He was the straightman
for her acerbic barbs.
To compensate
he ate:
To keep the peace
became obese,
slammed the kitchen doors
and drawers
though she's repeatedly
implored him
not to.

On the nights he snored
she foraged
for the chocolate
stored in the nightstand.
He ignored the foil
wrinkling
before dropping back
to sleep.

They loved each other
for forty years.

Mercilessly.

Lorraine Riess



Finding Full Sun on a Cold Winter Morning

William Crawford

Becoming America

America, my love, you see you're not alone:
I'm here among the many who would be your better angels.

In your streets, as in our homes,
we would help you live your natural goodness.

America, my love, I'm here because you will not listen,
because you've sold your soul to corporate gigolos.
because you've lost your mind to visions of dominion,
because you've auctioned off the land, the sea, the sky,
the very fate and future of your people.

America, my love, stop reading those deceitful press releases,
the ones proclaiming you the greatest, richest, and most powerful,
because if it were true your people would not want
for health, for learning, for rent and food,
we would not wonder why our happiness and welfare are
not in the national interest,
we would not wonder why we fight and lose long wars
in places we have never visited nor wanted to,
or why our war vets wander abject streets in madness and despair,
seeking manhood in a bottle or a needle.

America, my love, we've taken to the streets
that lead to your great heart,
because your justice is not color blind
because the cops keep killing young black men,
because Latinos fear a knock upon their door,
because your streets aren't safe for your most fragile citizens,
because they are afraid to vote,
because your judges, senators, and president force

feckless sex prerogatives on women in their power,
and get away with it,
because it's time that women run the country.

America, for love of you we won't stand down –
not while our congress wanders hollow-eyed
 among the cloakrooms of the Capitol,
 craving one more corporate fix,
not while lobbyists serve as pimps purveying cash fellatio,
not while buying politicians with campaign donations
 is called free speech, not common bribery.

America, my love, it's your ideals that make you rich,
 they are your capital to spend on us,
 spend on a nation yearning for your goodness.

Of, by, and for us, we the people
 insist on government that gives you courage
 to fulfill your principles of justice, freedom, and equality.

America, my love, we won't stand down 'til
 we can breathe, a free people,
 equal in each other's eyes,
 proud of the country that we love.

Christie Max Williams

What If Clichés

What if liberal meant a lot more gravy on your mashed potatoes?

What if a *bleeding heart* was a life-saving transplant?

What if reality is just the psychosis of consciousness.

If every word in the dictionary was a trigger warning for someone,
would we lose the ability to speak?

And what if a *big man on campus* was the center
of the women's basketball team?

What if caught with his pants down

was not a senator in the men's room?

If you *ate your words* would that mean the literature
and vomit are the same thing?

What if it *goes without saying*
means he took the fifth amendment?

Would it still be over if the Fat Lady sings
the entrance song?

What if everything really tasted like chicken?

Would we all then become vegetarians?

What if *dropped me a line* meant she left
out some words?

Doesn't *the naked truth* always result in a cover up?

If it is *needless to say*, why am I saying it?

If *there is no love lost* then who is hoarding it all?

What if *one foot in the grave* meant the digger
still had five feet to go?

Or maybe that the undertaker just *slipped up*?

If you *solved for X*, wouldn't the other letters expect the same?

If you *reap what you sow* might you be accused
of making hay while the sun shines?

If it is *the same old story* why does Hollywood
keep making it into a trilogy?
and why can't the gorilla get the girl in the end?
Instead of *what goes around comes around*
why not *just, get over it?*
What *if at my wits end* was another way
to say that this poem was over?

Tony Fusco



Dead Red with Lines.

