

Spire Light 2019

Spire Light:

A Journal of Creative Expression



Andrew College

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2019

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

Intrepid rumination encapsulates the entirety of this issue; authors, artists, and poets contemplate how our ancestry shapes our present-day existence. There is reflection about the self through the lens of time and across galaxies. Then, there's the elusive capture of our salvation and outright doubt and denouncement that we want to be saved. The original creation story in the Biblical sense echoes throughout, but there is a decided questioning of our destruction.

Fearless exploration is the answer to Zora Neale Hurston's cry, "There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside you."

Our contributors tell their stories through tangible objects and abject feelings as they traverse the South and beyond. Mothers become a string of pearls and mobile homes, bicycles, jet planes, spaceships, wagons, and strong arms transport us. Contained within are fascinating experiments in form, from advertisements as instructions for an experience to whimsical, meme-based poetry.

We hope that you enjoy this issue of *Spire Light: A Journal of Creative Expression*. Our editorial team has curated a stellar collection of works from our own Andrew College faculty, students, and general submissions from across the globe.

Penny Dearmin, Editor

History

In roughly 1983, Andrew faculty member Herbert Shippey started *Tiger Tales*, which soon became *The Menagerie* under the direction of Professor Lela Phillips, a printed art and literary journal featuring the work of the Andrew College community. It ran for 21 years, its last issue being printed in 2004.

Then, in 2011, *The Menagerie* was re-envisioned by Professor Amanda Knight as an online literary magazine called *The Welkin Ring*, borrowing a phrase from our Alma Mater, which showcased work of Andrew students, faculty, and staff.

In the 2016-2017 academic year, new faculty advisors and a new group of student editors relaunched the printed form, while maintaining an online presence as well, under yet a new name: *Spire Light: A Journal of Creative Expression*, and that is continued now in this edition.

We value the visions of Lela Phillips and Amanda Knight to print both a traditional hard copy as well as an online collection that can be more widely shared, so we are producing both, and are now including open submissions so that each issue reflects not only what we create but what we enjoy reading as well.

“Spires” also draws from the Alma Mater, in a line that reads, “The spires of Old Cuthbert,” referring to the unique architecture of Old Main. The spires stand tall over Cuthbert as some of the first and most recognizable features of our college and town, just as we intend for our journal to represent, to a variety of audiences, the artistic talents as well as values of our historic institution. Moreover, our spires have recently been illuminated with exterior lights, and “*Spire Light*” acknowledges our interest in illuminating others with art, from however small a corner of the world.

Kármán Line

Surrounded by no longer tilled farmland in Bibb County, Alabama, a simple square home is overgrown with privet hedge and tall grass. Hearty yellow cannalilies still grow at the house's southwest corner. There, in that house during the Depression years, Samuel Wesley Dowdle, my grandfather, as a young man and perhaps a hopeful writer, typed eleven pages of fiction he titled "Which?" His mother, Hattie Belle Dowdle, was a schoolteacher educated under the guidance of the iconic educator Julia Tutwiler at Livingston University.

Train tracks cut through the acres where Samuel Wesley grew into a man, and the tracks found their way into his story, "Which?" as if he were writing a nonfiction essay. I hear Hattie Belle fed the railroad hobos leftovers from dinners she'd prepared for her family. In my family when you see stray dogs, they're called traveling men. Often the train would stop at Hattie Belle's house, near which, is a switch lane—a double set of tracks where slower ones allow faster trains to pass.

Hattie's middle son, Samuel Wesley, must've possessed dreams. I have dreams. One of mine is to know his, but I'll never know if he wanted to be a writer or an astronaut before astronauts existed. Once, I heard him say he wanted to be a train conductor when the engines burned coal and soot coated his face when he'd stand on a bridge near his home and watch the locomotives pass underneath. He'd go to the well and wash the black soot, smelling the coal burn and hearing the hissing of the engines and the high pitch grinding train car wheels fade into the distance. He'd use a bent aluminum ladle at the well to wash his face because he

was country and poor. When he was younger, the ladle was a gourd.

Samuel Wesley wasn't a man who talked about dreams besides two that I know. One was to live in Maggie Valley, North Carolina, in the Appalachian Mountains, and the other to visit Pearl Harbor before he died. He made it to Honolulu one year before his death to see the oil from the Arizona leak to the surface of the harbor's salt water like brown upward falling tears.

Hawaii is a long flight through clouds from Alabama and the foothills of The Smokey Mountains where the Appalachians fade into the Coastal Plain.

The Kármán line is only 62 miles above sea level, which is the distance to Space from the Earth. After that line, an astronaut reaches the blackness of Space. Honolulu—4,386 miles from Birmingham, Alabama—is seventy times as far as Space is from Alabama soil. A year before he died, my grandfather might as well have landed on the moon.

The town Samuel Wesley grew up in was once called Dowdle, but it's a dead town that doesn't exist anymore. A dead town is deader than a ghost town, which exists in fallen structures, dilapidation and busted concrete spray painted, echoing one of the only pure arts that remain. Because graffiti is mostly anonymous, it's art done for a greater purpose than fame. Many other broken cities along the bulge of North America's Rust Belt are spray painted by invisible artists in the nights. Some leave tags for recognition. Some do not.

The Black Belt is like The Rust Belt. I was thirteen when Samuel Wesley Dowdle died in 1986 above The Black Belt line where he said gardens grew best in the black soil. The Black Belt—some say it's the richness of the soil, and others say the color of the skin of the people who live there, but it doesn't matter what the rest of the world wants to believe about Alabama. People will draw

the conclusions they choose. Hueytown is dead center among Alabama's version of a rust belt of dead steel towns. Geologically, Birmingham, Alabama is one of the few places in the world where every ingredient to make steel waits in the geological stratification underground, including coal and iron ore. The coal burns hot enough to melt rocks. It's metallurgy magic. The skyscrapers are small in the valley compared to other cities because the old mines below and the strata's plates aren't as reliable as Atlanta's granite bedrock.

A complete short story by a deceased grandfather discovered after his death cannot help but be precious to a grandson who eked out a living by writing and teaching freshman composition as an adjunct instructor at public universities. His story was like finding a secret packed away with his pipes and pocketknives and cedar carvings among things like paper bags and mostly everything my grandparents ever owned in their house in Hueytown, Alabama that I cleaned after his wife of fifty years, my grandmother, came to live with her daughter, my mother, when my grandmother could no longer live alone. The story was like finding the answer to why I write.

The thing was my grandparents never owned many things, but if you wanted an unused suitcase from the 1950s, there was probably one there. The house was relatively neat yet full of saved materials. Buttons, for example, there were thousands in amber medicine bottles. The house they lived in was honestly built room by room as my grandfather was able to save and then afford to make the house larger as he made money. He would buy nothing on credit. He did not see credit as money he had. They saved and paid cash for every addition until the house was a brick home.

In Alice Walker's short story "Everyday Use," Wangero, Dee, wanted to take the family quilts to New York from Georgia and display on her walls, but her uneducated sister Maggie was bequeathed the hand-sewn quilts in Wangero's stead. Alice Walker's short story

is an example of rhetoric in creative writing, but Dee wasn't all wrong. Too often, the world wants the pretense. They want the look. Maggie wanted the quilts for warmth. The substance does not matter to Dee, or it did.

I write. My grandfather wrote, and I have the evidence on yellow paper. Today, my grandfather's story looks manufactured as if the antique typewriter font and the aged paper were used for pretense if one looked at the pages' aesthetics rather than read them. The look is perfect—the corrections and strikethrough revision—the penciled word edits. Though I do not have an office in respected halls of an English department—no New York apartment—it'd be cool to frame the pages. My grandfather's pages look fake and purposefully distressed not unlike sanded paint on new furniture that simulates wear and age for that American sensibility that wants familial lineage yet buys the smell of new with retail tags and warranties. Mass produced quilts made to look handmade and imperfect can take many forms. America is the land of upstarts and image and the new. America has perfected the art of the superficial and the concept of constructed obsolescence.

My grandfather lived in a different America, and, with real typewriter keys in the 30s or 40s, he named his story and foretold my own. I don't know if it was the 30s or 40s. I do not know the typewriter manufacturer. I will be born in the early 70s—years later. There's no date on "Which?" but the ink and paper tell a tale. The tale is told by faded ink and brittle and dog-eared pages of dry yellow paper, once, natural white. The words tell of an approaching storm and a boy who wanted to love a girl, but would not let himself love her. As the storm neared, the girl walked alone along a dark trail in the woods that led from high school to the boy's house after the road forked. The storm came, and the girl was in danger and lost. The boy went to help her—an action that becomes a metaphor. Later when the storm passed, the original boy

saw his girl kissing another boy—the climax. It's not a story of betrayal; it's a story of counting on what is secure in an uncertain world. *Storms and Tempests*. I do not know if my grandfather read Kate Chopin or Shakespeare. The first boy was faced with a dilemma—a decision between a life of school study versus a life of manual labor in a factory somewhere, but I imagine the author was thinking of Tuscaloosa or Birmingham where the jobs would be. The author mentions grades that he calls marks quite often. Grades had been the boy's focus. In a sense, it is a story of passion versus the practical, which is a familial trait on my mother's side of the family. They do not gamble. Work versus study. They aren't ones to shoot for the moon.

