

SONIC BOOM

for writing that explodes...

ISSUE SEVENTEEN

April 2020

(Poetry, Prose, & Art)

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THE POETRY SHACK

Life on the river

By Bill Rector

Huck and Jim study the sky.

The raft knows a way
among the sandbars and snags.

The North Star is sometimes ahead,
at other times, in oxbows, behind.

Two aspects of one person,
the boy and the man

debate whether stars are made
or just happen.

Jim favors made, while Huck
comes down on the side of happen.

Both can see it being the other way.

Taste

By Brad Rose

The other day, I was pseudo catastrophizing during an avalanche when, by mistake, I nearly fell off the cliff. Of course, money isn't everything. A lot of things look good on paper, but when you get them home, they try to eat you. Melissa accuses me of talking to myself, like a dead man, when no one is listening. I told her I'm like that novice magician who tried to cut himself in half. When the police arrived to calm the angry crowd that had gathered to demand a refund, he said: *But my sequined assistant is at home, sick with the flu.* You'd never find me in a nest of snakes like that. The spider's web knows things the spider can't, but we all want to learn from one another. Because sharks close their eyes as they devour their prey, their teeth help them to learn more about what they're biting. There's no accounting for taste. Even the dead prefer their surgery with anesthesia.

,

By Elizabeth Cohen

pause for

a tear drop

an infant snake

a dust mote

if only you could place one

beside your mother, sleeping

to give her a teensy bit more time

and you

,

,

watching

Master Linji

By Joseph Salvatore Aversano

if no lifting into
the air no
walking on water

no stepping on
fiery coals

then what
are feet to do
on this earth

After reading Durrell, imagining Alexandria...

By Michael J. Galke

What finds more light?
The dark surface

of the ocean's edge
reflecting moon—

or the blank stones
beneath the gentle roll

cruised over
by the watching

white orbs
of a patient drum?

It is important to me
to know

while you write
whatever you

will write.

bird call solstice

By Michael Prihoda

you expect sound
from the forest.

plume fire,
paw prints

baked in dried
stream.

there is so much
of us.

enough to damn
any river.

So Far Away from Tuscany

By Mike James

The day my father taught me how to apply makeup was an important day. Mother too busy chopping wood and practicing her tremulous falsetto. Don't we all have some story to tell? The first bit of astronomy I learned was the location of Venus in the night sky. Sit outside long enough, you'll assign value to whatever you can't reach. Such comforts are important during late night walks and barroom ruinations. No one ever told me to whistle while I work. So I seldom carry a tune more than three daylight steps. That's far enough to impersonate joy. We don't have to be always clowns even if our makeup is badly done. And we can still juggle as if we are. Sometimes shadows might be our audience.

The Way Out Is In

By N.D. Erwin

from the womb of your mother
you can say yes

as a six month old fetus
as a widow at the edge of time

to the fog
to the wet grass
to the upthrust stones

you can say hello

to the fallen apple
feasting yellow jackets

hello,
and
yes,
my darling

choose your own sequence

By Peter Scalpello

a fact of nature
is to test the boundaries of
any new setting

as a body of
water reaches its threshold
to be comforted

the ruptured vein of
my inside elbow is a
curious molehill

my liquid lover
gushes for me to test our
sad perimeter

on the same street we
first met he walks right past me
after we'd fucked twice

face down i figured
out then you have to bury
your dead really good

my adapted self
at the chillout gurning on
anti-depressants

now i'm at a point
where i can forgive myself
for swallowing pills

each day fluid calls
to mind that life is short but
living can be long

life gave me lust &
what i've got to show for it
is all this lustre

Deuteroscopy: by second glance

By Scott Ferry

In a part of my cerebrum there is a list
of all the people I have wronged, an etch-a-sketch
with live ants captured in Himalayan salt. The ants
write the person's name before they die. It is very difficult
to read the letters formed by dehydrated ants, so the part
of me who tries to read the list gives up while cleaning dishes.

The names of those who I feel have wronged me
crackle in nerve-neon, dendrites curving and snapping,
clear and vibrant. I see these flashing signs more often,
but I know how many silent bodies lie in the salt.
And every time they twitch, I look behind me
at my faint twin.

Our Dreams at Dusk

for Shimanami Tasogare

By Seán Griffin

Having drunk with Jose in an empty theatre office, Sergio and I wandered into Times Square's electric night. Stomach full of rainbow candies and red wine, I fumbled with words like getting my pants past socks. Who it is I am, this gay friend my priest. "Thank you for sorta coming out to me." Thank *me*? I wish he gifted me a song. One whose notes turned to snow and cooled me to sleep. Were that I had one word at that time to say, "I am..." I may have blurted it long before. Been called f****t more than sexy, how could I correct a bigot? His shoulder was soft where I held onto him as we walked. Did I come out? I wish he told me he didn't listen so I could try out the words that felt right in my mouth. That I could flood this tight space between us and scream bubbles of words not me. *I am. I am. I am.*

The Red-tipped Cane

By Tom Barlow

I watched a young woman with a red-tipped cane
making sense of her course with inquiries of the sidewalk
like a dancer measures the stage with tap shoes or
a caver waits for his shout to return.

