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"Tree of Life" by Claire Perkins; <http://claireperkins.com>

*About this image: "The Tree of Life is an ancient and enduring motif in art and spirituality. In this mixed media interpretation I used lush, handcrafted Nepalese Lokta and Japanese Chiyogami Yuzen papers over acrylic inks, giving the tree a strong dimensionality which allows it pop out of the background and take center stage. There is a sensual feminine energy in the graceful curves of the trunk. The canopy is lush and full, and its spirals and circular forms suggest both timelessness and wholeness. Touches of gold throughout the piece lend a regal tone to the landscape. Symbolizing the idea of "as above, so below", the colors in the canopy mirror the tone of the ground in which the tree is rooted. To me, this piece represents the creative power of the Divine Feminine." —CP*

**in the folds**

by Sarah Henningsen

make me love like the dandelion's spores  
lighthearted wisps let loose into the world  
free for all to see  
running wild with the day's winds

make me love like the early morning rains  
gentle drops that refresh a wide sleepy world  
water gypsies  
slowly seeping into the cracks of dried earth

make me love like the pond's lilies  
peaceful drifters among murky waters  
patient and carefree  
floating on the rest of the world's ripples

why must i tuck my love away?  
like a delicate, lonesome flower picked from the meadow  
then stuffed away into the dusty pages of a heavy hardcover book  
safer in untouched stories

the lone flower seeks solace in private shelter  
protected by an insulated heart  
pressed down with time and weight into a thin crisp

delicate as dust

Bio- Sarah currently works at First Book, a literacy non-profit based in Washington DC that provides needy children with access to new, high-quality books. Outside the office, she enjoys indulging her love of Latin America, film festivals, bookstores, and cozy coffee shops. This is the third time Sarah's poems have been published by *The Write Place At the Write Time*.

**Luminescence**

by Anne Whitehouse

pink perigee moon of August  
scent of wild rose and honeysuckle

where fireflies dance in the grass  
and frogs croak in the swamp

swallows are flying to roost  
barn owls are flying to hunt

bluefish and stripers run in the floodtide  
churning the surface of the sea

comb jellies bob in the currents  
their tiny combs refracting moonlight

underwater rainbows  
shimmering in liquid darkness

Bio- Anne Whitehouse is pleased to be appearing once more in *The Write Place At the Write Time*. She is a poet, fiction, and non-fiction writer who was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama, and lives in New York City. She is the author of five collections of poetry—*The Surveyor's Hand*, *Blessings and Curses*, *Bear in Mind*, *One Sunday Morning*, and *The Refrain*, as well as a novel, *Fall Love*, to be published in Spanish translation as *Amigos y amantes* in 2015. Anne is also a winner of the 2015 Nazim Hikmet Poetry Festival.

[www.annewhitehouse.com](http://www.annewhitehouse.com)

### **Fourth of July**

by Erin Charvet

flowers of fire bloom and die  
abandoning smoky spider web ghosts  
and the slight odor of sulfur  
as laughter floats across the lake  
and insects and boat motors  
murmur in the moist heat

he asks me to follow him  
I don't know where but I trust him

though the woods are thick  
and the only light falls in  
gold fuchsia green blue streamers  
through the claw-like treetops

now they're looking for us  
I can hear them calling from the house  
and the beams of their disapproving flashlights  
slice their way toward us  
so we start to run amid the whistles and  
artificial thunder ripping through the sky above

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### **The Well**

by Erin Charvet

standing at the bottom of a well  
and looking up  
at that point of light above,  
you remember being there once  
in the sun's warmth, but can't remember  
quite what it felt like  
because the rays don't reach  
down quite this far,  
and the tips of your fingers  
don't reach quite that high,  
and all you can do now is watch  
the rays of light die,  
swallowed up by the shadows  
that have already swallowed you,  
and your throat is raw from shouting,  
or so you think,  
but then you realize that you never  
actually made a sound,  
staying silent out of fear  
of anyone passing by above  
refusing to pull you out,  
or even look down and notice  
and so you're left down there,  
voiceless, in that place

from which not even light escapes

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### **Phoenicia**

by Erin Charvet

In that valley of ruins, where once  
the name of Baal was sung, lie scattered the remains  
of lives left behind in war-torn homelands.  
They hope and weep and die,  
as the conquering begins anew.