William Crawford

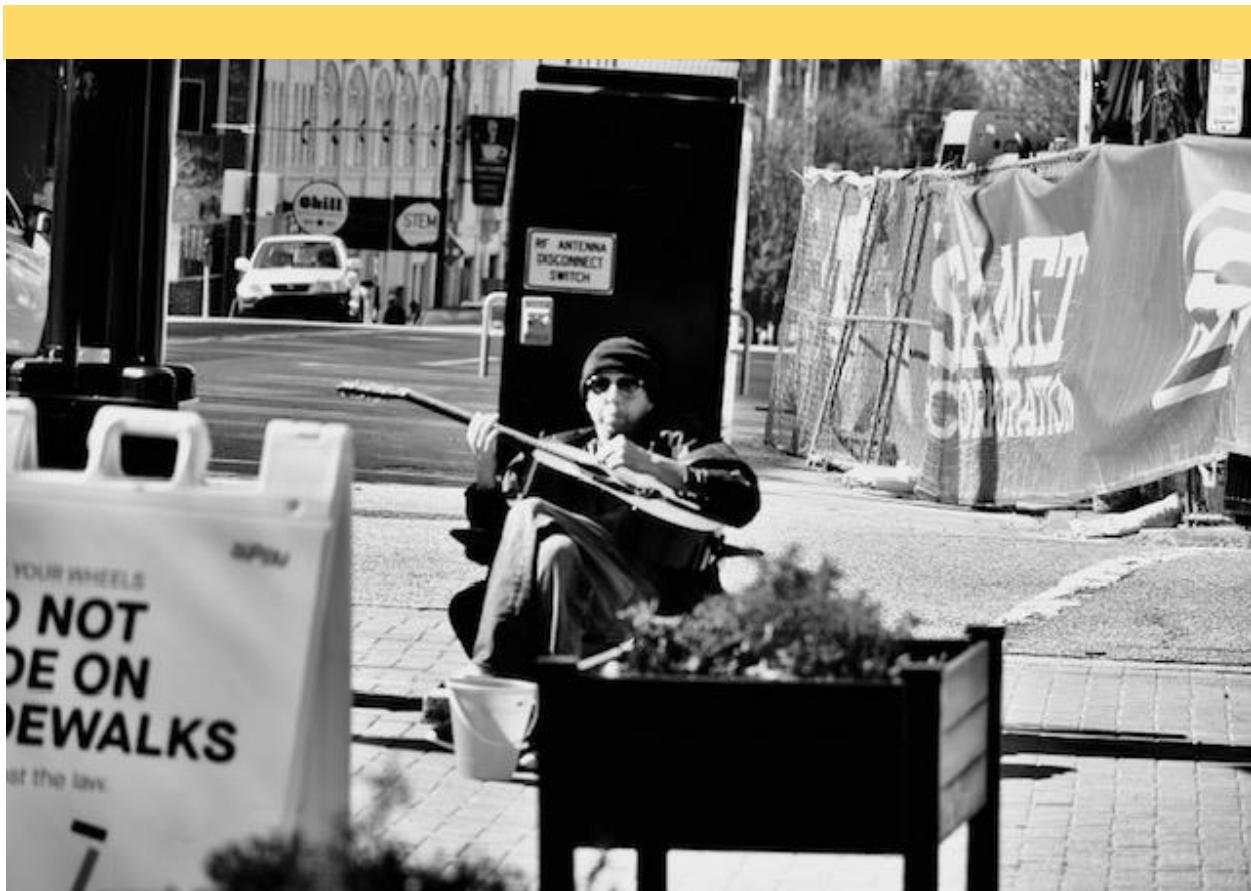
Chaos Theory

A woman takes a knee by the side of the road thinks:

“Surely the Mourning Cloak I spy this morning is mourning. Having surveyed our condition from its higher vantage point, it must wonder, as I do, if the storm that felled so many trees, that destroyed this holy place, did so on purpose. Barring us from passage. Asking us *who we think we are*, as Frost wrote, *insisting always on our own way so*. Our own way. God help us. Who DO we think we are...littering these open spaces with our trash, leaving our detritus and dog shit behind? Dragging our noisy selves and our machineries along paths as if we have some lofty right? Infesting the woods with our toxic nature, our assumed religions, our fabricated joy. Infesting *the world* with our opinions, our politics, our petty, pathetic proclivities. Insisting on our own way and ever ignorant of the ripple effect, the consequences.”

A woman takes a knee by the side of the road — butterfly, startled, flies away, a world away a world dies — and we think she is praying.

Jen Payne



Street Troubadour in Repose

William Crawford

Artifact Found on a Pleasant Local Walk

A chance glance,
and my eye wanders
to a curious glint by the curb.

I wonder
where you'd come from,
why you were nestled
in this restful suburban setting, a few yards
from my neighbor's vanilla raised ranch.

I look at you with unformed fear,
of what and why I can't
yet put into words.

You seem out of place,
an alien presence
dissonant to my mood.

Yet, the architecture of your curves,
the coolly machined smoothness
of your shiny symmetry caught and held me.

I pick you up,
and knock off stringy clods of street debris.
I scan your silvery cylinder,
whose sleek shape
reveals your purpose.

I roll you over, finding, finally,
the mark of your creators: '.40, S & W.'
I know now what you are and why you are, but not
why you are where you are.

I don't often find discarded shell casings
from high-caliber handguns,
and am troubled by images
that arise as I dwell on you.

Did you strike a practice target and then,
destiny fulfilled, get carelessly flung to the gutter?
Or if you spoke with malice,
whose voice did you silence?

Karl Traichel



Web by Charlotte

How to Teach Mountain Meadow Grasses to Grow Less Than a Foot High?*

They say we are growing
Weeds instead of Law/n they call us
Blight they say this breaks the covenant
they signed with their builders to keep
a uniform appearance, a monoculture through-
out their emergent neighborhood of They

As if anything can really BE owned the men
who own wives who will own only upon survivor-ship
are a covenant? more like a silent pledge of allegiance to
a patriarchy rampant with speciesism, racism, heterosexism, misogyny

We also could have bought a lot to build a new house but
it was as if the model house was built for us and was waiting
received best green award design for energy efficiency
why destroy more meadow? *maybe* the back lot bed of
lush red clover wouldn't sell a house there would be
less than 100 feet from mammoth electricity pylons
a serious health concern, *but* a patriarch with his brother
would purchase that lot and a second, the one next to us would
shoehorn in two massive houses with oil-based driveways almost
as wide as a road for their eleven new cars who
could have imagined it? *but*

Yes we want this to BE our home *For* life not investment
The attorney draws up a custom contract and we become one

Our first night, with cat friend, Claude
we breathe in the vast expanse of August coming to a close
take deep gulps of windfresh mountain air in the infinite field of night

stars clovers space quiet a within

coyotes' yipyaps carry down from the nearby mountain where
Metacomet of the Wampanoag hid out in a cave from property frenzied settlers
who eventually pursued him into Massachusetts where they would take his life

One neighbor says our weeds "look like a highway exit ramp".

These tall grasses are our relatives we live with them.

What he next calls invasive species is in fact

Queen Anne's Lace, a New England native.

