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Come in...and be captivated...



"Grace in Full Bloom" by Claire Perkins; <http://claireperkins.com>

Editor's Note: I had first glimpsed "Grace in Full Bloom" in its earliest incarnations on Facebook while we were running the Roots Challenge. I had written to the artist to encourage her to send the image in as an entry. The image had its own 'graceful' evolution as things in both art and nature do, so rather than be rushed for the Challenge, "Grace" was shared

with me just as we were about to release the winter-spring issue in February, slotting it for the following issue.

I knew that the image was finding its right place at the right time, because I knew from the materials I was gathering for the anniversary, including an interview whose subject had just released a novel centering around the symbolism of trees, that growth and transformation would be amongst our themes. This artwork is one of the enchanting seeds from which the spring-summer anniversary has grown. As we got to witness its various stages and learn how it came to be named, we invite you to also share in the understanding of its process by watching the video below where the artist acts a gracious guide to the germination of her creation.

Grace in Full Bloom - Art & Process



Poetry

Father Ocean, Mother Land

by Katie O'Sullivan

I am a water creature created by a capricious
ocean which by temper, caresses or rapes

the curving body of the land's seductive shore.

I am a water creature whose father once becalmed, placed upon my mother's smooth bosom, a necklace entwined of sun-sparkled foam and the blue sapphire of waves.

My playground lies deep within the water's swells where dolphins and nymphs play hide and seek between ancient columns and crabs scramble to weave floppy strands of seaweed nets to anchor all the long-forgotten ships.

But when I rest, it is with my mother who plies me with turtle eggs and spiny starfish and places a seashell against my ear to hear my father's voice.

She braids a crown of kelp for my head, and puts a flowering sea urchin behind my ear. And when I lie within her sheltering dunes, she covers me with a sandy cloak until at last, I fall asleep.

Bio- After leaving UCLA and getting married, Katie O'Sullivan followed her husband's career to the Middle East where she lived for 15 years. There she graduated from the American University of Beirut while raising her seven children. Back in the U.S. her family moved between California and Texas several times before her husband retired. Following several previous attempts, Katie began her creative writing career at the age of 75. Her plan was to write a memoir, but it was pushed aside for the publication of her poetry, flash fiction, essays and the staging of one play. Some of the publications that have included her work are: The Knoxville Writers Guild, the Adams Media Corp., Silver Boomer Books, *Writers Abroad*, *The Texas Poetry Calendar* (5 editions), *Cell2Soul* and *The Write Place at the Write Time* among others. She published her memoir last year on her 90th birthday.

One Summer Day on the Number One Train

by Anne Whitehouse

When the doors of the express opened at 72 Street,
the local was waiting. She entered with me,
tall and angular as a crane, her expression alert,
violin poised against her clavicle like a wing.

The train was half-empty, the passengers dozing
or absorbed in their smartphones.
She stood at one end of the car, her gaze
swiftly appraising us, while the doors slid shut.

Closing her eyes, she lifted her bow
and dipped her chin, and into that pause
went all the years of preparation
that had brought her to this moment.

The train accelerated in a rush of cacophony,
her music welled up, and I recognized
a Bach concerto blossoming to fullness
like an ever-opening rose. Suddenly

I was crying for no reason and every reason,
in front of strangers. I thought of the courtroom
where, an hour ago, I'd sat listening to testimony
with fellow jurors, charged to determine the facts

and follow the law. But no matter how we tried,
we couldn't reverse damage or undo wrong.
The music was contrast and balm, like sunlight
in subterranean air. The tears wet on my cheeks,

I broke into applause, joined by fellow passengers.
We'd become an audience, *her* audience,
just before the doors opened and we scattered.
Making my offering, I exited, too shy to catch her eye.

But she'd seen the effect her music had wrought.
Its echo resounded in my memory, following me
into the glory of the summer afternoon.
It is with me still.

Bio- Anne Whitehouse is pleased to appear in *The Write Place at the Write Time* once

again. She received the 2015 Nazim Hikmet poetry award and the 2016 *Songs of Eretz* poetry prize. Her sixth poetry collection, *Meteor Shower*, is forthcoming from Dos Madres Press, and her novel *Fall Love* will be appearing in Spanish translation as *Amigos y amantes* from Mundi Books.