Then later there was this portly man in his fifties
wearing sunglasses and guided by a dog, standing at the
intersection of High and Acton, where a talking signal
would inform him when it was safe to cross. I swear
that dog looked insulted.

If I wanted to show you my words in print I would
write you a dictionary but I would rather hear them
soaring from your lips, where they somersault. They are
my tap on the cement, its echo, they are an angel's voice,
telling me when it's time to stop.

PAPER LANTERNS

fall asleep inside words genderlessly

- Geoff Pope

wildflowers a poem led into

abandonment

- Rich Schilling

in the Eden of gardening

even the allegories
grow leaves

- Joseph Salvatore Aversano

rock-‘n-roll
the boulder in my room
deaf to blackbirds

- Adrian Bouter

shigure we lose and find our edges

- Isabella Kramer

agoraphobia
the unstable mass
of humanity

- Gary Hittmeyer

crows in a cemetery
the distance each of us keep

- Randy Brooks

my jaw working
to control emotion—
first crocus

- Eric A Lohman

a bird in the tooth impervious

- Kelly Sauvage Angel

such sadness
the vestigial feet
of fish

- Keith Polette

just how to lie in/to the dark

- Elmedin Kadric

the birdsong of things lost

- Bisshie

smokescreen of numbers redacting a hero

- Rashmi VeSa

aftermath you can hear the mist clearly now

- Adrian Bouter

stained-glass Jesus
I buy another
miracle

- Susan Beth Furst

closer to forgiveness *lepidoptera*

- Kat Lehmann

standing on principle
my feet broaden
with age

- Ronald K. Craig

waking the moment birds dive through me

- Keith Polette

PROSE

Afterword

By Bill Rector

What I need to write better poetry than what you see is one of those 4D printers that haven't been invented yet. Instead of a bunch of big thoughts, or even a lot of little ones, I'll feed in things like a white hair on a blue comb, a broken tooth of that comb, the black lacquer vase inlaid with golden herons on the mantle in the living room, beside which the comb was mislaid, a ray of morning sun striking the vase, swelling the herons' twin, gilded breasts with breath brighter than that of the living, a mote of dust floating in its momentary beam...

You see how it will work. Then (as I picture it) I'll turn the printer on and listen to it sigh, since it has to write the Instruction Manual before it can begin, and then keep me up nights with its grumbling, as the icemaker in the refrigerator does, or howl like the vacuum in the apartment above, where the retired librarian with torticollis lives, or make no noise whatsoever, as I go about the day-to-day business of living, having forgotten all about the amazing machine I set in motion.

Hats are the enemy of poetry

By Bill Rector

When people rub their heads and ask what my poems are about, I describe my collection of hatboxes. One resembles a library globe, with seven continents and seven seas, except it has a handle like a suitcase. Another is indistinguishable, even to a flag that goes up and down, from the mailbox at the end of my drive, where rejection notices arrive. A third may be mistaken by browsers for a birch bark canoe, or a quarter moon afloat upon the clearness of an evening.

Some of you may not be satisfied, so let me tell it in a different way.

When I find a hatbox that I admire, I shake it firmly to be certain there's nothing inside. Then—call me crazy—I place it on my head, or upon the hatboxes I am already wearing. Sometimes a ladder is required. Before you go (for time is forever setting off without us), try the round one, emblazoned with a ruddy sunset, for size. It may prove too small, perched on your head like a cardboard thimble, or too large, falling over your eyes like a blindfold, hiding everything.

Or the fit might be right, and you'll admit, *This fellow has style.*

3/4 Time

By Chella Courington

I watched a woman, hair once the color of coal, shape bagels at the corner deli; day after day the window revealed her long fingers looping dough around her hand and rolling it on the counter, white marble, until a round tube twirled in on itself and she dropped the circle into a pan of steaming water and the dough rose swollen and wet; through her I saw faintly a girl in dark braids sitting at a Wurlitzer turning pages faster and faster until the paper floated up in flakes, my hands holding to the treble clef, swinging above brick and tile through altostratus clouds, a red disc dimly visible.

A Manzanar Story

By Chella Courington

Noriko sits on her knees in a gold and black kimono, wide sleeves holding fragile arms, palms on her lap, thumbs hidden. With white hair pulled back, cheekbones rise under eyes deep in memory. In Block 25, she lived with her mother and father next to an ancient apple orchard he pruned and tended, picking yellow fruit for baskets stored in a cellar the other men built for the fruit's skin to turn red and sweet.

Being the oldest Issei man, younger than his daughter is today, he was given no work, left to himself while his wife made rounds as a dietician, using rations to plan menus for those suffering illness, and Noriko learned how to diagram English sentences, sticking words on limbs. The Sierras ten thousand feet above, her father hiked the creeks, no one believing an old man could escape the wire.

He brought home branches of myrtle. Noriko would watch him sit for hours, carving boughs into lamps and table legs. Once a night heron emerged from his hands, short neck and short legs. Her father placed him at the edge of the steps.

Alone to wait for the rising moon.