My spouse speaks up to say so as he turns around to tell her
"That's right". Smug as all hell just having lied to town councilors
while affirming the opposite to us because we know better

Another asks why *we* bought here

Isn't that obvious? We are surrounded by 500 acres of state-owned flood plain meadows.
They hire landscapers who chemicalize, install underground automatic sprinkler systems.
The runoff will kill our back yard indigenous white and red clover fields

Our home nestles into an old farm orchard easement on the east side.

All that thrives here has not asked an ounce of water from us.

Up on this windy, trap rock mountain ridge of scant topsoil
a groundcover of diverse grasses resists erosion prevents flooding
nitrogen sacks in the red clover roots nurture all

All that is here has learned how to be here

how to thrive sharing growth within
infinite interdependent webs made up of over the course of
countless eons before man made time

The town manager dismisses our neighbors' complaint because
they do not constitute a homeowners' association *we are safe*

Now it's the town's turn it will fine us \$100 a day *until* we comply
with a new law(n) ordinance that grasses must not be more than a foot high.
How about the State of Minnesota, paying people to stop landscaping?

How can we teach mountain meadow grasses to grow less than a foot high in order to flower and seed?
Who are we to say we know their life cycle better
than they do?

I want to lay down with the weeds in the wind
in the mountain's presence the mountain who
made this meadow far before man made the law

What did we do that 14 ganged up against us? Nothing.

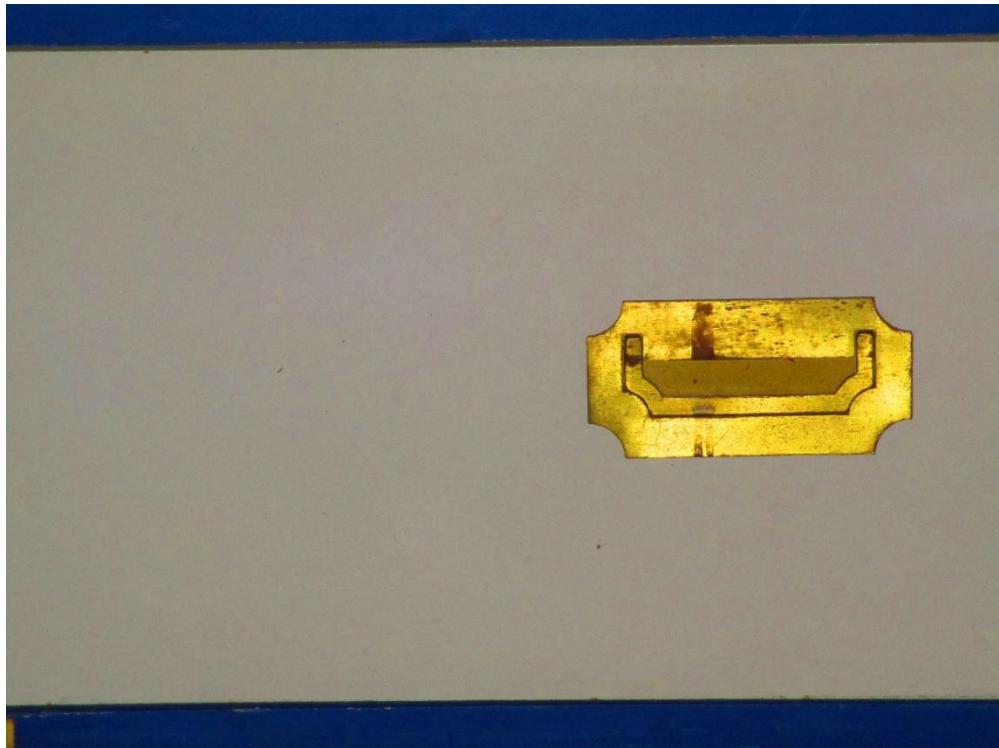
We did nothing. We just let be. Let the mountain meadow
return in its own sense of time over these eight years with still much yet left for it to do
to re-surge against *almost* insurmountable,
exponential odds

landscapers' weekly motorized onslaught a kind of combat with
the interdependent part of life we name death

the withering, decaying release of the living we call ugly
the mysterious part our species will not control

Donna Fleischer

**Postscript: Not one fine was levied during the six months after this town hall meeting. Thereafter, the cited town ordinance was rescinded and removed from the town hall's website. Let it not be said that one individual nor one blade of grass cannot make a difference.*



The Thought of a Letter to the World

Writing on the grain of falling snow,
I'm careful to spell our names
with several extra capitals
and a flourish like John Hancock's.
Despite the surly weather

we have to shop for groceries
and face the depleted shelves
where our favorite products resided.
Among its many topics,
my letter complains that people

angled like rhomboids have claimed
excessive space and matter.

I list our needed groceries but
accept that their absence defines
our place in the mega cosmos.

The snow looks too timid to stop
much traffic or even dust the pines.

My letter will feel too flimsy
to mail first-class. No stamp will stick
to the moist envelope. But drive

by the post office anyway.

The thought of a letter to the world
matters more than the object itself.

You aren't curious to read it
because tired of my nonsense,

but someone in the back room
of the supermarket will find it
clinging to the lone window
where last summer's flies buzzed
and died. Reading it is difficult,

but bored by his job this fellow
will try so hard to decipher
the half-thawed holograph that
he'll become the living image
I didn't have words to describe.

William Doreski



Silent Film Actor

I wrestle a chewed bone from a Rottweiler's jaws

I sing in a choir in St. Patrick's Cathedral

I hold a silent film actor's hand in a cemetery

near a zoo. Don't stop loving me.

I haven't harmed the dog or sung off key or stolen

a bouquet at the foot of a headstone.

