

BLÖÖ OUTLIER JOURNAL

ISSUE 2

THE SUMMER ISSUE

ED. KAT LEHMANN, GRIX, ALAN SUMMERS



Welcome to the second issue of Blōō Outlier Journal!

The Blōō Outlier Journal Summer Issue 2021 (Issue #2)

Very Special Guest co-editors: Grix, and Kat Lehmann

Editor in Chief: Alan Summers

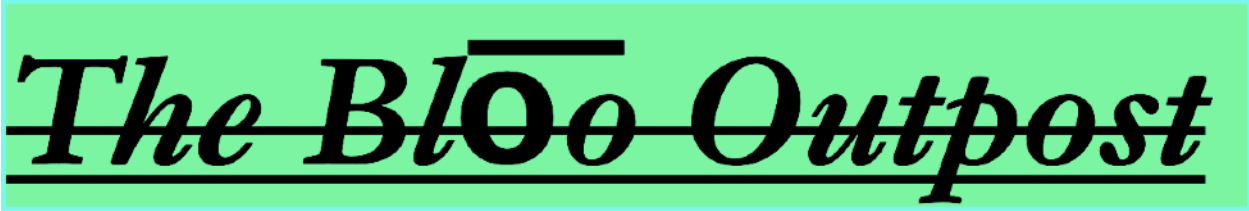
Queries only: Alan Summers <bloooutlierpress@gmail.com>

Each poet was asked to submit a single haibun (or tanka story, or kyōka story, or zuihitsu). Every author here has a piece of this journal. Many thanks to everyone who supported this venture. Everyone who submitted, you had your pieces read, and read again, and again, and then again: They were read and appreciated and we thank you.

Cactus in Tunisia photograph©Alan Summers

Look out for the **Bl̄oo Outpost** at the end of the issue to find out more about the very special guest editors **Grix**, and **Kat Lehmann**.

Look out for this banner:



The Bl̄oo Outpost

Now we begin...

To an Old Friend

the grass so little has to do

Occasionally a line of poetry arrives uninvited and what is there to do but welcome it inside for a seat and maybe something to drink never knowing when it might drop by again

all my life

a sphere of simple green

In the grocery aisle looking for cleaning supplies I am dogged by another line of Emily Dickinson. Clearly the synapses of my brain are trying to sing as if I am stuck listening all night to the carryings-on of an exuberant neighbor fond of the drink and full of dreams

a tenant

with only butterflies to brood and bees to entertain

By the time I get home from running errands I might as well be in a play complete with stage directions as I clean my third-floor apartment with the radio playing, windows open, leaves in full swing

*and stir all day to pretty tunes
the breezes fetch along*

Poetry has something to teach me. Why else would I have tried memorizing so many lines of it. Why else would they emerge from their slumber here and there as if jostled from hibernation half-starved

*and hold the sunshine in its lap
and bow to everything*

of my first treehouse

Peter Newton

Note:

The italicized verse is an excerpt from “*The Grass so little has to do —*” by Emily Dickinson.

Washing Up

It was always the men that did the dishes: her father home from the office at lunch (their main meal of the day); her husband after dinner at night.

Her father and she did it together in the small tenement flat while Mum sat and listened to the radio. She was his helper, his partner in the wet world of the kitchen. He showed her how to take a stack of side plates from the drainer, half a dozen, say, and dry the top and bottom, then shuffle the plates down the pile till the dry ones came round again.

Her husband also did his share of work around the house, and when at fifty he retired with ill health and she continued full time work, it was he who did the weekly shop, planned the meals and cooked them, and washed up after.

Standing at that same sink now without him, she looks out at the courtyard, at the apple tree they planted where the sunflower used to grow. The red apples cluster thickly. The neighbour's black cat freezes half way through its scramble up the trunk, and a blue tit flies away from the bag of peanuts.

Between sink and window, dead leaves from plants — miniature rose, money-plant, aloe vera — multiply on the sill among broken jugs, opened seed packets and a clay hedgehog her mother fired at night class. Compost has been spilled on the tiles. A paintbrush, blue all down one side, stands in a vase with a butterfly on a stick that came with some sympathy flowers.

She puts the plug in the hole, runs the water hot, and reaches for a bottle of detergent. *Lemon Blast* fills her nostrils. There isn't much left, so she removes the cap and rinses it out under the tap; the bottle seethes with giant cuckoo spit.

slim as dancers' legs
eleven elegant stems
spin light into wine

Automatically, she reaches for the cleanest things first — glasses, cutlery, then bowls and small plates, and lastly the big dinner plates with the green rims. It pleases her to stand in his spot, stacking the things in his order, seeing the garden through his eyes. She feels for a moment his arms around her waist and allows herself the luxury of leaning back into him, the back of her head against his chest. He kisses the top of her head. 'That's enough, now,' he says quietly, and as the last two plates, resisting the weight of the water, sink through the suds, she knows she can do this.

Elinor Brooks

Becoming Alice

Almost overnight our back yard becomes this year's holiday destination. We whitewash the walls, paint the door and windowsills Mediterranean blue and sow red geraniums.

For months the sun shines on our terracotta-potted sanctuary and we enjoy all our meals outside. One evening, a neighbour's voice from over the fence comments that the Irish weather is so good this summer that no-one will miss going abroad. We clink our wine glasses in agreement.

year two
the patio has shrunk . . .
indoors
every bottle
screams *Drink Me*

Marion Clarke

True Blue

Finally, the rain stops. From the bay window, a rainbow appears before us. On the first month, I'm quite excited to go outdoors on a warm, winter day of sunshine. The front door opens wide for me, and I begin my journey and shift from the kitchen's archway in order to cross . . .

in every shade
i f a ll into
the hipbone
becomes
a l l a l o n e

It can be easy to climb over a child's gate, and it was, until the last attempt. Once again, I adjust to myriad circumstances, situations, the activities of daily living. And without any warning, who doesn't know nothing stays the same.

Lovette Carter

Powerless

A candle flickers out and swallows the entirety of the room. For moments, even sound seems distorted by the settling darkness. My sisters' giggling slows. The cherry on my mother's cigarette lights her face for seconds and then recedes.

"Where's the goddamn flashlight?" My father's voice echoes through the silence it initiates.

"I thought it was on the counter next to the fridge." The flutter of her voice signals her wavering smile.

A thud and then thunderclaps. My mother's crying.

"You okay?" I ask, thinking I've never felt more unheard than now.

"I'm okay, baby. I tripped."

disconnected
pine needles
where the limb fell

Joshua Williams

Finding Harmony —

There's a big crowd at The Mad Dog, and more than one encore so John strikes the opening chords for "Blowin' in the Wind." Everyone stands, singing, a chain of linked arms from audience to stage. Afterward, still on a roll at 2am, John and Sue suggest we follow their truck, a place they know to unwind.

a furrowed road
the car bounces up and down
each hairpin turn

We stop with a jolt in a field, fling open the doors. *When, that was some ride.* We're all laughing and stretching as John reaches in the truck and hands us a beer. We talk about everything as we take in our surroundings — a crescent moon tangled in pines, a field redolent of damp hay and overripe pears. Crickets. The glow of John's cigarette weaves pinpoints of light into the dark as he gestures.

With the truck door open, radio on, John suddenly stops talking, reaches in and turns up the radio. We pile into the cab and sing along with Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young. Sue and I sing harmony, our voices ringing over the hushed field —

You, who are on the road, must have a code that you can live by . . .

We pour everything into that song, and when it's over, we slump against each other for a few moments before tumbling out of the truck, not yet knowing how tired we are.

We spend a few more minutes talking about Vietnam, the violence in the civil rights movement, how discouraging it is. Draining his beer, John says, *Regardless, we just keep bringing music to the people; we sing our way into peace. We can do this.*

into an owls' silent flight the scream

We scrunch closer together. *It sounds almost human* someone says. *Do you think the scream was the owl's or his prey?* In the silence afterward, our friends decide to call it a night. Not ready to leave, we lean against our battered green Ford, arms around each other.

Jo Balistreri

crowskin

at some point I noticed that my body was covered with feathers.
why do labels have such power to make us feel trapped?

genderfluid
learning to trust
in the moon

Andy McLellan

Stumped

10:30 a.m. A fine drizzle since early morning. Two young men on a motorcycle stop at our gate. They have heard that we want our three mango trees trimmed and a very tall coconut tree cut. We fear that during a thunderstorm it may come crashing down. Fortunately, the plot adjoining the back wall of our house is empty.