Samuel Wesley Dowdle was my mother's father. Passion and the practical must have seemed far apart in that time he wrote, and I guess they still are. The love of his life seemed to represent his responsibility to provide a home for his girl, and the pursuit of academics seemed fanciful if not a self-absorbed pursuit that would not pay security dividends or put money in his pocket. It was a gamble, which I know my grandfather would have never taken. With a kiss on the lips of another, his girl made the boy's decision easy. In the story, the boy chooses his academics and loses his girl under moonlight, watching a kiss. The story could have been titled "A Kiss," or "The Kiss," or "Kiss it all Goodbye." In real life, Samuel Wesley Dowdle gets the girl and must get a job. Academics fall by the wayside although Samuel Wesley was teaching high school in his own eleventh grade year. In those years, teachers were moved from desk to lectern, easily. He was a smart man saturated with what the world now would call unrealized potential.

Unlike the boy in the story, Samuel Wesley went to work in the steel mills of Birmingham and Fairfield and Ensley and Leeds and West End around what was once the town of Elyton Village that will become the Magic City of Birmingham in 1900 because the city will grow at

such a rapid rate that it will seem magic. Bessemer, Alabama—the process of smelting rocks into steel bears the inventor’s name: Sir Henry Bessemer—will help lend an English city feel to Alabama, where city names recall the old world, but a world we don’t remember. None think of York when thinking of New York. Bessemer came before Birmingham just as York came before New York, and the original are obscured.

Like many young men from the farms of Alabama, coming out of the Depression of the thirties and bracing for war in the beginning of the forties, my grandfather devoted his life to industry. It will be one of the South’s many moves from agriculture toward modernity. Financial security was to that generation of Americans unlike it will ever be again, and to work at “the plant” known worldwide as US Steel meant food on the table—not 401k plans or stock options. It meant work when it rained and steady pay. It was secure enough to eclipse a career path in academia. Academia was for the dreamers in an America where business embodies the American dream. In my grandfather’s time, America was in the age after the bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima and, it was all the same steel dug and molten and made in The Magic City of Birmingham and heated and hammered and formed in the Motor City. It was Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Detroit, Michigan. It was Hueytown, Alabama where Samuel Wesley Dowdle will return from work every day save Thursdays and Fridays, always working the weekends for time-and-a-half. He hung his coal and coke dust stained denim overalls in the basement and showered after work before coming into the house where his daughter was a beauty queen. It spanned all of America. It was a way of life and a good life.

Samuel Wesley Dowdle will die of black lung in 1986. I was 13. The ovens that cooked the coal to coke to produce Benzene were lined with asbestos, proven (in my time) to be one of the most lethal carcinogens. Samuel Wesley’s profession was as a heater on the ovens that

derived Benzene. The chimneys between Ensley to Birmingham abound, as does the industry that, for a time, saved the city. Some say it was the fire and smoke that gave The Magic City its name. The smoke would billow and flames would light the nights, and truckers would call it magic on the CBs. The new industry is yet another university named UAB, University of Alabama at Birmingham, which is rivaled by only The Mayo Clinic in Cancer Research. The smoke has died down, and UAB has built its research centers. The doctors will blame the cigarettes and later Samuel Wesley's pipe tobacco.

As an undergraduate at Auburn University, I read in the last pages of the second edition of *American Short Stories* a two-paragraph story by Michael Martone titled "The Mayor of the Sister City Speaks to the Chamber of Commerce in Klamath Falls, Oregon, on a Night in December in 1976." The title is so long, and still today it's argued if it's a story although, years ago, it won The Best Short Story in the World. Martone, now a professor at The University of Alabama, wrote the short story that changed the way I would look at writing. Martone showed me how an image can work in very few words where subtext is everything, and word-count is nothing.

It was after the raid on Tokyo. We children were told to collect scraps of cloth. Anything we could find. We picked over the countryside; we stripped the scarecrows. I remember this remnant from my sister's obi. Red silk suns bounced like balls. And these patches were quilted together by the women in the prefecture. The seams were waxed as if to make the stitches rainproof. Instead they held air, gasses, and the rags billowed out into balloons, the heavy heads of chrysanthemums. The balloons bobbed as the soldiers attached the bombs. And then they rose up to the high wind, so many, like planets, heading into the rising sun and America. ...

Few in America want to understand that the Japanese also wanted to win the war. Few in Japan will ever understand why America dropped its bombs that killed thousands of people. Kamikaze is honorable in Japan. There is no point in trying to explain the human condition, much less war. Martone knew that when I was just a boy. There comes a point when the world does not want to hear that it is stitched together in a continuous thread and that one of our fates is the fate of us all. The wind—Kamikaze—The Divine Wind connects us all. People simply do not want to believe that, so all translators may stop translating while writers may stop trying.

Diamond Head was to the left. I remember very little about Hawaii, but I remember the beautiful blue water, the sand beach, and the jutting mountain to the left that looked like a giant shark fin coming out of Waikiki. In Alabama, I had been shown a globe. A bigger finger pointed to a dot of tan in a wide open blue halfway to China, which is where I understood I would go if I did not stop digging in the dirt in my Alabama backyard. I had a literal imagination as a child, and I would dream up worlds that did not exist and inhabit them with people that did not exist. I spoke to them. We played. I saw angels on clouds from the airplane window flying to Hawaii. I told my mother, and she did not believe me.

Samuel Wesley wanted only a tiny bit of the Pacific water to take back to Alabama. It was another time before people worried so much about the safety of their kids, when they knew kids were okay seeing how far they could swim. People once lived more because they knew what it was to die. It was a time when kids could be free to be fish.

“Can you get the blue water?” The words were from Samuel Wesley who’d hop train cars as a boy and ride to school before his high school was built anywhere near the square house in Bibb County, Alabama. His hunger for learning seemed endless as the Pacific when he posed

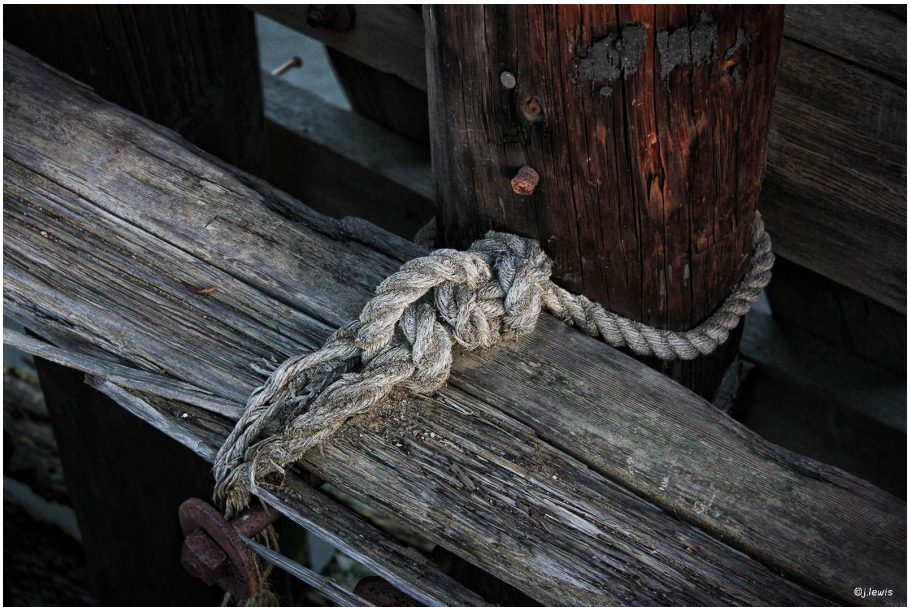
his question to me. I still can't be sure if he knew his dream was impossible or if he believed it was.

He wanted the deep blue water. He wanted the metaphor. He wanted something that can be seen but simply doesn't exist. He wanted the color of the sky reflected by the water. He wanted it in a bottle to take home.

In Hawaii and everywhere in the summers, I stayed in the water when possible, and I stayed barefoot. My hair was black and my skin almost as dark as any native of Hawaii. Samuel Wesley was dressed in pants on Waikiki Beach. He handed me an empty Smirnoff bottle we'd fished from a garbage can near the road. It was a pint bottle. I swam as far as I could and dove down and stuck the neck into the sand, and the bottle filled with sand and saltwater. I brought it back to Samuel Wesley, and the water was clear. I was not satisfied, and he wasn't either. I wanted to do that one thing for him. I wanted it to be true. I emptied the bottle, and I ran, swam further out into the deeper water that was the fantastic and magical blue.

j.lewis

Wharf Rope



Smoke Tree

First they were timidly bringing logs in shopping bags,
and then, little by little, they started coming to park
carrying transparent bags with kindling.
One man, who was buying from them,
was taking smoke tree over the border
and sold it there five times as expensive.
The married couple knew nothing about borders.
Their customers were elderly people
who were pushing wheeled shopping bags in front of them
They were saying that trees had been following them.
Medicinal trees grow there where the old people fall ill.
But smoke tree didn't grow in the town.
Does it mean the smoke tree was of no use
for the old people in town?
The married couple had no answer to this question.
"We're just selling smoke tree," they said.
The snow is sleeping in the park. December morning
Is turning out its pockets. And old people are sleeping
In their smelly rooms, while those
Luckier ones are no longer there. With iron fingers
The woman is taking off snow from heaped smoke trees, like
A wrinkled bed sheet. Street lamps are blinking,
Memories grow on leaves that are still holding on the branches.
The man is looking at the leaves. It appears that the leaves
Are trying to say something to him, but the man doesn't understand.

Deborah Liss-Green

Insect Lore

Hold a miracle in your hands, the ad said.