I plan to get the actor to his scheduled train

and make certain his niece, Heidi, will be

at his point of arrival.

Maybe on the way to the station we'll stop

in a bar, where I'll buy him a Manhattan

and myself a gin and tonic,

Though nothing's certain. I'm not going to

put him on the wrong train or lead him

on foot across a frozen lake.

We're visiting the stones of actors he once knew.

I, who have wrestled a bone from a Rottweiler's jaws

and sung in a church choir, met the actor years ago

in a drugstore in Calais, Maine.

His wife was blonde and beautiful, who now is

ashes. His name is Robert Metzler, whose

niece will meet him at his destination, Washington D.C.

I've never met her. My name is Darrell Moore.

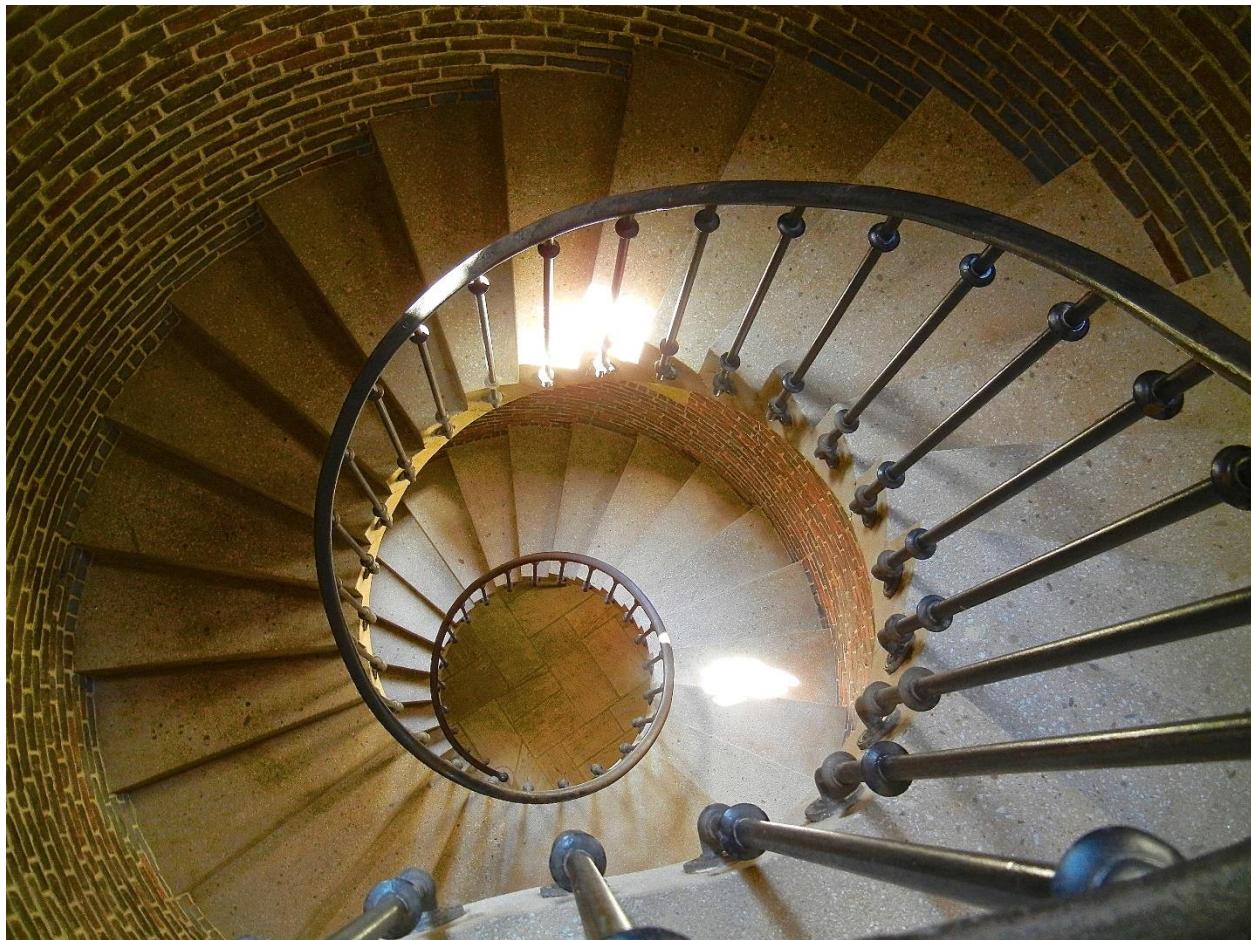
I once lifted a child onto an elephant.

A man, a stranger, led her round the elephant's ring

and nearby was a carousel. That was before I

knew Robert Metzler, before I started singing, before

I came to these stones and found you among the living.



Feeling edgy

Feel like walking on the edge.

Walking and talking with an edge. And being silent. Over the edge.

the boy in the cellar

he knelt on the bare mattress
reaching behind his knees, he peeled off
two dirty sopping wet socks
one by one, he rolled them lengthwise
one by one, squeezed them out
in the palm of his hand

one by one he snapped them open
with a flick of his wrist
droplets flying everywhere
he smoothed them out
with both palms
and placed them evenly
on a horizontal metal pipe
just above his head

all the while his mother
described to the journalist
the horror of their
two week attempted escape
from tanks, bombs, hunger, snow
the boy kept even focus on his task

two smaller hands reached
up within camera range
with two smaller socks
he rolled, squeezed, snapped
situated on the pipe,
carefully next to his

until she described her fear
for her husband
left to defend their homeland
the boy had not changed
his expression or pace

at that point he approached her from behind,
lowered his eyes, and tenderly,
put a hand on her shoulder,
the other around her waist

at night
when I close my eyes
he still shelters beneath my lids.