The taller and stockier young man barges in through the gate and starts speaking rapidly in Telugu. I follow Telugu perfectly but my responses aren't always grammatically sound. They take pictures of the garden and then start examining the soil.

The week has been exhausting for me. Too tired to think, I do not stop them.

The young man says, 'I want to dig around the trees and see if you need pest control.'

I protest. He is persistent. 'No money for this, *Amma*. Anyway, you will pay us for trimming your trees. All included.'

Weary, I don't contradict. As he digs around each fruit tree, he asks questions. 'Did you get good *rasalu* and *bangalpalli* this year?'

'Last year. Anyway, the branches are too high and the squirrels get to them before we can.'

'*Chikoo*? The leaves are diseased.'

'Leaf miner,' I mumble to myself. 'The fruit was hard and tasteless.'

'Papaya?'

'Looks good, but has a bitter aftertaste.'

As he digs around each tree, I see different kinds of insects crawl out — some slither like baby snakes; small shiny brown ones move in clusters; a well-fed cream-yellow one coils upon itself. I watch with rising trepidation and some disgust when he claims they are all damaging pests. Soon the two men start emptying packet after packet of an herbal fertilizer and spray more than a hundred squirts of a neem oil based pesticide around each tree and all the flowering plants. They indicate the cost of each packet and each squirt of neem oil. I try to stop them, but they are on a mission. I stand in the drizzle for an hour and a half like a zombie.

The soil soaks in fertilizer and pesticide worth thousands of rupees. I write one of them a check and ask them to leave.

My husband, immersed in Carnatic music, is unaware of my folly.

night *aarati* . . .
temple bells in tune
with the chants

Priti Aisola

Note:

rasalu and *banganpalli* are mango varieties

chikoo: sapodilla or sapota fruit

aarati: a Hindu worship ritual in which oil or ghee lamps are lit and offered up to one or more deities.

Record Time

What record did he break you asked me and I've been thinking for days about forty years ago-plus-the sidewalk jigsaw black on gray a thousand pieces the shatter shock — what did I like then Dowland's *Time Stands Still* or James Joyce reading *riverrun* . . . shaky voice *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* or Simon and Garfunkel or Bach cantata *Gottes Zeit* or/anyway he was the editor I photographed Denise Levertov making a point with her fist it was the break/he was taking the ferry to see his mother in Brooklyn I said okay I'd go and followed halfway and turned around went back home in the end

it was a good thing
a broken
record

Kath Abela Wilson

1st Trimester

tide pool
a mermaid floats
inside the moon

The doctor says this won't hurt. The doctor says put your feet in the stirrups and open your knees. The doctor says my hands may feel a little cold. The doctor says a slight discomfort may occur for up to 48 hours. The doctor says it's for the best. The doctor says please leave we have patients waiting.

blue bin collection —
the amniotic sac's
floating leaf

Roberta Beary

Letting darkness in . . .

Uncertainty of a waking dream. It is not yet sunrise but there's restless stirring in the blue pines. The deep-throated call of a lone raven hangs in the cold air. Another dawn of the pandemic . . .

*flickering butter lamp
eyes of the Medicine Buddha
light up briefly*

the stillness
at the cliff top shrine
not even the wind
to ring
the hoar frost-spiked gong

A leaf from the Acer slow-falls set adrift like this chapter of life.

*growing light
strung across the peaks
tattered prayer flag-clouds*

shadows lengthen
across the paddy stubbles
what is left now
not the pain of a year lost
but the remembrance of it

Sonam Chhoki

That Further Shore

Across the road from our new house marshy meadows stretch as far as the Scillies River. They are studded with clumps of rushes so tall I cannot see over them when I walk with my new friends, home-made fishing rods in our hands, zigzagging our way to the place where it flows into the Erne.

I was eight we moved from industrial Teeside in the UK to County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland . . .

snipe thrum out
from underfoot —
wild and startle

A hundred yards up our lane an old lady and her son farm thirty-five rushy acres. She keeps five cows; there is a horse for Noel to take the creamery cans to the Scotch Stores each morning. And there are eggs to be searched for in the orchard hedgerow where the hens lay out. Some evenings, I help bring in the cows to the byre, with my sally rod to encourage stragglers. My reward is a lesson on a three-legged stool where I find milking is not easy . . .

milk-jets sing
to fill a bucket
slap of a cow's tail

When I am eight and a half, one evening my dad goes into Enniskillen after tea, to a Council meeting. A while later there is a distant bang and the lights go out. There is a siren — its up and down wailing takes my Mum straight back to the Blitz; she thinks he is dead and she cries. I hug her, then the lights come back on and the all-clear siren sounds; he is home by nine . . .

given free rein
in Mrs Reilly's orchard
billy says *we can't play there*

When I am nine the 'B' Specials are out most Saturday nights on the straight as we drive home from Rosstown. They wave a red torch to stop us, have rifles and Sten guns. Once they see who we are they smile and wave us on. These young men have jobs in the Creamery, voices in the Lodge, have council houses: my mother has taught many of them. They are on 'our side' but I keep my sleeping sisters close

village cross roads —
men beat Lambeg drums with canes
hands bleed

When I am ten, I hear my dad going out late one evening, to supervise workmen fixing the water mains up at Kinawley Springs. It is very close to the Border so I offer him my toy Luger for his defence: he graciously refuses it . . .

Belleek Customs
on the way to the beach
steelwork lies twisted

When I am twelve, I stand at the end of our lane each morning waiting for the bus — it stops first at Drumcard Cross to let some Catholic girls on: I never learn their names. One morning, I ask a boy in the seat behind me how to say 'Hello' in Irish. He tries his best to explain "Dia dhuit." He may have been called Pascal.

in a byre
a slipknot grips fore-hooves
first birth

When I am thirteen someone in my class pulls the tip off a .44 round he has stolen from his father's gun belt. We spill the rods of cordite onto the top of the paraffin heater in the Rec Room — it flares, a spectacle, and makes a big stink. No one tells a prefect.

flags burn . . .
when a pastor roars
trolleybus topples

When I am seventeen a group of us from schools of differing denominations sit in a front room in Belmore Street on a Sunday afternoon. We are trying to work out how we can make our mark in this Westminster election from which, by age, we are excluded: we know what we are doing is revolutionary in this town and will likely draw down rebuke from some. Confident our creeds will separate us no more, we discuss and plan — until someone bursts in breathless, tells us the news from Ballinamallard, of Aloysius Molloy beaten up, his car wrecked

windscreen smashed
and tyres slashed —
a hard rain falls

When I am twenty, I hear the words of a priest, a hospital chaplain, who tells a scared, pregnant, shocked young woman not to marry the father, because

“Better the child be born a bastard than a Protestant.”

Henceforth we say “A pox on both your Houses” and cease to darken their doors. Our children may baptise themselves if it is their wish (much later they do).

(I’ll tell you a secret: it’s easy to tell the difference, their eyes are closer together.)

wheel a buggy
along Hazelbank shore
ghost of Henry Joy

When I am twenty-two Maggie from The Falls comes late to class one day, half wild — a young boy in her street was killed last night, hit in the chest by a rubber bullet. I can’t think what to say. Kate hugs her . . .

blow to the chest
of a twelve-year-old victim
‘non-fatal round’

When I am twenty-three, thirteen people who are in a march to protest against their fellow citizens being interned without trial are shot in cold blood by soldiers of the Parachute Regiment. The authorities try to cover it up with lies. Everyone knows

there is no haiku I can write about this

When I am twenty-four the UDA patrol through our estate, combat jacketed, forage capped, broomshafts shouldered like rifles. My student days are over, I have found a job, will start in September.

We pack our meagre belongings into my father's trailer — a group appears on the doorstep, menacing with masks and clubs, demanding the key. I recognise one, behind his mask. Sixteen, he works in the same hotel as me. I look hard at him as I tell them “Fuck off, it's not yours, it belongs to the Housing Executive,” and close the door. They go away.

It is the Eleventh Night and we leave via the M2. Below us the valley of the Lagan is studded with sparkles of flame. The flags and intimidatory bonfires fall behind as we make our way to safety—in Strabane

a journey
into unknown territory
mountain roads

When I am twenty-seven, one night following a row at home, I walk down town in a mood, determined in my quest for a pint in Felix's. Frank Stagg has died in Wakefield Prison in England after sixty-two days on hunger strike.