In that city, where bullet-wounded  
and bomb-scarred houses crumble,  
the faithful wake to the muezzin's sunrise song,  
and beneath the waves and earth  
sleep the stone idols of a lost time.

In that mountain cave, she waited  
Mary, holy mother, gazing with eyes  
of the same marble as those broken pillars by the sea,  
that look upon the place  
where water was turned to wine.

Bio- Erin Charvet is an Atlanta native who studied journalism and psychology at Georgia State University. Though she currently works as a freelance writer and translator, fiction and poetry are her passion. She moved to Paris, France in 2010, where she currently lives with her husband.

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### **Lesson**

by Gwendolen Gross

She was riding when the bats came out—those undead  
by whitenose, the good little browns, to hunt  
a bumper crop of mosquitoes.  
Some sweet-sweat, barley-breathed horses cared, the way horses do,  
about circles of flight, the unfinished falls. Horses tell us—  
big bodies akimbo, guttural protest, four legs taking to air

and land—what prey animals know. Flight.  
 Always first the idea that you must outrun a bat,  
 a bellowing tractor, a gremlin shadow lurking by the gray door X.  
 The bats tell us—spiral geometry, small devouring small—  
 that transition from day to night is the cleanest hunting ground.  
 She held on to her horse. She sat back, breath bright  
 against the gloaming. She rode the fear to banishment.  
 If only we could all ride it out that way, sit back, hold fast to fear  
 until it warms in your hands to conversation, the dark  
 transition lit by connection, the holding on eventual communion.

Bio- Gwendolen Gross is the author of five critically acclaimed novels, most recently *When She Was Gone* (Gallery/Simon&Schuster). She lives in New Jersey with her family of humans and a corgi and pony, all of whom try their best to help her with revisions on (and distractions from) her next novel.

### **Epiphany**

by Jada Yee

One taste of this coffee-cider-tea  
 makes the urgency for needing it  
 shrink to small flame, blown out with a whisper.  
 One sip of this drink and I hear myself think,  
*this will be all that I need.*

So, fill this cup with one more pour.  
 May the goodness in each drop  
 delay the swallow until tomorrow's time  
 comes to crumble the following days;  
 when I'll need something equally false,  
 such as tequila and lime or chardonnay with provolone.

May the warmth in the steam  
 leave a better taste in my mouth.  
 Not this bitterness I'd like to forget,  
 now on the tip of my tongue.

Foiled again.

I chose this beverage, for what it promised:  
Double dose of TLC and omega-3.  
A hint of That, a drop of This.  
Two ounces of a pale, powdery thing.

This trivial thinking of what I should do  
with my clouds, white or gray.  
My skies, blue or gray...  
I've been taught one or the other;  
not another, in-between.

I see this coffee-cider-tea  
with all of its promises:

The grin on the girl,  
who prepares it with her shining smile, sincere.  
But how she's doing past her rosy show, I'll never want to know.

The hum of chatter going around the room  
seems real and giving. Borrowing untaken chairs. Practicing good vibes.

Corner readers flipping through pages, scrolling down screens.  
Thinking fingers tapping on chins. All of them, quite friendly and occupied.

Meanwhile, these mannerly manners  
are ignoring select features in the scene.  
The tempo is a con artist!

*Enter! the mother with her four terrible twos.*  
*Enter! the man with Bluetooth whose voice is much too loud.*  
*Enter! the long line which no one can stand.*

There goes the fragrance we call, tranquility.  
There it goes, out the door.  
Stay, these disruptions.  
Stay, these unlucky omens.  
Stay, these half-filled cups.

So far. Fair trade.

