Letter to the Reader

We have once again received some fine pieces of work, and all of us at NEXUS have been appreciative of the high-quality submissions sticking out of our “in” box. It is one thing to write or create something in private, but to let it loose in the midst of a cultural majority that does not care for poetry other than in song lyrics, or art other than music videos or baseball team logos requires a certain amount of insanity.

Jung, the controversial proponent of “archetypes,” has written that creative individuals are able to tap into the subconscious depths where lie the imagos, the symbols, of shared human experience. The successful artist is one who can hold communion with what is universal, then bring the tokens of his or her journey back to the conscious world, couching reality in the figurative. The literal mind is invited to transformation through this process. In short, it is the dynamic between our opposite tendencies (reason vs. imagination…Browns vs. Bengals), rather than one winning over the other, where we decide what we want to be. Art can be a part of that process.

The staff would like to thank the following individuals for their willingness to work for free: Jason Frisbie, Kyle N, and Beverly Smart.

SUBMISSIONS

Nexus publishes poetry, short stories, flash fiction, novel excerpts (that can stand alone), memoirs, photography, graphic prints, drawings, digital art, and paintings. Each piece is considered for its effectiveness in style, detail, mood, and content.

We are hoping to include a section where artists can reflect on the creative process. Those who wish to apply should include a short bio, contact information, a reflection on the creation of your submissions, as well as the submissions themselves.

Every submission should include a cover letter with the bio and the following contact information: artist’s name, address, e-mail address, and telephone number. The reflections on each piece, if applicable, should be attached to the relevant work. Submissions can be mailed to the office, but electronic submissions are the preferred format. E-mail submissions to WSU_nexus@yahoo.com. You can also submit electronically or read further guidelines at:

http://www.wright.edu/studentorgs/nexus/submit.html.

“You must keep sending work out; you must never let a manuscript do nothing but eat its head off in a drawer. You send that work out again and again, while you’re working on another one. If you have talent, you will receive some measure of success, but only if you persist.” ---Isaac Asimov

Don’t be afraid to . . .

SUBMIT!

the NEXUS staff
editor Jim Tarjeft
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copy editor Michael White
web editor Phil Estes
graphic designer David Kenworthy
faculty mentor Brady Allen
NEXUS-hosted poetry readings

held on the 2nd, 6th, & 10th week of each quarter
varied locations
free entry

Bring your POETRY, your PROSE, your HOMEMADE
EXPRESSIONS of the life you trudge through and battle with
every time you wake up and are drawn to a pen. Bring your
TEARS and your LAUGHTER and KICK DOWN THE
BARRIERS that separate you from the people around. Bring
YOURSELF.

Come to our poetry readings—a gathering of minds hell-bent
on finding a meaning in this haphazard mess we have learned
to accept as life. At the very least, come so that afterwards we
can all get together and acknowledge that at the very peak of
our efforts we will only scratch the surface of the very
complicated, the very unknown, the very essence that as
human beings we are forced to breathe in every day.

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The Hand I Lent You
Arthur Gottlieb

I never got back intact.
You put it in your pocket
and walked off. I had to
make do with a shabby stump.

I saw it once
hanging on a nail
in your garage, stiff
as a sweat-dried workglove.

When I reached to retrieve it,
you snapped at my fingers
with a pair of borrowed
hedge shears.

Finally, almost as a favor,
it was returned as a Christmas gift,
packed in reams of tissue paper,
all callused and creased,
the lifeline shortened prematurely,
and the abused knuckles knobby.

From then on it never fit
or felt quite right. I use it
sparingly now, mostly for counting
my chickens and blessings.

But in dreams it haunts me,
going for the throat,
bleeding like the paw
of a trapped animal
who gnawed himself free.
Descansos
Taylor Graham

All day I counted crosses on the highway shoulder, rising out of gravel or graved into arroyo. Crosses at each bend and switchback, every wavering of pavement into distance and mirage. White wooden crosses, or metal filigree with plastic roses. Rooted in earth and reaching for heaven, with arms extended wide to the twin horizons of past and future. Descansos, they call them here. Traveler’s rest at the end of someone’s journey. For each one, I slowed a little more, savoring sun-glare off hot asphalt, tasting my thirst, delaying my arrival.
His Daughter
Taylor Graham

He sits in his chair
thinking of his daughter.

Before him, through the window
with its blinds pulled all the way
open, fog dissolves
to blue. It’s Saturday again.
He’s come to the art of sitting
motionless in immovable
thought. The spokes of his chair
blocked, he thinks about a daughter
so still, she never was born
to be Saturday-skipping or singing.
He doesn’t want to listen
to the music. He tells the girl
to turn off the radio,
just to fix him lunch or
supper or whatever it is that
comes next.
Blue Sunset
Nadav Zohar

There's a beginning and a definite end
There's a universe shrinking, or so it's said
We read poisons on our food wrappers
And if the motherland cries, you slap her
And the A-bombs look like popcorn from the moon
Blue sunset, you came too soon

We dove out of the frying pan
And into the fire that you set
We're crawling back to the waters we came from
The palm trees turn to anemonies
And cacti are coral, soaking wet
And all that flies has turned to plankton
The bugling of an elephant is just a whale's slow croon
Blue sunset, you came too soon
Kiss
Dee Rimbaud

I return to this uneasy cohabitation,
to the charred remains of dinner,
with the taste of another woman
in my mouth,
sweet and salt

like church bells
ringing out into tomorrow.

I confess:
yes, I kissed her,
but I omit to admit where.
Economy
Dee Rimbaud

There is no room for a bright sun in a poem; it wastes precious space and could easily be replaced by something so much more economical -- say, a thin moon or even a simple light bulb.
I put the clam shell
to my ear.

Is it a crying infant,
or a dog
so distant
that night's
cold flesh
distorts its voice?

As a matter of fact,
the cold itself
has the mouth
of a blue-eyed boa.

Crickets like tiny stars
of magnesium
surround the boa's cracked lips.

October's bulging throat
is my temporary cocoon.
Sagging tomatoes, mink shoulders.
Each vine dreams of attending the Metropolitan in December.

Soft black lips touch the gas tank of a motorcycle that moves like the perfumed shoulders of a Japanese geisha through my silk neighborhood.

Midnight clouds’ erotic shoulders ripped by the moon’s fingernails.