Then the larvae arrive.

The children— who were ugly too, once—

Pointy-headed, alien, and spastic,

Are a bit grossed-out and we laugh.

Sliced oranges will delight your new arrivals!

Like the children, they eat all the time.

Sucking the sweetness provided.

Your patience and care will pay off!

The little ones morph, grow and push against their confines.

Suddenly orange and black and splendid they tear at my heart,
begging

For release and other sweets and when we open the door,

They flutter, and then as we squint and cheer, they fly.

The future generations of your butterflies will return

and you will enjoy

Their summertime visits for years to come!

Yes, they will return, the children's children.

They will flit by our pool, barely noticed by all but one who hatched

Their ancestors one sweet summer gone.

Jacob Butlett

Bestiary

observations based on memes

I. Two Deer Stuck in a Barred Fence

we watch them dangle
like new locks speckled white, like
kids with fresh bruises

II. Brown Cow at the Beach

brown cow gazing at
lonely seaside waves today,
I know how you feel

III. Canadian Squirrel in Front of the Camera

you are a mirror:
the world is looking at you
looking at ourselves

IV. Mad Cat at the Table

you frown at me, blue
eyes dreaming of better days...
you make me hopeful

V. Honey Badger in the Wild

he chases snakes and
eats honey from frantic hives
because he lives free

Bruce McRae

Harm's Way

The little town of Harm's Way,
an accident waiting to happen,
a place between other places.
Downwind from the reactor.
Downstream from the munitions factory.
Where the devil visits
on his hard earned holidays.
Where the knife-thrower retired.

All my so-called life I've been walking
its reddened streets and blackened alleys.
A man with an edge running through him.
A man looking for something he hopes not to find.
A danger to himself and others.
The groom wedded to dissolution.

Bruce McRae

In The End Is Our Beginning

The man who murdered God.
The woman who reinvented Death.
Two lovers at the edge of the world,
walking past the last tree in a forest of fire,
strolling over the powdered glass of fallen cities,
our solar system cannibalized,
the moon crumbled, the stars gone awry.

Love, but a love at the end of the Earth,
the anti-Adam and ultimate Eve
cast back into a dilapidated paradise, a garden
once lush but now a foreboding wasteland,
the sun a fruit withering on the vine,
the two lovers embracing in age,
then, the cessation of all time...

Gwendolyn Joyce Mintz

Chained



Granny's Bag of Cool Clothes

So, I was age 13 years, summertime, and working for my dad's company in the headquarters' trailer in what is now Century City, CA. My job was to operate the PBX telephone switchboard. Yes, it was that long ago. I loved plugging a cable in a connection hole and saying, "Good morning, George A. Fuller Construction Company, how may I help you?" Because my dad's position was the project manager, the higher-ups in the company placed football players to work on the building construction and some of their children in the office. One of the players, Pete Bethard, was a handsome man, placed there with other teammates to build muscles and keep in shape over the summer months. To this day, I'll watch a USC football game just because they were superheroes to me that summer.

Just one other daughter was sent to work in the trailer office that summer. She was 16, and in my eyes, the epitome of 1962 cool with her perfectly coifed bouffant hair, Cleopatra eye makeup, matching sweater and skirt, and the coolest shoes worn with nylon stockings! She lived in Beverly Hills and arrived each morning in a very snazzy car, her car. She did filing and some typing and had a sweet disposition. Her father told my father that she was not to have contact with the football players ~ and she didn't.

By the end weeks of the summer job, the cool teen from Beverly Hills promised me her *old clothes*. The thing is, they were hardly ever worn, very expensive, and she said that she always got rid of her clothes at the end of summer to buy new styles for fall. WAS I THRILLED, HAPPY, EXCITED? My mom, an excellent seamstress who looked at styles and then made her patterns and sewed beautiful, stylish clothing, was my clothing rack

supply. She did all the choosing as our family budget was not ready for stylish, off the store rack clothing. The clothing was to arrive in bags the following Monday. All weekend I styled my hair, applied forbidden makeup I bought with babysitting dollars and hid in the lining of the very cool purse my Gram gifted me for Christmas. I was going to be the talk of my life, just as I was in my dreams.

Monday arrived, and I was the only daughter in the office. The same happened for the next two weeks. She never stopped by as she promised, but because I wanted to believe her, I still envisioned her parking her snazzy car and pulling out bulging bags of beautiful clothing that would be mine, top quality, off the Beverly Hills boutique racks clothes. Fall arrived. Back to school.

Eighth grade and I signed up for home economics where I learned to sew and made an ill-constructed, princess-style dress, but I wore it because it was a great material and in style. Ninth grade, tenth grade, and then a move to the Caribbean, and me still thinking the other daughter would arrive with bags of cool clothes. Over three thousand miles away and I always thought I'd see her snazzy car drive up and deliver the promise. Because after all, aren't promises supposed to be pinky finger facts?

Nearly a half-century later and a daughter-in-law arrived with two over-stuffed bags of clothing from the eldest granddaughter for the youngest granddaughter. As I passed by the bags awaiting the youngest granddaughter after school, I smiled through tears because the bags of cool clothes finally arrived without even a hint of a promise because they were passed on with love and honor.

Drew Písarra

Why Does Herr R. Run Amok

Run, run, run, run, run, run, run, run, run.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Why, why, why, why, why, why, why, why.

I can see my life pass right before my eyes
but you'll see yours pass before yours first.

Sorry, not sorry. / Same.

And now the director's cut...

HOLY

EVIL

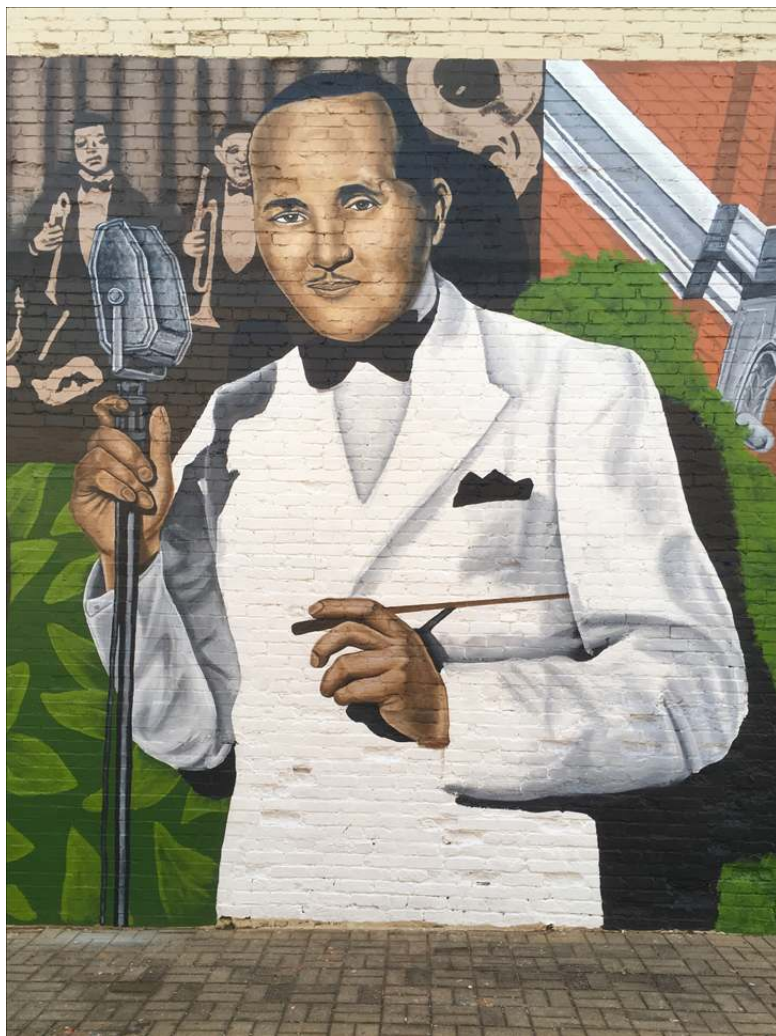
FUGLY

and how the last time those three words
came together, the sky rained pig's blood.

P.S. You said it was delicious!

Chris Johnson

Fletcher Henderson



Whity

I suppose I could write about my dog
As the ultimate servant
A kind of imbecilic helpmate
Who wants to please me
While remaining on all fours.

I don't know if such devotion is admirable
Or despicable. It makes me uncomfortable
Because it comes out of nowhere.
Unconditional love in my book
Is a kind of pitiable ideal,
Attained by the already dead.

People say having a dog is like
Having a perfect child,
One of those lovable cling-ons
Who teach us that affection
Has just as much weight as intellect.
That's no lesson to snub.

He's certainly eager to lick me.
He's always happy to see me.
He's insistent about being petted,
His prompting paws unclipped
And sharp as if he thought he must hurt me
To get my love.

How'd he guess I was so closed off
When he still can't figure out how to push
Open a partially closed door?

He doesn't know many tricks.
In fact, he only knows one.
The rest is just following commands
And a few other words that he's learned
On his own.

Like Sit.
Down.
Wait.
Come.
Up.
Treat.
Leash.