Toe Stories

By Keith Polette

“Scratch your flesh raw between your toes, but you won’t find the answer.”

— Franz Kafka, *The Complete Stories*

Big toe of my right foot, that over-eater, blind rat craving cotton, it gnaws the skins of socks. It is a horse trying to spit the bit, straining against reins to gallop from the herd. It can gesture like an umpire or push through dirt like a mole. It is no friend of the rock. On Halloween, it dresses like a whale, going from door to door, calling out biblical names.

The second toe, the tall one, brags that it once roamed as an elephant. At night, it says, it lumbered on grassy plains, holding the moon in its trunk. It loves music, always leaping a little when a trumpet sounds.

The third is an oar yoked to other oars. Unable to row its own way, it strives to keep pace, to stay in sync, to keep the peace, to go along, not to rock the boat. It wishes it had been born a swordfish or a locomotive.

The fourth is the forgotten child, the bat that won’t leave the cave, the seeing-eye-dog that went blind, the caterpillar that will not unfold into a butterfly. It may once have been a tiger’s tooth, but is now a clerk in an antique shop. Its home is filled with posters of mystery movies. It smokes cigarettes, when the other toes are asleep.

The fifth is the period ending the sentence. It wears a bruise from banging into furniture. It winces, but never shouts, though it longs for the hyperbole of an operatic voice. It will one day become a candle burning, while the rest of the toes melt away.

For JLM

By Margaret Erhart

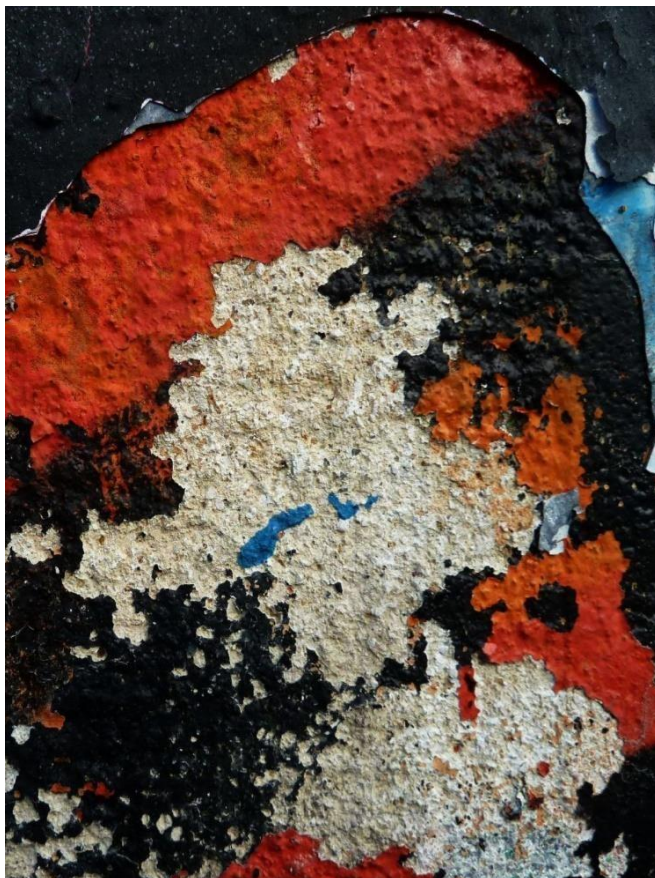
I sit behind this desk that is the size of a small boat and I talk to the desk at first, a kind of prayer though I don't pray anymore, I don't know how. I ask the desk to become smaller, the size of a matchstick, though I've read that wooden matches are no longer made because all the trees are gone or will be soon, creating a desk the size of mine. The size of a matchstick so that I might sit that close to you and read the language of your eyes which are the same color as mine but with a different story to tell.

If this is difficult for you to hear, forgive me. And know that all the prayers in the world cannot change the size of the authority behind which we sit.

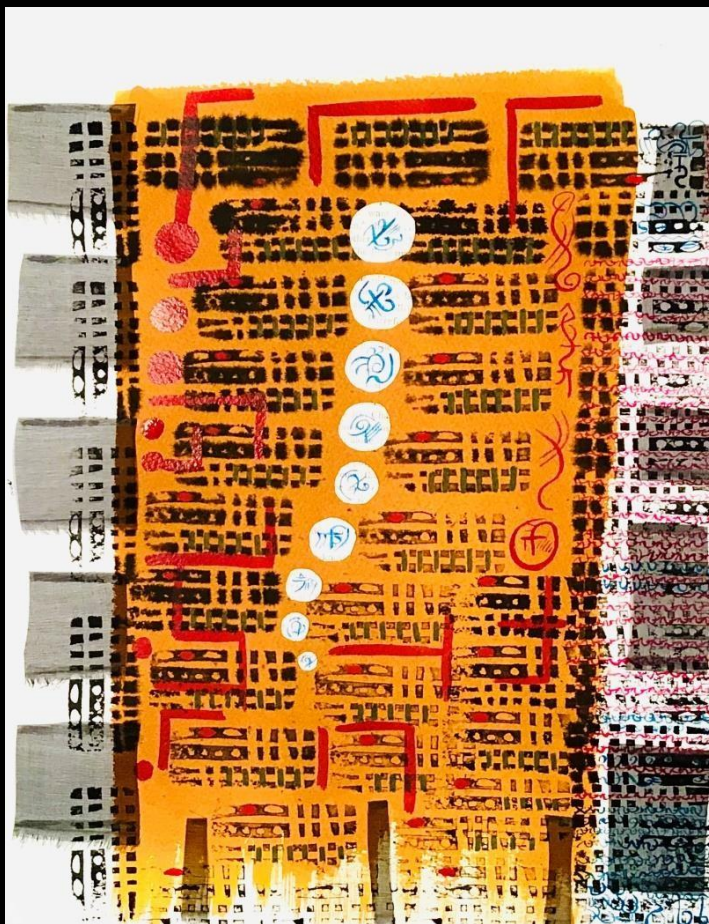
You are welcome to a cup of coffee or tea, or a paper cup of cold water from the dispenser.