Wind, a Revolution

by Tim Gavin

“Even as Haiti struggled, the ramifications of its revolution reshaped the world around it.” –Laurent Dubois from *Avengers of the New World*

The shapeless mouth of it opened
And breath swept through the river valley
Like rebels on horseback, swinging swift swords
Cutting away the shackles that held them captive
Until their cry rose to God. Thirteen years,
 It scurried from one
Mountain to another waging danger, with
Shout and shriek. It was a lethal weapon, neither
Wearied nor worn out. Its shapelessness
Spoonfed through the river and swooned
The banks of the Artibonite where,
Among reeds and trees, captors sought refuge
From bloodshed, but the wind, feeding itself
With each whirl and tilt, advanced
As its shapeless body hung among
Clouds and brought escape to slaves.

Dirt

by Tim Gavin

The moon is rotting in the limbs of the banana tree
And Daphne howls into the night, which covers the deep
Bruise of her soul as she wrings her hands in the dirty bucket
To wash herself from the dirt of the day and the dirt of her lover
And the dirt of the horse she walked behind, coming up
The mountain from the market and the dirt of her children

Who suck her milk till it's gone and the dirt of the foreign
 Missionaries who believe because they say *Jesus* as *Jezi*,
 then they are somehow soul mates to Daphne and her kin.
 She lifts the rag to the sky and sees the many holes which have
 Filtered the dirt from her body to the air and into the river
 Of her mother country where one mountain
 Rises up after another ranging into infinity.

Bio- Tim Gavin is an Episcopal priest, serving as chaplain at The Episcopal Academy, located in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania. He oversees the school's partnership program with St. Marc's School in the Central Plateau of Haiti, which he visits three to four times a year. He is working on a full-length manuscript of poems entitled, *Lyrics from the Central Plateau*. His poems have appeared in many journals and most recently in *The Anglican Theological Review*, *About Place Journal*, *Digital Papercut*, *Screech Owl Review*, *HEArt On-Line Journal*, and *Blue Heron Review*. He lives with his wife and sons in Havertown, Pennsylvania.

The Never-ending Now

by Len Kuntz

I suppose you are thinking this
 would be a good time to blame the moon
 or raise a glass
 slice a finger
 make confessions
 do anything but live
 here in the never-ending now
 but there is a flock of starlings
 writing names in the aquamarine
 a baby smelling of homemade bread
 cooing and pawing air
 some girl somewhere is getting her first kiss
 from a boy she's been writing poems about
 a mother has kicked cancer's ass
 refugees have found a home
 Nina Simone is crooning on a phonograph
 in an old folks home while a couple dances

please stop and ask yourself if
you really want to miss so much beauty

Home

by Len Kuntz

Today I am grateful for the fallow fields
Where as a child I'd fly kites
Imagining them angels sent to save me
From my war room home
The wind was a good friend then
Soil smelling of chaff and barley
The ghosts at bay for once
Returning here after all these years
Feels a bit like victory
Or forgiveness
And when my wife asks why I'm smiling
I tell her I'm ready to go home

Bio- Len Kuntz is an editor for the online magazine *Literary Orphans* and the author of the story collection *I'm Not Supposed to Be Here and Neither Are You* released this March from Unknown Books. You can also find him at lenkuntz.blogspot.com

A Hard Man

by Ion Corcos

A sculpture cracks
like clay in a dry river,

stands skewed in a gallery,
where life is exhibited.

A woman notes tears in its eyes;
he is alive, she proclaims,

followed by reporters
looking to find the right angle, quickly.

A scientist arrives,
assesses the sculpture,

decides there are no tears;
merely moisture

reacting with the minerals
of the stone.

Not everyone believes this;
some believe it could cry,

that behind the façade,
it was human, all human.

Bio- Ion Corcos has been published in *Axolotl*, *Bitterzoet*, *Every Writer* and *Ishaan Literary Review*. He is a Pushcart Prize nominee. He is currently travelling indefinitely with his partner, Lisa. He is also working on his first poetry collection, *Like Clouds*, and a chapbook inspired by Greece.

Ion's website is:
<http://www.ioncorcos.wordpress.com>

Concert

by Sarah Brown Weitzman

The stamping of feet,
 hands slapping
 together and shouts

 of *bravo* or *brava*

seem a barbaric custom.
 Rather,
 stunned silence
barely daring

to breathe, not moving

a muscle would be
 a more fitting tribute,
 absolute quiet
until
 the spell is broken

when a chair squeaks
 as someone shifts

in his seat a cough or two

 a few whispers
a purse falls to the floor,

someone stands up
and then,
yes, then
 let the applause
 begin.