Gemma Mathewson



Photo by Gemma Mathewson

This poem was found on the Timberlands Trails, in Guilford, CT. The author may be the tree. We don't know. If we locate a human author we will certainly give the appropriate credit. If you have an idea who wrote this, please let us know.

Release the Poems

Because every poem is a poem about freedom,
Before it is too late,
Because of what they are saying,
Because the world is the world and that is not so good,
Because scientists have determined that the basic particle is beauty,
Because the structure of the world is fractured,
Before they start rounding up poets,
Before it is too late,
Because one of my uncles says that democracy is shaky and will not last,
Because another uncle says there is nothing we can do,
Because another uncle says that the world is incapable of dealing with the climate,
Because poets are taking themselves off social media,
Because I am being paranoid,
Because I know a lot of Republicans,
Because some percentage of them believe certain things,
Even though those certain things are not nearly the fabric of the universe,
Because if certain people believe certain things, then what stops them from believing others,
Because people are dying,
Because there is nothing we can do,
Because it is cold out, and the wind chill is cold and everything is cold,
Because the ash trees on my block are falling,
Because jelly no longer associates with peanut butter,
Because they are rounding up poets,
Because they have rounded up uighurs,
Because they have rounded up utopians,
Because they have rounded up environmentalists,
Because I am scared to mention the groups they are rounding up,
Because people have – and this is true – shot at houses in my town that were displaying Black Lives Matter signs,
Because my Black Lives Matter sign was stolen from my lawn,
Because the signs that remain on lawns offer frightening messages,
Because we cannot know who to trust,

Because the signs are clear,
Because the bridges are falling,
Because cheating is now considered okay and honor has been deleted from the rules,
Because truth no longer matters,
Because I wake up in the middle of the night worried,
Because there are images I cannot escape,
Release the Poems.

Because I am hoping there is hope though hope is hiding,
Because this feeling will just not go away,
Because this poem has no end,
Release the Poems.
Release the Poems.
Release the Poems.

Mark McGuire-Schwartz

Part of the Problem

(sadly, inevitably, revised 2022)

The “real” problem, the pundit statistician on the radio said, “is not school shootings.” “Statistically” he explained “more people are shot in one-on-one crimes of passion.”

The problem is thinking there is only one problem.

The problem is imagining pieces of children blown apart by an AK15 could be a statistic.

The problem is Hop-along Cassidy, is Rambo, is Kill Bill, is Star Wars, is G.I. Joe, is The Transformers, is Lethal Weapon, is The Terminator, is Die Hard, is The Dark Knight, is Natural Born Killers, is 007.

The problem is that television, computers, cell phones and video games are not baby-sitters and institutions are not parents.

The problem is the insurance company will not reimburse the psychotherapist after 6 visits.

The problem is 50 shades of normalizing abuse and romanticizing violence.

The problem is the media persists in sensationalizing the actions of an irrational person.

The problem is that lock down only works in jails.

The problem is Postal 2, is Grand Theft Auto, is Manhunt, is Madworld, is Thrill Kill, is Mortal Combat, is Gears of War, is God of War, is Soldier of Fortune, is Armageddon.

The problem is that the motive of an irrational, enraged or emotionally damaged person is ultimately irrational. There is no “reason.”

The problem is the National Rifle Association, its gun lobby, and the EVIL members of congress who make a fortune from their bribes.

The problem is that children die of starvation, disease, and genocide every day without a list of their names.

The problem is that brain function is distorted by toxic chemicals in the food, the water, the air, and drugs from the womb onward.

The problem is that the second amendment is a dangerous archaic artifact. We do not have “organized militias” any more. Except when they are organized by the former President and his minions to host an insurrection.

The problem is that the parents are texting and the child is invisible.

The problem is that a child in our culture will use his stick or finger as a gun if he has nothing else at hand.

The problem is the psychotherapist (she said to me) doesn't even have enough time for her own children these days.

The problem is Ronald Reagan who said, after his attempted assassination in which he was wounded and his press secretary James Brady was paralyzed,
“ It does not change my mind about gun control.”

The problem is cutting the mental health budget to sponsor another war for Halliburton.

The problem is that we apparently forgot to pray for the safety of our children, since, as clergy reminds us, “god answers all prayers.”

The problem is that legislation is always one giant step behind the technology.

The problem is that our society has made bullies into heroes.

The problem is that my grandchildren live with this existential fear.

The problem is that, since Herod, the Innocents have been slaughtered in the name preserving power.

The problem is that “a well regulated militia” with AK47s on January 6th could have slaughtered the entire Congress.

The problem is that if we are not part of the solution we are part of the problem, and if we are a part of the solution, we are only a part of the solution to the part of the problem we have identified as the problem.

Gemma Mathewson

Walking with Zak

1

I am walking down the middle
of the street with Zak. There is no
traffic. They say it will rain.

2

The fog is blowing off snow. It is 60
degrees out, after ten days of less than
ten degrees. They say the rain
will be torrential.

3

There is a grocery store in my town
called The Big Y. Wikipedia tells me
that it is a chain that employs 12,000
people in southern New England.

4

To me, Big Y sounds like
a niche market for philosophers
and poets.

5

I tell my dog to eat some snow
before it is gone. Such is life.