The tires of a burning truck explode. In a side street an adult directs: children gather heaps of stones

walk through a riot —
over the hump of the bridge
a scared young squaddie

One child at school, another in a pram. Making a home in this friendly border town where a quarter of the men have never found work, where descendants of the planters own all the land around, I dig my first garden and begin to learn how to build a career. Amongst family and friends no eyebrows are raised about our connubial arrangements — but few of the people at work feel able to be more than cordial

soft hills surround
the fair place by the river
warm hearts

Soldiers patrol our estate by night. The whine of their Pig disrupts sleep.

An outspoken young woman is elected for Mid-Ulster — makes waves at Westminster.

In Belfast, nine bombs explode in eighty minutes, most of them within thirty: nine people die, many more are maimed.

In our garden you can read a newspaper lit by a searchlight sun when the helicopter flies over, nights.

The centre of Strabane disintegrates as one by one, shops, pubs, hotels become rubble. More people die, are maimed

town bridge—she stoops
runs one hand on our buggy
as bullets fly

When I am twenty-eight and our son is seven, our daughter four, we say:
'This is not our fight.'

Having grown tired of bombs, diversions, power cuts and border closures, of looking over our shoulders and of living in a sectarian statelet, we leave by Lifford Bridge to make a new life in a country town in Donegal

winter barley
stitches green the hilltop
farmer's sampler

Guy Stephenson

Note:

The title comes from *The Cure at Troy* by Seamus Heaney (Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 1990).

Believe that a further shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
And cures and healing wells.

3 a.m.

I had been dreaming about having COVID-19 when I was younger — which was impossible — and in the hospital, which was rare. Still is. I have been in hospital only a handful of times throughout my life. The first time to have five stitches in my knee. I was in fifth grade and had stayed up late writing a paper. My sister, Betty, and I slept on the sofa bed in the living room. When I turned out the light, I imagined spiders crawling all over the floor. I jumped into “bed,” hitting the sofa bed’s black metal frame and slicing my knee open. I called out to my dad who was asleep upstairs. He had been a medical clerk for a MASH unit on Guadalcanal during the second world war. He took one look at my knee and said, “It’s going to need stitches.” I got out of Phys. Ed. For a week due to those stitches.

My second time was to have a bunionette removed from my left foot, six months before my wedding. My biggest concern was whether or not I would be able to wear heels at my wedding. The third time, I had an ovarian cyst. Actually, now that I think about it, the third time was when I delivered Ben. The fourth time was the ovarian cyst. The fifth time was to deliver Peter. The sixth time was when I miscarried and needed a D&C. The seventh, to deliver Amelia. Eighth, Julia. Ninth, emergency appendectomy in California. Tenth, I thought I was having a heart attack. Eleventh, surgery on my spine. So, two handfuls plus one. That’s it.

I have, however, spent a lot of time in hospitals with other people. A lot.

roadside woods
a fairyland of wisteria
in the blink of an eye

Barbara Hay

Audience Participation

The thing — somewhat bigger than a mouse — was long dead and unrecognizable before I looked out my window. Over and over, the roadrunner snatches it up with his beak — then beats it against paving stones. In between pummeling, he pulls stringy meat and innards from what's left, guzzles them. Then more beating, sometimes flinging his victim in the air, watching it splat onto rock.

I've seen such savagery before. He seems to enjoy it in the way boys circle around playground fistfights and older men scream *Kill him!* around boxing rings. Forty minutes go by. I can't stop watching.

endless hours
of *Mortal Kombat*
never enough blood

Scott Wiggerman

The remnants

. . . last wishes are sacred. We all agree to sell the house. On the last day we hold hands and take a final trip to mama's kitchen, to the wall with our height marks, to the almirah where petrichor scented laundry used to be kept, to the mango tree and the pollen-stained ground, to the rust marks left by grandpa's ford, to the blank space of the nameplate, to the faded hopscotch, to the curled tendrils of the grapevine grandma had planted so lovingly.

unable to distinguish
one pain from another . . .
traffic chaos

Arvinder Kaur

What the Body Remembers

Grief seeped deep into bone. Memory knotted with intestine. An ache that flares when the weather changes.

not on the map
a heron flies the path
of a buried stream

Jacquie Pearce

while watching a lava lamp

what am I a stray neutrino passes right through what I am

Parallel worlds, palindromic worlds and split infinities? So, some surmise; anything goes until disproved. In twisted multi-dimensional topologies, the multiverses bubble forth and stretch their strings, expanding into...what, where? And when I so much as swat that housefly, I perturb cockamamie particles knocking about on a distant star, thereby changing the very fabric of spacetime? Far out! Hey, there are even cosmologists that conjecture that time travel could be a can-do thing! Really? Hey, ho, let's go—another dewdrop world—I'd be so outta here!

*abstruse algebras . . .
sipping my single malt
talking with phantoms*

Mark Meyer

A 1970s Neighbour

luring short strides, the musk stick house
musty lounge room one toy on the mantle
small handshakes a surfer in a snowdome
dome snow settles in a shaft of sunlit dust
old man's skin pink peeling weatherboards
spotted dove coos a child towards the window

d flat a a flat e f d b
a a flat
c g g sharp

Haiku playing notes, B flat clarinet

Line 1. Chalumeau register *crescendo* b (long note)

Line 2 Chalumeau register *crescendo* (hold both notes for 4)

Line 3 Clarion register 'c' *forte* altissimo last two notes

Robyn Cairns

Entanglement

*lying on the couch. reading. next to the picture window. I've lived in this house for years. how did i not notice before this moment that tall pine tree in the left corner of my vision. beyond the neighbour's roof. deep into the clouds and sky. it waves. calls out to me, **look! look! over here!***

particles
do i exist if no one
sees me

Marianne Paul

Asians all look the same . . .

yet, with the sharpness of an eagle's eyes, this white man still manages to hone in on the most vulnerable and defenceless.

an uptick
in new variant cases
another
Asian-looking old man
knocked to the muddy ground

In the dark tunnel of my daymare with no light at its end, I dash to and fro, but settle nowhere. I can feel a bull's eye on my back.

Chen-ou Liu

On My Dying Day

There are things I will never tell my children. Like the time I was the affair or that I lied about it to save my skin. I will never tell them I had cancer because of an STD, or that I was told to pray it away. I will never tell them that my wife raped me or that I even had a wife. Let alone the truth about my sexuality. There will never be a need.

only secrets
left behind
mother's wake

Samantha Roberts

the womb

it is 1956 in the sonoran desert community of tucson, arizona. i am 9. my grandfather's death at 53 sends my grandmother and i to live in a 28-foot travel trailer. my 19-year-old uncle, who is making good on my grandfather's deathbed directive to support us, lives there as well.

my refuge is the large vacant lot just the other side of the barbed wire fence behind our trailer. i discover a hole that is the footprint of a foundation for a small house never built. on hot afternoons, i jump in it and locate the shadow cast on the floor by one of its vertical walls. i stretch out full length in the cool, loose dirt (for that's all it really is) until grandma calls me to supper. i am the only living thing in that hole. it is the only space that is all mine.

dog days
the duty nurse walks
in the dark

anyway. about the haiku ::: imagine the dog days of summer occurring in the desert. sweltering to say the least! the hole in the vacant lot had been my womb, nurturing me into a love for nature. nurses nurture. in the summer, the only time to take a walk to unwind is before sunrise or after sunset. tucson is the low desert so it's cool at both times. trying to connect the nurse with the nurturing.

not that this would ever make it into this piece. although maybe it should.

you brought it up. so i want you to know. the truth.

my paternal grandparents were raising me because i was birthed with a birth defect given to my brain by the ineptitude of the delivering doctor. it was my grandfather who wanted me. my grandfather who wanted to keep me from being institutionalized for life as an imbecile. it was my grandfather who informed my grandmother that they were adopting me legally. my grandmother was finally past her baby-rearing stage; the uncle i speak of in this piece was 9 years old himself when i arrived on the scene.

my grandmother didn't want me. she resented the fact of my existence in their house. my grandfather adored me. he protected me from my evil father, who was the instigator of selling me to men when i was less than five years old. my grandfather died too soon.

my grandmother had no idea where i spent my time while i luxuriated in that hole in that vacant lot. it was my escape from her coldness, her uncaring attitude toward me. a year later, to "help with the lack of money (after all, how much does a supermarket cashier make at the age of 19 for that was the job my uncle could get), my grandmother pimped me out to a group of women who wanted pretty little girls for sex.

so if my grandmother comes off as caring in this piece, it definitely needs to be revised.

and i thank you for alerting me to my grave error.

i hope i've not spoken too freely and offended you or anyone else. report me if you must, i say to anyone offended by this reply.

no . . . "nurse" has nothing to do with my grandmother. i've always thought of lying in that hole in the heat of the day. escaping life without my grandfather. escaping the indifference of my grandmother that i now had to face alone without my grandfather's buffering, as being a nurturing experience.

and who nurtures in their work? as a way of life? a nurse. i can see that was not good thinking on my writer's part.

and now i'm posting this.