Everything's a contract we sign with our eyes.  
Dotted and crossed with a repetition of yes.



Don't show these eyes the real thing though.  
Just tell them you promise. Tell them to trust.  
Everything is temporary. The middle line we're standing on has an  
unlimited tolerance.  
The thin line is down the road; in the future. And yet, here we are, and we  
seem surprised.  
We don't remember saying yes. We don't remember agreeing to the terms  
of agreement.

How are these promises induced?  
Ones masked so well in the menus; Dwells in this brain, swirls in this cup.  
How can they be returned without accepting the loss?  
Don't promise me the same if the same can be better.  
The process expires, but standards never will.  
If I order another,  
if I add more sugar,  
if I use a new straw,  
if I give it a stir.

Then, maybe this will be my first and last coffee-cider-tea.

But, wait a minute...  
What about cinnamon? Could it be cinnamon?  
That's it...

All this needs is a dash of cinnamon.

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**\$2.75**

by Jada Yee

A test of elasticity and stamina between my  
fingers and the ears on the shopping bag.

Never trust the strength of plastic chewing gum.

I had hoped it might have been the carton of orange juice that would  
attempt escape.  
A flat-footed house with its sealed envelope roof, landing with a slight  
wobble.

But, no...it was the gallon of milk.  
The headless, limbless, pudgy cat.

Its white melon exterior,  
meeting the ground  
with an eggshell flash.

The fair cream.  
The golden liquor.  
The ghostly gasoline.

Precious contents  
spilling down the driveway.

Bio- Jada believes that even if lines appear abstract and broken on the page, all writing contains attention to detail. A great deal of her writing is driven by empathy. For other poems, Jada humors ordinary tasks, like bringing in groceries from the car or waiting in line at a coffee shop. And, speaking of coffee, her key writing tools are hot coffee and many doses of lyrical song, preferably from the alternative or singer/songwriter genre. Some of Jada's work has been adopted by *Poetry Now*, *Crack the Spine*, *Poydras Review*, *Penny Ante Feud*, *Tipsy Lit* and *Underground Books*.

### **Personification of Procrastination**

by Susan P. Blevins

Sunday morning, at home,  
no plans, the perfect day to write a  
literary masterpiece.

Well, I'll just go for a quick cappuccino  
at my favorite cafe, in and out, easy parking,  
perfect weather. I'll sit outside for a moment.

And then they come, one friend after another,  
my privacy expanding from runty little end table to  
banquet dimensions housing delightful friends and laughter.

A mimosa follows the cappuccino as we  
discuss the role of women, the infamous  
wall in Israel, the applications of nanotechnology.

How can I leave such elevated discourse?  
How can I leave my friends so I can write  
paltry poem, essay or story?

Another mimosa follows, and the hours  
are swallowed up by the black hole of time.  
I fight off guilt and reach for excuses.

Bells ring out their joyful message,  
*ite, missa est*, church doors open and  
slowly release their occasional members.

My celebration of life unfolds at the cafe,  
four hours passing in a rowdy heartbeat.  
Isn't that what it's all about?

Reluctantly I drag myself away and head for home.  
A perfect time to take a nap, and who knows,  
later, maybe a poem or a story.

Bio- Susan P. Blevins, an ex-pat Brit, lived in Italy for twenty-six years, traveled the world extensively, and has now settled in Houston, Texas, where she is enjoying writing stories based on her travels and adventures. She had a weekly column on food in a European newspaper while living in Rome, and has published various articles on gardens and gardening when she lived in northern New Mexico, before moving to Houston. Her passions are classical music, gardening, nature, animals (cats in particular), reading and of course, writing. She has written a journal since she was about nine.

*Editor's Note: This poem is an innovative response to the photograph prompt in our Art & Soul edition Writers' Craft Box. See the archive of our last issue to look at the original image inspired by a dream, melding woman and crow.*

### **What the Crow Knows**

by Cheryl Sommese

I'm demeaned in a surly  
sort of way.  
"You're not handsome like a dove  
or pristine like a peacock:  
instead you're dark and displeasing  
only slightly higher than  
a scavenger,  
your cackle annoys even the most ardent  
of ears."

