

The Write Place at the Write Time

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"Justice" by Patti Dietrick; <https://www.flickr.com/photos/pattidietrick/>

About this image: *This is a photo of my niece that I took when I was a student in photography, almost 30 years ago... It was the first time I shot infrared film.*

The day was unusually windy and cold for a California day. We rushed to the ocean and she stood on the rocks facing the wind and sea.

She was a teenager, outspoken, intelligent and a feminist. Now she's 44 years old, just as beautiful and powerful as she always was, but even more so. It's currently part of my "Tarot Card" series exhibiting at Picture This Gallery in Long Beach, CA. My son, Joshua Buck Weston, illustrated the pen and ink border. —Patti Dietrick

Poetry

With gratitude, we dedicate this page to 2017 WPWT Arts Patron, Tim Reed. Tim is a poet who started writing in 1990 on a journey of discovery and recovery. He has been featured in, and regularly attends, open mic venues and events.

Changing Tack

by Janine Lehane

One blustery moment sets
the host of good and quiet days
adrift. Undone, I rally with
the notion I can simply change
my mind, review the evidence
amassed for favorable company,
defer to health and wisdom—fleet
and sober visitant, graceful
guide—turn with craft and courage
in the face of outworn grievance,
call the joyful memories back,
lend my friend the comfort
of a mighty heart, a deft
release, until ghost hurts subside.

Intermezzo

by Janine Lehane

He's painting outside the souvlaki joint—
a contented blue—poised
on the plank, grateful supplicant.
Weeks ago, when his voice
broke as he asked me for help,
the plea emptied
sorrow at my feet.
He doesn't remember me
and that is good.
His smile is easy
now, and the facade
is coming along
beautifully: his blue-black
strokes console the wood.

Sunday: Recessional

by Janine Lehane

She stilled her hands by pressing
them against the shining wood,
her feet bore down upon the floor.
Her triumph lay in choosing, then, to play
before the crowd of witnesses.
I saw my friend laid bare,
and holding even notes in aching air—
though arms and hands and fingers rocked
without abatement—lend her prayer
as Bach intended, sustained by will,
and send the faithful on their way,
her leg, her foot upon the pedal
pulsing in a foreign time of rare
and solemn loveliness.

Bio: Janine Lehane is a poet and artist from Hobart, Australia. Her poetry has been published by Telling Our Stories Press, along with her cover art; *The Write Place at the*

Write Time; and *Hawaii Pacific Review*; and is soon to appear in an anthology out of The Poetry Society of New Hampshire and as the Labletter Monthly Note (February 14, 2017). She also co-edited a volume of selected writings by eminent teacher and community organizer, Suzanne Radley Hiatt.

The Women's March

January 21, 2017

by Rochelle Jewel Shapiro

Let us march beneath the rent ozone layer, stitch
together a coalition of citizenry.
Let those among us who cannot walk
be wheeled or carried. Come wearing
your headscarf, your *hadjib*, your *sheitel*,
your pink wool sock cap with the pointed ears.
Come bareheaded, unbowed. Bring your daughter,
mother, granddaughter, your husbands, lovers,
brothers, all your menfolk. Show yourselves
as scattered stars brought together
in a constellation that is still visible,
indivisible, even in full daylight. Whether
you are present or not, whether you are for
or against, let us come to know each other
with the intimacy of the blind touching a face,
reading each feature with our palms, our fingers.
Who among us can settle for a walled heart?

Bio: Rochelle Jewel Shapiro is the author of *Miriam the Medium* (Simon and Schuster), nominated for the Harold U. Ribelow Award, *I Dare You to Write*, *Kaylee's Ghost*, and the e-book short story collection, *What I Wish You'd Told Me*. She has won The Brandon Memorial Literary Award and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in poetry, with her poems having appeared in publications such as the *Iowa Review*, *Moment*, *Harpur Palate*, *Inkwell Magazine*, and the *Los Angeles Review*.