The moon’s white fingertips separate torsos from shoulders, smearing them across the nude waist of my zinfandel.
Cold one, alone in the streets.
Youth grabber,
waster,
drier of young flesh.
No neon signs to light the done acts in the streets,
only dirt,
sewer smells in the best part of town.
The dying zone: address any no number at all.

She lays there 'cause there's nowhere for her to go:
cold,
whitening,
dying

all alone.
Young blood caught in the throes of decay.
Her icy body
cracking.
stiff from the winter blast.
Her voice a thin whisper on the silent wind.
No one to hear her,
care for her,
cry for her.
Her tears too frozen to fall.
She passes out there,
hunched in that back alley,
buried in amongst the newspapers: her blankets for warmth,
they're scattering in the wind.

Staggering one picks them up,
gathering warmth for his winter bed,
lining for the holes in his cardboard crate.
He does not see her shape on their pages,
nor smell her fear of death,
nor her weak dying urine;
only the dirty feel of newsprint,
and he is back to all those mornings so long ago by the fire,
slippers on his feet,
coffee steaming in his cup.

Mornings from his youth.
On Being Loved
Max Snavlin

One’s ambivalent words are another’s supersonic palabras.
The morning aubade is a glass
half-filled with water and though no
love was made, no
dough was kneaded, no
deed was signed, no
article was heeded,
to one, night becomes
a hot bath, to another
a forty car pileup on ninety-five
shortly after saying goodbye to a complete ass.

Speaking of complete asses,
the circus is in town: hay,
gum, arthritic elephants, parking in the grass.
The unattainable ones would never go,
would never say yes,
no, and that brings the clownish tear to the eye
of the unloved,
the forgotten, certain asshole tragedy of crying over a lollipop
crushed in the street because...
she loved lollipops or...
he hated lollipops...
which manifests that hygienic gasping wail
found in lone parked cars
at the Washington Zoo on late Tuesday nights. (You know.)
Though the loved and the unloved do, at times, reach a certain
shared ambivalence, whether
it be when a shapely blonde unexpectedly maintains
eye contact with a homely gas attendant or...
when a sad clown is caught in bad weather.

In conclusion: One’s crushed lollipop in the street
is another’s broken reflector or busted break light or obliterated
fin man’s heart. Elephants at the zoo die
and the circus elephants die too. Typically,
these things end in abandonment.
Wind force, the buzzing eel-like lines of sand swarming in the beach roar, the dam lashed by foam and blue gusts, salt and sunlight streaming everywhere, in the long winding crevices on the stones, on the strand in a frenzy of dumped rags. You walk on and reach the lighthouse, a log stands by the squared booming blocks, it looks so bare, dry and shining white, a marrow of salt, you touch it and feel the centre of things' fury that is quietness, the strength of what is thrashed along and forgotten and lasts in the light.
Sea Salt
David Trame

1
After the swim you are faced
by the clouds in bloom,
a swelling of bright grey
and an arabesque of curls.
Rich? you hear yourself say.
Drying yourself you once more feel
the fulfillment of the sea-salt:
it rises and lashes about
with the wind and whips
the sharpened margins,
it teases you with the jostling
pointed wave-crests
and binds you with darting
eel-like laces,
your skin delivered to the horizon
in unending flashes.

2
You’ll lie down in the sunlight,
in a stinging permanence,
by the waves
and their memories on the stones,
the glittering chinks
and the winding
white carved lines
you’ll finger with closing eyes,
the bright grit
that’s the first and last
layer of what you are
and the granite rocks
that will absorb your breath
when dozing off
you sail just a bit further on
in the heat.
How I hope never to run in the snow again. 
Ah, but I will, I will return to the open fields 
and everything that fills the cups and bowls.

Inside McFulley's Pub an old man spoke 
and his words moved across air to stuff 
cabbage rolls and turn over potato cakes 
rising in the heat of a silver skillet. He said, 
you see what was, what is, and what will be, 
his voice has become a banging door in wind –
closing and opening. The cottage still stands 
in tall grass and swaying heather – grasping 
earth and swallowing rain – cold steady rain 
seeps into bones and wood – both creak and warp 
into a new state of being. The abbey shares ground 
with green moss and unforgotten vows made before 
the wind rose up and shadows lengthened and enveloped 
toward the sheltering countryside where thunder beats 
and fills ears with the rhythm of the Bodhran drums –
pounding with the rise and fall of the sea against stone cliffs 
and Uillean pipes raise up a nameless lament to the air – 
where snow meets wind and open fields.
I.
Scarlet berries after juicy scarlet berries plumped on the Rowan limb until they were the crest of autumn, orange and burnt red growing toward ripeness, full, bright, one might say the Winter Chanterelles were whispering the secrets of flora.

Later I found him, traffic hurrying by, by the terrace houses, and I hounded him against his absorbed claim, that the River Lagan is all his, that everything is his.

Not so. I was there. Near gray-green waters. And you were there too. I was there with you.

II.
My Anam Cara goes home to our place under the silver willows.

Lying in the long grass watching where the clouds are going as they discover both dust and sunlight.

Afternoons were long and the river flowed between sounds of the shore and wood – telling our story to the fauna.

Flora shares their mysteries, questions—the dreams they never knew and the words they love to exhale:

Oceanus, maritimus, autumnus.
III.

Rows of terrace houses flank Woodstock Road, and I am so busy among
the wire fences, cages, silent eyes,
the Catholic neighborhood Falls Road,
and Protestant East and their bloody sorrows.

Now and again, of course, I look up - a person must.
Maybe I will tuck my hair behind one ear or two.
Maybe I will walk down the center of the road.
Maybe I will open our door again, calling your name.

Or maybe you whisper mine.

IV.

Have you seen the white flowers of the Rowan
bloom in May—
perfect petals of combed linen, reaching toward light?
Have you seen their stems quiver in morning breezes
while the river rolls by?

Have you seen them stretching toward sky, open handed,
or the rain tapping with its bursting coolness on
unopened buds still growing toward being?
Or the razorbills, and kittiwakes making their way
to the waiting sea?

V.

Sanctify the waters,
for they are a cleansing bath.
Sanctify the photos of our summer,
for they are reminders of journeys.
Sanctify the fingers
for they are delicate paintbrushes sweeping across skin.
Sanctify the mouth
for it stalls time in a perfect ‘O’.
Sanctify the tongue
for it is the gatherer of liquid salt.

Sanctify the eyes
for they are the keepers of light and shadow.
Sanctify the silence
that exists between pauses.
Sanctify the moment
for it is the whole story.