Perhaps they know me?

My awkward body hybridized  
as if fashioned  
in some surreptitious lab.  
Coiled hands and curled feet  
brace guardedly for another  
unprovoked attack,  
the manifestation reminiscent of  
an imperfect carving  
Michelangelo would destroy.

But their wits are mistaken  
I am not slightly higher than a scavenger  
*I am*  
a scavenger,  
eating up every bit of knowledge  
so I may better secure footing  
for my young.  
They disparage my appearance but I'll refrain  
from reprisal,  
you see I am a great deal cleverer  
than they know.

Bio- Cheryl Sommese is a freelance writer. Her past contract work includes ghost blogs, multi-topic articles, authoritative reports, and medical posts. Additionally, she writes poetry, short stories, and nonfiction: a number of her creative pieces have been included in print and online publications.

Ms. Sommese has also completed a screenplay based on her immigrant grandparents' lives as they successfully assimilate into 20th century America and come to confront an

unscrupulous, life-changing family member. The writer's dream is to bring their fascinating story to life.

Ms. Sommese lives in New Hampshire with her husband and two dogs.

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## **December**

by Lauren Conte

As you enter the car  
icy air slices my skin  
I feel your presence and  
rather than meet your eyes  
I watch the stoplights

Green to yellow  
Yellow to red

I slow down but you command me  
to push on ignore the change  
We can make the light  
We can make it through  
I listen to you  
rather than my fears

Onward we drive  
My hands grip the wheel you direct

You steer me off the main road  
through dark tunnels  
Under thundering railways  
we slow to a stop  
Drifts of snow conceal cracked pavement  
We exist alone together

Hands on the wheel  
I am unable to relinquish my grip

In the dim lot  
steam fogs up the windows  
Hot, angry words are trapped

inside with us  
Outside snow falls  
illuminated by the few lights

The heat of your words exhausts me  
Expose to the blue flame of your eyes  
I give in to the warm honey  
of your lips  
But when our mouths are ensnared  
my stomach recoils

Onward we drive  
My hands grip the wheel you direct

The snow underneath the tires  
Causes me to lose control  
Trapped underneath  
the weight of the car  
I am unable to relinquish  
my grip on the wheel

Green to yellow  
Yellow to red

I slow down but you command me  
to push on ignore the change  
We can make the light  
We can make it through  
I listen to you  
Rather than my fears

The light flicks red  
before I can stop.

Bio- Lauren Conte is from Des Moines, Iowa. She will attend TCU this fall, majoring in biochemistry with a minor in writing. Lauren has written for the *American Motorcyclist* magazine. She plans to continue writing both poetry and short fictional pieces, as well as non-fiction.

**Will the Fear Ever Go Away**

by Ginger Peters

I picture him standing behind the pulpit of the auditorium in the church. The man that never smiled while he was preaching the word of God, the man in the little west Texas town that never looked happy or at peace, as he was shouting out the message of eternal life-more often of eternal hell.

He usually began quietly enough, with:

*Brothers and sisters, have you thought about your soul today?*

He always held the Bible in his right hand. As he continued, his forehead would wrinkle and bead up with sweat, his cheeks slowly began to turn red, like someone slapped him. The next lines would go something like this:

*I know you have thought about the food you are going to eat today; I know you have thought about what clothing you are going to wear and what chores need to be done and what bills need to be paid; I know you have thought about your children and how much money you have in your bank account; I know some of you have been thinking about your neighbor's wife or your neighbor's husband and some of you have been thinking about the anger, hate, and greed that has paralyzed your heart.*

Then the grim little man would bang the Bible, yes the Bible, on the pulpit as hard as his right hand could swing it. The noise would wake the dead, so to speak. My young child's eyes would widen, as did all the children in the great room—some children scooted closer to their mothers, as others began to sob. After the wham of the Bible, the preacher would begin to scream:

*Well, you better think about your souls people, you better quit thinking about all those other earthly things and start getting your soul right with the Lord. Because if it's not ready to meet the Maker, God will send you straight to hell and you will be damned to burn forever. And, Oh brothers and sisters it will be a hot place in hell, you will thirst for water, but none will be given to you—*

*Your skin will be on fire and Oh, the pain of burning alive forever. Do you want that, brothers and sisters? Do you want to be cast into hell with*

*unquenchable agony and torment? You better turn your life to Jesus  
Christ TODAY!*

He would whack the Bible again on the pulpit.  
By this time he was in a full sweat, like he had just ran 10 miles in the hot  
Texas sun,  
and his cheeks appeared burned like he had been to hell and back to tell us  
about it in person.  
At this time I was worried about going to hell, even though I was just seven  
years old.  
At this time every man, woman, and child was thinking of burning alive  
down in Hades,  
forever and ever and ever.

And, forty-two years later the hairs stand up on my arms and on the back of  
neck when I hear  
the word 'hell.'

Oh brothers and sisters, will the fear ever go away?

Bio- As a freelance writer living in Santa Fe, New Mexico Ginger sees much natural beauty every day. She feels blessed to live in such a profound landscape of history, culture, mountain ranges, and peace. She enjoys her family, hiking, and yoga. All three seem to inspire her with the kinds of material she ends up writing. She feels that it's always a pleasure to see her work published in various magazines and journals and it is always a delight to be included in *The Write Place At the Write Time*.

### **The Gracious Mountains**

by Randall Nicholas

You have seen them  
at a great distance  
like parings of fingernails  
above the western clouds,  
blue as the sky below.  
They do not look like mountains  
but groundless hovering spirits  
maybe affixed to your eyelashes  
you cannot blink or brush away,



permanent, yet unreal as the eternal,  
and at such remove as to seem unreachable.  
Still, there are people up there,  
even towns, and you and I have been up there  
frolicking and throwing snowballs,  
but mainly climbing, climbing  
towards their robust peaks,  
glistening above the clouds,  
whose view they offer, on a clear day, of below,  
it is told,  
is complete and forgiving.

Bio- Randall Nicholas is a regular contributor to *Haggard and Halloo*. He has conducted a poetry workshop for inmates of the Indiana State Prison and read at Valparaiso's Front Porch Music open stage, both weekly for ten years. He lives in Ogden Dunes, Indiana.

### **A Tibetan Epistle**

*(For my Tibetan friend, Kalsang. To the miseries of his homeland)*

by Sreyash Sarkar

After dreams were murdered in plenitude  
And the vermilion trail appeared in distress  
And the reverberations of the epic fragrance were heard  
The ephemeral earth underneath  
The Emperor's feet, shook  
And Gods were born.

Come, my lord, let's play a game.  
While in playful stance, when every ray of light  
From every entailed word becomes drunk,  
Let the Tibetan rivers enshroud you  
In braids of emotion  
Let the mountains become an entire race  
And dance around you  
Let the valley become the priest  
For a while  
Let the divine tea and porcelain vases

Break together as  
A torrential waterfall  
Because, like humans  
Gods too, can escape..  
And clutching onto bags of gold,  
Can declare,  
"This freedom is uncalled for..."

Just like Buddha's escapade  
From the land of friendship  
Of 'Mar' and of 'Refined Intelligence'  
The bird had barged into the weaponry  
Past the numerous  
Blood-stained eyes  
Metamorphosed into sunlight.

Onto the morning of your kingdom  
My midsummer night's dream  
Is knocking, my lord.  
Open the door.  
And breaking the bonds of my dreaminess  
And while wide awake  
I shall sing,  
"Tune is the freedom of words."

Come, let's start.