Plus there's "Partner" which means
Go to my left side
And "Other side" which basically
Means the same thing.

gold pen

george is gone for good they say
did his thirty years and retired
didn't complain much either
about having nothing to do
after, i mean

george was made to stand up
walk to the front of the room
shake the hand of the c.e.o.
and smile like he meant it
and say a word to two

he made it just two: "thank you"
as they handed him his prize
for hard work, for dedication
for not making their jobs harder

it was a finely crafted thing
that lay gleaming in a walnut box
it looked so fine, so fancy
that george cracked a real grin
though all of us knew
he really doesn't write much

me, i've got another five years
before i catch up with george
and having watched the show once
i am convinced of this, for certain
i could do without the ceremony
but I sure could use that pen

Alvaro Sanchez

Smile Now, Cry Later



j.lewis

what does a child know of grief

when her sense of object permanence
still makes her blink in dull surprise
when the ball disappears behind your back
and reappears in the other hand
what does she know of where it was
the whole time, when it wasn't anywhere

when his bike is left unlocked
despite a thousand tired warnings
and he walks out to get on it
and, well, it is gone. vanished
but he understands object permanence
this child of six wise years
who knows everything and nothing
except that his bike is somewhere
he just doesn't know where

what do they feel, these children
whose love is not yet big enough
to know it even exists beyond this moment
whose sense of loss is tethered
to the ball they can't see
the bicycle no longer there
the buried shiny box

i remember this, with few details
that when my friend robert and a rifle
accidentally got together
i was eight years old
and the only grief i knew
was the piercing pain
of seeing so many people
in one small chapel
washing a closed coffin
with a river of endless tears

The Good Scribe

The scribe had loved the young prince since birth. He had taught him how to read the first eternal word, which was apple, a sign of disobedience, the forbidden, the beautiful sweet, painful knowledge of things to come. It may not really have been the apple, but down through the centuries it had always thought to have been the apple.

The young boy lay side by side with the young prince, happily reading, and because he was the only one allowed to teach and play with the prince, they became the closest of friends.

They grew up together, sat in the same classes and were offered the same sweets and candies for lunch and recess. They were an odd pair. The young, fair handsome prince with lips as red as forbidden apples and the young scribe who was just beginning to learn the power of language, teetering on his weight with eyes as large as an odd toad. He missed nothing; he said nothing but wrote everything he observed in his diary of notes. He was destined to be a scribe as the prince was destined to be king.

They grew up, still close though differing in interests. The prince pursued horses and women. The scribe read books, entered the domain of political journalism and was immediately the prince's adviser. Everything would have been alright. They had always been friends but there was one glaring fault. The prince threw a fit whenever his desires were not met. The scribe tried to advise him as he ought to do for the sake of the country. But the prince went on to behead each and every one who contested him. All were killed except for his friend, the scribe. Ultimately, as he kept advising the prince, the scribe realized that his friend's patience with him was beginning to get thin. The scribe's patience with the prince was thinning as well. At one point in time he became mad with futility and stormed out of the prince's

office in resignation. The prince called for him to come back but his words simply echoed in the halls of the palace with his retinue of mute guards who stared into space, not speaking a word or expressing a sign of emotion. It was only the scribe who could meet him head on, who had the freedom to love him and tell him with all transparency how to rule the land. After leaving the palace, the scribe feared for his life and had to run away towards exile, north to cool his pen.

In the north, he entered a well-respected newspaper and began his love letters towards the prince whom he left in the deserts of the Middle East. He asked for reforms, no more, no less.

Also, the scribe fell in love with a lovely young doctor who accepted the fact she would never see his country, the prince her fiancée so loved and the people he loved more than the prince. One day, he knelt on one of his thick knees and popped open a box with a gold band in it.

On the happiest day of his life, they stood together in a chapel before a priest who was to marry them when a group of men burst inside the church and started strafing the inside with long guns killing all of the guests they had inside with them. Then the leader came forward. The scribe covered his fiancée and he was quartered to pieces before her.

When they left, his fiancée pulled the pieces of the scribe inside a sack and dragged it to her car and left the crest of the hill where the chapel was situated.

In the Philippine Islands there was rumored to be a sewer of body parts who could heal them by applying the right ointments from a pond she had behind her hut. She was a weaver of *sinamay* and wove for the scribe a white wrap which she wound and wound about him keeping him together with a fusion of mud from her pond and a choice of crushed flowers to attach him together. A wise owl helped with the wounding of the flaxen wrapper. The

weaver was covered from her head to her face and her whole body which was clothed in black. She had a wooden woven jar of fish behind her back for she had just been fishing her meal for the day.

The fiancée of the scribe knew of her from rumors which she never ignored, for she was always the one to know that science was still incomplete and that someday science and God would meet and they would all fathom the mysteries of the universe. For now, she could only begin with faith and a clear belief that her fiancée would live to tell the tale of the prince who had him killed.

Over the night, the weaver kept him wrapped and sunk beneath the mud inside the gnarled old cavity of a tree. They stayed about it and kept vigil with candles and flower offerings.

Soon the sun rose and the weaver pulled the wounded body of the scribe, silvery, beneath the light of dawn.

With a short knife, the weaver cut open the wrapping until he was fully revealed though still immobile. The doctor gasped recognizing a baby who was turning gray because it couldn't breathe. She lifted him to her chest and kissed him with passion on the lips. Soon, the scribe was puttering and coughing a green mucous substance which they wiped from his mouth.

More like comrades and lovers, they kissed and embraced. Back north, the scribe married his fiancée in a most secret ceremony. He went on to write about what the prince did on his wedding day. He was able to trace the line of command back to the prince to whom he had done nothing but give advice on how to govern his country.

The prince stood in the international court of law to be fully judged while the people eyed the scribe with the stiches running in his body and his large, gouging eyes that never missed a thing.

Chris Johnson

Mobil Home



Yi-Wen Huang

G-Town

New Mexican Chicken Fajita
Sopapillas in Jerry's Café for the first time
Handmade tortillas from Glenn's Bakery
Best baguette and green chili bagels I ever had in the Silver Stallion
from a Jewish baker
Too bad it was closed
Everyone here told me to go to Earl's, but I never did
Instead I went there to see the Native-made jewelry outside
Navajo tacos
Frybread with pinto beans, ground beef, some lettuce and sprinkles
of cheese on top
Chili Factory: authentic Navajo beef stew

The train, the huge noise at midnight before I went to bed
but you can take the train to LA overnight
Historical Route 66, Europeans driving motorcycles across the
American Southwest
Broken glass everywhere in the desert beside Armand Ortega
Shiny crystal ball in the desert sky but not a disco ball
I saw suspicious thieves with sharp eyes standing outside Safeway
with leather gloves on
looking at the vehicles in the parking lot
Hubby's Buick *Lesabre* lost 3 hub caps within the first two years
Glonnies, walking toward you asking for money outside Safeway or
burritos in the Taco Bell drive thru
Drunk drivers and passed out glonnies laying outside on the ground
on the weekend
Ditch Patrol
Only one radio station playing pop music
the morning show is not even local
Country music club, the Shalimar, the only night club here

Navajo ceremonies from Navajo creation myths,
singing and praying for a better life
better weather and more produce

The Four sacred mountains
Four directions
East, South, West, North
Four colors
Four times of day
Four seasons
Four phases of life
For walking in beauty
A cycle

Navajo and New Mexican Spanish
You can hear both languages
Navajo language is still spoken in stores in town or on the
reservation about 25 miles away
You can see billboards with *Yá'át'ééh*, which means hello,
written on them
Once you arrive in town

Richmond Adams

Quest for Moby Dick

Truth be told, friends, students, comrades, fellows,
I am not a poet.

I knoweth little and understandeth less about rhyme,
meter, feet (no socks, sandals or sandals with socks)
and other apparently generic conventions of the poetic
way.

Still, free verse allowed, or so I have heard it called, has
its way into recesses.

Playground, kickball, sixth grade, Grassland Soul and
Self.

So I take fingers to keyboard (needs yet again to be typing),
usher forth idea or--perhaps--

two from labyrinthine sub, un or preconscious somewhere: no plan
in mind, just free

flowing words, listen for them, see them as fingers key onto page.
Words that flow

listening for stop: stop at red.

More sixth grade, not seventh, eighth or ninth, recess stuff. Mr.
Hare, RIP.

Mr. Cole, scary, kind and remembered. 42 years, 1973-1974.

Truth be told, I am not a poet. Who cares?

Words are human, and I am I.