The Sea-like Longing

by Sarah Brown Weitzman

Is there ever a moment
as the tide turns
when the drag of the moon
checks completely the pull
of the sun and earth,
a moment of equipoise?

Or is the sea like longing
ponderous and deep
endlessly rocking
from shore to opposite shore
claiming, then releasing
holding but never keeping.

Language

by Sarah Brown Weitzman

In the mimicry of the sound
of sounds, some scholars think

language began, that early
lexicographers once culled grunts

and shrieks, hissed
to name the wind and conjugated

with universal moans.
To put the cant of animals

in a looser tongue
they later conversed as birds

whistling before they formed
a word but after doing that

they needed more
to say of, say, their fear

of darkness before the fire
was discovered

until they had a grammar
that could denote position

at a feast, recount a tense
hunt or give a meaning

to dying. I would not
wish to go back to that

excellent vocabulary
yet what a hearing

that first must have been
for them crouched

cross-legged in some dim cave
staccato pits of rain

upon dry leaf beyond
when those elements combined

to thunder suddenly
out of the mouth of a man.

Longing

by Sarah Brown Weitzman

Whether in music or words
or what is viewed
beauty brings an ache
familiar to women
an emptiness
we cannot explain exactly
except that we yearn
away the years
wanting *something*
we may never find.
While men express
what beauty does to them
quite differently—oh, how
I'd like to take *that* home—
still they have moments
of epiphany when they see
the way a branch strays
down to make a pattern
of shade on the surface
of a pond in a painting
or note a strain of melancholy
in a phrase of music
or glimpse beauty of bone
and cartilage turn
the corner of their possibility
then they too may long
for something
they cannot even name.

Bio- Sarah Brown Weitzman has had work in hundreds of journals and anthologies including *The North American Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Thema*, *Rattle*, *Mid-American Review*, *Poet Lore*, *The Bellingham Review*, *Ekphrasis*, *Spillway*, etc. Sarah received a Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. A departure from poetry, her fourth book *Herman and the Ice Witch*, is a children's novel published by Main Street Rag.

The Knight and the Lady of the Well

by Beate Sigriddaughter

Like a proverbial house cat never forgets
that she was once worshipped in Egypt,
a goddess never forgets.

An ancient story tells of a knight
(with long dark hair, of course)
who rides by a well, and a lady
offers him water in a chalice, and later
some wine. Soon they are married
and live in long and loving partnership.
She is a goddess it turns out.

One day the knight gets restless, asks
for leave to travel and find new adventure
and she says: Go. (What else could she say?)
So he rides off into enchanting distractions
and after some time he forgets.

Imagine being married to a lady,
a goddess, and you forget.

I will confess in my life I have
forgotten you at times while out
in the vast mesmerizing
world. I understand these things.

But my heart is mostly with her,
as she perhaps places a damp cloth
on the forehead of a feverish child,

or the trees around her grow tall,
unknown and unnoticed.

When will you remember? The well
has changed since you last saw it.
The wind tugs at its walls.
A goddess never forgets.

Aubade

by Beate Sigriddaughter

Dawn is again, somehow
that is significant.

Dawn is again,
perhaps it always is.

Dawn is again,
and I still hear you.

Dawn is the hour
of children grown too old
to sleep through a peace like this.

I say: *Your shadow is exquisite.*
You say: *But in this shadow is no face.*
What would you want with a face
at this hour?

All enemies are unconvincing
and strangers live only by daylight.

But this is dawn,
and I know you still.

Bio- Beate Sigriddaughter lives and writes in New Mexico, the Land of Enchantment. Her work has received four Pushcart Prize nominations and won four poetry awards. In 2015 ELJ Publications published her novel, *Audrey: A Book of Love*.

<http://www.sigriddaughter.com/>

Secluded Vista

by Lew Caccia

Seclusion draws crowds. Sandstone cliffs extend picturesque as do yellow poplars through hemlock branches. The vista reveals goldenrods, violets and pink asters. Sunset fingers its signature unique to each evening, tracing shadows around lucky pebbles.

The barred owl waits on high perch toward dusk. He drifts toward stringed summer light and entreats, "Hoo hoo hoo hoo hoo hooooo-ah!" Foragers near the plateau feed the campfires; the owl too looks westward.

Before We Are Fully Aware

by Lew Caccia

Over the falls ribbons of water torrent after spring rain. Vernal pools fill with salamanders. We wade up creek on compressed sediment. The seasonal mood exposes stone layers, yellow-brown looming over deep red. Even fossils revealed further into the slippery walk.