She teaches at UCLA Extension, and she lives in Great Neck, N.Y. where, like her protagonist in *Miriam the Medium*, she has a psychic practice. Articles about her psychic ability and essays concerning her experiences have appeared in *The New York Times* (Lives), *Redbook*, *Newsweek* (My Turn), *The Jerusalem Post*, and more. Her website features further info about her practice and her books, with book reviews and praise for

her novels from authors such as Jodi Picoult and Gwendolen Gross, and former MSNBC correspondent and *New York Times* contributing writer, Dana Kennedy. Stop by her website to learn more.
<http://rochellejewelshapiro.com/>

Clemente's Team

by Jacqueline Jules

Roberto didn't have to
be on that charter plane,
the one that crashed
on its way to Nicaragua.

He didn't have to organize supplies
for earthquake victims. Or use his baseball stats
to fight the status quo.

He had 3,000 Major League hits,
12 Gold Gloves, and 2 World Series rings.

Why didn't he go to a glitzy dinner
with his wife, like other stars on New Year's Eve?

The same reason he ran baseball clinics
in the off season, visited children in hospitals.

Roberto Clemente played on a team
larger than the Pittsburgh Pirates,
bigger than Puerto Rico.

He saw his own success
as a chance for others
to swing the bat
and run the bases, too.

Bio: Jacqueline Jules is a Northern Virginia author and poet who writes for children and adults. Her books for young readers include the *Zapato Power* series, the *Sofia Martinez* series, and *Never Say a Mean Word Again*. Her poetry has appeared in numerous publications including *The Write Place at the Write Time*, *The Potomac Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Burgeon*, *Hospital Drive*, and

Imitation Fruit. She is the author of two chapbooks, *Field Trip to the Museum* and *Stronger Than Cleopatra*.

Visit www.jacquelinejules.com

Setting In

by Sarah Rehfeldt

Winter—
it is as if the forest lasts forever—

everything that needs to be lifted
gradually descends here,
through the woods hangs silent—

light,
the shape of branch it fell from,

ground accepting,
sifting,

keeping soft and green
a small resting place beneath
so what used to be survives.

Bio: Sarah Rehfeldt lives with her family in western Washington where she is a writer, artist, and photographer. Her publication credits include *Appalachia; Written River; Weber—The Contemporary West*; and *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction*. Her work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize in poetry and *The Orison Anthology*. Sarah is the author of *Somewhere South of Pegasus*, a collection of image poems. It can be purchased through her photography web pages at: www.pbase.com/candanceski

Mirrors and Windows

by Steve Pollack

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
If I am only for myself, what am I?
And, if not now, when?" —Hillel (110BCE-10CE)

Look at a mirror!
The face that greets you
is but an image, a silvered reflection
you show the world. Look
inside, reflect on that glass self
and speak out as one who best knows.
Be shatterproof. An indifferent world
may yet see who you are and find your message
in a bottle across oceans. Then, they may
understand and stand by your side.

Look through a window!
Gaze with an eagle's sharp view
as if from towering height you see all
and your heart's attention
calls you to witness a world
of faces, each pair of eyes urgent.
Discover what those faces show
the world, find their messages
even blushing whispers, then
understand and stand by their side.

Sheep

by Steve Pollack

Ewes smeared and streaked
marked possession by shepherd or ram
frightened by wolves who growl black
and white on hillside of forty emerald hues

If human bodies were painted
each in our own shades, subtle or bold
scarlet, gray and gold
blushed with each passing hour

Every mood in tints and stains
shining highlights or haunting shadows
visible as wrinkled age,
clear as a child's earnest eyes

Instead of pigments skin deep
colors seep from inside
deeds bleed over deeds
a masterwork layered in oils

Character is a complex palette
like a mixture ground exotic
salty and bitter, sour and sweet—
neither are spring lambs pure white by summer

Bio: Steve Pollack is retired from a career in engineering and facilities management. He found poetry (or poetry found him) about five years ago. His work has been published in various online and print journals. He participates actively in several poetry groups, workshops and open-mics. Thanks to Linda, his wife of 48 years and to four grandchildren, his life is busy and grateful.