VISUAL ART

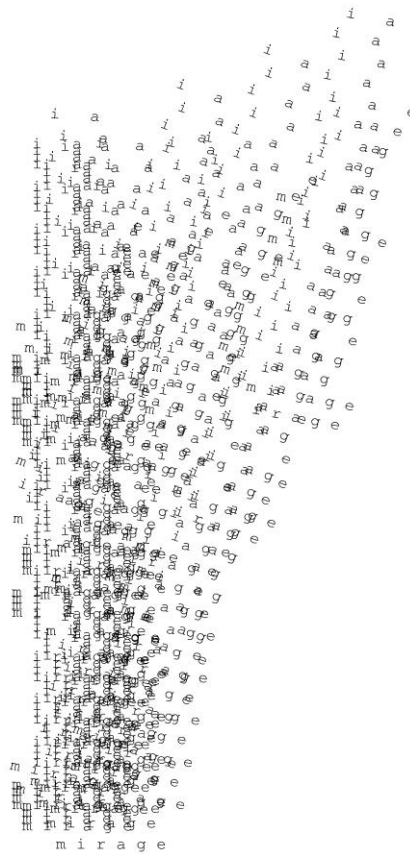
Imaginary map by Fabio Sassi



Inference and Subtext by Sylvia Van Nooten



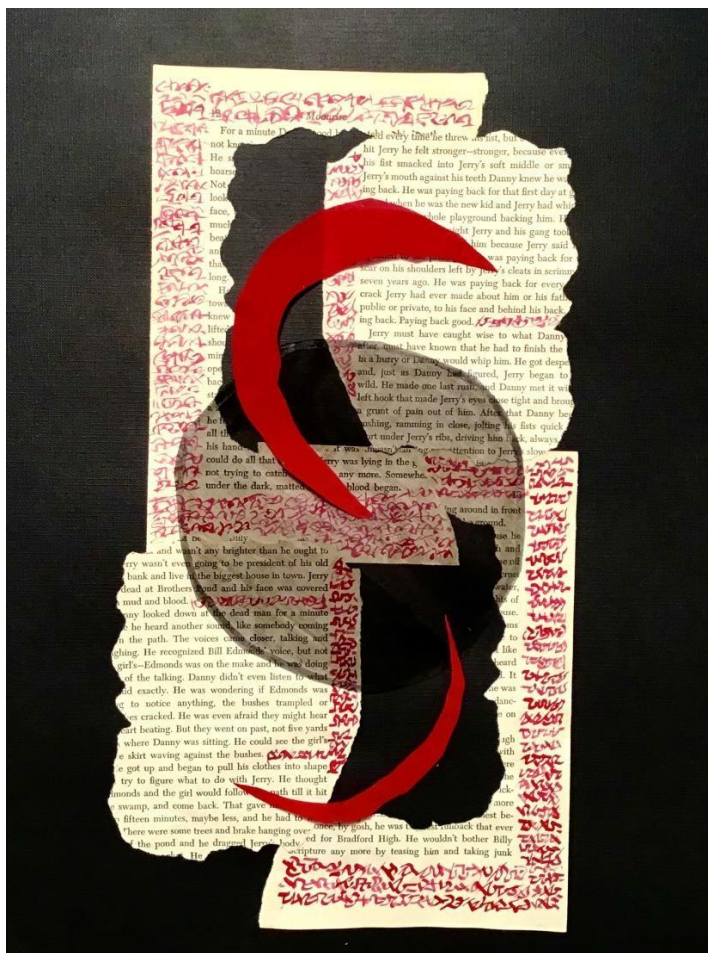
mirage by Andrew Brenza



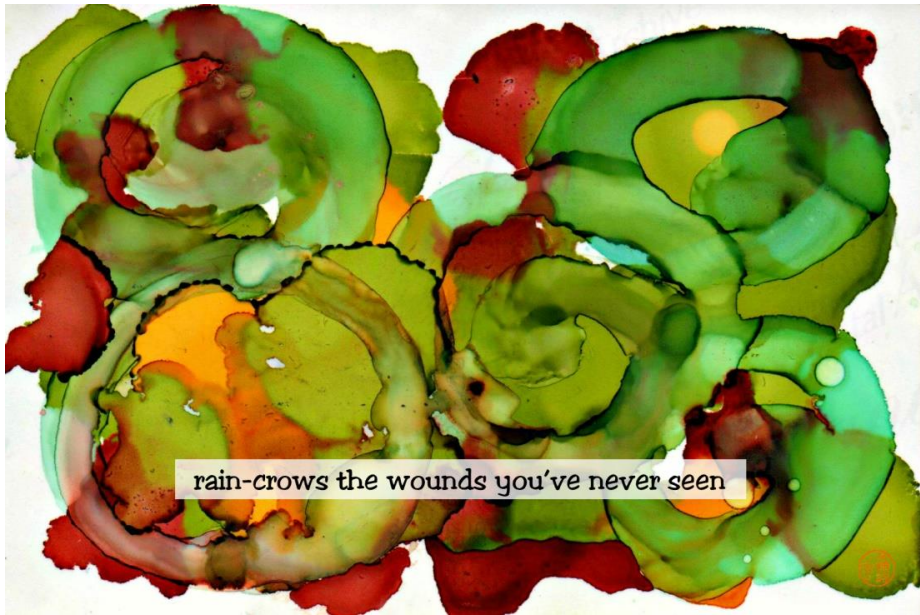
Motive by Shannon Elizabeth Gardner



Reoccurring Dream by Sylvia Van Nooten

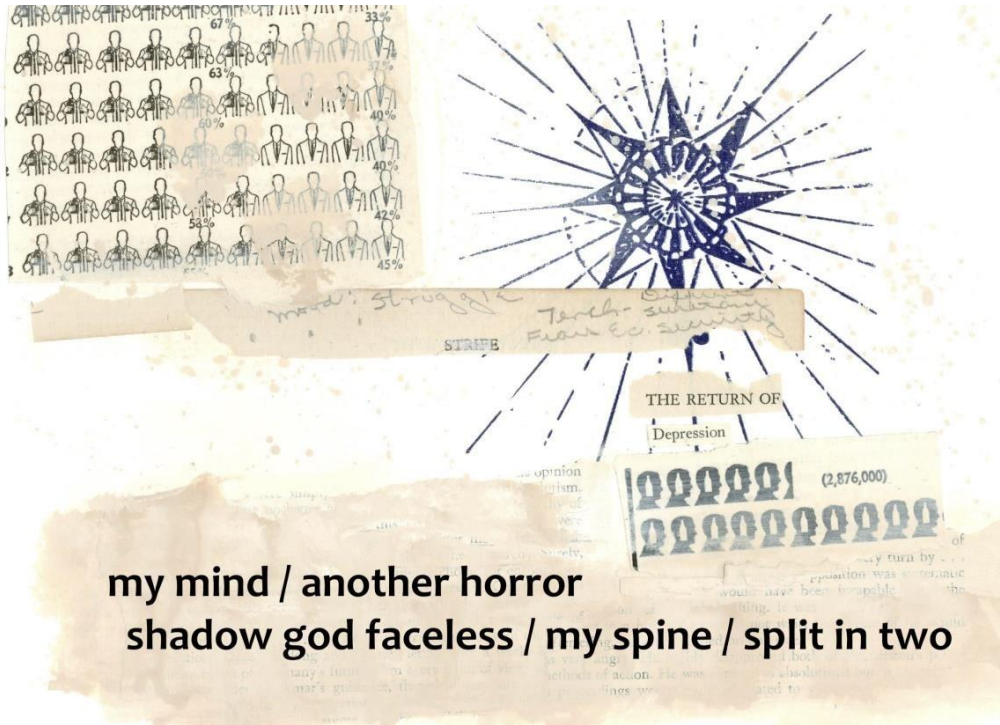


rain-crows by Christine L. Villa



Source: A monoku culled out from p. 50 of *Front Porch Tales* by Philip Gulley.

The Return of Depression by Noemi Ixchel Martinez



**my mind / another horror
shadow god faceless / my spine / split in two**

Source: An erasure culled out from p. 54 of *The Eternal Enemy* by Christopher Pike.

Endpiece by KB Nelson

Endpiece

"Wretch!" I said, "it is well that you come here to wince over the desolation that you have made. You throw a torch into a pile of buildings, and when they are consumed you sit among the ruins and lament the fall. Hypocritical wretch! if he whom you mourn still lived, still would he be the object, again would he become the prey, of your accursed vengeance. It is not pity that you feel; you lament only because the victim of your malignity is withdrawn from your power."

"Oh, it is not thus—not thus," interrupted the being, "yet such must be the impression conveyed to you by what appears to be the purport of my actions. Yet I seek not a fellow-feeling in my misery. No sympathy may I ever find. When I first sought it, it was the love of virtue, the feelings of happiness and affection with which my whole being overflowed, that I wished to be participated. But now that virtue has become to me a shadow and that happiness and affection are turned into bitter and loathing despair, in what should I seek for sympathy? I am content to suffer alone while my sufferings shall endure: when I die, I am well satisfied that abhorrence and opprobrium should load my memory. Once my fancy was soothed with dreams of virtue, of fame, and of enjoyment. Once I falsely hoped to meet with beings who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of unfolding. I was nourished with high thoughts of honour and devotion. But now crime has degraded me beneath the meanest animal. No guilt, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to mine. When I run over the frightful catalogue of my sins, I cannot believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness. But it is even so: the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone."