Into the gorge we are drawn wandering, quiet and unassuming is the vibe forgotten by time. Treacherous become the careful yet solitary steps. A light snow shower sprinkles over the still-green woods.

Bio- Lew Caccia serves as a professor at Kent State University at Stark, where he teaches courses in composition, rhetoric, professional writing, and literacy. His poetry has appeared in *The Storyteller*, *The Shepherd*, *hedgerow*, *The Write Place at the Write Time*,

The Penwood Review, and most recently, *Praxis*. He enjoys writing poems about the Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Ohio. "Secluded Vista" is based on the park's Ritchie Ledges Overlook. "Before We Are Fully Aware" is inspired by Brandywine Falls. When asked if 'lucky pebbles' refers to some particular pebbles, Lew explains that he calls them lucky in the sense that they happen to be in the right spot to receive the twilight; he also thinks of them as lucky in the sense of the positive feelings that onlookers often take away.

National Geographic offers a background on Cuyahoga Valley National Park:
http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/national-parks/cuyahoga-valley-national-park/#/autumn-lake-cuyahoga_92541_600x450.jpg

Original

by Howard Winn

Forget everything I have told you.
I can repeat it, more or less, if
I am required to, or I can forget
it myself, because others may
have said it before me.
Who can be that novel,
except when one has to be?
If we can figure out how to be.
Human experience has been
repeated with different stage settings
that may alter the meaning,
or maybe not.
Who writes the script and to what
end?

Surface Tension

by Howard Winn

Staring down through the stream's surface,
I see the slick rocks,
the green waving water plants,
and the occasional blue-gill searching
for food or another sun fish.
The sun glints along the countertop

of the slowly moving creek
and I strain against the glare
to see what lies at the bottom
Water bugs skate along,
disturbing the flatness
and my vision as I seek
these images in the deep,
and find them distorted
by the rushing water,
the trails of darting insects,
the angle of the sun.
I give up the search for accuracy
and acknowledge the bends and twists
of what I perceive.
We may pretend we can see clearly into the depths
but all we can do is accept
the break-up of surface tension
as we both look into these distortions
and find they are confused with the reflections
that mirror from the surface.

Bio- Howard Winn's fiction and poetry, has been published by such journals as *The Long Story*, *The Write Place at the Write Time*, *Galway Review* (Ireland), *Antigonish Review*, *Chaffin Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *The Wisconsin Review*, and *Tule Review*. His B.A. is from Vassar College, his M.A. from the creative writing program of Stanford University. His doctoral work was done at NYU. He is a SUNY faculty member as Professor of English.

What the Gun Eats #62

by Darren C. Demaree

We always admire
the first engineer,
the mind

& the hands
that can build some-
thing new,

but almost never
do they construct
anything

they live beside.
These new guns,
almost none of them

have been pressed
into the kidneys
of their maker.

That feels like
a story to me with
no good ending.

Bio- Darren C. Demaree is the author of five poetry collections, most recently *The Nineteen Steps Between Us* (2016, After the Pause). He is the Managing Editor of the Best of the Net Anthology. Currently, he is living in Columbus, Ohio with his wife and children.

Under My Nails

by Laura A. Lord

I get uncomfortable around the glass-domed
rotisserie section of the deli,
as if the contents of that case were going to sprout
feathers back on those wings
and beat around in my hair for a while.

As if the lady behind the counter were going to grab
my hand as I reach for the cellophane-wrapped carcass
and examine my nails to see
the leftover bits of skin and grease
stuck under the cuticles,

grown long from mismanagement and neglect.
I want to hide my fingers in my fists—
ball them up and stuff the knuckle between my teeth

so when I scream out his name
it sounds like, "I'm sorry."

I want to trade in the memory of chicken grease
and the feel of hot meat pressed,
hidden against my chest,
the cold air making a bark in my lungs
and you waiting, salivating,

hungry. I want to give up poverty
and bring back the wealth of your laugh,
the richness of your hand in mine.
But I was out stealing dinner when the call came.
I wasn't there when you died.

Ugly

by Laura A. Lord

I was twenty-three when the fertile valley of my womb opened,
blossomed and unfolded like the soft petals of an Easter Lily,
and spit out life like some fragile ornament to decorate my arms.