Long Coat

by Jada Yee

I think with a curious but child-like mind.
I am a spongy, but lonesome brain.
So it should come as no surprise that
I'll be a little consumed with putting things
in colorful and numerical order.
It should come as no surprise that
only when I drive, I'll want to know
how many dashes are painted on the road.
I'll be a little concerned if you're hurting.
I'll appear a little bit strange for lingering.
And even if you don't care, I'll feel like I should care.
It's as if I was born with a long coat stitched into me,
and the smallest observation goes inside a pocket.
Instead of an IED, I'm adjusting the sensitive weight of

two parts of my brain on an empathy scale,
trying to figure out who among the crowd is more important.
I remind myself to observe from a distance, all the while, worried that
I'm sending everyone away with a guilty verdict.
And, at home while vacuuming, if I come across
a small spider who frighteningly hugs the wall
to avoid its demise, I'll feel a strong inclination to let it escape.
There's this noose that I've tied around my very own heart,
and the one thing that keeps me from pushing it out of my body
without a last-minute parachute is this inclination.
It's this belief that something or someone will need me to listen.
It's never felt that strange to give away the time; to offer a moment.
Even if I only exist as five minutes in their day, or in their life,
I'll want to be there, just to be there.
Because, for those five minutes,
I have purpose.

Bio: Jada Yee's poetry has appeared in *A Quiet Courage*, *Literary Orphans*, *Ibis Head Review* and elsewhere.

Prestige

by Lew Caccia

It isn't your celebrity, or mine, or
where we attend or don't attend, or how
we breathe, or our mien—it's more
understated, and through the fields
going first rabbits scurry and possums
skulk unequivocal in their pattern.

Those timeless forays into froth and
fodder pass about, be steady; every burro
grips fair weather, and stubbornly
lingers: it dulls the high ground inward.
At the precipice of dawn a diminutive
sight appears and goes the same way.

But you sense it that night: the hot,
the sultry, the aberrant chill, winds
lispering without motion giving light
to dying embers grotesque in their dance.
Yet we drift forward. At the tip we feel
the sawgrass bloom—no past, no passing.

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 recent poetry has appeared in *Praxis*, *The Storyteller*, *hedgerow*, *The Write Place at the Write Time*, and *The Penwood Review*.

After winter...

by Lois Greene Stone

Although the tree branches awake
and the bare spaces fill with small
buds, spring suggests something
different for me. Yes, shrubs shake
off quiet periods, and underground
bulbs push stems of green and sprout
flowers. Worms wiggle on asphalt
then birds find seasonal food. Me?
I see a rhythm of my existence.
Increased darkness of winter's days
gives time for introspection, and
autumn's colors, that encouraged
me to notice, fade and fall.
Summer is brief; full blooms,
green grass will grow whether I
water or not. But spring says
"new" and my "new" has fewer
ahead than behind and reminds
me to cherish each loved one as
eventually my being will end.
Each caring moment is my bud
springing into the minds of

my grandchildren; seasons
will be their repeated events.

Bio: Lois Greene Stone, writer and poet, has been syndicated worldwide. Poetry and personal essays have been included in hard & softcover book anthologies. Collections of her personal items/photos/memorabilia are in major museums including twelve different divisions of The Smithsonian.

Woodstock Christmas Eve 2016

by Mary K. O'Melveny

The snow has shrunk a bit.
Kind of like my mind some
mornings when the news is
so grim I decide to
go back to my bed
to seek the comfort of
my very worst nightmares.

Snuggled in there, it could
still be early fall when
laughter had not been lost,
geese still circled around
the pond and russet trees
were the only things in
flame. When trust still mattered.

