

THE IBIS HEAD REVIEW



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FOUNDING EDITOR:
ELI T. MOND

MANAGING EDITOR:
TIAN TRAN

JUNE 2017



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Social Media Manager

ASSEF ALI

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ABOUT *T.I.H.R.*

The Ibis Head Review is a quarterly literary publication dedicated to the idea that poetry is a necessary aspect of the human experience and it should be appreciated by people of all backgrounds and interests—not just poets. We seek to honor the intellectual dignity of the reading public by publishing nothing but genuinely meaningful and high-quality content from both established and emerging writers.

CONTACT

EMAIL

theibisheadreview@gmail.com

TWITTER

[@ibisheadreview](https://twitter.com/ibisheadreview)

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CONTENTS

Kevin Rabas	Start, Mowing Season.....	2
Janet Lindquist Black	Icumen In.....	4
	From Here.....	5
Nilesh Mondal	#1. Passing away of a patriarch...	7
Damon Ferrell	Untitled No. 1.....	10
Marbut	Untitled No. 2.....	11
Austin Brookner	Sickening Eyes.....	13
Billy Malanga	Lovelord.....	15
Kenneth Kesner	sorceress.....	17
Ky Li	For Lack of Moon.....	19
	Distractions.....	20
	A Day in Life.....	21
Nels Frank Hanson	Ulysses' Song.....	23
Lauren Suchenski	Fishtown you said.....	25
Frederick Fullerton	Axial Tilt.....	27
	Waterfront Visit.....	28
Steven Reese	The Anti-Towers.....	30
	Rift.....	31
Frank Candeloro	“Syllables Waken the Air”.....	33
Eric Matthew Goldman	Gray Orb.....	35
Kristin LaFollette	Susceptible.....	37

	A Lasting Impression.....	38
Arushi Singh	Exile.....	40
Michael Aird	Nor is There Any Other Way to Pass Thither, Whither We Needs Must Pass.....	42
	We Have a New President, Faggot.....	45
Phillip Newton	Groceries.....	49
Richard Fein	A Brief Refrain.....	51
Ken W. Simpson	The Reality of Unreality.....	53
	Optimism.....	54
Peter Surkov	Tiberius among rockpools.....	56
Thomas Piekarski	Headless Horsemen.....	58
	Elephant Ears.....	59
	Drowning.....	60
Vern Fein	Portraits of Gran Ollie.....	63
Guinotte Wise	Dial Twisting.....	66
Isha Tewari	The Creator's Blueprint.....	68
Elizabeth Schaulat	Out of Place.....	70
	German Heritage.....	71
Dennis James Underwood	Old Cat.....	73

PLEASE
ENJOY!



KEVIN RABAS

Kevin Rabas teaches at Emporia State University, where he leads the poetry and playwriting tracks. He has seven books, including *Lisa's Flying Electric Piano*, a *Kansas Notable Book* and Nelson Poetry Book Award winner.



Start, Mowing Season



Snow gone, the grass's tan—
zoysia and fescue,
and the men on the block eye
their mowers
like other women, run
a dust rag
over the red fuselage, uncap
oil and gas cans, and pray now
for heat and fidelity, pray
together we can
start up again.



JANET LINDQUIST BLACK

Janet Black has lived in many places. Her work—informed most recently by Princeton NJ, New York City and small-town New England—emerges in solitude or in cacophonous cafes.

Janet works with troubled children by day.

In after hours, she considers life and the numerous incompletions of love, swallowed by time, distraction, mystery, interruption—and she finds consolations offered by Nature as in the give and take of weather and tides.

Janet has published short stories in *The Kenyon Review*, *Literary Review*, *Wind*, *Persea* and others. She twice won honorable mention in Best American Short Stories.

Her poems have been published in *Welter*, *Mobius*, and *Cortlandt Review*.



Icumen In¹

First winter couldn't stop happening
no matter if time's wings were damped in rage

Then the whole bloody spring
slashed through in a song without mercy
vain tendrils and floral tantrums
ruptured the earth
in frenzied birth

Followed by insult of summer
exuberant grasses in lustrous buzz

And now the hardknuckled bruise of
autumn, purpling
stamina's thready strings

To think of all the sad last
winters, springs, summers and autumns
practicing time without you

The seasons only repeat their rush
Hours go hard in the throat
a dull wind that never stops
ushers cavalcades of morning into eternal night
Footsteps vanish

And the clock says - *There*

¹ title is from Cuckoo Song (c.1240) first line - "Sumer is icumen in" (summer has come . . .)



From Here

I will never forget those stars
on March 18, 2007 in the Catskill Mountains
when I was looking for our life
among birdfeeders hanging icicles
over the woodpile
topped with drifts.

Those stars filled themselves up
with some celestial milk
and bellied down like lighted snowballs.
They were reaching
to tell me something of forever and the night.

What did it mean?
this press of firmament,
balled up mysteries of light making themselves tangible.
Was it a darkness reminder or
a message of light?
Was it you?
They pried my eyes open all night long.

Days keep us earthbound
among hurries,
eyes on our toes.
But night brings on the universe.
No horizon. No divide.

The date of your birth
now has its other bookend.
No. It's not as you thought.
You are not where you were
before you were born
on March 18, 1941.

No one was missing you then.