"You, who call Frankenstein your friend, seem to have a knowledge of my crimes and his misfortunes. But in the detail which he gave you of them he could not sum up the hours and months of misery which I endured, wasting in impotent passions. For while I destroyed his hopes, I did not satisfy my own desires. They were for ever ardent and craving, still I desired love and fellowship, and I was still spurned. Was there no injustice in this? Am

Source: A blackout poem culled out from p. 195 of *Frankenstein* by M. Shelley.

Transcription of *Endpiece* by KB Nelson

I
throw a torch into
the desolation that you
made.

You
are consumed
among the ruins.

You
become the prey,
the victim.

Your malign
power
is withdrawn.

{happiness }

No {virtue } I am content,

{affection }

my sufferings
soothed.

I
hoped
for
love
and devotion.

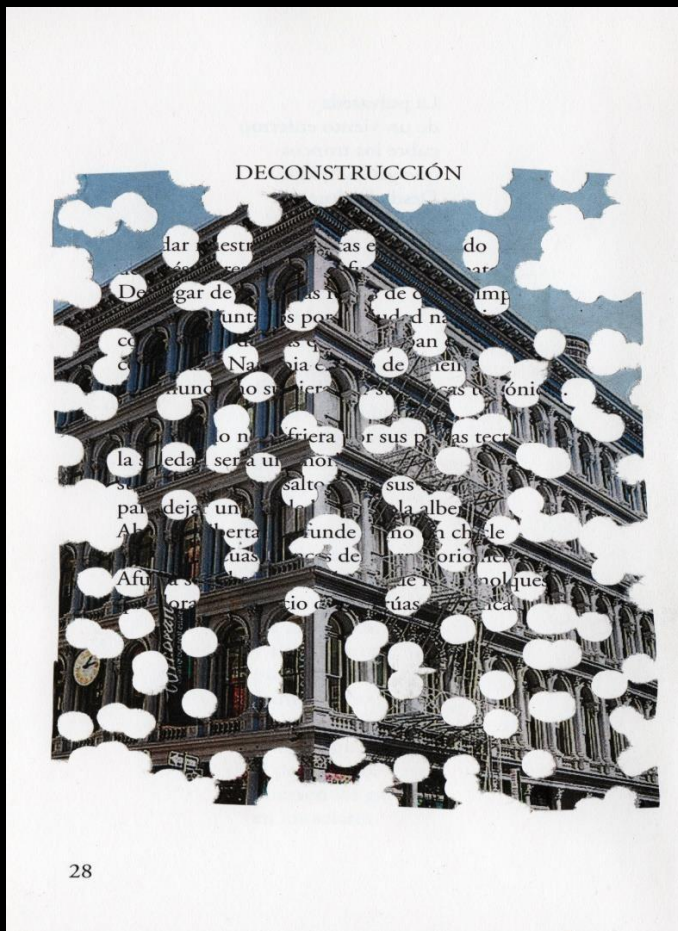
Pardon
my
high thoughts.

I am
filled with
visions of
beauty and
goodness.
But
even so
I am
fallen,
I am
alone.

orbital dynamics by Debbie Strange



Deconstruction by Ferran Destemple



how boring by Christine L. Villa



Source: A monoku culled out from *A Non-Punctuated Partner* by Francis H. Kakugawa.

pink's favorite hobby by Kyle Hemmings



pink's favorite hobby

*she likes to blur the
obituaries*

so no one ever really dies

Kyle Hemmings

peeling walls by Christine L. Villa



Source: A monoku culled out from p. 4 of *While I Was Gone* by Sue Miller.

Untitled by József Bíró



A Better Deal by Noemi Ixchel Martinez

waiting for a better deal / to kill my confidence
all the clocks
I want broken



Source: An erasure culled out from p. 43 of *The Eternal Enemy* by Christopher Pike.

CONTRIBUTORS

Adrian Bouter lives in Holland and has two children. He's a caregiver and a poet, and likes to ride his bike besides many other things. Go deep, but travel light—life is (often) wonderful.

Andrew Brenza's recent chapbooks include *Poems in C* (Viktlösheten Press), *Bitter Almonds & Mown Grass* (Shirt Pocket Press), *Waterlight* (Simulacrum Press), and *Excerpt from Alphabeticon* (No Press). He is also the author of three full-length collections of visual poetry: *Automatic Souls* (Timglasen), *Gossamer Lid* (Trembling Pillow Press) and *Album, in Concrete* (Alien Buddha Press).

Bill Rector is a retired physician who has published numerous individual poems as well as a full-length collection and four chapbooks.

Bisshie is the pen name for Patricia McGuire, who lives in Zürich, Switzerland. She is editor of *the haiku pea podcast* and *poetrypea journal of haiku and senryu*. Her work has appeared in *Frogpond*, *Bones*, *Presence*, *Akitsu Quarterly*, *Failed Haiku*, and many others.