You had a tendency to exaggerate and the truth turned from a petrous,
stead-fast thing to something fluid. It ran like madness through our home
and dripped as fat drops of paint quickly smeared across that spot on the
wall

where your fist shoved through the drywall and the bottle against your lips
spilled dark amber waves that made a scornful ocean in your ears.
And still I listened to the crowing of my heart. I let your steady dose of
white noise

drip drop into my veins, a needle on tap. I held a baby to my chest
felt his lips pull at my body while you raved about the ugliness of this world.
I looked down at the crinoline eyelashes, stiff with sleep and the soft

cheeks and pursed lips and thought,
the only thing ugly in this world
was you.

Bio- Laura A. Lord is the author of numerous collections of vignettes and poetry and one awesome children's book about a T-Rex screwing up her entire day. It's absolutely a true story. Laura's work has been featured in *The Beacon*, *Mirrored Voices*, *The Collegian*, *Precipice*, *Massacre Magazine*, *Tipsy Lit*, *The Reverie Journal*, and *Whirl with Words*. She is one of the founding members of *The Reverie Journal* and Book Genesis, a book editing and marketing company. Laura is also an editor for *Birth Without Fear*. Laura lives with her husband and three children on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

Fait Accompli

by Cheryl Sommese

It eerily unfolded like never before—
your tongue flailing
struggling to revive
a drowning relationship
yet grasping
at some measurable level
the rhythm and strokes
necessary
to make it happen
simply
weren't there.

Liquid oozed aside your
crinkled brow
as the whole discomfoting scene
played out:
words chillingly transforming
from
forced reticence
to earnest desperation
to manifest rage.

I was perplexed why this particular time
seemed especially
poignant,
perhaps my stare
revealed

a lasting burial plot
had been found.

Bio- Cheryl Sommese penned her first poem in her early teens. Since then, many more have followed. One beloved writing project she has undertaken is a human interest screenplay based on the lives of her spirited, immigrant grandparents. The longtime animal lover hopes to one day see the script come to life. She enjoys French and Italian wines and periodically partakes in one of the ruby treasures while savoring a well-prepared vegetarian meal. Ms. Sommese lives in New Hampshire with her husband and two dogs.

Rooming House

by Robert Joe Stout

Awakening from this same bed
I heard water running
and imagined it was my wife
in the next room
washing her hair. But it was rain;
the wind bringing it against the window
shredded her presence
and I sat with my hopes in my hands
like a cobweb
brushed away from a mirror.

Six A.M.

by Robert Joe Stout

Crack! Abruptly I awakened.
All was silent
except echoes
 then the wispy rustling
of the wind
and I stepped through

the dormer window
onto shingles

twinkling mica-like reflections
as the cottonwood's huge limb

swayed back and forth
refracting light
from a round
full laughing moon

then slipped into a haze
of merging bison
covered by the dust
they hooved behind them

as sleep and dream dissolved
and I was who I was
alone, standing by a window

hand upraised, the moon
a murky dwindling through leaves
that fluttered shards of dreams
I groped but couldn't grasp.

Phone Call to My Ex-Wife

by Robert Joe Stout

Thanks! A lilt of laughter
like old times
and I laughed too
 and then a silence
each of us
with our own thoughts,
remembrances, concerns,
connections not like what they were
but something new,
a seedling sprouting
near the old abandoned trunk,
fresh yet formed
from what had been,
familiar yet so far removed

from *then*—she laughs again,
more quietly, assures me
she's okay
and asks about my weight
and I reply
as though to any friend
I might have called,
the who she is a shadow
somewhat like a dream.

Bio- Robert Joe Stout is a freelance writer. His work has appeared in *America*, *Eclectica*, *Conscience*, *Notre Dame Magazine* and many other magazines and journals. His most recent novel is *Where Gringos Don't Belong* from Anaphora Literary Press. A new book of poetry, *Monkey Screams*, was released in 2015 by FutureCycle Press. A career journalist, he now makes his home in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Busboy

by D. G. Geis

"And that was the whole show." —Charles Simic

Busboy by day,
Philosopher by night;

This strange world of
Disappearing tablecloths

And naked tables
Flashing leg.

A little cheesecake
For the diners

Or maybe a fork
Out of thin air.

A brief demonstration
In four parts

And the metaphysician
Struts his Stuff.

The cosmology of tableware,
The ontology of napkins:

There'll be no applause
When he makes

Nothing from Something
And hardly a glance

When the diners levitate
On a cloud of atoms.

Prix fixe, the last course
Is a mystery.

This sleight of hand,
This aproned magician,

Bending over a table
Reshuffling the universe

One spoon at a time.

Modern Dance

by D. G. Geis

Modern dance is like this.
It is real, but not.

The dancers move unnaturally,
the gifted ones the most.