NILESH MONDAL

Nilesh Mondal, 23, is an engineer by choice and poet by chance. He works as a writer for *Thought Catalog* and *Terribly Tiny Tales*, and is prose editor for *Moledro Magazine*. His first book of poetry, *Degrees of Separation*, is scheduled for a 2017 release.



#1. Passing away of a patriarch

grandfather's room was kept the way
he left it, when he was rushed to the
hospital and never returned, grandma
carries the keys now, tied to the end
of her white saree, sometimes it drags
on the ground and makes a rattling
sound, startles us with the reminder
of a man turning into memory, slowly

on my spring break I visit the house
again, my first since grandpa's passing
getting down from the rickshaw I see
grandma standing at the door, waiting
she smiles when I touch her feet, and
dabs the corner of her eyes next moment

the house looks cavernous, silent and
mourning, grandpa's framed photo has
been decorated with a garland of fresh
marigold, that afternoon untying the key
from grandma's saree while she slept, I
venture into the room
no one enters anymore

in the cupboard, I find photo albums and
astrology books neatly arranged according
to dimensions, in some photos my father
looks at me, almost unrecognisable, barely
23, wearing jeans that taper at the ankles
and a sideburn which doesn't suit him, in
some photos my grandma, newly married
and with long, dark hair looks at the camera
as if waiting for someone to arrive, and one
of my grandpa, beside his scooter, hair
receding and a smile squeezed
into his serious face and brows

beside a window, rosary beads hang
framed photographs of goddesses
look down from the wall, and the
room smells of denture cleaning formula



and a man who had lived
many lives, in one



DAMON FERRELL MARBUT

Damon Ferrell Marbut is author of three poetry collections, *Little Human Accidents*, *Human Crutches*, and *garbageflower*, in addition to the critically-acclaimed novel, *Awake in the Mad World*. He lives in New Orleans.



Untitled No. 1

The last card game I was in
there were naked men and women,
I, the only with just pants on,
there was a refrigerator filled with beer
and I mean beer, a fridge separate from the main one,
I wasn't even playing cards, really,
just holding them in my hands, watching the other game
of women drunk and kissing women,
sun-coming-in-window-sort-of-morning,
I kissed two straight male friends, drunk,
one took off with a lady
and sex happened in the front room,
I was the only one on LSD,
crying each time I laughed because all was beautiful
and the Earth still promising,
I'd a better body then,
everyone cheered each other on to do more, be more,
love more, experiment, lay your cards down, all,
but I was thinking how Hemingway said,
"In order to write about life first you must live it"
so I didn't let on to what I was doing,
I just watched, dazzled, and didn't fold.



Untitled No. 2

Burying the dog with Papa,
I held the flashlight at night in the back yard,
couldn't tell you the temperature or about the stars,
just the sound of his shoe on shovel unearthing earth.
He'd come over for this,
perhaps Nannie was inside with coffee and Ma,
discussing how a child might learn of loss.
I was fascinated. I held the light still.
The little, old poodle had been ready for years to go.
What caught me was maybe twenty years later
and I lost him.
After many visits, huddling close in the kitchen with Papa
while the women chatted across the house,
I learned community and laughter and that
the world is fine when you've got
tea brewing and chicken in the fryer,
I became a man, I developed trust,
wanted to become the best southern chef alive,
didn't even mind church.
None of this to suggest I was a good boy,
but I was something else then, pure,
loved to make Papa laugh,
and when my father died and I saw him buried
all I thought was give Papa some money,
give my mother money,
and I did and I went back and forth
between certainty and guesswork and,
for some reason tonight I can hear my grandfather
saying Let Me Go, Sweetheart,
You Make Me Some Kind Of Proud.



AUSTIN BROOKNER

Austin Brookner has been published in the journals *Mad Swirl*, *The Carpathian Health Resort*, *Earl of Plaid*, *Offbeat*, and *Quirky Books*, *The Unrorean*, and *Bleacher Report*, and was shortlisted for the 2016 Erbacce Poetry Prize.



Sickening Eyes

Her crotch a river, gleaming large and untrue.
Since Christmas, so cold; no pussy, no school.
Then he emptied their friends – the bass player, laughing as the others.
Slamming the door, his mind conjuring his wife.

Got an energy smile, going larger.
The coat now – ya beer, a little groggy.
Oh please don't come back,
Sickening eyes.

He's a big brave man, feeling black all day.
Another winter, his face shaking, waiting for the light to change.
He showered very slowly, his own flesh and blood.
Away from her for a long time, he took a shot for good luck.

You're a fascinating one;
A told collapse;
A blame,
Down.



BILLY MALANGA

My name is William Marshall. I write under the pen name: Billy Malanga. Billy (M.S. in Criminal Justice) is a first generation college graduate, U.S. Marine Corps veteran, and the grandson of Italian immigrants. He played college football and worked for many years in a state prison system. All of these influences have undeniably shaped his way of thinking about his art. His poetry reveals his small victories and also his struggles in redefining masculinity in an effort to better understand the beauty and brutality of the world around him. His upcoming poetry will be published online at *The Naga.org*, in print at *Sprindrift Literary Journal*, and *The Rat's Ass Review*. He currently lives in Urbana, IL.



Lovelord

My Lovelord lives
past Ferry's Bell,
across the foggy bay.

A shadowed map guides
me there, when light
has lost its way.

Our naked breath does
fill my cup, like rows
of needled pine.

This untold lust defends
my Lord, my hallowed
saint divine.