6

Zak loves to eat the snow.
He chases the blowing leaves
that seem a season too late.

7

We are walking. I have an age

and a location and an attitude.

8

But why would you care?

10

In the fog I remember Alice
asking the Cheshire Cat
which path to follow.

11

“It depends where you want
to go,” he tells her.

12

At home I turn on an app
called MicroGenesis. It bills
itself GPS for the Soul.

13

A man is spouting Arabs and Muslims.
He seems to not understand the
difference. “Immigration then
infiltration,” he snarls. “MikeGen,”
I say, “Less hate.” And it switches
to a man predicting planetary doom.

14

“The climate, pollution, locusts, and drought”
he says. “If war doesn’t destroy us, then asteroids
will. We are due for an asteroid,
and there’s always a war.”

15

I ask Mike Gen for “less gloomy” before the

soothsayer can predict the evils of aliens.

“You only know what you know,” it says.

“But aliens may know much more.”

16

I ask Mike Gen if my poems
will be rust. “Of course,” it answers,
“Everything must.”

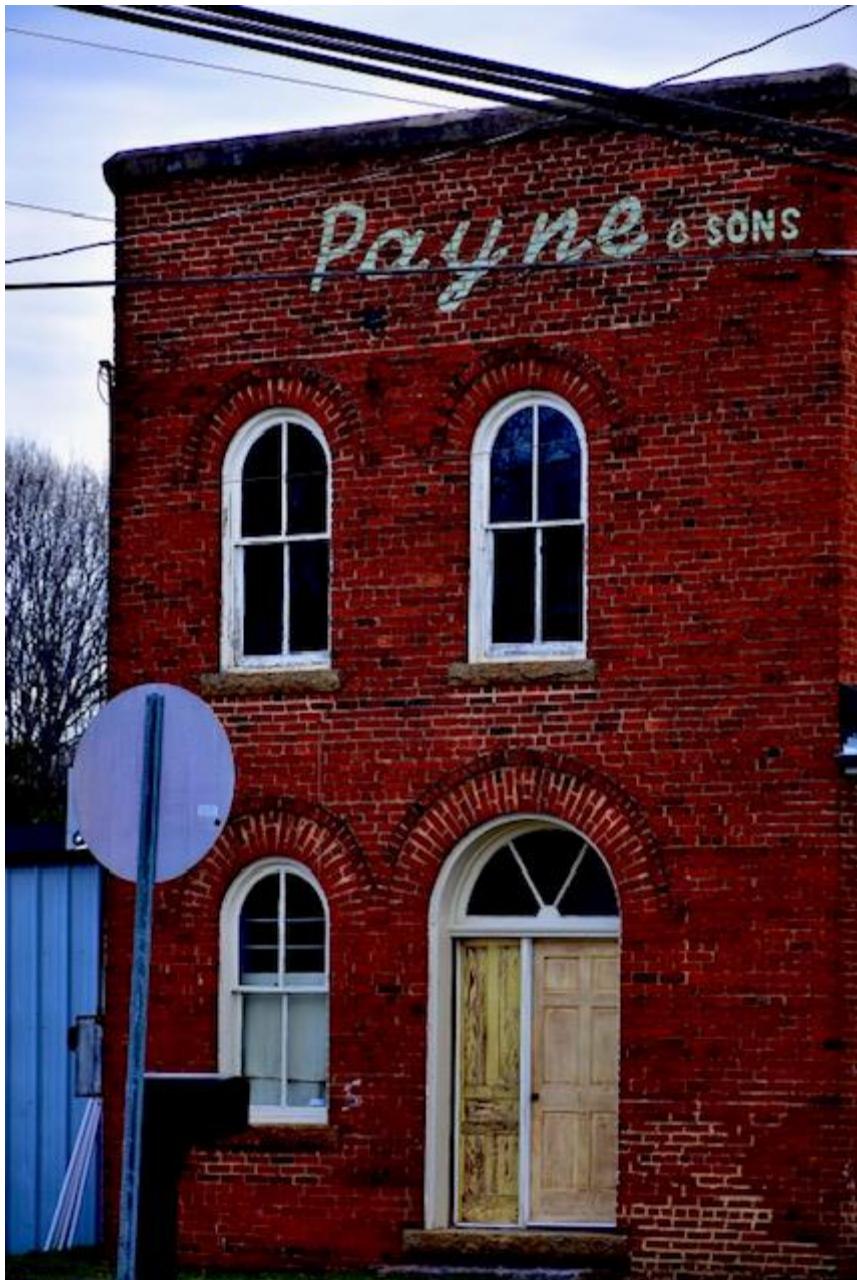
17

Last night, I wrote about putting
things into boxes. First, I put truth
into the large one. But it vaporized
and leaked out under the cover.

Today, I found a poem by Gregory
Corso. It was about putting Truth
into a box.

I have an age and a location. But why
should anyone care?

Mark McGuire-Schwartz



A Lifetime of Memories. Rural Hall, NC.

William Crawford

Gimme something sharp. Gimme a divider. Either here or there. The thinnest possible margin in between. We yearn to be the edge. Push that edge as if there were no boundaries.



& we wonder what else
has happened
to Current affairs.

(Note: the editors
are pondering whether
we need to prepare
for a special
post apocalyptic issue.)



Still Life Portrait

Anne Sheffield

BIOS

Anne Sheffield, a retired Art and English teacher (for all ages and abilities), now volunteers as a museum docent and a Master Gardener intern. Her braided and experimental artworks have been juried into dozens of exhibitions in Connecticut. Her publications include stories, poems, essays, interviews, creative non-fiction, and reviews in numerous literary magazines.