It is almost Christmas.
Our fire is chipper, flames
darting about like hopeful
children. Today I thought
my innocence might still
be intact as I yelled
out at our wily squirrels

as if they might listen
and head away toward
the neighbor's bird feeders.

In their briefest absence,
the pure red cardinal
landed gently, promised
that we might yet survive.

Kintsugi

by Mary K. O'Melveny

In Asian philosophy
there is value to cracks,
splits and lacerations.
Once whole, a pot descends
to ground only to be
repaired by golden threads.

Thus restored, resplendent
in metallic ribbons,
the vessel takes on new
life, proof of resilience
shines forth, imperfections
twinkling in the daylight.

So it is with lovers.
Their history can be
read like a delicate
bowl, tea leaves swirling past
edges of loss and joy, each
day bonds growing tighter.

Joy in broken things is
needed now. We gather
shards of hope scattered like
fallen teardrops. We will
bind, polish them with care
until they glow like new.

Bio: Mary is a retired labor rights lawyer living in Washington, DC and Woodstock, NY. Her poems have been published in various print and online journals (including *The Write Place at the Write Time*) such as *FLARE: The Flagler Review*, *Into the Void*, *Allegro*

Poetry Magazine and *The Offbeat*. Like so many, she is struggling to figure out paths forward.

*

by Simon Perchik

From just dampness, nourishment
and rust seals the bolt
in place—the carriage

already there and nearby, it rains
though you take hold a single spoke
as if the enchanted palace

stopped moving—why is it
a parent favors the weak one
and the crib early on

strengthened with blankets, around
and around the way they dance
in fairy tales scented with midnights

with a gate half iron, half
this wrench, its gardens, ponds
no longer coming apart.

Bio: Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The Nation*, *Poetry*, *Osiris*, *The New Yorker* and elsewhere. His most recent collection is *Almost Rain*, published by River Otter Press (2013). For more information, including free e-books and his essay titled “Magic, Illusion and Other Realities” please visit his website:

www.simonperchik.com

The Fertile Winter (*prose poem*)

by Carole Mertz

The climate is vital, quite cold. In spite of frozen elements, we experience an underlying and pervasive fertility. The trees will lose their leaves. Yes, Winter will require that; yet Demanding Mother Earth also has a plan for her children: the leaves will drop, and the trees will bear fruit in due season. The climate's vitality burnishes the surface of the earth, rubbing its brownness through the land and the air, proving its potency by what it creates. The ground is so cold, but elements beneath the surfaces are working there. It is not yet time to push up, to break through, but the time will come and, until then, there is much movement—each silent push and pull using its given space, each expanding molecule defining itself before it implodes, making way for other visiting droplets, so small they cannot be seen or imagined, yet vital, and performing their part in endless chain reactions, even in their forces, but later uneven and volatile in their potential to erupt. Listen to the silence!

Not much resting there. We do not discern the noise of the underground movement, just as we seek to obliterate the wind in our faces. These forces, loved or unloved by us weaker beings, we face only when there are no alternatives. We attempt to resist this wintry force, we take it on, sometimes with fists raised and heads tilted toward its force; other times we acquiesce, amazed by its perfect completion—like a prime number divisible only by one and itself, sifted and baked into a full loaf, offering no lack and no redundancy. Winter will have its way. Its fertility will reveal itself, regardless of whether we blink or sleep. It alternately shrinks or puffs out. It knows its exact time of fullness. It performs to its own measured beat, swelling in the frozen lakes enwrapped by crusty soils, and whirring through northern winds. Immobilized, yet rooted, we observe winter's trek toward its own appointed time of completion.

Bio: Carole Mertz has recent essays, poems, and reviews at *The Write Place at the Write Time*, *The Society of Classical Poetry*, *Indiana Voice Journal*, *WestWard Quarterly*, *Prairie Light Review*, *Pyrokinection*, *Arc Poetry* (online), *MOM Egg Review*, *Working Writer*, and elsewhere. She resides with her husband in Parma, OH where she teaches music theory and piano performance to young children.