Lorraine Pester

Quick-change

It is a snowy night on the mountain. Mr. Rick shows up for dinner and a nap in his heated hut.

sandman all tucked in

Rick's Café is busy tonight. The casino is bustling, and the house is winning. Rick takes a drag from his cigarette, nonchalant in his white tux. A young woman, too young, catches his eye.

“Mr. Rick, what kind of man is Captain Renault? Does he keep his word? You see, my husband and I want to go to America to start a new life. But traveling is expensive, and we don't have enough for our exit visas. Captain Renault has promised to give them to me if —

necessity knocking at the wolf door

“Where is your husband now?”

“At the roulette table, and he's losing.”

Rick looks at her for a moment, then nods at the Croupier. “Twenty-two,” he says.

“Oh, Mr. Rick!” she says.

“Your husband's a lucky guy. Now cash in and don't come back.”

bibbidi bobbidi boo

Rick peels her arms from around his neck. There are more important things to be dealt with: the letters of transit hidden in his office and Major Strasser of the Third Reich.

noir the stuff of dreams

It is midnight, and the bar is loud and raucous. Smoke is heavy in the air. The band is playing, and the patrons are preoccupied with politics and French champagne. When suddenly, Ilsa.

freeze frame the silence of an atom bomb

It's one in the morning, and the snow is heavy on the ground. I tiptoe to the front door to check on Mr. Rick. He's asleep in his hut, white paws twitching in the porch light.

feathers the cat catches the canary

Susan Beth Furst

The Insomnia Chronicles

3:11 a.m.

Lucid dream. Try to conduct the workings of an anxiety-addled brain. Realize dream characters have minds of their own.

3:23 a.m.

Semi-awake. Things start to itch. Toe, shoulder, nose, ear. Ignore it and it will go away. Re-fluff pillow. Throw off covers. Pull up covers. Flip one way. Flip the other.

4:03 a.m.

Heart palpitations. Eyes wide, taking in the darkness. Panic builds. Real life encroaches. What/if scenarios play themselves out with various unattainable resolutions. Contemplate getting up.

4:39 a.m.

Get up. Grab your robe, slippers, phone. Go to the bathroom. Pee. Stare in the mirror. Stare through the mirror. Splash water on your face. Pop a xanax.

4:47 a.m.

Write something. Anything. Backspace. Delete. Try Again. Fingers freeze mid-stroke. Rub your eyes. Sigh.

5:14 a.m.

Make some tea. Drink two cups. Strong and black. Watch a spider crawl across the ceiling. Become the spider. Build a web. Center yourself in the web. Close all eight of your eyes. Go to sleep.

dragline silk
in dreams we never
hit the ground

Terri L. French

a ruthless opportunist

must be able to master *all* forms or aspects of social activity without exception and must be ready to pass from one to another in the quickest and most unexpected manner, without regard to

bare facts
a little brainwashing
goes a long way

Adam T. Bogar

*Found text excerpted from the first edition of *Against Method* by Paul Feyerabend (New Left Books, 1975).

Recipe for Pretending That Everything's Fine

Ingredients:

- Mask (metaphorical or literal)
- 5 ounces of inappropriate laughter
- 2 cups of mitigated anxiety
- 1 bowl of feigned interest
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tablespoon of awareness

Method:

- Keep mask on at all times, except while showering and sleeping.
- Sprinkle an ounce of inappropriate laughter every time you begin a conversation. No more than five a day.
- Mix mitigated anxiety into the bowl of feigned interest and stir until you get a composite of pretense in its purest form. Dust $\frac{3}{4}$ tablespoon of awareness to increase your ZQ (zen quotient).
- Serves 3-6 people a day, preferably at room temperature.
- Repeat the above steps on an as-needed basis. You might run out faster on some days. It's alright. Keep stirring.

the white edge of disbelieving :: maybes smooth as glass

Shloka Shankar

TO KINGS FALLS

crumpled
quilt of microhabitats
Devonian granite

First the descent through messmate forest. Undergrowth of gleaming wiry grass, patterned with roo trails. Here and there, the powerful scent of bracken. Cacophony of rival kookaburra families. Bluebells, fringed lilies, pink hyacinth orchids. To the north, chinks of sky inch down a narrowing stand of trees.

The path hits the mountain face and sweeps around a spur. Sudden expansion. Lift off. A wedgetail's view of the bay. The embracing arms of two peninsulas. Scattered rooftops. Submerged sandbars. The narrow band of ocean blue beyond.

A steep slope scoured by sun and salt. Stunted vegetation. Pink and orange rock.

butterflies
on the noon steps
mica dust

The plunge into a sheltered glen. A wandering line of tree ferns, their frond circles seen from above. Greenish hovering light. Aromatic damp. The swimming sperm of moss and maidenhair. An imaginary griffinfly.

Then bone-dry rain shadow. Sheoak needles carpeting the ground. A few hunched grass trees. The climb to the lookout facing Selwyn Fault. The falls, a darkened streak of glinting rock. The last trickle from the water bottle.

Returning I'm amazed to see the tide has gone right out. The moon. The spinning Earth's albedo. My walk athwart the journey of the year.

crystal ball
a microscope made from
a drop of dew

Alice Wanderer

phantasmagoria

unbroken shrieking
 pierces my mind
 disturbs sleep
 open eyes, colours exploding
 beyond
 the glass

 angels on fire
 f
 a
 l
 l
 i
 n
 g
 from grace . . .
 another wonder

Marilyn Humbert

Not An I In Sight

Just clay fashioned into a semblance of a self. At first it seemed but a form ready to be washed away as a thinning earth colour back into the mire, or ready to be baked into a figurative moment of permanence separated from its origins.

Is such a shaping independent of will or is it the fruit of a profound silence knowing only itself?

breath-gathered
dust
warping mirror
between the shapeless
and the shaped
an old man
no longer astonished
a yawning gulf
that the image
is him

The waking hour strips the world of an irretrievable gift. A gift so profoundly intimate that it is conceivable only in the stumbling beginnings of aspirations which may remain no more than mere hints of breath. A gift that bears traces of the weightlessness of shadows cast by the timeless instant that brings forth light by word alone.

anywhen breeze
the moon swans about
its reflections

Hansha Teki

Hidden

I turned the page.

[. . .] “I have amazing news for you—and indeed for every bird-lover in the country,” he whispered. [. . .]

It was my first day at Junior (Primary) school and I had picked a book to read, from the library shelves.

“Bennett! What are you doing?”

“Reading, Miss” (I hadn’t heard the Headmistress come into class). “We were told to, Miss.”

“What have I been talking about?”

“Dunno, Miss.”

“Come here!” (six raps on the knuckles for not paying attention and six more for answering back). “Write out, in your best handwriting, *‘I must not read in class’*. Twelve times!”

Did she know that my writing was awful. I could read, and spell almost anything, but write—I couldn’t write for toffee.

She kept the book.

I returned to my desk and stared out the window; a Green Woodpecker flew up into the trees bordering the grounds of the old Rectory. Overgrown and unkempt—a place of mystery and adventure . . .

We turned the page.

[. . .] “ ‘As I suspected, the birds you saw and which I have been watching for fifteen minutes are Bee-eater.’ ” [. . .]