Till we meet again
dark moon, across
navy waters wait.

Come to me my Lord
one last time, before
the brilliant sun is late.



KENNETH KESNER

Kenneth Kesner left school after reading in European classics and philosophy then sought a career teaching in East Asia, where he began to study martial arts and write poems. Some recent work may be found in *The Courtship of Winds*, *The Inflectionist Review*, *The Opiate*, *Otis Nebula*, *POETRYREPAIRS*, and *Subterranean Blue Poetry*.



sorceress



she teaches how certainty burns
how dusk spends its blindness
the way a trident can pierce
soul and heart and sky to give
words for her to hold and
sacrifice sound in their likeness
she points where suns collide
the days that might have been
what's behind a forgotten night
in a moment the moon let go



KY LI

Ky Li is a folk poet living in Louisville, KY. He sees his poems as utilitarian for an esoteric common-man/woman, sometimes working with the common in an uncommon way and sometimes the reverse of this. He has been published in the literary journals *Brittle Star* and *The Oddville Press*.



For Lack of Moon

What has not been said already
of beauty by lost fairywrens
aimlessly circling the Barrier Reef
or woe, the type so well-expressed
by vacant lovers who stare blankly
at untrimmed wicks in the dark?
What futility of day following night
following day down the circling drain
to the right of one hemisphere
or the left of the other, has not
been so expounded upon by poets
or painters wayfaring some similar
terrain? Can you speak, oh words,
forgiving the moon his absence?



Distractions



Gratuitous speakers in Starbucks
pulsate overhead, their generic
drum-machine monotony
muddle into lattes
and languishing commuters,

Lake Michigan's wind plays
push-pull with umbrellas
and lethargic morning faces
who react profane and bitch-slapped,

taxis cue centipede-like
at the hotel's gargantuan feet,
awaiting the doorman's command
to fetch, sit or stay, while one

noncaffeinated heart skips unnoticed.



A Day in Life

Wind brisk the morning's face.
Outside the window, maple seeds fall
from a late spring freeze
to a frenzy of squirrels and birds.
Winter's coat is soon stored away
for something more colorful.

You prepare tea and biscuits.
A warm duvet envelopes my torso
and a hardbound book fills my hands.
Steam heat creaks and pops
through the cast-iron radiator
as you slip back into bed.

We kiss and share similar smiles.
Death must wait for another day.



NELS FRANK HANSON

Nels Hanson grew up on a small farm in the San Joaquin Valley of California and has worked as a farmer, teacher and contract writer/editor. His fiction received the San Francisco Foundation's James D. Phelan Award and Pushcart nominations in 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016. His poems received a 2014 Pushcart nomination, *Sharkpack Review's* 2014 Prospero Prize, and 2015 and 2016 Best of the Net nominations.



Ulysses' Song

Penelope warned this King
never to drink from the new
spring bubbling in the Sacred

Wood but one morning early
from a cup I tasted it, woke
days later far away, a sleeper

who savored Circe's potion.
I'd dreamed of some 10-year
Trojan War, of mighty heroes,

Helen and tragic Hector, his
father Priam, the Great Horse
and a city burning, a decade

voyage home, love and death,
the lone survivor only his dog
Ajax knew. Each character I'd

given face and armor, a name,
sword, each story told in rising
hexameter. The awakened poet

stumbled for the palace to chant
his amazing song but realized
no search party, no dog set out

to meet him. The throne room
was left unguarded, amid flaring
torches, mad flutes and drums

12 suitors danced in serpentine
to beg the Queen to string again
yew bow for drunken laughter.



LAUREN SUCHENSKI

Lauren Suchenski is a fragment sentence-dependent, ellipsis-loving writer and lives somewhere where the trees change color. Her poetry has been published in over 40 magazines and her first chapbook *Full of Ears and Eyes Am I* is due out this year from *Finishing Line Press*. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee and she loves to swim inside syllables.



Fishtown you said

Fishtown you said,
But I thought the curve of your nose
said something too -
How the glue between our fingertips
was getting stickier with time/
How love would rant along South Street -
ringing the bells, chiming the chimes
Meet me, you said
I said I loved the hilltops
of your lips - I said to meet me there -
Where the wounds of the world closed fast
like ancient hands praying
silently
for something worth holding



FREDERICK FULLERTON

Frederick Fullerton is a raconteur, writer, and poet. He lives in Rhode Island.



Axial Tilt

Our planet Earth spins on an axial
tilt a tad more than twenty-three degrees
and in axial recession treks
equinoxes and solstices
while our planet's people tilt toward
fear and cling to anger and hatred
of named and nameless others
because we refuse to open our minds
and cling like leeches to illusions,
growling glibly we don't and can't know
those others, not now, not ever.

Crosscut to a propinquity
in a dingy corner bar where
a passé pinball wizard rocks
and humps a vintage machine,
fingers thumping the side flipper
buttons, but he nudges too much
and the backglass flickers TILT.
Wizard turns and stiffly shuffles
out to the empty street,
savoring the peace of loneliness.



Waterfront Visit

I.

The port's harbor shelters
gaudy cruise ships and
flaking tankers, freighters, trawlers
in need of repairs and paint.
Portly cruise ship tourists
wander among overpriced kitsch,
looking over but not seeing
the smiling tarts in the shadows.
They're too distracted by the sea and sky
and credit card fun that fades
with the setting sun as the launch
ferries them back for dinner and shows.