VI.

Because there is no substitute for actions
and words, I would like to say how
your hands, at midnight, mirror, at the same
time, the complexity of a lunar cycle, and its turnings.

VII.

If you are in the city, I will bundle myself in an Aran jacket.
If you are by the river, I will find those dark waters and slide
a hand beneath its surface, I will mingle with fish.
If you are in Blackstaff Pub speaking in guarded tones,
I will wait across the room for your eyes to seek me out.
If you are in a back hall plotting retreats, I will become
vapor that knows everything, but remains unvoiced.

Searching, searching, searching. The eyes look, the hands
feel, trace, stroke softly. The city is spoiled.
Country, however, is an open green, fresh, unstained, that
includes the bliss of forgetting, and rising winds, rising cliffs, while
each heart becomes a pilgrim
and waits for questions to be answered:
to know the reason why winds die and where the stories go.
The Things He Said
Kymberlyn Steel-Fannin

Perhaps I should call your wife
Breathless
Almost speechless
Moaning, groaning, writhing on the floor

Pay no mind
Your marriage is over

Maybe I should call your son's mother, your lover, your
one time best friend
And let her know, who it is you really love
Maybe I should let her know all the stars in heaven shine
In between my thighs
And my lips are more intoxicating than Solomon's wine

Hand on the receiver
Waiting to receive
I've been waiting for a long time
Head cocked, hand cramped
No more dial tone
Just dead

I've been waiting to hear from her
Waiting for a call from her
Breathless
Almost speechless
Moaning, groaning, writhing on the floor

Pay no mind
This torrid intrigue is over

She just fucked my boyfriend
Who happens to be her husband
Maybe she will let me know all of earth's milk and honey
flow between her thighs
And her lips sweeter than Cleopatra's honey

And then we shall finally agree
We are both in love with a liar
Reckless and loveless we lie speechless on the floor
Zack plods slowly toward the meeting hall, past the church, past the barbershop, past the big fountain in the town square with the statue of an ant. He walks down the quaint cobblestone street and looks at the old-fashioned ice cream parlor. The occasional stranger who passed through would never guess that this town was only a year old and its citizens drove hybrid cars. They certainly would never even begin to fathom the town's real secret.

Zack's mouth is filled with the bitter taste of the Tylenol he just swallowed dry. Goddamn, his head is killing him. Every day it seems to take more and more medicine even to dull these migraines, and in the meantime, he gets to be politely avoided all day by his classmates and teachers. What he needs is a few hours of darkness and quiet, but a full town meeting cannot be skipped.

The meeting hall rises up beyond the fountain with its thick white pillars. Zack looks up at it for a moment, rocking back and forth slightly in time with his throbbing head. The building is modeled after the familiar landmarks of D.C., driving home the significance of this place: the decisions made here might have an effect reaching far beyond the model community.

There is no way to open the heavy double doors quietly. Not that it matters anyway; the back few rows are already looking over their shoulders, wondering where the pain is coming from. Zack awkwardly hunts for a seat, trying to ignore the way people cringe when he moves closer to them.
Mayor James Prescott, who had paused to glare at Zack's entrance, resumes his speech from the grand podium on the floor of the meeting hall. "As I say, I have the distinctive pleasure of announcing that this meeting hall has not served its additional function as a criminal courtroom for six full months!"

Polite applause. Zack finds an empty chair, but before he can sit down, the woman in the next seat says, "This is saved," and plops her purse down on the chair as proof. She doesn’t meet his eyes. "I’m sorry," she adds, sensing his hurt feelings. Where the hell are his parents? Probably closer to the front.

Prescott continues. "We are scoring consistently high by every standard our founders have devised. Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, we come to the reason why I called this meeting. Please, try to contain your excitement."

Zack sees movement out of the corner of his eye. Dr. Hull is signaling to him from a few rows down.

"I have received word that an arbiter from the company is coming next week to evaluate our community. If he decides we’re ready, and with a two-thirds majority vote from us, we will be able to move Simpatico on to Phase 2!"

This news warrants a standing ovation. Someone is yelling and whooping with particular enthusiasm; Zack wonders if it’s Dad. Zack feels the excitement around him, but does not let it infect him. With the townspeople distracted, he quickens his pace and reaches the empty seat next to the doctor. The noise intensifies his headache, so that the room seems filled with the strange bittersweet combination of pleasure and pain. "Yes," says the mayor. "Yes...yes indeed, settle down please, we have much to do and very little time!"

The doctor leans toward Zack and whispers, "Another headache, Zack?" Zack nods miserably.

A man behind them whispers, "I got aspirin." He thrusts a bottle between the seats.

Someone else says, "Aspirin’s no good for migraines. Here, take some Excedrin." Soon everyone within reach is offering their painkiller of choice; if there’s one thing this town has taught people, it’s to carry painkillers wherever they go.

Zack says, "I’ve been takin’ stuff all day. It just hasn’t kicked in yet."

Hull says, "You probably shouldn’t take anything more, Zack. Just lie down when you get home."

"I plan to," Zack sighs and rubs his temples.

"But we have to deal with it in the meantime," the first man says. "I don’t think it’s fair that we all have to be miserable because of this."

The doctor turns to face the man. "We have to look out for each other’s best interests; that’s why we share our pain to begin with. It is my professional opinion that Zack has probably taken more than enough pain medication for one day." To Zack, he adds, "Come by my office tomorrow after school. We need to check out these..."
migraines, and perhaps I can prescribe something. We should also make sure your implant isn’t malfunctioning.” Again, Zack nods.

Mayor Prescott is animatedly concluding a request for volunteers to help cater the arbiter’s reception. “Thank you, thank you all! This meeting is now adjourned. Will everyone please rise for the Simpatico town anthem, with our own Sharon Sommers accompanying us on the piano?”

Zack lies in bed with the lights off, absorbing the silence around him and willing it to soothe his headache. He thinks about his old town and his old high school, back when he could actually tell he was living in the early 21st century rather than the early 20th. Back before Dad had come bursting through the front door after work, out of breath and almost incoherent with excitement.

“Do you know why, Tricia?” Dad turned on Mom. She sighed and muted the television. “No I don’t, Frank.”

Dad spread his arms wide to deliver the gift of revelation. “It’s because they can, people! It’s because they can! But Better Tomorrow Enterprises has just approached me with an offer. They’re going to change all that! Zachary, you’ve taken biology. You know ants? Do you know how an ant knows when another ant is in trouble?”