Alyssa Harmon

john 14:27

god is sitting there waiting for me to come home
like my mom used to do when i was a teenager
trying to sneak in after curfew at 3 a.m.
except i can't decide if i actually want to go home

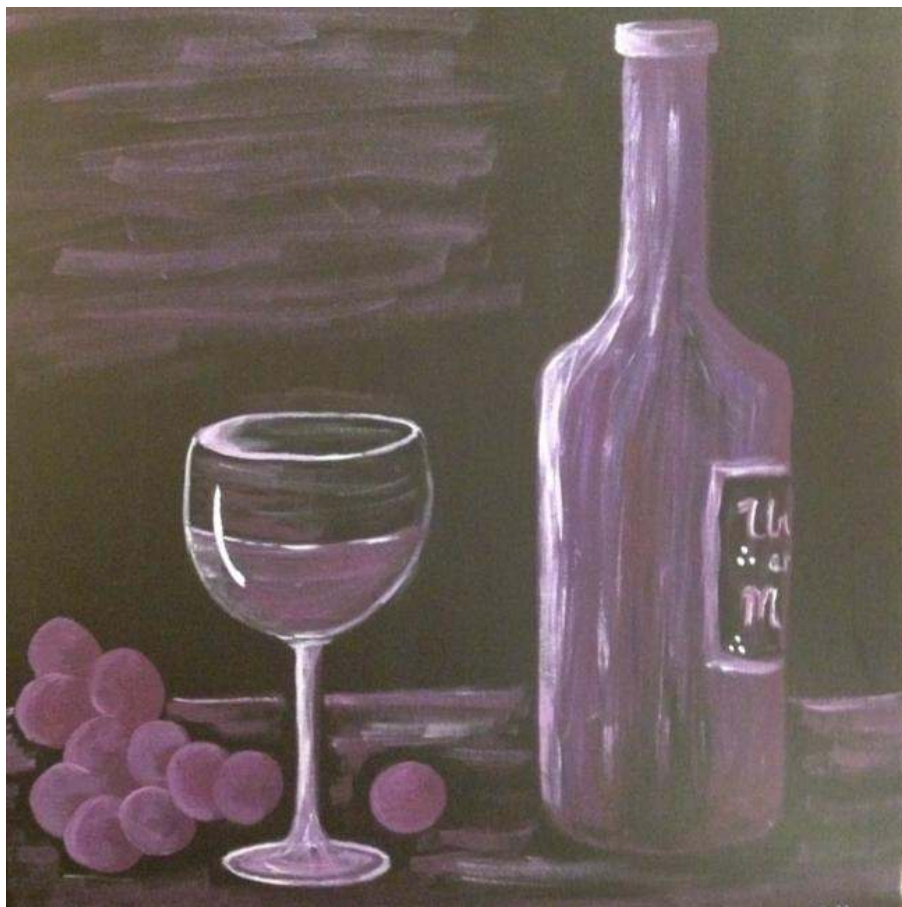
Alyssa Harmon

they all fall down

hallelujah comes on
in the store; she
sinks to the
dirty ground and
cries like some-
one played jenga
with her feelings
and they just pulled
the wrong
block.

Amanda Knight

Wine and Art



Molded

The vacant void of a Father: some lose their Father to an unexpected death or when the father loses his battle with his worst enemy of all, himself. My story starts where every story starts, at birth. Growing up, I was often described as many things but one of those sayings stuck with me throughout, "He's troubled, if he keeps on he'll never amount to anything." The base of my story and impact early on started at the murky and rough root.

I was a young African American in a small country town called Ailey, GA. My home was a small mobile trailer on acres and acres of land and towering trees with no neighbors within three miles. I relatively stayed to myself, playing with my toys and sometimes playing football with my older brother. We fought a lot, which caused me to be more distant. I really looked more and more to go to school but with that came problems.

The town was based on local racism which ran deep in the bloodlines of the families there. Not understanding one of the major problems in the community, I was often confused. I can recall on a sunny spring day, with the sticky sunbeams prickling my skin, I was talking to one my crushes at my school with a grim look on her freckled face. She looked concerned me and bittered my mood. I asked her, "What's on your mind?" She gazed in my soul window and I gazed into hers. Then, the unfiltered statement came out suddenly, "My parents said I can't be friends with the colored people....."

My heart dropped but I didn't question her; I don't know why. I responded with "Ok" and strolled away from her across the sandy playground that would be the last time I would talk to her. Later, when I returned home, the questions rung in my head but an unexpected one arose. I thought about when she said "My parents..." I thought, "What would my parents think?"

I went up to my mum and asked: "Since you're a parent, what would your input on some saying that they can't be friends with someone of color?" She gave me her input and it stuck with me, but what she said next struck me, "You can ask your mum next week that same question when she comes down here." For the first time in my childhood, I raised the question of "Where are my parents if they are not here?" To my astonishment, my aunt gave me the rundown on my shaky beginnings and that my mother, the woman I thought was my aunt, was in Atlanta going to school and making a way to provide for me and my brother.

Then the news of my dad hit me. I learned that he was in prison: a vacant void in my future home with my mom, brother, and me. The biggest vacant void took place in my heart, knowing that my dad was not here with me, and not here with his son teaching him the things that a father should be teaching his son. The news of my father didn't sit well with me; but, for some reason, the feeling of being mad didn't drench me.

The feeling was rather a rich lather of questioning and confusion. My aunt ended the conversation by telling me, "Be patient Tariq. Your Mom will explain it all to you next week." The urge to know why he was in prison drilled my head for days leading up to my Mom's arrival and then before I knew it, the day was upon me like a flashing neon sign. The Sun transitioned through the window of my silent home and crisped my face to greet me on another breezy morning. My aunt informed me that my mother was pulling up right as I slipped on my crocs and made my way to the kitchen in search of some food.

I made a U-turn from the kitchen, opened the door, and eased my way down the steps. My Mom slid out of the ruby car and, to my delight, I was introduced to her wide and glowing smile, along with my favorite flaky chicken biscuit. An hour passed and it was filled with catching up on what was going on in our distanced lives.

Then the feeling came over me, the feeling that triggered and tormented me leading up to this day. I popped the question without hesitation, "Why is Dad in jail?"

My Mom's facial expression seemed to melt from a smile to a frown. After a long standstill of silence, she finally spoke. She informed me that one cold night, months after I was born, my Dad's life would change forever. He and a couple of friends decided to rob a corner store. In the process of the robbery, my Dad was the driver. After the task of collecting the money was done, he sped away from the scene. A high-speed chase was in effect and the aftermath all ended with the termination of a stable future.

My Dad was charged with robbery and was sentenced to thirteen years in prison. The sad nature of the situation didn't make me bitter toward him. The feeling of not knowing was finally over. At first, I thought it was kind of cool that I had a Dad that was in prison. But, I realized my Dad couldn't teach me what other dads teach their sons at a young age. I soon felt as if it was the right time to go and visit him in prison, the "cell building" I called it.

The visit was a traumatizing event for me given the fact that it was the "First" for a couple of things. This was the first time I would see my Dad's face, this was my first time stepping in a prison, and I declared that would be the first and last time I would be in a prison. The stale air and echoing sounds of inmates slurring inhumane words were not welcoming. As we made our way to the center of the prison café, I could see from a distance the pain on the inmate's faces. Years of pain in this place, bondage by the thick grey parallel bars.

With my aunt leading the way, she suddenly came to a stop and greeted a fairly dark man; the dark man was my dad. His sacred skin and bulging eyes captivated me. I was upon him, my vacant father. He led the way by talking to me and getting to know me, like he should have. After the questioning died down, I found myself resting my head on the cold steel table thinking about

what lay ahead for in my future. My Dad messed up my train of thought by saying, "Sorry."

My dad apologized for not being in my life and not being the man he knew he could be. He then caught me off guard by saying, "Tell your Mom I'm sorry." After a long silence, we went our separate ways. From that day forward, I changed the way I handled myself. My dad taught me that I needed to be better than him. Caged and held by bondage, the sight of bars reminds me of the position my Dad was in. They humble me; they make me think before I act so I will never be in a position to be a slave, a slave to a cell.

Shalom Aranas

The Last Alchemist

I missed out
on the heart
of who you are.
The way you
nobly revealed what you know
as an alchemist,
at heart. I did
not pay attention,
hearing only the sound of my voice
asking you something
you were already answering
how you could mix two elements
to produce an elixir of explosion
in my heart,

drawing me to an addiction
to the golden sands
of the desert
I once cursed as the
house of dissidents
of the world.

After Listening to “Mad About You” (by Sting)

Are you truly mad?
Once you snipped your bridal gowns
in a show to reveal how
much you hated me.
Bridal gowns of deep indigos
and sunny marigolds
you sell in racks you so
delicately sew for your clienteles,
all for me?
Are you truly mad?
The song repeats
vanity and ambition
perhaps you are in that tract

and I remind you of
something you cannot grasp
except in the physicality
of fabrics, your imagination
come to life, unlike my words
that flow like a wedding train
of watered lace.
Dearest sister,
we eddy in the same
estuary. There is no
difference, no shame
so why do you hate
me so much?

Mikayla White

Self-Portrait



Mark A. Fisher

lichen

I am lichen
gray and green
the itch of stones and trees
un-fazed by mere time
that withers flesh
and bone
and the ghosts
of forgotten monsters
slain by gods
and demigods
also forgotten
like memories
of monotony
indivisible
bound in symbiosis
with the stories
true or otherwise
I believe about myself

Losing My Best Friend

Losing my brother and knowing he's never coming back again is the worst feeling I had to deal with all on my own. Losing him was like the devil throwing me in hell and telling me I'll never leave. Losing my brother and having people in my ear telling me everything was going to be just fine wasn't good enough because they never experienced that feeling. He was the only sibling on my mother's side and my best friend. We had an unbreakable bond until someone changed that.

On June 6, 2012 someone did the most hateful thing to my brother that anyone could ever think of, which changed my viewpoint in life. Although my younger brother and I were nine years apart, we were still very close. We shared so many memories together, such as reading him his favorite bedtime story, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?* I enjoyed taking him to daycare every morning, being able to call him a loving baby brother, and just always being there for him except for the day someone took his life away. I'll always miss dropping him off to Ajeenah's Daycare every morning with its thick strawberry scent. We took so many photos together, shared silly moments, and got in trouble for always doing outrageous things. We made so many memories at home playing in our 80-acre yard. He was a younger version of me in my eyes, but now he's my hero and the best person to ever come into my life. I wish I could hear his soft tender voice again and I could become the best sister all over again. I'll always miss his hugs and kisses he used to give me every night especially with his soft as a feather touch.