II.

Stumbling from discordant dives,
swaggering but driven
seamen prowl a Hieronymus Bosch
waterfront seeking quick sex
with smiling whores who whisper
their wares from the shadows.
Bolder mariners steer through darkened
doorways and climb red-lit staircases
others stagger past, navigating by
music, laughter, and clinking glass.
A poet lurks nearby scrawling
rough verse to seafarers and whores.



STEVEN REESE

Steven Reese's work has appeared in *The Journal*, *West Branch*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Atlanta Review*, and a host of other magazines, as well as in three collections: *Enough Light to Steer By* (Cleveland State), *American Dervish* (Salmon), and *Excentrica: Notes on the Text* (BlazeVOX, forthcoming). He has as well two volumes of translation, *Synergos* (Etruscan; poems of Roberto Manzano) and *Womanlands* (Verbum, Spain; poems of Diana María Ivizate González). He directs the Northeast Ohio MFA in creative writing.



The Anti-Towers

...let us make us a name...

Poetry is born at Babel
as dissent, as descending word-
towers, what they name falling toward
earth and meanings they're able

to stand by—which all stand for *no*
to the brick-and-slime tower's rise
toward *a name*. They step down the sky's
white page to walk here below

with us, to help us know the ground
we're living on and ending in.
Unsteady at first from the thin
air out of which they were spawned

but taking their bearings from time,
they find a rhythm, they spread out
in the boast-tower's shade and get
their breath. And then going home

with us, as we carry the hay,
the milk, the mint, the dry cleaning—
and that unnamed weight whose meaning
they help us find ways to say.



Rift

You can glimpse it this way: think of a child
for whom you've made a name, a room, a space
among the spaces in you; whom you've raised
to that weedy height when she knows you've told

her things that weren't strictly true, not *so*,
and can hold full halves of conversation
that advance all knees and elbows but know
where they want to go, and do. And, just then:

she's gone. From the face of. Not having died
as much as slipping off behind the seen
world—the way the squirrel kept his tree between
him and her as she circled it and cried

because he was and wasn't there. Behind
house doors; beneath the shimmer of sea water;
ahead on the road, hidden by a bend.
All that your life will not be: she's its daughter,

now. You will call her name and cast your gaze
into a gap no one has ever crossed.
Your look can't reach behind those surfaces,
or voice guess the language of what you've lost.



FRANK CANDELORO

Frank Candeloro is a teacher and writer in Ontario. He has published fiction in *The Danforth Review*.



“Syllables Waken the Air”



Syllables waken the air
Deep in the neural forest
Of the synaptic chorus
Buried beneath her hair
Lemony shoots entwine
Blossoming movements of mind
Wrapped in the honey of “hi”



ERIC MATTHEW GOLDMAN

Eric Goldman earned his degree in philosophy at the University of San Diego. He has achieved many triumphs despite life's many setbacks, culminating in his inspired tenacity for ornate, yet clear and coherent writing. His poetic styles range from storytelling to the lyrical, and from the severe to the stunning. His poems and essays have been published in *Paper Wings*, *Open Minds Quarterly*, and *Cosmoetica*.



Gray Orb

It's an enormous gray orb,
stationary in the center of a wordless garden
of ceramic grass and bird feeders of stained glass mosaic.
What is this giant orb doing in the middle of my garden?
There must be a way in.
I search for a door, an inlet,
a pore through which I may seep,
step inside and steep like green tea.
Within that sanctum, would I grow cute little sprouts from chia seeds,
or would I extend gradually like branches?
Will they be rigid or brittle—
I may never know.

Sometimes, I'll recline in that garden
and just stare at that huge gray orb,
wondering idly of its true power.
If I could ever permeate, would it be disturbed?
Would it roll magnificent out of its solid stance,
and level the walls of this icicle paradise?
Sometimes I even want it to,
yet it remains motionless, an emotionless, obstinate gray orb.

Sometimes I take to painting it with tie-dyed blood,
but it's no use—
my vain pigments are promptly burned off by the sun,
the orb stripped to its skin, bare before me,
and I just happen to forget what my silly creation even looked like for that short time,
since it always returns to gray—an enormous gray orb.

I would execute no decisive method, by puncture or by artillery.
I don't want a leakage in my garden, and shrapnel clutters the lawn.
It's just that during the dismal wastes of age it appears to permeate and breach me,
but its insides seek *me*,
and make my mind operative,
visions no longer lost in stale meditative captivity.
No, the orb strips me down to my inner creation,
since within are stored my horrors, my elations, my bones—
fresh syllables dipped in an inkwell of copious marrow.



KRISTIN LAFOLLETE

Kristin LaFollette is a PhD student at Bowling Green State University studying Rhetoric & Writing and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Her poems have been featured in *West Trade Review*, *Poetry Quarterly*, and *Bridge Eight*, among others. She also has had artwork featured in *Plath Profiles*, *Spry Literary Journal*, and *GFT Press*. She lives in northwestern Ohio.



Susceptible

feel it just beneath the skin
I think, *part of me is artificial*
I think, *not of all me is flesh*
once I worked in a hospital

my arm close to my body to protect
it from other human bacteria

hand, arm open to a universe wounded
again

at age twenty-four I stood next to a
hospital bed my arm wrapped in gauze
stretched tightly around my sun-
darkened skin

my grandmother in the bed barely

breathing me with my hand tucked into
my chest
my doctor said: *elevation keeps*
the swelling down doctor said:

you could be susceptible to infection
me: afraid of the woman in the bed microorganisms

my fused bones
blood leaving the area when I hold it above
my heart

wounded, again and again



A Lasting Impression

Sometimes I smell a surgical smell,
yellow-green bananas with the peels still on,
something strong like anesthesia,
a bag of apples bathed in pesticides.