Whatever they are saying is lost.
In fact, is lost together.

They only appear
to leap.

They crown dead air
with vigilante limbs

and chiropractic fervor—
tight skin stretched

over tighter bodies,
war drums beaten

to ambush ecstasy.
The final footfall,

a footnote
folded into an airplane

loosed cheerfully
on the void.

Bio- D. G. Geis lives in Houston, Texas. He has an undergraduate degree in English Literature from the University of Houston and a graduate degree in philosophy from California State University. His poetry has appeared in *491 Magazine*, *Lost Coast*, *Blue Bonnet Review*, *The Broadkill Review*, *A Quiet Courage*, *SoftBlow International Poetry Journal*, *Blinders*, *Burningword Literary Journal*, *Poetry Scotland* (Open Mouse), *Crosswinds*, *Scarlet Leaf*, *Sweet Tree*, *Atrocity Exhibition*, *Driftwood Press*, *Tamsen*, *Rat's Ass*, *Bad Acid*, and *Crack the Spine*. He will be featured in a forthcoming Tupelo Press chapbook anthologizing nine new poets and is a winner of *Blue Bonnet Review's* Fall 2015 Poetry Contest.

Mystery Man

by Fiona Sinclair

No pillow talk, rather he dozes tight-lipped as a spy.
So she must catch what he lets slip in daily life,
ELO on the radio whilst they decorate
I saw them at the Albert Hall...
She repaints the same skirting,
fighting her need for who with? when?
settling for *What was the band like?*
After Jeff Lynne is reviewed,
Do you think we should paint the ceiling?

cueing *that's enough* to her firmly as putting
the lid back on his chocolates.

Occasionally his history ambushes him;
a road in Liverpool recognized after 30 years,
she holds her breath as his dramatic monologue unfolds,
route to his mate's funeral, a TT race casualty,
roll call of other biker mourners *Ogy, Tex, Spider*
a few thumbnails sketched; *Noddy, he was a nutter...*
no biker chicks mentioned but then
brothers, bikes, birds, the natural order, she gathers.

When I was married to: When I was inside...
sometimes sudden revelations slap shock her,
yet he is adamant as a lying child *I told you this...*
Nevertheless brief Q and A session permitted,
her questions answered as if she was the prying press,
then time up, back to work on his laptop.
But questions persist in her like weeds,
however much she tries to smother them.

Greedy Cow

by Fiona Sinclair

At the ice cream counter you reject
With Malvolio priggishness my attempts to tempt,
Turn your back on burlesque photos
of Peach Melba, Broadstairs Surprise, Banana split...
'I just want a proper frothy coffee,'
strut off to examine the juke box.
My diet's resolve this Easter has already
capitulated into a full blown bender
so I order Knickerbocker Glory.

At melamine table in Lloyd loom chair,
I scoff the sundae's whipped cream head;
ogle pink lit Liberace shell encrusted fountain,
cornet cast door handles, 99 shaped wall lamps.
Melted droplets splatter my dress,

I dab with serviette too sugar high to care
that my occasional eating incontinence makes you look away.

At home, your child sized meals,
make my adult plate seem free buffet greed.
Eating, I try to match your dissection pace
but soon revert to my Labrador gulp.
Shuffle my knife and fork around an empty plate
until you have caught me up.
Shame that our shared sexual appetite
does not extend to similar desire for food.

Bio- Fiona Sinclair is the editor of the online poetry magazine *Message in a Bottle*. Her first full collection, *Ladies Who Lunch* was published in 2015 by Lapwing Press, Belfast.

The Lessons in Arguing

by John Grey

An argument drags up
other, older arguments—
fighting knows the past
better than memory.
We blow off on tangents.
We find the connection
between this hurt
and its long dormant grandfather.
We're overwhelmed
like children with too many toys at Christmas.
Only we break our toys.
We'd even break Christmas if we could.

An argument needs to be this way.
It can't be centered.
It must never be linear.
A rational argument on either side
and there'd be no hope for us.
Irrational is the only hope.

A viewpoint must, for the good of all,
eventually sound crazy to the person saying it.

So I can't play cards with the guys
because the iron's cord is frayed.
Your mother won't visit with us
as long as there's a nasty noise
in the Volvo's engine.

You're calm.
I'm feeling better now.
We kiss and make up.
I'd like to see logic try.

Bio- John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in *New Plains Review*, *Perceptions* and the anthology, *No Achilles* with work upcoming in *Big Muddy Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Coal City Review* and *Nebo*.

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