Zack remembered something—vaguely. Might’ve been from biology class, might’ve been from somewhere else. “Pheromones or something?”

“That’s right. When an ant is in distress, it gives off an alarm pheromone, signaling other ants to react to the danger. They can’t ignore it. This biological system of communication ensures the survival of their species.” Dad sounded like he was quoting sentences from the most bizarre brochure ever printed. “Now just imagine if humans—people were the same way!”

In time, Dad calmed down and stopped speaking in lofty advertising language. That’s when they learned about Better Tomorrow’s goal of “Curing the Human Condition,” about the Simpatico experiment... and about how they’d have to move there, immediately.

The next few months were a blur. Zack remembered the moving truck. He remembered coming out of anesthesia in the recovery room and gingerly feeling the bandage

Eric Newland
on the back of his neck. He remembered meeting the mayor and the doctor, and the first time he felt pain that wasn’t his own—God, such a strange feeling. He remembered having wet dreams again and eventually realizing it was because his parents still made love. He remembered his first migraine.

Zack feels affection, and knows that Mom must be in the room. Presently, she speaks. “You’re feeling better, aren’t you, Zack?”

No way to hide it. He has a pretty good sense of the device’s range; even the neighbors are probably feeling relief. “Yes.” Something is tugging at his mind. “Dr. Hull...he...he feels it the same amount as everyone, right?”

Zack can see Mom’s silhouette in the doorway, and she nods. “Yes. Still, the device has a threshold. You can’t help anyone if you’re in agony yourself, of course, and as a doctor, he needs to have a clear head when he’s working with people in pain.”

“Still, sometimes I think he ‘sympathizes’ better than anyone else. At least, his answer to everything isn’t immediately ‘take more pain pills,’ you know?”

He senses Mom’s awkward discomfort. “Well, yes, sometimes people still look for a quick fix. But overall, I like what this community is doing. People who hurt are being healed. People are becoming more generous.”

Zack sits up and begins to put his shoes on. “Dr. Hull helps people because he’s a good man,” he says.

“Everyone else is just reacting.”

“Well, naturally he helps because he’s a doctor. It’s his job to help people.”

Zack sighs. “People avoid me when I get migraines.” He wants to scream, “That doesn’t help me! I feel like a fucking leper!” But it’s obvious she feels his seething; the device can be a form of communication in and of itself sometimes.

She looks away as Zack finally turns on the light. It feels good to Zack to be able to see things and not feel a hammer pound at the inside of his skull at the same time. Finally, Mom says, “Well, it’s difficult when people hurt for a long time, especially when there’s not much anyone can do about it. But Dr. Hull will help you with that, right? Soon you won’t have to worry about it anymore.”

Zack brushes past Mom and down the hallway, sees the Tupperware containers on the dining room table. “Is that the food for the Charleston family? Is it ready to go?”

Mom purses her lips. “Yes, it’s all ready.”

Zack abruptly whirls to face Mom and speaks through a lump in his throat. “Hey, Mom? What about the People Who can’t stop hurting, no matter what? What good does this do them?”

Mom moves her lips, but no answer comes out. She shakes her head mutely for a moment, then says, “Zack, that’s a very difficult question. It always has been...”

“I’d better go drop this stuff off while it’s still warm,” Zach says, and goes to find his keys. He works
quickly, gathering up the food containers, because sure enough, Mom says something to Dad, and he’s waiting by the door.

Dad says, “Zack, can I talk to you for a minute?”
“I’m going to the Charleston’s, Dad. I’ll be back in a bit.”

Dad glares, but lets Zack through. Zack exhales heavily as he steps out into the fading light. Yet another evangelical Simpatico speech awaits him when he gets home, but at least that won’t happen until he gets home now, giving him time to think.

Tom and Olivia Charleston are a young couple. Getting married right out of high school is what Zack hears. Then soon after joining the Simpatico experiment, Olivia went in to see Dr. Hull for a routine checkup, and they discovered that the silent killer had crept into their lives. The treatment has been trying, and the prognosis less than encouraging. Considering the discomfort of Olivia’s treatment and the nature of Simpatico, Dr. Hull and many other citizens have recommended that the Charlestons leave for their own sake, but their strong belief in the Simpatico system wouldn’t allow it.

Tom is sitting on the front step inexpertly lighting a cigarette as Zack pulls up to the house. His skin is smooth but pale and waxy, his eyes sunken, and veins show on his hands. He looks up at Zack and smiles wanly. “Hi, Zack. How you doin’?”

A faint ambience of nausea seeps into Zack’s body.

“I’m all right, I guess, now that my headache’s gone.” He shakes his head. Dumb thing to say in the face of agony like this. “How are you...how is she doing?”

Tom sighs out smoke and stifles a cough, looking off into space. “She’s all right, all things considered. The nights are kind of rough, you know, when there’s nothing to distract her. Well, come on in. Don’t wanna leave you carrying all that.”

Inside, Tom clears a space on the kitchen counter so Zack can set his burden down. Under the bright lights, Zack looks Tom over again. “Jesus, Tom.”

Tom smirks. “I know, I look like hell, don’t I? My hair’s even starting to fall out. It’s...sympathetic symptoms. Like you know how some guys go through sympathetic pregnancy? God, I wish that was what it was. Anyway, a couple of Better Tomorrow scientists think we make for an interesting study.” He grinds his cigarette in an overflowing ashtray. “At least someone’s enjoying all of this.”

Zack crosses his arms and stares at the floor tiles, fighting for something to say. Without warning, his nausea grows more intense. He grabs on to the counter to steady himself, and gapes as Tom doubles over and vomits.

There is a long, awkward silence, made incomplete only by the ticking of a clock somewhere. Tom spits a few times into the puddle before straightening up. He looks at Zack with a tragic sort of bravery, like a soldier marching past the bodies of fallen comrades toward the front lines.
Finally, he smiles, weaker than before, and says, "I sure hope that food doesn't end up like that. Your mom sure can cook." His knees nearly give out, but he braces himself against the counter next to Zack, spits again into the sink. "Be careful going out, Zack. I've gotta go make sure Olivia's all right."

Zack backs slowly out of the kitchen. "What about you, Tom? Are you ok? Do you need me to get Dr. Hull?"