I remember the time I buried a
clock in the

backyard,

the soil like wet laundry,
fabric with dark patterns like

blueprints of a mouth,
teeth and gums—

Sometimes I smell a surgical smell
and
see the jagged skin of my chest,

crooked lines with dark scars where stitches used to be.
My hands are no longer symmetrical,

tendon on metal on bone—

I remember the time I scrubbed and scrubbed my skin
under hot water—

I thought: I am blood and water and pigment

I thought:
The color yellow is so hard to remove



ARUSHI SINGH

Arushi Singh was born in Delhi, India in 1996 to Ritu Singh and Manvender Soam but lived only for a while there. She spent much of her life in Jaipur and Bangalore which opened her eyes to a complex world of a rich culture and metropolitan one. The older of two sisters, she was always an avid reader and writer. She wrote her first poem when she was 9, and has witnessed it evolve over the years.



Exile

Psychiatric wards incite a dreamlike stance
You will see a ritual in the blood of a helpless atheist
so the infant girl the fluttering eyes whispering *Morning* at noon
became the infant girl on her knees, worshipping, listening to the walls
wondering why the windows were made my darling
If they didn't believe in latches
could it be sin to know
could it be...
and she stepped out from the bed
to the tiny cupboard next to it, with a book out in her hand
and ink, out from her veins.

And wrote her blood through the night
Escape is beautiful my darling



MICHAEL AIRD

As far as a biography goes, my current musical obsession = Alexander Borodin: String Quartets. Current print diversion = Giovanni Arrighi: The Long Twentieth Century. Current YouTube distraction = anything by Adam Curtis (just to make sense of it all).

My work has appeared in such journals as *Fence*, *Lungfull!*, *Bombay Gin*, *Salthill*, *Dislocate*, on-line by *Word for/Word*, *Bomblog*, and *Blackbox Manifold*.



Nor is There Any Other Way to Pass Thither, Whither We Needs Must Pass

To sum up
I'd say bread and circuses have been skipped
and somebody's eaten the middle class—
 if it wasn't for the fact
 the Global Hunger Index notes that this
 kind of starvation response usually reflects
 food insecurity in our
 communist opposites

Thankfully these days those in Wuxuan
 now prefer fish bowls and frogurt

But if the hungry ghosts won't be placated,
fasting as a method of protesting injustice
dates back to pre-Christian Ireland—
 where people would set up on offending doorsteps
 all throughout the financial district

 Even St. Patrick
 experienced his own form of gavage
 in the cells of Holloway—
 which, as Margaret Thatcher has pointed out,
 is better than suicide in Belfast

Such rhetoricity of the body
is how pussy riots threaten to turn into
food riots

 Meanwhile business and governmental leaders
 will come together to play “Food Chain Reaction”—
 a policy decision-making game
 that allows players to explore
 various crisis-interventions

I interpret the movie's title to mean
 many contestants have difficulty
finding food in the district they live in,
 so if they won
 they wouldn't be hungry anymore—
 just like in Egypt or Tunisia



The thing is, contrary to the moans
of many dieters, ghrelin
isn't a gremlin unleashed to ruin your day—
it can actually sharpen your instincts
and serve as your secret weapon

When MBA Thang Nguyen says he's hungry,
he doesn't mean he wants to grab a burger
or even some native Vietnamese food—
he means that he's always looking for more
to consume in his career field

Let me take a shot
at explaining *stay hungry, stay foolish*:
while you pursue the sort of Orthorexia
that will end the giant panda,
your competitors are circling,
looking for every greasy opportunity
to sink their teeth in

Is the demand for short-form content on the rise?
then feed the beast—
Are the yield-hungry foaming at the mouth?
then make the move toward dividend stocks—
Is a new phone causing you indigestion?
use some hunger marketing
and return to the glow of its glorious
first bite

Sometimes when I'm at the mall I feel
a physiological sensation
in my abdominal and throatish areas—
Is this what they call "shopper's refeeding syndrome?"

Yeah, that sounds more like the need to take
a giant dump and/or a confusion
in the bidirectional relationship
between acquisition-related thoughts
and the motivation to eat

Nevertheless
short-term appetitive consequences
could act associatively to produce
visceral state-dependent sensory
preferences or aversions



More specifically, hungry males prefer
females with mature facial characteristics
or those who are heavier about the hips,
whereas calorically full participants
settled on nondiscriminant friendship
affiliations

Of course perceptual errors
are all too common when it comes
to interpreting your own interoceptive
raw data—
the rich might be rich,
but just looking at them shouldn't trigger
the Vitiated Empty Hollow Sensation (VEHS)

Optimal readiness is rather,
like Ghandi says, a certain sort of
spiritual maintenance
in stomaching that the ample bread
is so unlike the crumb

But still
I gulped down this food because I thought it was you—
and such was the spoiling of the truth,
for we were the ones around the table
while they were the ones who were on it



We Have a New President, Faggot

And the Lord God planted a garden,
and out of the ground made the Lord God
to spring a tree, which Robert Owen's
"Boatload of Knowledge" ran into its second day
down the Ohio