Watch

by Pascale Louissaint

Naked or drawn, I'm not
your favorite scene. But I need
you to watch my story. Even if you
spy. Learn
my story. I'm every child but one

who crafts her silence with touch,
turns her dance into a play and her
stage fright into a plot with
character as her place. She signs
her name "In Memory Of"
but walks as an immortal.

I'm the child still in womb. Facing
the outside in a womb. Not out of fear
but obedience: to hear what I must hear,
know what I ought to know and preach

with falls and kicks—if I must. Though
you command birth. The best I could do is
shine, or maybe throw my shadow
at you. Will you, *please*, feel
something? If not in your heart,
then, with your eyes, consult me.
Reach in and sense my nerves; I don't
have a skin
thick enough for a shield so stop

your blows and scratches. If you
won't hold me, at least,
spare me. I'm every child but one.

I'm but an object on this stage. Not
your favorite display. Still need you to watch

my shape and cracks; the way I pose,
how I fall and remain. I cannot tell
but have you watch
my story.

Hidden Whispers

by Pascale Louissaint

He won't call you
ugly. He'll ask you to
look in the mirror. He won't
name your attitude, but he'll say

you got one.
He won't say sorry. He'll show you
why he's not. Not that he doesn't love you.
He LOVES you, but...

Go to that mirror. If you can
love yourself as is—less work
for him. He won't call you
weak but debate
on how often you failed. Child,
hush; he ain't gonna beat you.
He'll work to have you do it
yourself. Not that he's insensitive, but just
too wise to care. He won't call you dumb.
If he does, you might try to be smart. Then how

would he win?

The best he'll do is have you wonder:
what is right? If you guess wrong,
he'll understand.
He likes that you're human, and he's proud
of his rank

beneath God and over you.

Now, Breathe

by Pascale Louissaint

Turn on your vision, shut
down all breathing, scrape off those scabs of emotions

then listen: a beat inside takes struggle for a game
and won't stop playing; it screams for silence but silence sleeps.

Spring—scream higher! Spring like seasons: no risks, no permission. Just
be

there. Take and be. Take
the fear and shame along. Let
aching smile
at your tears and no, they don't belong to cowards. Take 'em back!
Take the ride—loud or bumpy—
while rolling down the hill. Spin till you're transparent.
Take in the flashes (back or forward; legs
or faces). Let in the ages born and miscarried. Fast-
forward to the light you've wished to tear
with a vision. No bulbs or fire or
screens; just lightning Robins in their heaven
performing for their guardians, while
angels camp with their flocks.
If only you could touch their song
or cry out their names. But like crumbs
snatched from a beggar, a whirlwind
takes you and you accept to convert

into "past."

You're the eye of the hurricane now. Watch
all undated moments and their daughters rip like pages of a
sentenced journal on death row. Blink, now. You can. Like
drips. Sleep, after all the debris spins into daylight.
Just for that moment

breathe.

Bio: Pascale Louissaint (AKA Tia Paul-Louis) is a writer, wife and mother from Florida with an MFA degree in Creative Writing at National University. She began writing songs at age 11 but later, became a lot closer to poetry. Inspired by poets such as Edgar Allan Poe, Emily Dickinson and Langston Hughes, she continues with her writing which has appeared in journals such as *As/Us*, *Eye to the Telescope*, *The Write Place at the Write Time*, *Rattle* and several others. Additionally, through poetry, she has escaped much of her fear of speaking out and revealing herself to others.

Harmonic Divide (January 2017)

by Cheryl Sommesse

You lay aloof on your side and I lay on mine,
yielding to the anguish of ignoble disguise.
Resolute in our visions of decency and truth,
we continue in silence, with no compromise.