Bio- Sreyash Sarkar, is a poet, a qualified painter, a practising Hindustani Classical musician and an aspiring Electrical Engineer. Educated in Kolkata and Bangalore, he has been a student correspondent at *The Statesman*, Kolkata from his school, South Point. Has been an active participant in various poetry and essay competitions in both Bengali and English and has won accolades by and far. In 2012, in an international poetry competition organized in memoir of Yeats, his poem was shortlisted among 40 other poets from all over the world. Besides being a freelance writer for several magazines, he is the editor-in-chief of Kalomer Kalomishak, a bilingual magazine, which he founded in 2013.

Poetry, according to him, is similar to the entire process of macramé—an art of knitting of words. Being trained from an early age, in both classical music and Tagore-songs, he has imbibed in himself, a deep philosophical understanding of the Upanishads, Sufi songs and other forms of folk poetry. Tagore, has always been his *raison d'être* and therefore had been an inspiration in his definitive understanding of Lalon Fakir's songs. He had also gotten himself into painting, very early on, and his works has been particularly influenced by DuChamp, Abanindranath Tagore, Anjolie Ela Menon, Picasso and Ganesh Pyne. An

aesthete of a sort, he loves gardening, Ikebana, books, home-made Bengali dishes and watching films. He currently divides his time between Kolkata and Bangalore.

### **A Farewell To Lovely**

by Richard Carl Evans

I write for it is the light at the end of my tunnel  
allowing me to labor incessantly through this sojourn  
with layer upon layer of manner ripped from my skin  
self-deception becomes my greatest fear

please know that I shall not vanquish  
the voices in my head  
though the virtuoso might feel  
they could one day vanquish me  
I see, I smell, I taste  
the dreams of childhood  
the voices they fill my script  
with needed subtext

I store these elements  
in a house with no walls and paper floors  
the distance between myself and sanity quintuples

I see, I smell, I taste dreams of childhood  
I pound the paper  
the paper pounds back  
with neither side claiming victory

Bio- The poet Richard Carl Evans was born in Los Angeles, California on November 10, 1957. Shortly after the Watts Riots of 1965 Richard's parents moved their family out of the inner city to a suburb just outside of Los Angeles. After graduating from high school he went straight into the workforce doing everything from delivery driver, fast food cook to security guard. Tension at home between his mother and father forced him to move out on his own with a girlfriend around 1981. Within a year his first child was born. A second child came in 1986 and a third in 1991.

It was around this time that a friend suggested they start a rap group and from this endeavor a passion for writing was born. After the group disbanded he continued writing songs and from that he developed a love affair with poetry. His poems are unlike his songs.

It seemed like poetry allowed him to look even deeper inward to express his feelings about a broad range of topics such as domestic violence, unfulfilled dreams and social unrest.

### **Plateau**

by Jonathan Dick

Progress is a fallacy of the mind,  
Where one foot steps forward,  
The other steps behind,  
And as the straddled gait,  
Trembles back and forth,  
The walking man fights his fate,  
And freezes in his form.

Oh, mountainous valley,  
You reek of a shadowed soul,  
A walking man whose legs no longer,  
Guide him to his goal.

But, yet, a man will always lose,  
If walking is the test,  
It is the plateau of the mind—

Lurching flatness upon the crest.

Bio- Jonathan Dick is a 21-year-old human being from Toronto, Canada. He is currently attending Huron University College where he is studying English Language and Literature. He is an avid reader and writer and has had a love for language starting at a very early age. Jonathan will be graduating this spring and plans to write, travel, and dream.

### **Balance and Its Sustenance**

by Lew Caccia

Each of us has a center,  
our source of direction in life.  
Choosing the wrong center

will bring about its own undoing:  
one might fashion, yet not develop.  
Not choosing a center  
avoids a closer look  
or descends toward relativism that refrains  
from balance and its sustenance.

Vision arises from one clear center  
that drives an underlying sense of purpose:  
it embraces comprehension and discernment—  
and overcomes embedded habits:  
a spark, a catalyst, an integration.