Was anyone really surprised?
despite the fact the handouts grown on bushes
in the Big Rock Candy Mountains

You could almost say the blueprint
we've been talking about these 500 years
was just a rib pulled from the *Praise of Folly*—
which is a claim the Saint himself
wouldn't lose his head over

And thus began a long history
of imagining a No-place
and presuming people will show up there

I mean, as Anatole France points out,
without the Utopias
of other times how else would we have arrived
at Hausmann's Parisian boulevards?—
naked, miserable, dwelling in caves

It's just IMHO Utopia,
in an all peacefull loving manor,
will never exist here—we're not high enough
in vibrational frequencies—
take a look at the Nordic countries

"Why Socialists Don't Believe in Fun" was probably written
for Finland, where it seems people are charged
by the syllable when they speak—
macho isn't a problem in Sweden,
not since the military issues more hairnets
than hand grenades—and sex with animals
is practised by 5% of Danish men



Research has shown that this mentality
of the next-best-thing ultimately contributes
to less sexual satisfaction than that
enjoyed by the conservative class

Perhaps the anarchist Alex Comfort
thought he could remedy this with his
joyful manuals—failing which
other pornotopias offer the motif
of robot sex—like my Katrina,
her real eyelashes and Indonesian hair
from the lowlands outside Jakarta

Of course, what else would you fantasize about,
bored out of your tree with a fifteen hour
work week and universal basic income—
that's why utopian thinking is for
the young and carefree, back when I joined
a radical cheerleading squad and rhymed
“bop-she-bop” with “oppression we will stop”

Visions of utopia are as numerous
as the number of people:
what would a modern-day Herland look like?
gun ownership is a utopia,
especially when I've been to Coltsville 4 times—
have you seen the way the North Koreans
imagine the “beautiful future?”

And utopian societies
are not possible without utopian people—
despite the fact that Obama
is trying to re-engineer us into
Homo Sovieticus, or that
the Federal Reserve feels it can
create the New Socialist Man with fiat money,
we are all just as flawed as Adam

I have been a utopian myself,
yet it would be unrealistic to think
we can avoid the pathologies
associated with utopian hope:
Progressive Personality Disorder;



the DSM-V's moi grandiose;
Rachel Dolezal but with
a Cuban heritage
When Martin Luther King said "I have a dream,"
he wasn't inviting everyone
to an intentional community
in Abu Dhabi

Besides, there's nothing
in the definition of an arcology
that states the superstructures must be
planned in advance—
isn't the Las Vegas strip climate-controlled?
didn't Googies usher in a certain
space-aged aesthetic?

We're already living in Utopia—
and if you want the liberal paradise
of free healthcare, free education,
free food, free housing and free utilities,
that too exists: like Joe Arpaio says,
it's called prison



PHILLIP NEWTON

Philip Newton is a writer and musician living in Oregon. Most recently his poems have appeared in *Ink In Thirds*, *Coal Magazine*, the *Bangalore Review*, and *Work Literary Magazine*. He's inspired by Pablo Neruda, Tristan Tzara, Kay Sage and Little Walter. His poems, novels and screenplays are represented by DHH Literary in London.



Groceries

My job is to shelter you
and speak as gently as I can
If my heart breaks
a little or a lot
that's also my job

I'm not sure why
the thought of plump
anxious grocers
makes me want to weep
Maybe it's because they
want so much to please us
with their celery, fresh cream
soft and finely-sifted flour
And maybe it's their mild hope

If I could just shut my mouth
and remember for once that
not all creatures have explosions
in their chests
and not everyone wants to
bite the throat of the world
or wants to chase down
other beings until they collapse

Some people are grocers with
kind words and storerooms of humility
Some people have soft black ears
And there are little ones
and timid ones
and quiet ones
whose planets
rise and set
with the sound of our voices



RICHARD FEIN

Richard Fein was a finalist in The 2004 New York Center for Book Arts Chapbook Competition. A chapbook of his poems was published by *Parallel Press*, University of Wisconsin, Madison. He has been published in many web and print journals such as *Boiler Journal*, *Cordite*, *Cortland Review*, *Off Course*, *Reed*, *Southern Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *Adirondack Review*, *Green Silk Journal*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Mississippi Review*, *Paris/Atlantic*, *Canadian Dimension*, *Black Swan Review*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Foliate Oak*, *Morpo Review*, *Ken*Again Oregon East*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Morpo*, *Skyline*, *Touchstone*, *Windsor Review*, *Maverick*, *Parnassus Literary Review*, *Small Pond*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Terrain Aroostook Review*, *Compass Rose*, *Whiskey Island Review*, *Oregon East*, *Bad Penny Review*, *Constellations*, *The Kentucky Review*, *Muddy River*, and many others.



A Brief Refrain

Especially the one with the massage switch
the neck and back gently rocking,
she'd make it fit into her midtown condo,
if she could ever afford one.
Probably never, and definitely not in Manhattan.
She plays in parks, on street corners,
and once in a while at some short term gigs.
Many stop to listen.
One in five passersby help fill the upturned hat.
A dollar, two, sometimes even ten.
After a lunch break she'd peer through the Sharper Image window,
at that easy chair, the one with the massage switch,
then back to dancing her bow across the strings,
playing her lifetime theme with nimble fingers.
Her romance with the violin unbreakable.
But for now, just right now——it's that chair
that cushioned chair massaging her,
while her tired fingers
splay across that supple leather armrest.
But the call for encore must be answered.
That has always been her choice and still is.
Encore, encore, no regrets.