In 2012, in the month of June, I lost my favorite little guy when he was accidentally left sleeping inside a heated car by a family friend. I was even more devastated when I found out she placed my brother's body inside a garbage bag before throwing him into a river. I remember

getting snatched out of the AAU basketball game and being rushed into the red Toyota Camry that I came in. I would have never imagined something like that happening to anyone so close to me. My brother was one of the sweetest kids someone could ever meet; he was always smiling and being very independent.

The hardest part for my family and I to get over was that it took months to find his body in the river. The river was located near a lot of trees and a brown wooden deck where people could stand to see a lot of scenery. My brother's killer was on the run for months as well until she was finally caught and got sentenced to life in prison. She was an African American that stood 5'10" tall and was born in the city of Savannah, GA. My parents won't accept what my brother had to face at a young age alone, but they still want him back in our lives until this day. I wished the death penalty upon my brother's killer many nights while I was crying and facing the situation alone. She literally took my only best friend away from me before he was able to explore the real world and do great things in life.

I was the most hurt not being able to see my brother for the last time at his funeral. I heard rumors that my brother was so deformed and unrecognizable. Everything hit me hard when I looked at his closed casket and wasn't able to see his face for the final time. It still bothers me because I wanted to give him one final kiss on his nice, soft brown-skinned cheek. At his funeral, the navy blue casket with a photo of him on top tore my heart into pieces. I remember yelling and asking God, "Why did you take my best friend away from me?" I still have yet to receive answers to this day. I broke down and was helpless the entire day with salty tears falling into my mouth and my hands as I wiped my face every few seconds. I hope she regrets killing my innocent brother because she forced a different type of hurt on me that I never want to experience again. The hurt of losing my best friend is worse than someone stabbing me with a

knife in my back because I still have a chance to come back to life, but he never will.

My brother's death affected me as crazy thoughts flew through my head and I asked God why he chose my brother and not me. After I lost my brother, there were plenty of nights I wished I could've left the world and not him. I remember his death with a teddy bear that he loved to sleep with every night that I gave him at his first birthday party that was held at Chuck E Cheese. His teddy bear kept me together some nights as I held it as if it were him lying down next to me. I still have moments when I go into my door room and vent to the teddy bear, as well hoping I can almost hear his laughter from it. His teddy bear also keeps me strong because if I push against the bear's stomach, I can hear my baby's brother voice inside. The recording inside of the bear says, "I want to be a superhero one day and save my family;" it is the sweetest voice anyone could ever hear.

I would have preferred to be the one gone since I have already lived for eighteen years, rather than him only being here for three. We shared the promises of always being there for each other and never leaving each other's side. I feel as if I let my brother down and broke one of our promises because I wasn't there for him when he lost his life and was thrown into a river. As an innocent kid, my brother didn't deserve any of the harm that he had to face at the age of three-years-old. Due to the pain that he felt on that day, I was hurt and it stills get to me because he looked up to me and I was his role model. I had to take counseling weekly due to how hard I took my brother's death. When I lost my brother, I just wasn't the same LaNaya anymore. Losing him put me at a breaking point because I ended up shutting down completely. My trust wasn't there anymore when it came to family and friends because of my brother's killer being very close to my family.

Losing my little brother has showed me so much within these past few years as far as pushing myself and doing everything to make him proud. Knowing that he's

watching over me now is very hurtful, but I can still think about the good times that the both of us shared together. My brother's death can't get in the midst of the goal I'm aiming for because he wouldn't want to see me down. My best friend's death is now my motivation that keeps me going daily to keep a smile on his face while he's looking over me.

Regret

It takes me in and swallows me whole
deeper into the world of unknown.
I'm drowning
in the thoughts of what if's and
what could have been,
if I was there to Hold
your hand through the journey of life's end.
I did not call
that was the worst mistake.
I hope you forgive me
for my soul's sake.

The hand of regret
is keeping me under
this is my punishment from him
over the yonder.

I cannot do anything but take the cards I have been dealt.
I am drowning and I am the cause.
I just wish I could go back
and change it all.
Maybe then
I would have called.

Wheels at the Mall

Kiddie rides shine like walls of candy
in a market checkout line.

Dashboard screens mimic sights
and sounds of NASCAR and tractor,
Corvette, fire engine, ice cream truck.

Mothers in a rush have tugs
of war with tots and some fold,
and then collapse on benches,
yet alert as traffic cops.

All vehicles vacant, a power lifter
looking mid-teen takes the cue
to impress his giddy little brother.

Free of charge he handles each replica
with quakes, rumbles, rocks and shakes
adds rhythmic engine revs,
purrs as well as traffic clatter.

He tries but fails to spin the isle
into a makeshift carousel.

A senior welded to a wheeled walker
gets a kick out of the sibling larceny
and risks a spill saluting them.

Young moms parade and navigate
strollers and prams hoping
their infants turn out better.

Others as helpless as babes

are on wheels too, in caregiver
hosted transit: stunted, kinked
and faulty limbs, necks and spines,
tilted heads, ticked and misaligned
faces but eyes that seem
unscathed that must marvel
at big brother's strength
and dexterity and don't they fancy
they are aiding and abetting?
Who's to argue?
Especially when Hercules
senses security closing in.
Popping the kid from the Vette
as if it's crashed and burning
he tucks his charge under arm.
Speedy as a brazen thief
his only regret
no time to take a bow.

Chris Johnson

Magnolia Alley



Brandon Marlon

Remembrance

Soldier, solitary in the gloom of your room
with a .45 fixed under your chin, stand down.
Soldier, replace the safety where it belongs.
Soldier, repatriated yet still war's prisoner, cease fire.
Soldier, your next battle has begun, with the enemy within.
Soldier, buckling under the weight of memory,
lost in trauma and grief, haunted and hurting,
burdened with guilt, weary of life, persevere
through soldier's heart, shell shock, combat fatigue.
Soldier, whose mind reels on endless replay, respire.
Soldier, let the noise and imagery flash by; these too shall pass.
Soldier, sob as much as you need to then some more;
let your tears flow like fine wine from its bottle.
Soldier, for whom the hours lour, outpour your pain
in words and purge all that consumes you.
Soldier, wounded warrior, your loved ones are nearby
and your neighbors stand by you.
Lean on your brothers- and sisters-in-arms, soldier;
they know best what you went through.
Soldier, let your pets save you; they sense your sorrow.
Soldier, fighting for survival, never, never, never surrender.
You may not get closure, soldier, but you will find peace.
Soldier, take this hand, all these hands, and rise to attention,
that together we might amputate the anguish.
Soldier, those who sent you salute you.
Soldier, we honor your service and sacrifice.
Soldier, remember that you are unforgotten.
At ease, soldier. At ease.

Weltschmerz

A storm of thoughts gusts the mind
routinely as we eyeball telecasts, the news
ever breaking, never mending,
with headlines and images instilling
existential fatigue, renewing sorrow
for already assailed souls.

Granted, we don't view the entire picture,
yet how can we forgive God for granting us
not just free will but free rein,
at the same time imbuing us with
a pronounced proclivity for evil?

We creatures can't control ourselves,
and our Creator is hands-off by nature,
unwilling to superintend. In this way
innocents suffer and injustice prevails,
with rare exceptions evoking wistful sighs.

Those who would dispel weariness
and cleave to hope are left to step
forward and fill the breach, becoming
the change they wish to see, filling the void
with kindness, compassion, healing, peace.

Death Legacy

My grandmother was the most morbid example of thanatomania that ever existed in the history of my family. She opened her cedar chest upon each visit of her grandchildren, extracted her Last Will and Testament drawled upon tissue thin parchment that crackled, and upon which turquoise ink bled. First, she unburied The Will from under a flimsy shirt box which contained her turquoise negligee she told us she was to be buried in—all five of her granddaughters and singular grandson nodded agreement each time. The bottom layer contained photo albums marked with each child's name. She handpicked which snaps of memory would be mine one day. She leered over the paper to see who would rally for certain pieces of her jewelry. When she finally passed away, I got her crystal candlesticks and prioritized what jewelry I wanted from a similar photo album—one turquoise necklace and two sets of turquoise earrings were my morbid inheritance. It is understandable how my grandmother became obsessed with her own death.

Her mother Ruby died on January 12th in 1980. I was four-years-old when my great grandmother passed away. The East Bay of California seeped with fog when my dad, her grandson, travelled from Oakland Children's Hospital where his newborn son, my brother Andrew, lay in the NICU not expected to live. He arrived one hundred miles away at her hospital room with Polaroids of Andrew, her first, and only, great grandson. The flesh of her breast rotted with cancer as she perched on death's shoulder. She prophesied to her grandson that she would die, and his son, her great grandson, would live, despite all indications to the contrary given Andrew's latest brain bleed. My dad left with the comfort of her promise in his pocket like a hanky and she passed away later that night; her great grandson lived.

My great grandmother Ruby was an active Baptist in her church. She taught Sunday school for forty years and her deceased husband was an Elder. Ruby's keen business mind led her to buy the building where she ran a daycare; women were determined and industrious on both sides of my family. On the day of her funeral, the building approached capacity with many of her former students and current daycare families. The Mortuary bustled with church members and expansive flower sprays.