My son finally asleep, I stared out the window towards the blue line of distant hills. Thoughtfully, I put the book back on his bedroom shelves.

found again
... a secret garden
my childhood

Clive Bennett

The book is *The Fourth Key*, the last of the Michael and Mary stories by Malcolm Saville (1957), which was based on the true story of the efforts made by four friends, to protect the first pairs of Bee-eater to nest in the UK (1955): <https://malcolmsaville.co.uk/serm-m.htm>

Tumbling out of the sky, out of the blue, I manage to land on my feet, wonder where I am. Purple poppy seed trees, orange grass with two eyes waving on every blade. A sky full of feathers, black fading to white. I shuffle through the grass as eyes follow me, feathers whisper, poppy seeds snicker.

sinkhole
we sidle around the edges
of the new normal

Peggy Hale Bilbro

The Power of Thought

If I'm always thinking about aliens, angels, and old gods, will it somehow bring them to me? Will one of them finally see me and take an interest?

turns out my fears
outweigh my fantasies . . .
person-like warthogs
parachute to Earth
to enslave us all

Susan Burch

Life — Full of Surprises

Sometimes the worst ones turn out to be the best, like my second Divorce. The image I have is of giant rose colored glasses smashed to smithereens, sitting cockeyed on my face, I'm totally devastated.

Standing there I realize for 40 years all I know is how to work really hard for what everyone else wants, their dreams, what they need and it hits me, I have no idea what's important to me, what it is I want. This is the turning point.

For the next 30 years I explore, learn and discover what is important to me. I find out what I want, what I desire. Now at 74, I can say, "I have an amazing life."

the current
catches blossoms
as they fall

Carolyn Winkler

Escape

I ran out into the cold, away from my mind, but my mind followed me. The room had grown smaller with the crowd of thoughts that filled it. The immense ME, like a swollen balloon, became suffocating and unbearable as the objects in the room became invisible from the overexposure of having been stared at so long — like a word repeated over and over again until it's lost its meaning. The need arose to move, to get away from the same mental images by running outside in the open air; so, I went out towards the frozen lake and ran alongside it towards the city.

Run, you creature, you organism — feel the pain, the cry of lungs used to cigarette smoke and not sharp air; the strain of muscles used to the fetal position of deep thought — feel the body, every cell of it, to remember that the mind is in this shell; make the self physical with every stride. I, I, I, I look at this water, this ground, these trees, these roosting shapes, this approaching city. I, I, I, I, a floating brain, that in this world exists. All this will be here after I die, but these thoughts, these thoughts are just I and me and my perception,
a caw,
I stop short
of breath . . .

chilled to the bone
seeing the crow

Agnes Eva Savich

Rules of the Game

The opening chords of the overture come over the backstage speaker as I make my way upstairs. Just enough time to grind the tips of my pointe shoes in the rosin box. My partner John cracks his knuckles waiting for the dresser to check his jacket hooks again.

daisy petals
slip from her fingers
one by one

After the matinee a few of us go out for a bite during the break between shows. John says, “I think your interpretation of the scene where you realize you’ve been betrayed by the prince lacks a certain vulnerability. Your emotional ruin isn’t quite desolate enough.”

nutcracker
how it works
to crush small things

Maybe he’s right. Maybe my rendition isn’t enough to evoke accolades, bestowed on lucky ballerinas whose debasement, at the behest of powerful men, leaves audiences to crave a saving mercy of their eventual insanity and death. The heroic suffering of the chaste and ghostly weightless draws crowds to opera houses, and for centuries, we’ve coveted those roles.

little swans
point their feet
toward the water

Back at the theater for our final show of the run, a dancer with whom I shared my role performs it with John’s alternate. Disheartened after his comments I don’t really feel like watching from the wings but John pulls me over anyway. We witness a woman embodying disempowerment and deficit as if they were the water, and she was a fish. Nodding toward the thunderous applause John said, “now *that’s* a victim.”

bindweed
taking over
the garden

Lorraine A. Padden

without within

now sometimes now caught in the branches of pines and oaks, opening a forest path, clearing away an ocean of detritus now attentive to reflections in small puddles, tree, sky, heart mirroring contentment now

television news anchor meditating on another life

Lynne Jambor

Wonder

All of my favorite passions are tiny: writing micro poems, educating toddlers about love and the environment, creating miniature wreaths. What does that say about me?

a whole life
the size of my pinky nail —
treefrog

Julie Bloss Kelsey

Beta

Average men watch sports then find some level of camaraderie in talking about it. Average men are taller and stronger. The average man doesn't cry at the finale of *Les Misérables* or pray that their children will be girls because the thought of raising a boy into a man is just too daunting.

This is why, when my father received my final report card senior year and said, "Congratulations, Son, you are completely average," I thought I'd actually done something right for a change.

Gender Studies

I find a seat

somewhere in the middle

Bryan Rickert

Ok, Boomer

being a cynic makes you a funny bone

I solve
a murder
in my dream

Hemapriya Chellappan

Midnight Hijinks

I slip out of my sleeping body to jitterbug with my old friend Harold, long dead.

WHOOSH he rolls me over his shoulders in the version he danced a decade before mine. I plant my landing like a pro. He takes my face into his hands, wants to kiss me but he's married and I've been down that dead-end road . . . *I was planning to leave her before I met you . . .* oh sure.

Men leaving me. Me leaving men. My broken heart skips away and lands on last year's Valentine, the glitter lost.

My husband grunts in his sleep. I quickly jump back into bed, glad that he didn't rush away for a tango while I was gone.

flash lightning
one red slipper tumbles
from the dog's mouth

Pris Campbell

I'm not going to talk about us any more...

winding path
our bedsheets cool
in emptying air

Patricia Hawkhead

Fuses of Anxiety

he backs me into a corner. stands close. over six feet tall. cheeks flushed, voice raised. fist in my face.

his complaints
about the front desk guy
nonsensical talk...
later, driving home
my first panic attack

more follow. new triggers catalyzing a now-familiar chain of reactions: fear, doom, difficulty breathing, racing heart . . . like a falling row of dominos.

over the years
a widening interval
between attacks . . .
asking myself as I write:
am I a survivor?

Claire Vogel Camargo

Rilke with his hat backwards

he left his window
and also the garden
drums of spring in his blood
with hat and gaiters
and a cane of walnut
walking becomes abode

in the cane's pace
all ears
falling in tune with the path
sort of forbidden
clouds know and
the heat waves above fallow fields too

Gong still atoms left first caws of crows

Michael Lindenhof

Slices of Pandemic

What does it look like?
Creamy-yellow mist with deep black cones
intermittent.

Each day I wait to reach the sheer cliff,
to drop into blue, to arrive at Summer.

It is taking such a long time. Some write about it,
some dance naked looking for their minds.

her glass of white wine
his black porter
checkmate at dawn

Maureen Weldon

thoughts upon visions

I'm in my hospital bed, in a room on my own, when I suddenly feel crowded. It's an inexplicable sense that my personal space has been entered: the room is jam-packed with people, yet nobody is around.

sickbed window
night by night watching
the moon grow
still no escape from
my body's slow death

My room is at the end of a long corridor, and the ward is winding down for the night; so different from the busy clutter of daytime. Family, friends, and all types of medical people have been in and out of my room from early morning to evening. But as night reaches me, everything is still.

waiting
for the new normal
first chrysalis
one year has passed
since my panic attack

I look towards the door to see a glow of white light shaped like an assembly of people. Similar to a silhouette: bodies of all shapes and sizes huddled together watching me, but it's a powerful white light of connected auras instead of a dense black mass.

trapped
trapped in
trapped in my body
only the sweet release
 of tears

I stare in wonder, and then confusion. Are these spirits? And are they guardian angels here to help me in my journey? Or have they been sent to haunt me: the ghosts of those who've died in my bed, in this room, on this ward . . .

ripples
of a water rat
through pond sludge
repetitive thoughts upon
visions of self-harming

Kirsten Cliff Elliot

On Impulse

ready meals
in a fridge...
woodpeckers drum

Wind screeching through marram grass, I scramble down dunes to the beach. Quite why, I'm not sure. A vicious sandstorm is blowing, the raging sea leaping in foam around the long-deserted lighthouse.

Kittiwakes tumble in the turbulence. Tatters of sea holly sweep by. My trousers flap and snap. Yet curiously elated, I dive headlong into the storm.

Sand flails my face and fills my eyes. I crunch it between my teeth. But now, wraith-like in the blinding swirl, a figure approaches. Female, I think...

Yes, female. She passes without pausing within yards of my left hand. Another poet, perhaps.

childminding...
visions conjured
in dancing words

Paul Beech

Where the wind blows

The shelves are half empty. Books are carelessly stacked in untidy piles, in cardboard boxes and on the counters. The front table of bestsellers now holds best friend mugs, crayons and keychain teddy bears. The cashier is the only one left.