KEN W. SIMPSON

An Australian poet



The Reality of Unreality



The most reputable person in town
achieved a certain renown
through his personable personality
perspicacious use of publicity
and subtle use of bribery
by providing inducements
as unconditional warranties
to profit handsomely
and weep realistically
when required
with sincerity and compassion
audacity and false humility
to members of the public
who found him to be honorable
decent and trustworthy.



Optimism



The sky dispassionately glows
on havens
where happiness hides.



PETER SURKOV

Peter Surkov is a medical student and ex-marketer. Originally from London, he currently lives in the Midlands.



Tiberius among rockpools



No fat oysters here
Or lamprey ponds for an emperor's sport.
Seaweed, stuff of peasant soup,
crabs not worth the sucking.

After mother, I had to think
make things as I would.
Blundering, dumb with appetite,
from Capri, forward,

fleeing, chasing, as if a boy;
a god in boy-shape sped my feet
then sat to wait
my arrival on a further shore.



THOMAS PIEKARSKI

Thomas Piekarski is a former editor of the California State Poetry Quarterly and Pushcart Prize nominee. His poetry and interviews have appeared widely in literary journals internationally, including *Nimrod*, *Portland Review*, *Mandala Journal*, *Cream City Review*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, *Boston Poetry Magazine*, and *Poetry Quarterly*. He has published a travel book, *Best Choices In Northern California*, and *Time Lines*, a book of poems.



Headless Horsemen

Into the light the four of them dove, horsemen
carrying in their saddle bags art they had lifted
from museums all over the world. A grand piano
played in the background, the sky red, and vibrant
tremolos from suns yet undiscovered fueled them.

Then wonder of splendors, a superb electric violin
thrust its chords, obviating every scintilla of pain
that might bode. But this pain never materialized
as they soared through the void and black holes,
life lingering despite their lack of consciousness.



Elephant Ears



There is a structure of something between the ears of an elephant. What it is depends on the elephant, not me. I must accept the fact that Lazarus was a freak thing, people don't normally come back from the dead. I read between the lines of a recent report, found you can't believe in science and vote conservative. Once certain of an outcome, run for the hills. This music's part of our heritage. The gospels written by mystics. It all devolves back to one single atom, our destinies, our passions. The elements of style are a sty on my eye, Bennie admitted. Why don't they teach us the Watusi so we can swoon back in time, learn to give and get love again? If it doesn't seem rational there are no open options that suffice.



Drowning

From my childish perspective
it seems perfectly safe:
I think I see my reflection

on the pool's bottom. Plenty shallow
says my malleable brain,
brain not yet taught to swim.

Then a magical vision emerges:
I view myself happily hopping in
the way kids do a wading pool.

So I toss my flabby body
unwittingly into the deep end,
eight feet to the bottom bound.

I flash arms and feet frantically
like a captured bird, desperate
for air, gurgling.

They say once you go down
for the third time you hear
bells chime in your head.

I want to hang on, live to
rollick on my rocking horse,
watch the Lone Ranger ride again.

I only have to make it
over to the edge where a sister
or cousin can pull me out.

I hear mom frying bacon; it sizzles
while I'm barely awake in my bed,
sounding like rain outside.

Unintentional suicide? Gulp.
Flail. Gargle chlorine-laden
public pool water.

Will Buffalo Bob scoot by



on his dapper steed directing
Clarabell to dive in to the rescue?

Wish I was running Lionel trains
around the Christmas tree.
Immersed. Insane with fear.

Oxygen. Terra Firma. Forgiveness.
Everything else hogwash
as toes tap the bottom.

Not knowing what or how
I am, but about to discover
the meaning of lights out.



VERN FEIN

Vern Fein has published one poem in **82 Review*, two poems in *The Literary Nest*, two poems in *Silver Birch Press*, a poem in *Rat's Ass Review*, two poems in *Bindweed Magazine*, another in *Gyroscope Review*, a haiku, one in *Spillwords*, several in *VerseWrights*, a poem in *VietNam War Poetry*, another in *1947 Journal*, and has a short story in the the online magazine *Duende* from Goddard College.



Portraits of Gran Ollie

Dorian Gray should have painted your portraits.

I.

You told marvelous stories to us,
your grandsons,
tales of Candyland and disparate animals,
cat and walrus, pig and elephant, horse and snake,
woven on the spot.

II.

Our Mother told us your tale.
You were lost as a child in St. Louis,
found at a Convent and spirited to Arkansas.
You were betrothed to a German exchange student,
who was murdered by an unrequited yokel love.
You married the yokel's best friend.
Mom was born.
The best friend lasted only a year, never seen again.

III.

At first, you were a lady barber, then danced across Vaudeville.
Smoking red hair lit up an insurance man.
Wild romance wed John Barleycorn
you liquored your way across the South until the Crash.
Harold—Hoovered— took his own life.

IV.

Mom moved North to marry a Yankee.
You followed and told us the stories
except on the nights you mumbled and stank.
We didn't know a bottle had a different genie.

V.

Our Father was an abusive Lothario,
scoldings and beatings to cover his guilt.
You and Mom fled to an Aunt and Uncle in the middle of the night.
Father pursued in rage.
Farmer Bill, blocking the door, threatened:
“Remember Yankee; I butcher my own hogs.”