Tom waves one hand while still supporting himself with the other. "Naw, it happens, Zack, it happens. I can take care of it. Besides, I have a feeling it'll all be over soon, you know? I just have this feeling."

Zack can already feel another headache coming on as he drives home, and a cold feeling gnaws at the pit of his stomach. When he gets there, yet another long pro-Simpatico rant from Dad blows over him, a pittance after what he has just seen and felt. No, not felt, sensed. The mysterious Simpatico device can convey physical and emotional feelings from pain, through discomfort, on to pleasure and bliss, but those are tactile sensations quite different from the foreboding, the dread that he suddenly feels. That night, he dreams about drowning.

***

Morning arrives, bringing with it a strange feeling of relief mixed with terrible guilt. Though he is used to blocking out the Simpatico sensations as well as he is able, this time he reaches out, grabs hold of this bittersweet feeling, examines every subtle flavor of it like a wine taster.

Mom comes bursting into the room, sobbing. "Oh my God, Zack! This is so terrible! Olivia Charleston...she...she died last night!"

"I know. Tom killed her." Mom gapes, as if seeing her son for the very first time. Zack absentmindedly rubs his forehead. "I have a headache."
To My Fellow Writers of the Professional Realm
Anis Shivani

After Mayakovsky

Where are those tantrums you promised
at our first wedding?
I came as best man, because you promised.
Where are those slivers of sawed-off swords
that would put the fear of words
in hollowed men who write for pay?
Where is God?
Where is alienation?
How did you know to fall silent
when the matchsticks flared
of their own,
burning down the 'burbs?
Haven't you learned anything?
Is seventeen years of higher schooling
not enough?
Not enough after you've sworn in five
illegitimate presidents in a row?
Not enough after the rape of fashion models
by women less actionable than Indira and Golda?
Why have you escaped the wrath of the censors,
law-givers and word-sticklers?
I would have thought murder of the first degree
would be common as fake plants in your household.
Your niceness is Spenglerian.
Take some lessons from me.
Next time at a retreat – for which you're paid in celebrity –
look for the quietest customer in the front row.
Do me a favor, compatriots, friends:
teach him that writing is an illness of the organs,
unless you're a traitor to memory.
But you're busy writing memoirs
of menstrual fluids and Chicano chic.
You're host to Mao's most inebriate dreams.
I despise you, throw bricks at your face,
for you've forced me to enter my home,
as one who is a friend to himself.
You mix, you marry, you multiply.
The horse race?
You're in, you'll win.
pals of the bourse, housewinners and caregivers.
Me, I weld words till they abduct me
like steel hiding inside iron,
subdued always in theory.
Faulkner sat at the piano, smoking Havana cigars, kicking up a cloud of haze around his haloed head. He said, Republicans and Democrats equally irk me. I'd like to see, for once, the country take a bath.

Meanwhile, Hemingway stripped at the dresser mirror, upstairs in the uninhabited bedroom, and caressed his firm but large potbelly. Scars slashed his torso like remnants of a fight among starlets for his corpse.

Fitzgerald almost set fire to the grill on the patio. Fuck the neighbors' prurient eyes, don't they get enough with the evangelicals' sermons of fire and brimstone? He had hay fever in early winter.

The squalls of guttery clouds over the bay reminded all of us that day of war eternally postponed, except when we slept, knowing we were too old to fight. In our dreams our ex-wives walked on thin ice.
She Swims
Nathan Elmore

In honor of Katherine Grace Elmore, my daughter, born January 18, 2005.

So much there is to behold
in but a spot of her redness,
and there are seven thousand spots
and many more closed corners of the eye.

She swims
and I am saved:
the purity of her deep dive
through blood and water
is the wedding of my soul,
is the original moment,
is the realized convergence –
every particle bursts inside
incrementally, sacramentally
imploding into a portal
through which I become lost,
but I am not alone
for there are seven cardinals
meeting me in the dark places
whispering of a covering snow
saving me
suddenly.

As she swims
I am close:
the seven cardinals swirl
in, around and through my tongue,
an intoxicating vintage
allowing me presence
with the fruit of the eternal womb –
ripe with full moons
and newborn babes,
symphonic harmonies
and old Palawan men,
and other purities
distilling me
softly.

As she swims
I smell Sudan smoldering:
the seven cardinals are dead (reportedly raped and shot)
as spots of redness burn
in the bushes
under the wings of heaven;
Adam Muhammad is lost tonight
Still running in the garden,
Alone
With his cold, hungry daughter
Wandering to death
Violently.

As she swims
I hear Sri Lanka flailing;
the seven cardinals are floating
as spots of redness stain
the damning ocean floor
under the wings of heaven;
Bah dusana looks lost today
still hoping for an ark,
alone
with his only son
starving to death
ambivalently.

As she swims
I see Russia reaching out;
the seven cardinals are trapped
as spots of redness paint
that gymnasium horrible colors
under the wings of heaven;
the soldier is lost this morning
still looking for a parent,
alone
with some random child
walking from death
silently.

She swims
and I feel everything
in the spot she opens
where red's purity and pain
cannot contain the seven cardinals,
but there are seven thousand spots
and many more waking corners of the eye.
To sink my teeth into your lemon wedge
would be the end of me, or perhaps
another beginning: either way I have left
this place for the taste of fruits beyond.

Of course, the distance I traveled
would be infinitely more than I have already –
through orchards and groves, gardens and vineyards,
gathering all that is sour from these roots below.

To sip a drop from your ancient-squeezed light
would be the moment of truth, or likely
of fear: either way I am exposed thoroughly,
mercilessly tongue-tied around your shadowy rind.

Of course, the answers I found
would be still smaller than I have already –
in the treatise of a wave, in the rhetoric of the rabbit’s hop,
reading the bittersweet scents scattered all across down here.

This is why I sometimes sleep with my mouth open.
Each day he got up and wrote three pages
Just as sun rises and sets
Night follows day
Tides pull in and out
Or earth orbits the sun.
He got up and wrote three pages
When war raged around him
And fellow citizens were rounded up
And transported to camps
Filled with the stench of bodies.

Another day he got up
And tried to write three pages
But he kept hearing screams
Of human beings he thought he knew
And he could not write another word.
He threw the pages he had written
Into the fireplace watched
Them blacken and burn
Then turn to ashes.
He wept for all the words.
All he had written had not stopped
One prisoner from being killed.