Behind the sheer curtain shielding the attendees from seeing the mourning family, the view for kin was a preacher and casket profile. As the choir finished their last song, the preacher said, "Let us say our final words to Ruby." At that exact moment, a 5.2 earthquake buckled the sanctuary floor and a seismic wave rolled the casket platform. As it threatened to dump Ruby's body out of the casket, my grandfather bolted to stabilize the wooden coffin with all of his strength. The wall to the left of the family room rippled and my mom and dad ran out the door that led to the cars for the processional. As they looked up at the awning, they were sure the 1800's building was going to fall and kill everyone, but no one but my parents got up from their seats. However, the building did not fall and the ceremony was concluded with the following statement, "That was just like Ruby. She had to get the last word."

*

My own mother was five when her grandma died. Mabel Wadsworth had striking brown eyes that saw plenty in her life, especially from the high vantage point of a woman who stood at 5'9½." When Mabel looked down at the world, her view angled past her narrow nose and beyond her slender waist appointed in an elaborate gown. Her thick auburn hair waved in the wind if she didn't pin it up. She was a merchant's daughter born smack-dab in the middle of two other sisters. Mabel's father owned several properties including the

blacksmith's shop and the general store. He even donated a schoolhouse for the town's children. Mabel was disowned and forfeited her sizable dowry when my great grandpa Marion strolled into her small Kansas town, picked her off from her wealthy family, and proceeded to marry her.

Marion started making moonshine in the backwoods during Prohibition, selling it at poker games and by the railroad tracks. Marion's family, The Clark's, came from a long line of shysters and flim-flam men who knew how to coax a dollar out of a dime. It wasn't long before their moonshine was in high demand and Mabel's husband was gone for days at a time tending the still and meeting behind buildings on main street to peddle his little glass bottles. Marion began paying dues to the Masonic Lodge in town to keep the police off his back. His son Walt watched the still when Pops was away. Walt was supposed to lure any suspicious characters as far away from the still as possible until he could call for help.

Marion's momma Isabel came to live with them soon thereafter and was put in charge of paying the lodge dues that served as bribes. Instead, she pocketed the money from the very son who had taken her in, and he was swiftly arrested before Mabel could return from town to warn him. Isabel fled; Mabel was left alone with two small children and no crops or livestock except one milking cow and a solitary chicken.

Marion was tried right away and sentenced to ten years in jail. He was to be transferred the very next day to the state pen. Mabel knew no help from the lodge or her family was coming. She bunched up her sewing machine and quilts and loaded the buckboard with her children like families did when fleeing the Dust Bowl. She sat at the crossroads and pulled her wagon forward so that no one could pass. She trained her shotgun on the prison wagon as it approached. Mabel shouted to the driver, "I'll shoot you!"

The Sheriff stepped off the wagon and tried to talk her down, "Now, you don't want to do this. You'll go to jail."

Mabel looked back at her two hungry children in the wagon and said calmly to the Sheriff, "I think I'll shoot you first."

The Sheriff unloaded Marion from the wagon. As he looked Mabel in the eyes, he said, "I'll give you a two-hour head start."

Mabel and Marion Clark escaped with their two children. Walt was seven at the time and Elner was eight-and-a-half. They left behind their house with gravity-fed water from the creek, no electricity, and no way to keep their food cool. They hid in the carnival where Mabel ran a game with a roulette wheel encased in a wooden box lined with green velvet. Carnival patrons would pay for a chance for their numbered pocket to catch the ball. Mabel would flick a lever inconspicuously under the box to stop the wheel so that a win was rare.

I inherited the velvet-lined game and can still flick the rough plastic lever that Mabel sent away for in the mail. I even have the yellowed envelope that she must have ripped open when it arrived. Plastic was rare in 1931, but she was smart enough to know what she needed and how to get it. The game still spins and the lever still stops the wheel. However, the velvet is pocked with craters, perhaps from a hungry or cold mouse. I wondered what artifacts I would leave behind for my grandchildren.

Marion traded whiskey for hand-woven Indian blankets, pottery, and jewelry. He sold a few blankets to the Smithsonian, but his bartering skills mainly went towards setting up his Indian exhibit in the carnival. Marion displayed the artifacts on sawhorses covered with the blankets with a sign that read, "Genuine Indian Artifacts." Walt and Elner contributed to the exhibit by barking out front to lure in unsuspecting passersby looking for cheap entertainment.

Mabel also used the children in her carnival glass booth. Walt was in charge of greasing up the dishes so the coins would slide right off. During the carnival off-season, they wintered in Arizona or New Mexico. They used this down time to make tramp art as prizes for their games. This family legacy is not something I'm proud of, but I have to imagine they were forced to do unimaginable things to feed their family.

After two years they were forced to quit traveling with the carnival when Walt and Marion contracted rheumatic fever. They took the dilapidated trailer they had been living in and parked it at a relative's house in California. They signed up for welfare and Marion would grab a Bible and set up on street corners to coax money out of believers to make ends meet. After three years, with Walt and Marion working as a team to set up fights for money and Mabel and Elner collecting bets in the crowd, they bought the apartment building where they lived. Marion started a janitorial company and his fighting skills helped him unionize the janitors. They always had their eye out for the ever-changing game of quick money. Walt grew up, married my grandma Val Jean right out of high school, and had three kids of their own to support.

Mabel passed away about a week before Christmas in 1959. She and Marion were traveling by car from California to Oregon to visit their grandkids, my mom included, when they hit a patch of black ice. Mabel struggled with her seat belt and couldn't get it unbuckled as their car careened towards the guardrail and over the cliff. Marion tried to help her and she kicked him free of the car. He lived and she died; she saved him for a second time.

The day of Mabel's funeral was foggy and cold, much like the January chill set upon Ruby's internment day and my father's trip back to his son in the NICU. Isabel, Mabel's double-crossing mother-in-law who pocketed the dues from her son, showed up at the reception after the services. They lived in a well-

appointed home amongst a bourgeois social circle. Even though she was his Ma, Marion knew he must keep a close watch on her. He lost track of her in his grief shuffle of receiving guests and directing caterers. Marion asked his sister Bessie to look for their mother; Isabel was spotted on the back porch escaping with all of Mabel's furs and her mink stole.

Bessie told her Ma, "You go put it back," but Isabel kept moving towards the street. Bessie raced to tell her brothers of their mother's thievery.

Marion and his brother Frank met her at the front door. Uncle Frank grabbed the furs and stole from her hands as Marion said, "Ma, you didn't have to do this, today of all days." Frank brought the furs into the house through the back door and Bessie escorted Ma to her car.

I went to Isabel's one hundredth birthday party and sat on her lap as *The Stockton Record* snapped our picture for the cover of the Lifestyles section. As a child, I only had a vague understanding of what family legacy I would inherit. I learned from the strong matriarchs in my family that no matter what was taken from me by life, I could get it back as long as I wasn't afraid to die. I did inherit a love of firearms and an urgency to protect my family regardless of the consequences. I've not yet been forced to lie, cheat, and steal to feed my kids. I still know that I have enough carnie blood in me to do so. We keep forgiving in our family. But, we always have our eyes open, shotgun loaded, and never wear our seatbelt in the mountains.

Mikayla White

Extraplanetary



The Blessing of Forgetting

*Burned into the ridges of the human brain,
this centre of emotions, memory, and pictures.
Data coming up like on a computer screen,
fragments imprinted in the mind, agglutinated pain,
distressing recollections or a pleasant rhyme;
some come to the surface, spring to mind,
stay monolithic, overshadow, influence the time,
those, mercifully submerged in oblivion, left behind.*

Forgetting belongs to dough like yeast.
If we could not forget, we would be slaves of the past.
Some of my mementos are an ice-cold winter night
over dark steel factory outlines, a full moon – bright;
hand in hand with mother on empty streets,
destroyed houses, after a hellish rain of bombs
in war nights, only left as crater chains,
a smell of decay, time-dust washed into the drains.

Living in ruins, streets like dentures with missing teeth,
my parents, and me as an additional package,
unborn, duty unpaid,
to be delivered in the coldest month of the year.
Poverty unfelt, did not know anything else for two decades.
An empty tin as birthday present, a wooden stick,
the little drummer, pa rum pum pum pum.
Dead hare on a balcony wall, from which blood dripped,
eyes staring, a questioning glance at the sound of the drum.

Rubble pouring out of a collapsed building
like the guts spilling out of the dead cat on the debris,
lying on top of the broken bricks like a warning;
like a mourning of the dead, buried underneath, reduced to ash:
People who never came back to the light of the day.
Messed-up childhood, disturbed, until the end of my time.
We never forget wounds, exposed to a haunting memory
which never fades away.

Julia Wagner

My Mother, In a Photo

My mother, with dark hair and a smile,
is in a photo I found in my father's bed.
She is younger than me, drinking a beer.
Her skin is not the skin I know.

In the photo I found in my father's bed,
wedged into the cold iron springs,
her skin is not the skin I know,
her arms are tan in the dull bar light.

Wedged into the cold iron springs,
did my mother know she would end up here?
Her arms are tan in the dull bar light,
her back is not yet bent with fatigue.

How could my mother know she would end up here?
Hidden by my father, tucked away.
Her back is not yet bent.
Her hands are those of a daughter.

Hidden by my father, kept to himself,
in a room that is too cold for her,
her hands are those of a daughter.
I run my fingers over her hand.

In a room that is too cold for her,
she is younger than me, drinking a beer.
I run my fingers over her hand,
my mother, with dark hair and a smile.

Julia Wagner

Looking for Love in Strange Places

I looked for it
in the chiseled faces
of TV drama stars,
on the covers of romance novels.

Each night, I thought I might find it
under the tongues of girls.