Bio- Lew Caccia serves as a professor at Walsh University, where he teaches courses in composition, rhetoric, professional writing, and literacy. He earned his Ph.D. at Kent State University. His recent poetry has appeared in *The Storyteller*, *The Shepherd*, *The Write Place At the Write Time*, and *The Penwood Review*. This summer, he will present at the Council of Writing Program Administrators Conference in Boise, Idaho. After the conference, he looks forward to a hike somewhere in the Rockies.

### **This Tomb is a Library**

by Jesse Williams

This man he  
sleeps like an angel.  
His hands blend  
like paper and water on  
a desk with  
his chin on his chest.  
There is a notebook of  
Chinese characters against  
his elbow. I leave and he  
sleeps through the 21st  
century to disappear like  
an old god into books  
and into stars.

Bio- Jesse Williams is a writer living in northwest Connecticut. His poetry has been

published in *Children, Churches and Daddies* literary magazine, and he won the 2010 Jennie Hackman Memorial Award for Short Fiction. Currently a writer for the newspapers, Jesse hopes one day to find peace in his time.

### Placement

by Vince Corvaia

*Do not turn the page  
until told to do so.*

Before you begin  
consider

you're as old  
as you've ever been

*Fill in the circle entirely  
using a black No. 2 pencil.*

which is why  
looking through

the clean pressed sheets  
of time

no one's as young  
as they really were

even  
the dark-haired beauty

trying  
not to notice you

across the vast  
library table

a grandmother now

her daughter older

than this girl hoping  
you'll ask her out

*If you cannot think of an answer  
go on to the next one.*

No question then  
too insignificant

when all you'll ever be  
depends on your answer

So it is  
no one was ever young

so it is  
of all the options

you've been assigned  
there never was a right answer

the girl with your name  
a litany in her notebook

already the memory  
you carry

the perfect words  
you pray for

already (though you can't  
know it) gone

*Turn the page  
and begin.*

Bio- Vince Corvaia earned an MFA in creative writing from Wichita State University and has published nearly 200 poems. He lives in Boise, Idaho.

## Promises Kept Haibun

by Neal Whitman

In the summer of 2005 my wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. In the summer of 2013, we kept our promise. When she completed two months of chemotherapy, we promised ourselves that we would celebrate seven years of remission. During her last infusion, she was flipping through a travel magazine and showed me an ad for a cruise to the Inside Passage of Alaska. "Let's do it," I said. "In seven years, let's go."

Fast forward seven years: We love our home and think it might be our last one. At this stage of life we travel less. But, we decide that a cruise to Alaska still sounds like a great idea and book a suite on the Silver Shadow operated by Silversea Cruises.

golden shadows  
wherever we are  
we are home

Unsurpassed are the long, lingering sunsets ... the beauty of Alaska is not unexpected. But, there is a bonus: the history and culture of the people who lived there long before Europeans. We learn that the 30 to 40 foot mortuary poles erected by Native people honored individuals of high rank. A cavity is carved in the top in which a wood box is placed holding the deceased person's ashes. From top to bottom, totems tell the story of that life. One mortuary pole we see in Sitka has an eagle crest on top and a human mother holding a bear cub on the bottom.

dusk to dark  
winged memory of life  
deeply carved

In Haines, our tour guide tells us that she and her husband bought the house of a local character who had died. In his last days, this man had asked his brother to fly over Cathedral Point Summit and scatter his ashes from the air. We are told that, when the brother in his single-seat aircraft tried to unscrew the canister holding the ashes, it dropped out of his hands. He watched it tumble down and hit a mountain goat on the head. The poor beast staggered a bit and then bounded away.



Deposit Only  
10 cents payment is due  
at redemption

Bio- Neal Whitman writes to be read and to be heard. In particular, Neal enjoys in print combining his poems with his wife, Elaine's, photographs, and in recital his poetry with her Native American flute. He very much likes the Japanese haibun form which combines prose with haiku.

### **She's Moving In**

by Craig Kurtz

There's a new coffee cup  
in the kitchen cabinet;  
a little milk dispenser  
where once empty space sufficed;  
it's evident in the vased flowers  
which replaced the paper clips—  
she's moving in  
& the room is blossoming.