Brad Rose lives in Boston. He is the author of three collections of poetry and flash fiction, *Pink X-Ray* (Big Table Publishing, 2015), *de/tonations* (Nixes Mate Press, 2020), and *Momentary Turbulence* (Cervena Barva Press, 2020). His fourth collection, *WordinEdgeWise*, is forthcoming in 2021 from Cervena Barva Press. Website: www.bradrosepoetry.com

Chella Courington is a writer and teacher with a PhD in American and British Literature and an MFA in Poetry. Her poetry and fiction appear or are forthcoming in numerous anthologies and journals, including *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *The Collagist*, and *The Los Angeles Review*. Originally from the Appalachian South, Courington lives in California with another writer and two cats. Website: chellacourington.net

Christine L. Villa is an award-winning tanka and haiku poet published in numerous respected online and print journals. Her collection of Japanese short-form poetry is entitled *The Bluebird's Cry*. She is the founding editor of *Frameless Sky* and its imprint

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Debbie Strange is a short-form poet/haiga artist whose work has been published in 15 countries and translated into 11 languages. She recently won the Sable Books Women's Haiku Contest for her manuscript, *The Language of Loss: Haiku and Tanka Conversations*. Website: <https://debbiemstrange.blogspot.com>

Elizabeth Cohen is an English professor at SUNY Plattsburgh and editor of *Saranac Review*. The author of six books of poetry, her work has appeared in *Ellipses*, *Black Renaissance Noir*, *River Stix*, *Yale Review*, *Tiferet*, *Connecticut River Review*, and other publications.

Elmedin Kadric is a minimalist haiku poet writing out of Helsingborg, Sweden. His first full-length collection, *buying time* (Red Moon Press, 2017), was awarded second place at the Haiku Society of America Merit Book Awards for excellence in haiku poetry. He has had work appear in many prestigious journals and anthologies, including *NOON: journal of the short poem*, *Modern Haiku*, *Acorn*, *The Heron's Nest*, *is/let*, and multiple volumes of the Red Moon Anthology.

Eric A Lohman currently lives near Atlanta, Georgia, USA. He is a psychiatric social worker, musician, and poet, working in the emergency department of a large teaching hospital to assist the homeless, the chemically dependent, and the mentally ill. Much of his poetry reflects his response to and efforts to cope with that reality.

Fabio Sassi makes photos and acrylics, often putting a quirky twist on his subjects. Sometimes he employs an unusual perspective that gives a new lens using what is hidden, discarded, or considered to have no worth by the mainstream. Fabio lives in Bologna, Italy. Website: www.fabiosassi.foliohd.com

Ferran Destemple has a degree in Spanish literature from the University of Barcelona. He has published experimental texts since 2012 and is an active participant in the international mail art network. He has published his texts in different international journals and is co-editor of *La Rita Cooper edita*. Website: www.autismosautomaticos.net

Gary Hittmeyer was born in Brooklyn, NY, during the fabulous fifties. He currently lives quietly in the beautiful Hudson River Valley of New York State, where he enjoys NY Mets baseball, silver age comics, BBC crime dramas, classic rock, 75-degree sunny days, and short-form poetry.

Geoff Pope's poems are forthcoming/have recently appeared in *The Heron's Nest*, *Hedgerow*, *Bones*, *Under the Basbo*, *baikuniverse*, and *Failed Haiku*. Geoff teaches English at Green River College in Auburn, Washington.

Isabella Kramer lives with her husband and two cats in Lower Saxony, North Germany near Hannover. For years, she has been a passionate poet, author, photographer, and painter. She published her first book of German poems, *weniger bis meer*, and has also contributed to several anthologies. Website: www.veredita.blogspot.de

Joseph Salvatore Aversano is a native New Yorker currently living on the Aegean coast of Turkey. Some of his most recent works have appeared in *E-ratio*, *Modern Haiku*, and *Otoliths*.

József Bíró is a poet, visual artist, and performer living in Budapest, Hungary. He has published close to three dozen books and has participated in nine individual exhibitions and more than 700 group exhibitions around the world.

Kat Lehmann is a Best of the Net nominee whose poems have appeared in *Mayfly*, *The Heron's Nest*, *Frogpond*, *Human/Kind*, *tinynwords*, *The Mainichi*, and elsewhere. She leaves books in public spaces through her Ripples of Kindness project. Her third book is *Stumbling Toward Happiness: Haibun and Hybrid Poems*. Twitter/Instagram: @SongsOfKat

KB Nelson thrives in the intersection of art and science. She has won awards in both poetry and short fiction. You can read her work in *Tiny Spoon*, *Nourish-Poetry*, *Sea-To-Sky Review*, and several other journals and anthologies. KB currently lives in Greater Vancouver, B.C.

Keith Polette lives in El Paso, Texas. His work has appeared in *The Red Moon Anthology of Haiku & Linked Forms*, *The Haibun Journal*, *Presence*, *Modern Haiku*,

Frogpond, *The Other Bunny*, *Human/Kind Journal*, *Daily Haiga*, and *Otoliths* among others.