One or two people browse the shelves looking over the coffee table volumes with their curling edges and broken spines. It's the last shelf of books.

The fiction section has pens and pencil sets, decorative pen stands, boxes of Assam and Darjeeling tea and handmade sling bags with cheerful peacocks and elephants. The non-fiction section has only dust.

Someone buys a notebook. Others leave empty handed.

The coffee shop has tea and coffee. The sandwiches will take time. Someone has been sent to buy the bread.

last year's
group photograph
only I remain

Rohini Gupta

Chiaroscuro

A visit to a couple of dear friends who live on the heights of the Ligurian coast. The land around their small house borders on the woods: here and there in the Mediterranean scrub the dark tones of agapanthus, myrtle bushes and hydrangeas by now withered.

Here I spent peaceful holidays waiting for the shooting stars, here I took refuge when my parents both left in a few months...

here, today

wild shadow—
so white the oleander's
white flowers

Chiaroscuro

Una visita ad una coppia di cari amici che vivono sulle alture della costa ligure. Il terreno intorno alla loro piccola casa sconfinava nel bosco: qua e là nella macchia mediterranea i toni scuri degli agapanthi, dei cespugli di mirto e delle ortensie ormai sfiorite.

Qui ho trascorso vacanze serene aspettando le stelle cadenti, qui mi sono rifugiata quando i miei genitori se ne sono andati tutti e due in pochi mesi...

qui, oggi

ombra incolta—
così bianchi i fiori bianchi
dell'oleandro

Angiola Inglese

The Strongroom

I wrap it carefully in gauze and with a piece torn from grandma's soft *mundu* with the frayed golden border. Like I would a fragile heirloom or a Romanov egg. Then, I place it inside the tall cupboard made from the wood of the Jackfruit tree that grandpa had planted many years ago. The shelves still smell of the camphor and dried neem leaves meant to keep silverfish away.

I lock the cupboard with the numberless metal key that has turned black with years of use, perhaps crafted by the village smith a century ago.

Next, I shut the heavy teak door that creaks in a note that I used to be able to play while at college, on my Gibson that lies warped in the loft.

It's safe now. After all, I don't want to hold in my palms the memory of the last rays of the fading sun, as it caught the silver of your hair, or at least what was left of it after the ravages of the chemo.

heave of the sea
as it dashes the rocks –
my salty cheeks

Geethanjali Rajan

Crippled

I can't pretend my way through this on sheer will. I have spent the past five years searching for an answer.

This fear is different.

It is not the “defuse an ugly situation” kind of fear. The kind you instinctively know you know how to stop.

It is not the “step on stage to speak to an audience of hundreds, forgetting everything I meant to say” kind of fear. The kind when the words that roll off your tongue aren't the ones you planned—but better.

It is not even being at Mama's bedside in ICU for 12 days. When “you hope your voice might rouse her from her coma” kind of fear.

It is not any of the “straighten my shoulders, try to look as if I know what I am doing—even when my knees are knocking and heart pounding” kind of fear.

It is the “I have no idea what to do” kind of fear. For today I cannot let it control my life.

“Let It Be”...
the Beatles'
answer

Margaret Walker

A Sound of Horns Far Away

Look! ...across the Glen...

Do you see those distant wrinkles on the greening hills?
They are grass grown earthworks of my ancestors...
Spring may never come to some dark hollows where my own
people left their bones. There is a melancholy that creeps
across these places like mist.

ancestral worship
incense blackens
the altar wall

I have stood on windy hilltops by moonlight... I have seen cold stones
glitter in frost turning to dew.
Moon of Storms! Promise us only change as we
children make this pilgrimage. My folk never cared
whose flag flew above the fort. ...Seasons change again.

thermal updrafts
the raptors crossing
continents

Sing me an old song... Listen to the wind between stones.
...I will make a fire, and you may play my drum.
I am only partly here: even though I seethe with blood of old foes
I am no stranger. The blood of all the warring bands is mixed in me.
and so I am the peace.

cross culture
in the melting pot
dialects

My language now blends with that of our conquerors
...and our slave mother's tears are invoked in the song we sing.
So the castle falls: and we who remember... ignore the kings, as ever.
This morning there is a hush over these hills and a scent of
change drifts on wisps of smoke from peat fires.
Last night the Moon of Storms came to the half.

zoom lesson
the tutor picks up
another accent

Michael Hough, prose /
Christina Chin, haiku, senryu

Floating

All the large house is bright and rarefied, full of abstract indistinct whiteness, and going through its half-empty rooms there is nothing that could seem to be even vaguely out of place: it is wonderfully full of absence.

Absence yet so present as to seem, in the unperceivable and evanescent floating dust suspended between the doors and the windows, a mysterious epiphany.

calla lilies
the strange simplicity
of astonishment

Fluttuante

Tutta la vasta casa è luminosa e rarefatta, densa di un astratto vaporoso candore, e attraversando le sue stanze semivuote non vi è nulla che potrebbe anche vagamente sembrare fuori posto: è miracolosamente colma di assenze.

Assenze così presenti da sembrare, nell'impercettibile, evanescente danza del pulviscolo sospeso tra le porte e le finestre, un'arcana epifania.

calle giglio
la strana semplicità
dello stupore

Stefano d'Andrea

Winged wails

My mother lives in a building at the edge of a pond. On my visits to her, I would be awakened at two in the morning to the shrieks of birds announcing their arrival at this tree-fringed wetland, where birds flocked to feed, breed, nest and rear their young ones. Later, I recognised the explosive screams to be those of pond herons and the low-pitched guttural grunting to be of the cormorants. The rest was a babble of squawks and chirps as ducks, moorhens, plovers and lapwings paddled through the weeds and reeds of the sluggish waters.

A few visits later, I found the pond to be unrecognisable. The banana and coconuts trees on the fringes had been cleared to make way for buildings. The pond's sluggish waters had become still, a thick green slime covering the surface. So still was the pond that plastic bottles, jute sacks, cartons, plastic bags, a shoe... lay motionless on it as if on hard green ground. There was no sound of bird calls at night. At dawn, I saw a motionless egret on the pond's edge and a bunch of plovers, black beaks dipping into the water as they stood on thin pale legs. A woman emerged from a newly constructed building and walked slowly towards the pond, carrying a heavy sack of garbage in both hands. There was a sudden grating scream like a ske-ow. A large grey heron descended from a tree, wildly flapping its wings as it landed at her feet. The woman screamed, dropped her sack, tripped on a tree's root and fell.

endless caws –
a crow's rapid hops around
its dead mate

Neera Kashyap

Lineage

Underground, the mycorrhizal network carries the soil-rooted messages of trees, in exchange for carbon:

—I smell rain.

—Optimal sunlight at a 40° tilt Northeast.

—My leaves have been bitten into lace.

The networking spores offer a discount to a mother tree, already diverting her share of nutrients and sugar to her suckling sapling. Along the rootlines from mother to child, a fungal bloom, an arboreal caress.

Chemicals commute along the buried threads, spreading the news. Above, movement in the canopy: a bit more sunlight trickles down.

through
the overstory's gaps
a shift
grandma punctures the linen
with her tapestry needle

Pippa Phillips

[...]

Being drained and dramatic I put on my almost forgotten music and somehow, I start dancing. If you could call this a dance – jumping, twisting, swinging, swirling, whatever occurs to my mind or whatever my liberated body wants to do. It seems like something exploding within my body than me actually moving.

echo in the empty house
remembering my old self

Nadejda Kostadinova

Unstrummed

the universe of music inside her waiting

to release
the sinewaves
of A-sharp

to loosen that songknot in her throat

caught up
in the word
the vortex

and the songs gather dust

the tanpura watching casually
from the corner of her music room.