Calmness came over him.
He was a tiny baby
Sucking his mother’s breast.
Sunlight shone through windows
As he swallowed his mother’s milk.
When he woke up
A sentence flashed through his mind.
"Then he opened the door of his study
and walked out into the black forest."
And he wrote it down and wrote
Until he had three more pages.
Then he opened the door of his study
And walked out into the black forest.
Live for the Poetry
Gary Pacernick

The small boy knows he is part of you; that his heart still beats in you even as you walk old neighborhood streets. He is with you, follows you, watching you. You never thought you’d live past thirty-three.

Live for the poetry that shows you the way. Open the curtains. Pigeons roost on the gray sculpted façade of the abandoned synagogue in Budapest where you met the old man from Israel who came to bury his son who survived the Nazis. Follow the poetry to cold gray windy rocky Ireland where bards still sing by the sea and in cities and towns wracked by war and insurrection. Go to Paris where you can feel yourself walking with Apollinaire in the smoky air near the Tuileries and in the country air as you climb the mountain to Montmartre and Sacre Coeur.

You love the sound of French. You can imagine what the sounds mean like the sea’s symphony.

The ever recurring chords of the poetry comes to you too in New York as you walk the Village streets with the poet who stops to inspect a leaf in front of a brownstone across from Washington Square Park light shining through the leaf like fire and so you can shine like fire if you do not forget the small boy who still dreams and teaches you to live for the poetry that you were born to write.
I am a brunette.  
I am also tall.  
My eyes are hazel and set somewhat far apart.  
I will carry three roses in my left hand,  
two white  
and one red.  
If circumstances are such  
as to allow us to be introduced  
I will momentarily start  
to raise my right hand to my mouth,  
followed by a barely audible somewhat embarrassed laugh.  

You might notice the roses in my left hand.  
If you do I will raise my left arm  
so that the roses  
will be between us. You might choose to smell them  
remarking on their fragrance. I will offer you  
the red one.  
This could allow for some  
small talk about roses, their cultivation,  
their role in history, art and literature. When the host  
approaches with someone to introduce you to,  
your parting remark could be one last thing about roses,  
their use as a memory aid. Of course, then,  
we will both smile, even if just slightly.  

On separating, I will walk,  
slowly,  

out of the room  

without turning.
"It all boils down to jobs,"
the Secretary of State told
the American Public in answer
to why we must go to war.
Threat of shutdown hovers over your factory.
Fear of layoff ulcers your office.
Job security erodes
at all levels of the job ladder.
Firms can’t be expected to promise
a raise in salary every year.
The thought of longer vacation time
is out of the question.
Psychiatric megaclinics have no choice but urge
displaced workers overqualified for
dead-end low-paying part-time jobs
cash in their retirement money.

The banker’s mistress fears she looks worse
after liposuction.
The developer’s call-girl jeers at the environmentalist—
"Ten years ago you were yelling—
‘We’ve only got ten years to save the Earth!’"
The executive’s prostitute likes her Caribbean cruise,
even if most of the time looking at scenery
there was a big cock in her mouth.
The professor lectures his students
who faithfully record each word—
"Like the laws of physics,
the laws of economics can’t be broken,
whether sloths loathe lathes no matter,
whether Bushmen only work 15 hours a week no matter."

The astronomer wears a suit and tie
even when alone at night at the telescope.
The thought the Solar System is so big our Earth compared to it
is as an atom compared to the Earth.
The thought some Galaxies are so big our Galaxy compared to them
is as an atom compared to the Earth.
The thought how do we know the Universe wasn’t formed complete
just last night with all our supposed memories.
Do nothing for him: 45 years ago, yes,
but now he pays them no mind.
Now all he sees is his son who hates him and who he hates.
juggling three jobs to study poetry
so he can write things like:
there are more planets with Utopias on them
than all the beheaded heads in history,
or this Universe is just an alveolus
in the lung of a lungfish
in another dimension.
10 miles away in another city an 8th grader
writes above the urinal—
"Show hardon for blowjob."
100 miles away a welfare bum is interrogated
for stealing a wallet.
1000 miles away a soldier tries to push his intestines back in
but it doesn’t work.
2000 miles away the owner-of-the-owners-of-100-factories’ day
is spoiled discovering benefits for workers
are cutting into profits.
How to get more out of them for less?
3000 miles away Eskimos must sell their wilderness
or set up the oil rigs themselves:
how else can their young men make money?
Every day more and more Americans feel they won’t be happy
till poets quit complaining and get a job.
Antler, from Milwaukee, offers $10,000 reward
to anyone who can disprove his work.
There were perverted skywriters vandalizing the horizon between the hillsides of Oakwood and Dayton, bluebirds shooting over car dealerships, and the familiar sound of people evolving backwards shimmering off in the distance. There were headless mannequins in sexed up poses, thrift store junkies with raccoon tattoos and trailer trash queens' timelining their futures in neon-speckled chalk down the side street walkways.

Bette and Galvin lived together in a one-room apartment on the outskirts of town. They constantly were adding to their “diary of bad news” which was etched in magic marker bordering the kitchen ceiling, each entry inspired by the outcome of the 11 o’clock news.

“December 25: suspect entered the orphanage armed with a syringe and demanded money from a little red haired girl.”

Occasionally, they’d meet me in some Podunk bar, which often reminded me of every gas station I have ever been in. We’d sit in these noisy rooms, and watch the chain link lighting break outside the tinted brown frame of the window, while bands named after popular hunting knives poured music into our ears.

Galvin loved hearing his voice reflect off peoples blinking eyelids. He liked the way it spread like a disease in a public bathstall. After a number of beers he would speak freely about his previous life as a female praying mantis. He’d go on for hours detailing his weeklong voyages as a mantis, from grass blade to grass blade always in search of his next lover/victim. These nights were slow revolutions.

Earlier in the afternoon, you would find Galvin gawking out the apartment peephole, watching as a Chinese ladybug landed upon the mailman’s tote bag. Always noticing the minute details of every moment. The
background would be loaded with Bette’s wild chatter. She would spew forth whatever at that particular moment lit up her mind, like Hemingway and his pathetic attempt at drinking himself to death or how she kept having the same dream over and over for an entire month. Supposedly it was all about this stray mutt roaming through the Hollywood hills. Then he found a cemetery and roamed aimlessly, but somehow stopped only to urinate on the gravestones of soap opera celebrities. All the while, ivory strokes of rain would trickle off the trees like prehistoric-popsicle sticks.