Bessy Reyna's poetry, short stories and essays are published in numerous anthologies in the USA and Latin America. The recipient of many honors and awards, she's the author of the bilingual poetry chapbook "Memoirs of the Unfaithful Lover." She finds many special worlds looking through a camera. (www.bessyreyna.com)

Christie Max Williams' debut poetry collection, *The Wages of Love*, won the 2022 William Meredith Poetry Prize and will be published in May of this year. He is also a writer and actor. Though originally from California and then New York City, he now lives in Mystic, Connecticut, where he and his wife raised their daughter and son. He has worked as an actor and director in California, New York, and Connecticut. He also worked as a fruit vendor in Paris, a salmon fisherman in Alaska, a consultant on Wall Street, a writer for the National Audubon Society, and in leadership posts for non-profit organizations in whose causes he believes. He co-founded and for many years directed The Arts Café Mystic, which is in its 28th year of presenting programs featuring readings by America's best poets, complemented by music of New England's finest musicians. His poetry has been published in journals, magazines, and anthologies, and has won the Grolier Prize, placed second in the Connecticut River Review Contest, and was a finalist for the National Poetry Series and Morton Marr Prize.

Claudia McGhee has dealt in and with words for decades as technical writer, poet, fiction writer, columnist, and freelance editor. Finishing Line Press published Claudia's chapbook, *Paperlight*. While her technical writing has been translated and distributed worldwide, she is currently working to ensure her words read properly in American English.

D. Walsh Gilbert is the author of *Ransom* (Grayson Books) and winner of The Ekphrastic Review's 2021 "Bird Watching" contest. Her work has recently appeared in *Gleam*, *The Lumiere Review*, *Black Fox Literary Magazine*, *EcoTheo Review*, and the anthology, *Waking Up to the Earth*, among others. She serves with *Riverwood Poetry Series*, and as co-editor of *Connecticut River Review*.

David Cappella, co-author of two poets textbooks, *Teaching the Art of Poetry: The Moves and A Surge of Language*, won the 2006 Bright Hill Press Poetry Chapbook Award. His novel, *Kindling*, has been called "a powerful and devastating coming-of-age story." His sonnet cycle, *Giacomo: A Solitaire's Opera*, appeared as a bi-lingual edition with *puntoacapo Editrice* in November 2021. A stateside version will appear in June 2022 by *Červená Barva* Press.

Dennis Barone is the author of *A Field Guide to the Rehearsal* from *Blaze Vox*. A decade ago he edited *Garnet Poems: An Anthology of Connecticut Poetry Since 1776* for *Wesleyan University Press*.

Diane Lowman is the Poet Laureate of Westport, CT. She writes haiku poems that have appeared in line and in print. Her memoir, *Nothing But Blue*, was published in 2017.

Donna Fleischer's fourth chapbook is called < *Periodic Earth* > (Casa de Cinco Hermanas Press, 2016). Her poems recently appeared in A) *Glimpse* Of), EOAGH, *Solitary Plover*, and *The Helix*. She received the support of a Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art – *Tupelo Press* residency and studies in the *Albertus Magnus College MFA Creative Writing Program*.

Frederick Pollack is the author of two book-length narrative poems, *THE ADVENTURE* and *HAPPINESS* (Story LinePress; the former reissued 2022 by Red Hen Press), and two collections, *A POVERTY OF WORDS* (Prolific Press, 2015) and *LANDSCAPE WITH MUTANT* (Smokestack Books, UK, 2018). Many other poems in print and online journals.

Jen Payne is a published poet and writer and the author of *LOOK UP!*, *Evidence of Flossing*, *Waiting Out the Storm*, and *Water Under the Bridge: A Sort-of Love Story*. She is the owner of *Words by Jen* and *Three Chairs Publishing*, the editor of *MANIFEST* (zine), and writes at www.randomactsofwriting.net.

Karen Warinsky is a former finalist of the Montreal International Poetry Contest and has published widely in journals and anthologies including *Nuclear Impact: Broken Atoms in Our Hands*, and the *Mizmor Anthology*. Her debut collection *Gold in Autumn* was released in 2020, and her new book *Sunrise Ruby* was released this June. (Both books from *Human Error Publishing*). She organizes poetry readings in her area.

Karl Traichel renewed his passion for the ancient, magical world of poetry some years after he retired. He's always been dazzled by the power of a few simple syllables on a page to draw forth the most intense primal emotions, distilling common, painful personal struggles in a shorthand of the soul.

Lorraine Riess is a retired architectural designer living in Haddam, CT. She is a member of the Connecticut River Poets and Connecticut Poetry Society. Her latest poems have appeared in *Connecticut Literary Anthology* and *Connecticut River Review*. Her collection *Still Life With Wings* was published in 2021. She is the current Poet Laureate of Haddam.

Louis Faber's work has previously appeared in *Alchemy Spoon* (UK), *Arena Magazine* (Australia), *Dreich* (Scotland), *Atlanta Review*, *The Poet*, *Glimpse*, *Defenestration*, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, *Rattle*, *Pearl*, *Midstream*, *European Judaism*, *The South Carolina Review* among many others, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. He can be found at: <https://anoldwriter.com>

Monica Ong is a visual poet and the author of *Silent Anatomies*, winner of the Kore Press First Book Award. A Kundiman poetry fellow, Ong founded *Proxima Vera*, a micropress specializing in visual poetry editions and literary art objects, which are now part of distinguished institutional collections worldwide. Her solo exhibition *Planetaria* is on view at the Poetry Foundation from April 21–September 8, 2022. <http://proximavera.com>

Peter Mladinic's fourth book of poems, *Knives on a Table* is available from Better Than Starbucks Publications. An animal rights advocate, he lives in Hobbs, New Mexico.