Suraja Roychowdhury

genesis

ex tenebrae: darkness splinters:

*shape: shape: something is stirring, trembling, striving, within: inception, a beginning, genesis – chapter & verse: prelude... & fugue:
an empty stage, the light curling like a tendril, starting to grow, tubers...*

*inchoate: incandescent: iridescent: slow, wild incantation at the shaping of a gospel, the coming of the wild and light and winds to the breaking sky, white with gull:
twisted, gnarled and broken ground: a poppy opens slowly, and a deer leaps through open fields: an angel bursts out of the sun – mosaic of wing and
scattered light: the sky is intricate and interlaced, charged with colour and woven mysteries, coral light and shadows outlined and cursive: the sky shimmers
like memory, imbricate upon the waters: rays of sunlight strike clouds like scripture and impel and drive the morning – its solar dawn, revision: I am listening
to Philip Glass now, as clouds form and reform into ever-changing shapes, the sky black in the foreground but flecked with glimmerings of light there in the
distance, everything a metamorphosis, grey and white and blue, then rouge with the intervention of the sun:*

magnificat of the Earth

lightening & brightening

a tabernacle of bees

blue voice of prophecy

an apprentice to the dream

there on the threshold to birth and shadow

pinnacles of the wind

ataraxy & meditation in the sun

indigo and pearl, seas so deep with whale, huge and blue: a fish-bird flies through the air, over water and wave and wishes...

and now I leave the shoreline behind, and come to the butterflies – butterflies with burning wings in the blue fire of atomic summer burn into the landscape
like furnaces of fluttering flame in the name of this wild planet: inferno of dreams that float out of light:

summer:

dancing

with butterflies

dancing

with the sun

A A Marcoff

[For Alessandra Ferri – ballerina *extraordinaire*]

Area temporally closed

spring sunshine
the fresh salvation
in every bud and shoot

- 'ere, mate. Watcha doin'?

- *Wot? Me? Nuffin. Just killin' time.*

- Whoa. Radical. Like a kinda existential vigilante?

- *You takin' the piss?*

- Naah, mate. Ah mean it. Time's the universal assassin, innit? It's like the agent of entropy; the archduke of chaos.

- *You on new meds?*

- Naah. It's all good. Jus' fought you'd bin strikin' a blow for ephemeral life fruaah the cosmos.

- *You might need a lie dahn, mate.*

- P'r'aps ya right. Mindfulness sa double-edged sword, innit?

- *Too true, mate. Too true.*

evening chill
the brown borders
of last week's daffodils

David J Kelly

B100 Outpost note from David J Kelly:



This sign led to thoughts of a sci-fi scenario where people might actually damage time. As the sign was the result of a misunderstanding, I thought it would be fun if the sci-fi scenario was also the result of a misunderstanding.

The conversation is imagined to be spoken in a heavy British accent (some non-specific area of South East England). Consequently, some words have been phonetically rendered.

The haiku were selected to illustrate the inevitable passage of time, despite the crazy sci-fi scenarios generated by creative minds. So, even though the area of the conversation might have been "temporally closed", the world around it steadfastly carried on.

A simple glossary of the heavily accented words:

bin - been
dahn - down
fruaaht - throughout
innit - is it not
naah - no
nuffin - nothing
p'r'aps - perhaps

A Boy Called Snow

Scotland has more than four hundred words for it.

I'm in England though, on the run, it was all a big misunderstanding.

Found diary scrap: *How do we find home?*

I start to get to know each and newly discovered word for snow that could bring me closer.

“feefle” (to swirl, as of snow round a corner)

snow we undulate around a sun striking noon

Dictionaries of the Scots Language

Scottish National Dictionary (1700–)

FEFFLE, v. Also feiffle, feefil, fiffle; fifel (Jak.). To work in a clumsy or foolish manner (Ork. 1887 Jam.); to act foolishly (Sh. 1908 Jak. (1928); ‡Sh.10 1951). Now gen. as ppl. adj. feeflan, clumsy, footling (Ork. 1887 Jam., 1929 Marw.); “working slowly or listlessly” (Ork. 1922 J. Firth Reminisc. 151). Hence adj. feefly, infirm, feeble, clumsy (Ork. 1929 Marw.; Ork.5 1951). [O.N. fífl, a fool.]

The facts and scraps of thoughts about snow I've decided will appear in sticky notes, or “repositionable notes” as they never stay in one place anyway. Well, it's if they have a mind of their own.

Random Thought:

So are we “snow”, not just stardust, and therefore do we snow amongst the stars?

I’m just trying to find home.

snowball vocabulary
we first start by beginning
and ending as snow

Random Thought:

If the Scottish have four hundred and twenty-one words for snow, what about the next one after that, if it could exist?

I keep leaving these “repositionable notes” as much as for me, as for anyone who can help me. Help me, help me, help me. Help me, please.

“snaw” (snow), “sneasl” (to begin to rain or snow) and “skelf” (a large snowflake), flindrikin (that’s a slight snow shower,) while this one is stronger and it’s “snaw-pouther” (fine driving snow) . . .

snaw-pouther
the name becomes snow
in every language

Have I even considered “flauchter” (snowflake) which lies in the “weather category”? It’s as if we “could” be snow, after all. I am refinding and redefining myself as snow. How many times will I need to name snow before the wardrobe comes back?

Found diary scrap: *How do I find just one special place?*

I ask my experts:

It *“was a very grey day; a most opaque sky, ‘onding on snam,’ canopied all; thence flakes fell at intervals, which settled on the hard path and on the hoary lea without melting.”*
Charlotte Brontë (*Jane Eyre*)

It’s that time, isn’t it, when we need to be with that “*onding*,” that heavy and continuous snow that refers to breathing alpenglow.

“Look out, Jock; what night is’t?” “Onding o’ snam, father,” answered Jock, after having opened the window, and looked out with great composure.

Walter Scott, you wrote this way back in 1818.

That’s me, that’s actually me, looking out through a window, waiting. The snow is falling all around, and through.

I wonder if the snow *loves* the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug, you know, with a white quilt; and perhaps it says, *“Go to sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again.”*

Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*

But do I want Summer?

“The snow doesn’t give a soft white damn whom it touches.”

E E Cummings

That’s true.

“A snowball in the face is surely the perfect beginning to a lasting friendship.”

Markus Zusak, *The Book Thief*

I’ll remember that! I should remember that.

liathreodhadh
the traveller's cant of
a winter's long word
starting
an original world

"Well, I know now. I know a little more how much a simple thing like a snowfall can mean to a person"

Sylvia Plath, *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*

Thank you, that's where I want to be, amidst the snowfall.

"With luck, it might even snow for us."

Haruki Murakami, *After Dark*

It's what I'm hoping.

"The hollowness was in his arms and the world was snowing."

William Goldman, *The Princess Bride*

I think I want this, do I want this, I think so.

the way
some snow
clings
the Barbegazi
of my make-believe

*One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow*

Wallace Stevens, *The Snow Man*

I do, I do, I do!

*“For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.”*

Wallace Stevens, *The Snow Man*

I am listening, I try so hard to listen.

motes of paper
I save the shavings
of thoughts

C'mon experts, keep speaking to me, I need to hear . . .

“A small and sinister snow seems to be coming down relentlessly at present. The radio says it is eventually going to be sleet and rain, but I don't think so; I think it is just going to go on and on, coming down, until the whole world . . . etc. It has that look.”

Edward Gorey, *Floating Worlds: The Letters of Edward Gorey & Peter F. Neumeyer*

That sounds like it could be Narnia, it's where I really want to go.

broken spine
the page numbers
the first to go

“It snowed all week. Wheels and footsteps moved soundlessly on the street, as if the business of living continued secretly behind a pale but impenetrable curtain. In the falling quiet there was no sky or earth, only snow lifting in the wind, frosting the window glass, chilling the rooms, deadening and hushing the city.”

Truman Capote,
American Fantastic Tales: Terror and the Uncanny from the 1940's Until Now

Thank you, Truman, this also reminds me of the David Lean movie, all those snow scenes. A candidate for another sticky note, where to position it, for now?

HIGH-ANGLE LONG SHOT.

Under a snow-heavy sky moved by a strong wind is spread a flat landscape, full and immense. In the distance something winds towards us like an eel, across a vast pale field of stubble. The CAMERA ZOOMS slowly in.

Doctor Zhivago (1965) Shooting Script from the Screenplay, Director David Lean

snow drifting
in and out
of consciousness

"It snowed last year too: I made a snowman and my brother knocked it down and I knocked my brother down and then we had tea."

Dylan Thomas, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*

I don't have a brother, do I? Maybe a twin, maybe, I don't know. Sorry. I don't really know why I am here.

*"Since it has quietly began to snow,
new distances have awakened within me."*
— Gerrit Achterberg, *Snow Passage*

I'll look for that snow passage and the storm inside, I'm scared, but determined.

christmas globe
the snowdrift teases
from both sides

Found diary scrap:

There are another nine hundred and ninety-four words related to snow or at least, very similar, did you know that?