Their husbands were tender, supportive, and kind,
as I stood with my sisters, drawing strength from their might.
You didn't stand with me like I'd hoped you would,
you held firm in your thinking, as if you were right.

Tomorrow's illusive and yesterday has passed,
inaccessible landscapes both primeval and new.
Let's tread softly along our contentious-like path,
for I simply won't change—and neither will you.

Mysteriously Sublime

by Cheryl Sommesse

He bought *way* too many adapters,
apparently assuming we were destined
to utilize
every plug-in we packed
at the same time.
Staying high on a Jerusalem hill,
sacred sounds resonating
from Bethlehem below
as if ancient proclamations
hauntingly decoding
life's mysteries.
Small—
exposed,
marveling at their blissful melancholy
like a wandering child
curiously

observing worker bees
 dutifully go about business.
 Surrendering myself to the
 oscillating octaves
 eventually culminating
 to one unifying chord.
 Opening my mind's eye to see
 you can never really
 have too many
 adapters.

Bio: Cheryl Sommese contracts part-time as a freelance writer. Additionally, she volunteers as a CASA GAL advocate. Her creative works include a screenplay, short stories, essays, poems, and a book that undoubtedly could benefit from consistent, as opposed to sporadic, addressing. Penning poetry is her favorite, however, as she feels this medium more fully expresses the path God chose for her and everything she can become.

The Most Beautiful Music *(prose poem)*

November 2016

by Beate Sigriddaughter

"Now I have time only for the most beautiful music." —Jonas Ingimundarsson, pianist and cancer survivor

My world is not well. I seem to wander in the midst of a great cancer of the soul. Trinkets have multiplied and grown out of control. This fear in my bowels I have never felt before. I try to learn from others as I stumble on.

A gentle neighbor, eighty-three, Hispanic, walks with a limp. He is afraid. He mentions praying often. He suspects God is punishing us and we don't even know what sins we have committed.

Up in the bones of the mountain I sometimes meet a woman who tells me she spends hours each day sitting with the sun and the rocks, summer or winter, sending healing energy out into the world.

Grandfather Golden Eagle tells me to bless the world with my eyes each time I look at anything. Make every sight count. I try. I am afraid.

A friend posts on Facebook, three lines of gratitude each day to counteract the terror in our bones.

Earth is our bones. The sun. I listen to Mariachi bands, church choirs, poets—oh, the poets, so diligent in coming across with blessing and caressing this world.

We are not here to be overtaken by trinkets. We are here for the song of the sun, the light of many-throated birds and Mariachi bands with golden sombreros, the decency of offering each other beauty and joy, the pleasure of being alive at sunrise, and at sunset still.

We are the voice of God. Let us fill the narrow margins of reality with beauty.

Rules for the Road

by Beate Sigriddaughter

High on the mountain things are carved
solidly into the tender granite of your soul:

Life is a gift, not a duty. Honor it.
And celebrate.

Honor yourself,
your tenderness, your loud exuberance.

Honor your spirit of passion.

Honor your ancestors.

Honor your children.
This one is very important.

Honor love.

Honor the rocks you walk on and the trees
who give you breath.

Honor your hunger, your desire.

Honor the ravens and the flies.

Honor the fears that meet you
in the middle of the night.

Stop war.

Honor beauty.

Live deeply.

Bio: Beate Sigriddaughter lives and writes in New Mexico, USA, the Land of Enchantment. Her work has received several Pushcart Prize nominations and poetry awards. In 2018 FutureCycle Press will publish her poetry collection *Xanthippe and Her Friends*. She orchestrates a women's writing blog at: <https://writinginawomansvoice.blogspot.com/>.