VI.



After years of penury you wed Henry,
the happy cab driver who loved you well
until he died of intractable cancer-colored pain.

VII.

Then, the clock of time stroked.
I visited you throughout,
prayed for you and talked to you, grasping a bony hand,
only your eyes able to move,
blinking yes and no until you died,
a stark look of amazement plastered on your face.

VIII.

Years later, my own grandboys begged a story,
two little boys, mouth agape,
like birds grasping for words.
You showed up in the room
gray hair, flower print dress, without a bottle,
smiling out the words for me.



QUINOTTE WISE

Guinotte Wise lives on a farm in Resume Speed, Kansas. His short story collection (*Night Train, Cold Beer*) won publication by a university press and not much acclaim. Three more books since. His wife has an honest job in the city and drives 100 miles a day to keep it.

www.wisesculpture.com



Dial Twisting

...two lefties in the bull pen...800 561...below
sticker or MSRP...first five callers...feeling
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...skyrocketing credit card rates...Canadian
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...at Berkeley pro...monster trucks...forward
to the challenge...hormonal therapy...could
be transmission...E.R.A of two forty...but
if you call now...Tyreek Hill ran it back...
foster care for...time only...dot com, again
that was twenty fift...treaming live at two
...only nineteen ninety fi...unseasonable...
...one for the books...and keep it off after
Let me speak! Let...released the names of
...never slept like...last chance, buy one...
and if you don't...personally guarantee...
umbrella and light...Ladies! Do...owerball
jack...unlimited data...llama ahora y...bet
you don't...(marimba music)...that's BS just
substantially reduces or elim...that's 1-800
if you're not...ruled a homicide by...herbal



ISHA TEWARI

Isha Tewari is a fashion designer by profession with a love for all the art forms. Apart from creating designs with different varieties of fabric, she loves to express her creativity through the written word. She is also blessed with a beautiful voice and that provides another outlet for her creativity.



The Creator's Blueprint



It's a pain which is intensely felt.
And becomes a smart, if left unexpressed.
Throbbing in your being, it's like one massive heartbeat.
Art is an effulgence within the soul concealed.

It's a bee's sting, it's a lover's passionate kiss,
It impregnates you with seeds that never die,
And like a woman's labor pain, it intensifies within u.
You're meant to deliver it; and in time it delivers you.
Art is a boon , don't let it be a bane.
That will only happen if you cannot use your pain.

It's like mother's pure love, the creator's warm touch.
A sun which once it dawns upon you, can never set.
Art is like a true lover's heartbeat, throbbing for you eternally.
So flow and bloom; be consumed by its hunger for you,
Allow it to turn you around inside out, upside down.
Until you become, the Creator's Blueprint.



ELIZABETH SCHAULAT

Elizabeth Schaulat is a freelance writer and library aide who graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a degree in English Writing. She has had a book review and several other short pieces published in *World Literature Today*, as well as poems published in the *Olentangy Review* and the *Ghazal Page*. She looks forward to publishing more of her work in the future.



Out of Place

Walking down the street I seem to blend in here,
Where all the passersby have ringlets,
And dark brown eyes like me.

I almost feel at home
In the region of my ancestors,
Belonging here for that short span of time.

I recall with pride Aunt Leona's stories
Of her Spaniard grandpa hailing from Andalusia,
And my heart yearns to truly belong here,
To be Spanish in full and able to claim this place as my own.

But the truth is,
My hair is too light, my nose straight from Eastern Europe,
My clothing rumpled and mussed from my travels,
And I speak not a word of Castilian.

The people surrounding me know it too,
One old man on the bus asking me if I'm German,
A waiter upset that I don't understand churros aren't dessert,
And the women glancing dismissively at my attire.

The moment fades; I am out of place,
Just another tourist in Granada,
A camera-wielding American girl,
A foreigner staring with Spanish eyes.



German Heritage

The lines of white chalk
Mar the building's outside wall.
If the symbol was something else,
Perhaps it wouldn't matter so much.

But someone had done this,
Marking us as killers and haters.
This place is a Lutheran church,
And we are descendants of Germans.

Thus the vandal decided to draw this symbol,
The twisted swastika,
The emblem of the Nazis and their hatred,
On the wall of our sanctuary.

This person decided that the swastika was what should define us,
Not the beautiful music of Johann Sebastian Bach,
Not the strength of the cold Iron Cross,
Not even the Reformation in which we declared grace alone could save.

None of us had done any wrong against anyone,
And yet simply because a madman had once,
We were condemned for our heritage,
A heritage that didn't truly belong to us.



DENNIS JAMES UNDERWOOD

Dennis works at The University of Michigan-Dearborn and is adjunct faculty at Henry Ford College, both in Dearborn, Michigan. He lives with his wife of thirty-nine years and three cats and a greyhound. He has been writing for over fifty years, but only began submitting his poems in 2013, after the persistent prodding of those who had read some of them.



Old Cat



The old cat sleeps in the one spot of sun
That warms through the creeper vines.

I sit in the shade and watch him sleep.
His life is perfect; loved, warmed, and fed.

He sleeps in complete contentment,
While I am unsettled by inconsequence.

I study his satisfaction with simply being.
From a sleeping old cat, I seek enlightenment.



THANK
YOU
FOR
READING!