Kelly Sauvage Angel spends her days exploring the literary, visual, and performing arts. She is co-editor with Lee Gurga of *The Anthology of Contemporary Wisconsin Haiku* to be released later this year.

Kyle Hemmings is a retired healthcare worker living in New Jersey. A Pushcart nominee, his work has been published in over 400 venues, including *Otoliths*, *White Knuckle Press*, *Bones*, *the other bunny*, *is/let*, and *Unbroken Journal*. His latest full-length collection, *Amnesiacs of Summer* (Yavanika Press, 2019), is now available on [Amazon](#).

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Michael J. Galko is a poet and scientist based in Houston, Texas, USA. In the past year, he has had poems published in *The Red Eft Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Gargoyle*, *Riddled with Arrows*, *Defunkt Magazine*, and *tinynwords*. He was the featured poet in the February 2020 issue of *bottle rockets*.

Michael Prihoda lives in central Indiana. He is the founding editor of *After the Pause*, an experimental literary magazine and small press. His work has received nominations for the Pushcart Prize and the Best of the Net Anthology. Michael is the author of nine poetry collections, most recently *Out of the Sky* (Hester Glock, 2019).

Mike James makes his home outside Nashville, Tennessee. He has published in numerous magazines such as *Plainsongs*, *Laurel Poetry Review*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, and *Chiron Review*. His fifteenth collection, *Journeyman's Suitcase*, was published in February 2020 from Luchador Press. He currently serves as an associate editor of *Unbroken*.

N.D. Erwin is a rural poet, educator, community mediator, and researcher at the School of International Service, American University. He works as a poetry editor for *Folio* and *Barrelhouse Magazine*. His book *Hemp and Farm Justice* (Mandel-Vilar Press) is forthcoming Fall 2020.

Noemi Martinez is a queer femme crip poet-curanderx writer.

Peter Scalpello is a poet and sexual health therapist from Glasgow, currently living and working in East London. His work is featured and forthcoming in *Pilot Press*, *barana poetry*, *POLARI*, and *New River Press* among others. Twitter: @p_scalpello

Randy Brooks teaches courses on haikai arts and book publishing at Millikin University. He and his wife, Shirley Brooks, are publishers of Brooks Books and co-editors of *Mayfly*. His most recent books include *Walking the Fence: Selected Tanka*, *The Art of Reading & Writing Haiku*, and *Writing Haiku: A Reader Response Approach*.

Rashmi VeSa is passionate about her day job. She is equally drawn to the process of thought and shaping it through words and art.

Rich Schilling is a husband, dad, and poet. He has been published in *Human/Kind Journal*, *Bones*, *antantantant*, *is/let*, *Modern Haiku*, *Otata*, and numerous others.

Ronald K. Craig is a retired psychology professor living in Batavia, Ohio. His haiku have been published in numerous journals, anthologies, and blogs. As an Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist, he practices stewardship at the Cincinnati Nature Center. He is married with one adult daughter.

Ruth E Rollason's practice explores the process of cognition of thought, what is said, and what is written down. By means of sculptural, pictorial, and handwritten letter shapes, Rollason's work considers cultural and personal thought, manipulating the textuality of letter shapes using gestural and corporeal representation. Website: www.rutherollason.co.uk

Scott Ferry, as an RN, helps U.S. Veterans heal. He has current work in *Thirteen Myna Birds*, *Cultural Weekly*, and *MacQueen's Quinterly*. His first book, *The only thing that makes sense is to grow*, was published by Moon Tide in 2020.

Seán Griffin received an MFA in Creative Writing from Manhattanville College. His writing has appeared in *The Southampton Review*, *Selcouth Station Press*, *Impossible Archetype*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, and elsewhere. Seán teaches at Concordia College of New York, is an editor for *Inkwell Journal*, and lives with his three dogs.

Shannon Elizabeth Gardner's interest in the macabre came about while exploring nature and the paranormal. Her work explores the natural and organic process of death, evoking empathy for decay. She believes that life is beautiful when left to fate; leaving art to chance assists the viewer to witness beauty hidden within imperfections.

Susan Beth Furst is a Touchstone award-nominated poet and author. She writes Japanese short-form poetry and especially enjoys writing haibun. Susan has published two chapbooks: *Souvenir Shop* (Buddha Baby Press, 2018) and *road to utopia* (Yavanika Press, 2019). *The Amazing Glass House: A Haiku Storybook* was published in October 2019 by Purple Cotton Candy Arts. You can find Susan on Instagram @susanbethfurst.

Sylvia Van Nooten is an asemic artist living in Western Colorado. Asemic art, with its pastiche of 'language' and images, allows her to merge texts and painting, creating a hybrid form of communication which is open to interpretation. Her work has appeared in *The South Florida Poetry Journal*, local galleries, and at the exhibition Mai Piu in Italy.

Tom Barlow is an Ohio poet whose work has appeared in journals including *The Stoneboat Literary Journal*, *Headline Poetry and Press*, *Voicemail Poetry*, *Live Nude Poems*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *Heron Clan*, *The Remington Review*, and *Your Daily Poem*.

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