You know if you come at the right time of day you might see the skywriters dotting the “i” in the word bitch. You might see Galvin tiptoeing behind your car while recreating the Battle of Fallen Timbers with several of the trailer park kids, or walk by a new automobile confettied with the off-white droppings of a singing bluebird.
The killer’s good life began with all the standard advantages. He was a well-liked young man and an above-average student whose parents offered generous quantities of love and attention. Their high hopes were vindicated through high school and college, where he majored in computer science. Things were falling into place. Things were working out. He had it made. The killer’s good life ended when he used a mounted swordfish to stab a coworker during an argument over a line of computer code. The killer had wanted an asterisk placed inside some brackets; the victim, outside.

After being released from prison, the killer needed to function in a society that harbored certain prejudices. One, reasonable enough, is that hiring or befriending or making love to a killer is undesirable. To lie to others about his past would be necessary. But all the years of scouting and organized sports and earnest parental admonitions had impressed on him that to lie to yourself is a crime. So he began referring to himself, inside his own thoughts, as the killer. He would “own” it, as the prison psychiatrist had put it. He would “work through his own stuff.” And “killer” was clearly preferable to “murderer,” or the more awkward, though legally accurate, “aggravated manslaughterner.” Killer was a handle that approached respectability. A workout could be killer, or a lasagna. Killer was something you could name a trusted guard dog.

The killer’s shrink would also say, “Life is neither bad nor good. Our attitudes make it what it is.” His mother and father used to say different things. Things like: “Clean up your own mess.” And, “If it tastes like fish, don’t eat it.” And, “If you drive drunk and get yourself killed, you’re an idiot; if you take someone with you you’re a scumbag.” But his parents were mute on the topic of sending another human being coughing and gurgling into the valley of the shadow, then sticking around to wipe his blood and guts off the pointy end of a fish. In the search for an appropriate platitude to illuminate the central event of his life, the killer was on his own.

Eating alone, sleeping alone, taking long walks at night, alone, he found himself hanging around taxidermy shops
and sport fishing boats, staring at the swordfish, the sailfish, the marlin, and wondering where all the time had gone, and reliving the triumph and the fear and even the disgust he had felt, like a runaway galaxy looking back at the Big Bang and thinking remember when. It was the most exciting thing that had ever happened to him, the most extreme thing he had ever done. So the killer would wander among the carefully labeled display cases, or lose himself in the stinking maze of the public docks, and kneel before one of those fish Mother Nature builds like weapons, and search for his reflection in the cold black jelly of its dead eyes.
1966. Though he has policed the streets of Cleveland for nearly a decade, Elliot Hanson, a.k.a the Golden Lightning, struggles to thwart the destructive influences of drugs and civil unrest that have invaded the urban community. The costumed adventurer is nearly killed when breaking up a drug trafficking ring. Paul Beckett, a fifteen year old gang member, suffers a sudden crisis of conscience and tells the gunman about to murder the lauded hero. Impressed by Beckett’s natural fighting ability and calm under fire, the Golden Lightning asks the wayward youth to go undercover and infiltrate the city’s drug rings. With Beckett’s aid, the Lightning wipes out ninety percent of the drug threat in less than one month. Inspired by Beckett’s loyalty and courage, the Lightning takes the youth under his wing and teaches him the skills necessary to become a costumed crime fighter. Thus, Paul Beckett becomes the Quicksilver Kid!

The weather in San Diego is too perfect. Too comforting. It breeds laziness. It’s the middle of June and the forecast says highs of seventy five for the next three days. I’ve been here for less than eight hours and I already feel like I’m going insane. I like to go outside and feel hot in the summer. I mean hot, too damn hot. I like to come inside with sweat running down my back and the heat of the sun soaked into my skin. I hate hotel rooms. There’s nothing on TV. I’m paying damn near two hundred bucks a night to stay here and they only give you thirteen channels. Bad movies and reruns and goddamned bowling of
all things on ESPN. It’s a slow night. If there’s one thing I
can’t stand it’s slow nights, when everybody everywhere
seems to kick back and let the minutes slip through their
fingers like worthless grains of sand. I want to run up to
people and shake them and say, “This is your lives, you
stupid fucks! You sad, stupid bastards. Every minute you
waste you’ll never get back, and when it’s all over, you
never feel like you had enough.”

About ten I head down to the hotel bar. A godsend,
hotel bars. Nobody ever recognizes me or comes up to
me to say “Hey Paul, my dad told me all about you when I
was a kid, can I have an autograph? Take a picture with
my girlfriend?” Always with something they want.

It’s never, “Can I buy you a drink?” Whatever hap­
pened to “Can I buy you a drink?” This place doesn’t look
any different from the rest. A few business types, playing
video poker and drinking alone. Some hotshot talking on
a cell phone, holding an unlit cigar in his hand. A couple
eating dinner in silence. I sit down and some kid, I bet he
doesn’t even have to shave, asks me what to drink. I start
with the gin and tonics and watch the bowlers on the bar
TV, pumping their fists and yelling and what a worthless
sham of a game.

I clear my tab before one and walk back up to my
room. Shower, rest, waiting. So much of life is waiting. I
watch the digital lines on my alarm clock disappear,
reappear, forming the same pattern of numbers until its
finally three-thirty. I look through my bags in the closet,

finding the one with the cables and hook. I tuck it under
my arm and walk to the stairway. I’ve been out of action
since ’71, same as everybody else, but I can’t imagine
leaving anywhere without the bag. It’s fifteen floors to the
roof, two flights per floor. This is good, the climb. I step
faster and faster, my feet clanging against the stairs, but I
don’t care because who is going to hear me at this three-
star hotel in the middle of the night, and soon I’ve passed
the last floor, two more flights and the stairwell ends with
a single door. It’s the end of one world and the begin­
ing of the next. The air is cool, but still too comfortable.

High fifties. I stand on the rooftop and survey the skyline:
it’s all I could ask for. Minimal lighting, nice array of heights,
plenty of ledges and windows just in case something goes
wrong. But nothing will. I can always tell from the second
I step on the rooftop if something will go wrong. I open
the bag and remove the cables. I can leave the bag
here. No one will see. Then it’s time to stop thinking and
run, run towards the ledge and swing the hook in my right
hand. I leap off the edge and there’s a moment in midair
when everything falls out from under you, and everything
that was never possible suddenly is. I toss the hook onto
the ledge of an office building. It catches and I swoop
downward like God’s vengeance, a blur, a low whistle, a
mass of speeding light, the last fucking thing you’d ever
want to see coming your way. I twist my legs and soar
upward through the roaring wind. My feet hit the next
rooftop running. With a quick pull of the wrist, the hook
comes free and, as I toss my right arm into the air, flies back into my hand. Another rooftop. Another. Another. You don’t know this. You don’t know what it is to do this.