Thank goodness there are even larger “repositionable notes,” some of those words were really long.

snow-pushed-wind-hanging-onto-the-coat-tails-of-a-scarecrow

Found diary scrap: I.m not my name.

I am calling on snow to arrive, spilling out of a wardrobe, please.

“ . . . we shall both catch cold if we stand here talking in the snow, how would it be if you came and had tea with me?” Mr Tumnus

Tea does sound wonderful, someone else mentioned this too . . . long ago? I do like the idea of an old-fashioned British tea, is that possible, Mr Tumnus?

nimbostratus we huddle as jam sandwiches with piping hot tea

I’m another world, a childhood world of the long winter, harsh, simple, beautiful, and higgledy-piggledy contradictory too. It was my equivalent of Narnia, and this is becoming my last note.

Found diary scrap: The snow looks strange, Test One: Negative, Test Two: Interesting, Test Three: Changing . . .

soggy socks . . .
the snow is falling
from me

The nine hundred and ninety-ninth word for snow:
Schneeballschlacht

Postscript

Some of this is true:

I opened the front door of my childhood home and found another doorway, made completely out of snow and ice. I was just single digits old and had never known or seen snow before.

As an adult I wake up early, I'm heading out of double digits old now as I revisit my childhood home. Somehow, I open the front door, from the other side . . .

1962-1963 was the coldest British winter for 200 years: It began just before Christmas in 1962 and carried on, and on into 1963. The real boy is older now, occasionally gets lost, forgiven, revisits Narnia, forever feels on the run. He reads too much. He has two full legal sets of names. He reads into things too much. He's still making haiku out of snow.

Alan Summers

Down the Tube

infusion day
movie theater
show-hopping

The story of my life begins. I'm played by Jack Black in a rock opera that opens with a theme song played by Tenacious D. As Jack sings the chorus "Fire needles in my a - s - s - s - s!" literal flames rise to lick his rear, he clenches the air guitar, his eyes bug out, tongue sticks out, and he bangs his head furiously while running about the stage trying to avoid the singe.

opening number
300 milliliters
of bananas



"He's making dollars but she's not making any sense . . . "



Well, I guess not because he's a dude and I'm more of a genderless turbosloth masquerading as a slowly shrinking Rubenesque female human with a shoal of red-bellied piranhas chowing down on my spine.

docked at port
the sea knights me
Sir Lancelet

Suddenly I'm the girl who wears a bolero and sea stars in her hair — the back of her head blown out like the universe. I open my mouth to catch her voice dripping into mine and I sing out the whole of the Canadian wilderness.

Jack pine
do you know your way back
to the harbour seal?

She asks if I'm okay but I can't tell who *she* is until she gets much closer. I touch my finger to the tip of my nose as if it's a sort of secret message. But do *I* know the message?

"I'm bringing you the medicine," Bev says. I squint my eyes.

Yes, It's Bev.

brain password
I put your face
on unlock



"My memory is waterproof."

"Mine looks like a colander."



Suddenly, the door is kicked down by a golden warrior in a wheelchair, who shoots laser beams into my face with a bamboo spear. As my cheek falls open in sheets, I press my finger back to my nose, Bev appears with my Benadryl, and she quickly slams the door on the lasers.

disconnecting from a dream the nurse gathers my thoughts

GRIX

Revelations

After the eviction, her belongings were reduced to piles left in an old garage. Whenever I went back in Pennsylvania, I would climb the maze of boxes to look for photos, heirlooms, and mementos. This time I found a blue suitcase, the one we used to take on trips to the Jersey Shore. The suitcase is filled with the black and white composition notebooks used for schoolwork.

undertow

I opened the notebook on top. In it were lists of license plate numbers from the cars that were following her. Alongside the lists were conversations with Cat Stevens, in which he would pay trillions of dollars for her broach. I opened another book. She is the center of an ornate mafia scheme. Mobsters are in her walls and keep track of her movements with microphones and spy devices. Agents swap their disguises to monitor her everywhere; only she knows their true identities. Woven into the plots are her neighbors and the doctors from the hospital where she worked as a floor nurse.

mother writes

There are dozens of notebooks. My full name is written thousands of times, always the victim of hostage scenarios and unspeakable violations. My father is written there too, a kingpin of darkness. Everyone she has ever known or seen has a sordid role detailed in this opera. Other books contain prophecies she says God whispered in her ear. Through her cunning, she, alone, remains protected from the gaslighting schemes that spiral around her. She defeats them all, the sole bearer of truth and goodness.

a rape

The notebooks are dated as **journals**. Every word is written in blue ink and underlined twice in red. Every. Word. The first book is dated the year I graduated from college. I wonder if she is still writing now.

that didn't happen

How long have I been standing here? I can barely breathe. Every question surrounding her **has** been answered in this moment. What an odd relief to touch this undeniable proof, the strange **evidence** written in her familiar handwriting.

Then it hits me, how terrifying it must be, to be her.

Kat Lehmann

The Blōo Outpost

My very Special Guest co-editors:

Grix

Grix is an award-winning, as well as a Pushcart Prize nominated haibun writer, whose work focuses on disability, gender, trauma, and loss. They are the founding and chief editor for *Human/Kind Journal*. Grix is currently joint Team leader of the *Trailblazer Awards*; Assistant Editor with *Sonic Boom*, and *Yavanika Press*, and also reader for new British based "*kontinuum: kortárs haiku _ contemporary haiku*" journal.

Grix is the author of the stunningly and much needed ‘different’ approach to haibun and tanka stories: “shedding light on these powerful poetic devices...it unravels openly, vibrantly, and unabashedly, leaving readers feeling pure catharsis, release, and unrestraint.” Nadia Gerassimenko, Founding Editor of *Moonchild Magazine*

Fire Rainbow: A Haibun and Tanka Story Memoir (Human/Kind Press, 2020):

<https://payhip.com/b/2Evl>

<https://payhip.com/HumanKindPress>

Grix, amongst other awards, is also a Winner of a Touchstone Award for Individual Poems (2019)

More about Grix: <https://www.grixartistix.com/about.html>

Kat Lehmann

Kat Lehmann is an award-winning haiku poet and a regularly best-selling author.

A Best of the Net nominee, Kat's haiku have been honored in The Haiku Foundation Touchstone Awards (2020; individual poem), the Haiku Society of America Harold G. Henderson Haiku Award, and Japan's Basho-an Award. She is a judge in the inaugural Trailblazer Contest.

Kat's books include Moon Full of Moons: Poetry of Transformation (2015), Small Stones from the River: Meditations and Micropoems (2017), and Stumbling Toward Happiness: Haibun and Hybrid Poems (2019).

<https://www.amazon.com/Kat-Lehmann/e/B00U2PNZ5U/>

As a give-back to the larger community, Kat seeds free copies of her books in public spaces throughout the United States, and now in more than a dozen countries, as part of her "Ripples of Kindness" project.

Kat is a scientist based in Connecticut, USA. Her work can also be found at <https://songsofkat.com/> and on Twitter and Instagram as @SongsOfKat.

Founder and Editor-in-Chief Alan Summers

Alan is a *Pushcart Prize* nominated haibun writer, as well as a *Best Small Fictions* nominated haibun writer, and a former haibun editor for *Blithe Spirit* (British Haiku Society journal).

Amongst other haiku honors, he is a winner of a Touchstone Award for Individuals Poems (2016, The Haiku Foundation).

Alan's recent haiku pamphlets include: *Forbidden Syllables* (Bones Library 2020) *Glint* (Proletaria 2020) and joint collection *The Comfort of Crows* (Alan Summers & Hifsa Ashraf) with Velvet Dusk Publishing (2019):

<https://area17.blogspot.com/2020/06/recent-haiku-poetry-collections-by-alan.html>

Alan is the co-founder of *Call of the Page*, and lead tutor including the Passion of Haibun, and Haibun 2 x 2 courses:

<https://www.callofthepage.org/courses/>

Next submission date, genre and topic, and announcement of a new email address

Blōō Outlier Journal issue 3 will be haiku only.

Blōō Outlier Journal issue 3
natural history haiku
ed. Alan Summers
dedicated to Gene Murtha

Details will appear in September 2021

Blōō Outlier Journal

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