Also visit: www.sigriddaughter.com

Others Like Us

by Michelle Soley

I am a moon child
I dance under
the cool velvet sky
amid the pale midnight flowers
Whirl through the unsilent night
A sweet cacophony to my ears

I am untethered-gypsy-blood-hear-me-howl

So... No
You ask too much of me
I will burn
shrivel under the garish sun
My spirit-though-strong cannot withstand insistent heat
I have no desire to leave
My mossy home

Please
just
let
me
be

Yes, yes
I know
Yes...yes
I hear you

Perhaps I can start by
stretching my toe
to the border of dawn
Then my foot
My leg
My torso
My arms
My neck
And finally
my head

Maybe, just maybe
I can find my soul
On this unexpected
unwelcome horizon
If you are waiting
right beyond there
To slice through the rays
with me
To seek others such as us
With stardust in our eyes

Will you be there?

Bio: Michelle Soley's passion is to express herself through writing. She enjoys taking risks

with format and subject. Presently Michelle is working on a novel and seeking publication for a children's book she's written.

Works of Art Attract Works of Art

by John Grey

I don't go to a Museum for the painting
but to appreciate the people who appreciate the art.
Old Masters, Impressionists, Fauvists, Pre-Raphaelites...
and that's only in the cafeteria
sipping coffee, nibbling on overpriced watercress sandwiches.

Bent pensioner in faded jeans, beret atop, grey-pony tail trailing behind,
peach-cheeked russet-haired young girl,
middle-aged woman, saturated red skin, thin bones knotted by tight bun,
pale, almost-transparent eyed waif in long white floating floral dress...
first I frame them...

I Am a Pianist Available to Play

by John Grey

Dear war-torn country,
Invite me to play the piano in your fields.
I will turn your day into a stage,
the half-baked smoky sunshine
spilling through parlor curtains
into a spotlight.

Know me like the good things
you remember about the dead.

I can tap, tap, tap
on the black and white machine,
hands straight-backed,
rhythm fodder,
not a stumble in that

well-tempered genealogy
from lessons to Liszt.

So calm the withering collage
of bunkers and M16's.
soften the edges of the two feet
that failed to find the land-mines.

I am a concert waiting to heal,
scored by the relief of sheet music,
after too many years
of what I've seen
fitting so sloppily
into what I know.

Let that incongruity release in a gift
of hammers pinging steel,
tied up in a bow of ivory.
Hold your fire.
Listen to mine.

The Shell and the Rock

by John Grey

Alicia claims mystical powers,
plucks a clamshell
from the sand
and pressing it to her ear
creates, in her mind,
the Atlantic
from the foam dropped at her feet
to the distant shores of Africa.
She feels the depth, the power,
of its waters
more so than the ocean does.
To her, every drop, every pinch
of salt and sea creature
is nothing if it's not

one side or other
of her human equation.

I have within me,
ruined Australian landscapes,
a harsher mysticism,
with trappings of mankind
on its perimeters
but a dead dry center.
Identity is hard-won here.
It must please itself
before it bothers with me.
I pick up a rock,
hard and smooth.
rugged and strong.
It's already doing its best
to survive me.

Bio: John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in *New Plains Review*, *Stillwater Review* and *Big Muddy Review* with work upcoming in *Louisiana Review*, *Columbia College Literary Review* and *Spoon River Poetry Review*.

Sing it Frank, Physical Therapy

by Michael Lee Johnson

Sing it Frank
I'm busy at physical therapy
struggling with back spasms
looking out this window, these clouds
this rain, slice this thunder,
listening to your songs over again
on the Muzak for the 6th week in a row,
peddling this mechanical bike,
might as well be a mechanical bull
with a heat pad on my spinal cord.
I'm deep inside your larynx 10 minutes
3 times a week tickling it back and forth,
jousting and reviewing those playgrounds

of all your illicit affairs. With a few shots of vodka
peddling these wheels with intensified pressure
I can appreciate Lana Turner, Judy Garland,
Lauren Bacall, even Marilyn Monroe.
"This is my kind of town Chicago is,
my kind of town Chicago is."