I looked beneath my grandmother's
couch cushions, listened for it in the sound
of the sofa sliding on the wood floor.

I searched the pockets
of strangers on the street,
hunted for it in my reflection,
staring up at me from puddles,
rummaged in my purse,
scattering the contents onto the sidewalk.

I found it in my father,
dog in his arms, dancing
around the room to Frank Sinatra,
the dog's head thrown back,
saying, *this is pretty strange*
but it must be love.

Julia Wagner

Pearls

My mother is a pearl: soft eyed, luminous, rare. I want a string of her, repeated a hundred times, to wear around my neck and keep. I will thread the string through her inch by inch, quickly so the pain will be over. My mothers, in their pearl bodies, will be so cold at first but I will warm my hands under my shirt and hold them, squeezing gently and then clenching as my mothers rattle inside the balls, wanting air. *Shhh* I will say, like she did when I would cry at night, wanting to leave my bed but not allowed to roam alone in the dark. It will be dark inside their pearlskin but they will shed light, give me the brightness I've always wanted, they will shine white, like skin without blood, shine above my clavicle. In spaces carved just for them, the pearls can settle and stay, peek over the bone and watch the world through the milk of their eyes. My mothers will weigh nothing. I will fasten them around my neck and they will stay with me. I will feast on their light.

Sheri Michaels

Young Rebel



Contributors

Andrew College Students

Tar'iq Davis, Creative Nonfiction

Qrishna Dukes, Poetry

LaNaya El-Amin, Creative Nonfiction

Alvaro Sanchez, Art

Mikayla White, Art

Richmond Adams is an Assistant Professor of English at Northwestern Oklahoma State University and a former Andrew College faculty member. After eleven years in pastoral ministry as a younger man, he read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* as part of a class in the American Novel during the fall semester of 2001. Melville's struggle with the human condition led him toward a professorial life in the study, appreciation, and love of the connections between literature, history, and culture.

Shalom Galve Aranas is a freelance writer. She has been published in *The Blue Nib*, *Former People*, *Written Tales* and elsewhere. She is a loving, single mother of two. She is also fond of collecting found objects and is going to create something out of them someday.

Cherri Brown, BA Mount Holyoke College, Francis Perkins Scholar'01, Harry S. Truman Scholarship finalist, MBA New York Institute of Technology'06, and PhD Walden University'15, works as a Senior Doctoral Adjunct/Dissertation Chair, Adjunct Psychology Professor, Georgia State Mediator'73, Motivational Speaker, researcher, academic author, and freelance writer. Published, *Journal of Gerontology*. *Our Mothers in Us* and *Jockeying for a Position: When the Senior Class Graduates* are books currently in review. Dr. Brown resides in Fayetteville, GA.

Jacob Butlett (he/him) holds an A.A. in General Studies and a B.A. in Creative Writing. In 2017 he won the Bauerly-Roseliep Scholarship for literary excellence, and in 2018 he received a Pushcart Prize nomination for his poetry. Some of his work has been published in *The MacGuffin*, *Panoply*, *Cacti Fur*, *Rabid*

Oak, Gone Lawn, Word Fountain, Ghost City Review, Lunch Ticket, Fterota Logia, Into the Void, and plain china.

Penny Dearmin is an Assistant Professor of English and Humanities Division Coordinator. She holds an MFA in creative writing from Georgia College as the recipient of the Flannery O'Connor Scholarship. Her work can be found in *Exhume Literary Magazine, JuxtaProse Literary Magazine, Spire Light: A Journal of Creative Expression, Madcap Review, Vine Leaves Literary Journal, and Mom Egg Review*. Her most recent work is forthcoming in *Bodies of Words*, a photo and essay collection about writers, their tattoos, and their meaning.

Mark A. Fisher is a writer, poet, and playwright living in Tehachapi, CA. His poetry has appeared in: *Spectrum, Dragon Poet Review, Star*Line, Penumbra* and other places. His first chapbook, *drifter*, is available from Amazon. His second, *hour of lead*, won the 2017 San Gabriel Valley Poetry Chapbook Contest.

Alyssa Harmon's poems have been published in several print and online publications, including *Merrimack Review, Minerva Rising, Papercut Literary Journal, The Wild Word Magazine, Politics Letter: Car Poems, 30 N, Chomp: A Journal of Literature and Art, Cipher: The Semiotics of Love, Sexuality, and Desire and Desire, Shaking the Sheets Magazine, and Odet Journal*.

Dr. **Yi-Wen Huang** is from Taiwan and an Associate Professor of English and Linguistics at UNM-Gallup. She lived and attended universities in Long Island, NY, and Pittsburgh, PA. Her research focuses on language and affect. Her hobbies include zumba, winter hiking, spinning, thrift shopping, edm, and traveling as a foodie and tea aficionado.

Chris Johnson is Assistant Professor of Visual Art and Director of the Visual Arts Program. Prof. Johnson, a resident of South Georgia for most of his life, is a visual artist who typically works in the mediums of woodcarving, printmaking,

painting, drawing, and sculpture. In 2008, Prof. Johnson received his Masters of Fine Arts degree in Studio Art from Clemson University in Clemson, SC, with a focus in printmaking and a minor in drawing. Prof. Johnson developed a love for teaching artistic process and technique during his time as a graduate teaching assistant and continued to teach as an adjunct after graduating. In 2013, Prof. Johnson became an Assistant Professor and Director of the Visual Arts Program at Andrew College where he has begun to grow the visual art department into a regionally-significant program.

Professor **Amanda Knight** has taught at Andrew College since 1999, and she currently serves as the Coordinator of Program Development and Accreditation and Director of International Travel. Professor Knight enjoys travel, reading, gardening, and creating art--both painting and making pottery.

j.lewis is an internationally published poet, musician, and nurse practitioner. His poems have appeared online and in print in numerous journals from California to Nigeria to the UK. His first collection of poetry and photography was published in June 2016, and is available on Amazon. A chapbook "every evening is december" was published by *Praxis Magazine* in February 2018.

A New York City transplant who has been in SOWEGA for nearly twenty years, **Deborah Liss-Green** is Assistant Professor of Theatre at Andrew College, where she gets to wear many wonderful hats. One blessing of her newly empty nest is time and space for writing, the other love of her creative life.

Thomas M. McDade is a resident of Fredericksburg, VA and a graduate of Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT. McDade is a U.S. Navy Veteran serving ashore at the Fleet Anti-Air Warfare Training Center, Virginia Beach, VA and aboard the USS Mullinnix (DD-944) and USS Miller (DE/FF 1091). *Poetry Quarterly* recently published one of his poems.

Bruce McRae, a Canadian musician currently residing on Salt Spring Island BC, is a multiple Pushcart nominee with over 1,400 poems published internationally in magazines such as

Poetry, Rattle and the North American Review. His books are 'The So-Called Sonnets (Silenced Press), 'An Unbecoming Fit Of Frenzy' (Cawing Crow Press) and 'Like As If' (Pski's Porch), Hearsay (The Poet's Haven).

Brandon Marlon is a writer from Ottawa, Canada. He received his B.A. in Drama & English from the University of Toronto and his M.A. in English from the University of Victoria. His poetry was awarded the Harry Hoyt Lacey Prize in Poetry (Fall 2015), and his writing has been published in 275+ publications in 30 countries. www.brandonmarlon.com

Sheri Michaels is a photographer, graphic designer, and artist. She was involved in the art community in Iowa for over 25 years. Since moving to Cuthbert, Ga., in 2016, her body of work has continued to grow and evolve. Her photography and artwork has won local, regional and national awards and has been on exhibition as far away as Japan. Sheri Michaels is a graduate of Iowa State University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.

Gwendolyn Joyce Mintz is a writer and photographer.

Naida Mujkić (1984): Bosnian poetess. She holds a PhD in Literature. She was a guest artist at Q21 Museumsquartier Wien and Goten Publishing Skopje. She published 6 books of poetry.

James S. Owens received an MFA from Georgia College while studying the works of Flannery O'Connor in her hometown of Milledgeville, GA. Owens is a graduate of Auburn University and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Owens has published creative essays in *The Flannery O'Connor Review*, and his essay "Polaroid Angel" was awarded the Thomas H. Brown Prize for Creative Nonfiction in *Aura*.

Drew Pissarra's first book of poetry 'Infinity Standing Up' is slated for release by the small press Capturing Fire in early 2019. His book of short stories *Publick Spanking* was published

by Future Tense some time ago. He is also one half of the art installation duo Saint Flashlight (with Molly Gross) which finds unique ways of integrating poetry into public spaces, be that haiku on an abandoned movie marquee in Brooklyn or recorded verse accessed by a 'lost poem' hotline in Miami.

Julia Wagner is a poet and teacher. A Minnesota native living in Georgia, she spends her time playing her flute and trying new flavors of coffee. Much of her work is influenced by her upbringing in the Catholic Church. Her work has appeared in *Poetic Strokes*, *UW Flash Fiction*, and elsewhere.

Eduard Schmidt-Zorner is an artist and a translator and writer of poetry, crime novels and short stories. He is writing haibun, tanka, haiku and poetry in four languages: English, French, Spanish and German and holds workshops on Japanese and Chinese style poetry and prose. He is a member of four writer groups in Ireland and lives in County Kerry, Ireland, since more than 25 years and is a proud Irish citizen, born in Germany. He was published in 36 anthologies, literary journals and broadsheets in UK, Ireland, Canada and USA. Writes also under his pen name: Eadbhard McGowan