Robert Beveridge (he/him) makes noise (xterminal.bandcamp.com) and writes poetry in Akron, OH. Recent/upcoming appearances in *Ricochet Review*, *Poetry Pea*, and *Cattails*, among others.

Stephen Campiglio directed the Mishi-maya-gat Spoken Word & Music Series for 12 years at Manchester Community College in CT. Author of two chapbooks, *Cross-Fluence* and *Verbal Clouds through Various Magritte Skies*, his current project, with co-translator Elena Borelli, will result in the complete translation of Giovanni Pascoli's volume of poetry, *Canti di Castelvecchio*.

Sylvia Scherer is a 79 year old poet and artist who has been writing Songs of Protest for a long time. Having seen devastation of war first hand, she believes in adding my voice to many others, who contribute globally to that resounding uproar, demanding freedom and justice for all.

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Tony Fusco is the Poet Laurette of West Haven. He is Past President of the Connecticut Poetry Society. He has been editor of Caduceus and the poetry anthologies High Tide and Sounds and Waves of West Haven, as well as six books of poetry and three chap books.

V. V. Aldebaran McEvoy often doesn't know what to do with herself in these turbulent times.

William C. Crawford is a prolific itinerant photographer based in Winston Salem, NC. He published four books featuring his eclectic images. Please see -bcraw44 on Instagram for more of his work.

William Doreski lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire. He has taught at several colleges and universities. His most recent book of poetry is Mist in Their Eyes (2021). His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in various journals.

We welcome your comments, suggestions, and even complaints.

We can be reached at the address below:

poetryinstitute@gmail.com



Pronghorn Pride:

Let us be heard,

not herded!

In this issue,
We are attempting to promote a better world
through discussion
of Truth, Beauty, and Justice.

As always, our efforts are in Support of Justice,
Peace, Democracy.

We are proud to stand with all who work to advance Justice.

We believe that Black Lives Matter

We champion the quintessential right:
to vote
to vote
to vote
to vote

We support a just path to citizenship
for our undocumented residents.

We support human rights and humanitarian asylum for all migrants who seek refuge at our borders,
fleeing violence, hunger, poverty, climate disaster
and all forms of persecution.

We are Circumference that welcomes all into our circle.

A poem or 2 in this collection deals with some of the world's ills, though that might not be a surprise during a time of war, pandemic, and other sad events. A poem or 2 may have called for social justice. Although that might not be a surprise during a time of -- well -- pretty much any time. And perhaps other dark subjects were alluded to now and again. But, after all, poets be poets.

Thanks to all the poets who submitted work.

And thanks to the Institute Library,
for all the wonderful reading we held in their wonderful space.

And thanks to all who have shared their poems at Pi.

And to all who have blessed us by listening.

Someday, together again.

Acknowledgements

Monica Ong's visual poem, laminated duratrans film on vintage medical light box was first published in Lantern Review. From Silent Anatomies, Kore Press, 2015.

Picture Poem of Survival Crackers originally published in *Museum of Rain*, by Gemma Mathewson, An Off the Common Book, 2019.

Karen Warinsky's poems previously appeared in her recently published book, *Sunrise Ruby*.

Photo Credits:

Cover photo is by Gemma Mathewson, as well as other photos in this issue.

Miscellaneous photos by Edmund Schwartz are scattered throughout.

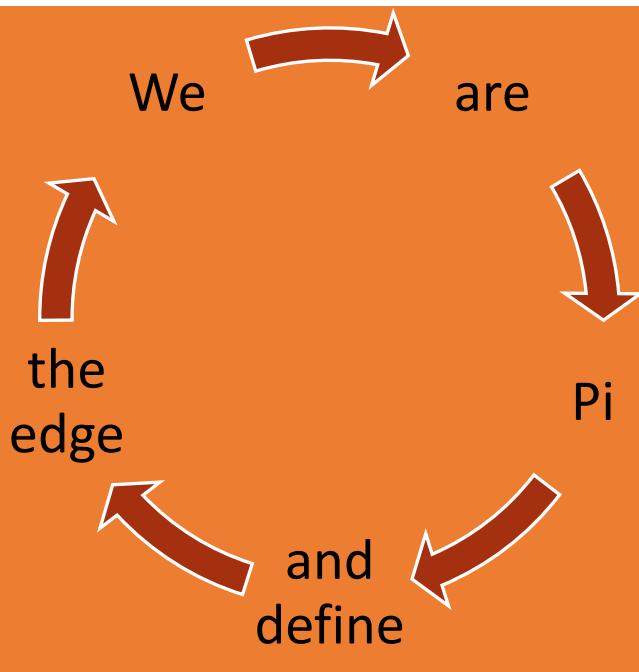
The Black Lives Matter poster was taken from their website, with permission.

Most other photos and artwork are identified on the pages where they appear.

All other photos and design elements in this issue are by Mark McGuire-Schwartz.



BLACK
LIVES
MATTER



around we go. for freedom and justice

Life, a Circle of Poems; Poems, a Circle of Life.

This zine, the Circumference of poetry and life.

Aiming to be a round peg in a square world

Aiming to be the edge.