Iranian Poetry Lady

by Michael Lee Johnson

The first time I saw your face, cosmetic images, dust, dirt, determination
fell across your exiled face. Coal smoke lifted with your simple words and
short poems.
Your meaning drawn across a black board of past, rainbows, future
fragment, still in the shadows.
Muhammad, Jesus, twins, only one forms a halo alone.
One screams love, drips candle wax, lights life, shakes, love.
I encrust your history in the Ginkgo tree, deliverance.
I wrap in the branches the whispers in your ears a new beginning.
I am the landscape of your future walk soft peddle on green grass.
I will take you there. I am your poet, your lead, freedom clouds move over
then on.
I review no spelling, grammar errors; I lick the envelope, finish, stamp
place on.
Down with age I may go, but I offer this set of angel wings I purchased at a
thrift store.
I release you in south wind, storms, and warm in spring, monarch
butterflies.
Your name scribbles in gold script.
Night, mysteries, follow handle, your own.

Flight of the Eagle

by Michael Lee Johnson

From the dawn, dusty skies
comes the time when
the eagle flies—

without thought,
without aid of wind,
like a kite detached without string,
the eagle in flight leaves no traces,
no trails, no roadways—
never a feather drops
out of the sky.

Bio: Michael Lee Johnson lived ten years in Canada during the Vietnam era. Today he is a poet, freelance writer, amateur photographer, and small business owner in Itasca, Illinois.

Mr. Johnson published in more than 945 small press magazines online and in print. His poems have appeared in 28 countries, he edits, publishes ten different poetry sites. He also has 109 poetry videos on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/poetrymanusa/videos>.

He was nominated for 2 Pushcart Prize awards for poetry in 2015 & Best of the Net 2016. He is also the editor/publisher of the anthology, *Moonlight Dreamers of Yellow Haze*:
<http://www.amazon.com/dp/1530456762>
<https://wwwcreatespace.com/6126977>.

Post-apocalyptic Chandeliers

by J. E. A. Wallace

The chandeliers constantly jingle
In this house in abandoned New York
Shaken by starlings that tear past
The cracked window teeth of the mansion's maw

There is life in here as well
It comes from the dreams of the ghost
Now descending the collapsing stairs
A polar opposite of clumsy shadow

The crooked corridor paintings
Watch as it drifts by
Its determination casts
No reflection in their eyes

Once again it makes its way
Into the sunlit ballroom
Whose broken glass is everywhere
Like a smashed up crystal tomb

The skeleton of the piano
Is wearing a menacing smile
As if to say, *Oh, you again?*
Are we giving it one more try?

But a ghost knows how to ignore things
And focus on the task at hand
It gathers all of the life in its dreams
To speak the name of a woman

Who hasn't been seen since long before
These parts were blown apart
Who had promised to return
If only he would ask

Bio: J. E. A. Wallace has been a hotel night porter, an abattoir security guard, and a barman in The House of Lords. Born and raised in England, he is now a happily married poet who lives and writes in New York City.

By the Moose

by Richard L. Provencher

a wooden bridge is
more than a whisper
of creaking like
grandfather's
rocking-chair.

The river creates a soufflé
of meringue-filled current
in its southerly flow.

Around the bend ripples
overcome a sand dune. Aware

of my presence, a
squirrel skitters tree-upwards.

I am a child of my past—
peanut-butter fingers
fishing with a night crawler
dangling low.

Etched upon an old plaque:
“Three men entombed In '36
141 feet below, seeking crowns
of gold within the granite,
one man died.”

Like a page in time this village
is sketched at attention
as if stapled to a gravel road

where peace
and simplicity
is not forgotten.

Bio: Richard enjoys writing, especially poetry. Many poems have been published in print and online journals. He and his wife, Esther are co-authors of Kindle e-books which are now available on Amazon.com. They are born-again Christians and very busy in their church, Abundant Life Victory International.

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