There's a set of rare bookends  
which decorate odd opuscles;  
a dish of after-dinner mints  
has replaced a roll of stamps;  
it's apparent in the portiere  
that animates the corridor—  
she's moving in  
& the room is now enlivening.

It's ostensibly effortless  
how a box or two creates  
a bustle of enhanced good taste  
where once indifference did rest;  
it's the additional inference—  
a future merging incidents  
of habitation (such small details)—  
which signifies expansile lives.

There's an illustration, framed,  
adorning a formerly blank wall;  
also, a set of art pencils  
accoutering a forlorn desk;  
it's obvious in the dashing tones  
imbricating the coat rack—  
she's moving in  
& this room has twice the life.

Bio- Craig Kurtz has vexed aesthetic circles since the 1981 release of *The Philosophic Collage*. Recent work appears in *Aerie Literary Journal*, *Conclave: A Journal of Character*, *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, *Festival Writer*, *Penmen Review*, *Penumbra*, *Red Fez* and *The Road Not Taken: A Journal of Formal Poetry*.

### **Wednesday Morning #69**

by Darren C. Demaree

New  
& halfway  
hoisted,

today's cup  
is your eyes  
singing

to me.  
I gulp that  
possibility.

Bio- Darren C. Demaree is the author of *As We Refer to Our Bodies* (8th House, 2013), *Temporary Champions* (Main Street Rag, 2014), *The Pony Governor* (2015, After the Pause Press) and *Not For Art Nor Prayer* (8th House, 2015). He is the Managing Editor of the Best of the Net Anthology. He is currently living in Columbus, Ohio with his wife and children.

### **A Second Excerpt from Euclid Creek Book Two**

by Michael Ceraolo

Sappho,  
in Fragment 16,  
asks what is most beautiful;

throws out  
a few possible answers only to reject them,  
then  
(in my favorite translation) answers with:

"whatever one loves most is beautiful"

and  
goes on to describe the qualities of her beloved

But  
the beloved can be a place in addition to a person,  
and  
for me this place is just that;  
specifically,  
the Euclid Creek watershed,  
and more generally,  
the entire Cleveland area

I was here originally because my parents were,  
but  
I had a chance to go away to college,  
and didn't;  
and then in the early 1980s  
I had a chance to leave again,  
this time  
in a kind of Kerouackian road trip/job search,  
and again stayed put  
I couldn't really have explained why at the time;  
some may put it down to laziness,  
or the lack of an adventurous spirit,  
but  
I have gradually come to understand  
it's because of my love of this place  
(I answer an emphatic

NO!  
when people ask if I'll leave the area  
when I retire)

I love  
most (though not all) of the things  
that civic boosters would cite  
as the best reasons to live here;  
and  
I would also cite other reasons,  
ones that others would ignore  
or cite as reasons to leave,  
such as the weather,  
which  
sometimes even seems to be changing for the better  
(will this be the place to be  
in the coming years of climate change?)  
I embrace the spectacular failures in our history  
as well as the documented successes,  
and  
explore the obscurities in both categories  
with the aim of making many of them better known

I reject  
    cynicism  
    defeatism  
    etc.  
in favor of a congenital cautious optimism  
having at least some basis in reality,  
which  
has the potential to sound,  
at times  
and to some ears,  
defeatist or cynical,  
especially  
when pointing out some persistent inequity or iniquity

But  
I will continue to conduct investigative poetry  
on any and all aspects of this area  
that catch my interest and attention,

the good as well as the bad,  
adapting  
Lincoln's definition of patriotism to the local level:  
my city, right or wrong;  
when right,  
to be kept right;  
when wrong,  
to be made right

and  
to do so for as long as I am able

Bio- Michael Ceraolo is a 57-year old retired civil servant and active poet who has had one full-length book (*Euclid Creek*, from Deep Cleveland Press) and a few shorter-length books published, plus numerous magazine publications.

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