1968. Having fought alongside the Golden Lightning for three years, the Quicksilver Kid has become one of the most skilled and dangerous threats to the nefarious world of crime. Though the Terrific Twosome does not garner as much press coverage as the heroes operating in bigger cities, the Kid enjoys a brief period of national celebrity when he makes a cameo in the costumed adventurer-themed movie Titans of Justice. The Kid also attains the status of a teen idol after he begins dating the film’s lead actress, Sue Stevens. However, the relationship lasts for less than two months and the Kid’s national popularity quickly subsides.

Next morning, eight forty-five. I’m late. I should have been at the convention center an hour ago. Overslept. From the time I was fifteen until I was twenty-three, I only got four hours per night. Now I’m groggy if I get less than eight. Getting older, weaker. I finally reach the exit, and even two blocks away, I can see the line of people standing single file, waiting to pass through the metal detectors. It’s worse than any airport security. It reminds me of those old photos of bread lines from the Depression. These people have been standing here for hours, maybe days. For a minute I feel sorry for them. Then I remember Eddie Freeman, the Crimson Cougar. Two years ago, some whacked out old hag walked up to him at one of these things and shot him at point blank range. Turns out she was the former whore of some pusher Eddie put away in the late sixties. I’m glad I wasn’t there. I would’ve killed the bitch right where she stood.

I pass the main lot and pull around to the booth marked “Vendor/Guest Entrance.” The guard sees my pass and raises the bar. There’s a huge yellow banner draped down the side of the center. It has a grotesque drawing of some masked, steroid-ridden freak and the words “2005 San Diego Comic Book and Costumed Adventurer Convention.” We don’t even get top billing anymore. The people who took our sacrifices and our blood and used all of it to make silly little picture books are the ones making millions. I know some guys who’ve single-handedly taken a thousand criminals off the streets and they can’t afford to fill their prescriptions. I’d have to laugh if it didn’t make me want to puke. And the worst part is, people don’t even remember that we inspired them. There would be no Superman or Spiderman or Fantastic Four if people like us didn’t put on costumes and risk our lives. The reality died and the fiction survived. Enough. If I think about these things for too long, I want to smash my head into a wall.

I park and start to unload my things out of the trunk. It’s the typical convention stuff: autographed 8x10s, some posters for Titans of Justice, t-shirts...I’ve even brought one of the old costumes, in case I get lucky and run into some high roller with money to piss away. I check in at the registration table and find my booth. There’s less
than two dozen of us here this year, and they’ve got us all clustered in the southeast corner, away from the main action, like the invalids at a nursing home. I nod and wave to some of the familiar faces, but I’m trying to get my stuff set up at the last minute, so I don’t have time to talk. Adam West walks by, carrying the Batman mask in his right arm. The sad thing is, if he didn’t lose his lawsuit with DC, I have no doubt the pathetic bastard would still be wearing the whole damn costume around. Though I have to admit, I kind of dug that show. Almost did a guest spot on it once. It was goofy as hell, of course, but there was something optimistic about it. It was about people doing good just for the sake of doing good. Ever since that overrated piece of junk Watchmen came out, every single damn hero has to be a fascist vigilante or closet homosexual or God knows what else. Us sidekicks get it the worst. If I have to hear one more pseudo-intellectual prick talk about how “perverse” it was for single guys to have teenage boys living and training and fighting alongside them, I might finally lose it. “Wasn’t it weird to be running around with some guy in your underwear?” they ask. “Did he ever touch you? Were you lovers?” Go fuck yourself. I didn’t “run around in my underwear” because I’m some sort of faggot. I did it because I wanted to make things right. That’s all I’ve ever wanted.

1970. The public mood towards costumed heroes has grown hostile. As the war in Vietnam steadily worsens, the adventures come to be viewed as a symbol of the excesses of the right-wing, militaristic government. Congresses passes a law banning private individuals acting as crime fighters. The ban comes into effect on January 15th, 1971. Most living adventurers accept the news as an inevitable occurrence and attend a banquet dinner in New York City to commemorate the end of their careers. Though the Golden Lightning attends, the Quicksilver Kid is conspicuous in his absence. At 11:56 on the 14th of January, the unconscious body of an at-large child molester is discovered on the front steps of the central office of Cleveland Police. Investigators must consult fingerprint records to correctly identify the individual, as his face is beaten beyond recognition.

About nine-thirty people start finding their way back to our corner of the convention floor. Most of them are kids, probably got lost while they were looking for the latest issue of Big-Titted Vampire Wench or whatever that sort of shit is called. They stare at me blankly and I stare right back. Some guy, late-forties with a Nike sweatshirt on, catches my eye and flashes me a moronic grin.

“Paul Beckett,” he says, walking towards the table, “the Quicksilver Kid.”

“That’s me.”

“Oh my god, I can’t believe I’m standing right in front of you. I wanted to be you more than anything in the world when I was a kid.”

I’ve heard this a thousand times, but I act like I’m hanging on the edge of every word he speaks. Thinking
about the money in his wallet.

"You know, you guys were the best. I've always thought that you never got nearly enough press. I'm originally from Cleveland myself, you know. We invented the costumed hero! All you ever hear about are those guys from New York and Chicago. The Phantom Justice. The Midway Monster. All that crap. What about you guys? Or Mighty Jack friggin' Goldman? I mean, the guy inspired Schuster and Siegel, for God's sake!"

"Yeah, well that's the way it always was. The guys in the biggest cities got the most press. Wasn't much we could do about it."

"I think that's a sham. A crying shame. Let me tell you, I still have the Press front page that says 'CLEVELAND'S TERRIFIC TWOSOME BUSTS MAFIA RACKET.' If you ask me, that was your finest moment. Every kid in the city wanted to be you guys back then."

"Oh yeah, I remember that one."

"Hey," he says, after an awkward pause that lets me know exactly what is coming next, "do you still keep in touch with Elliot?"

I raise my eyebrows and shoot him a look that tells him to drop the subject. He doesn't see it, or doesn't care.

"You know, Elliot Hanson. The Golden Lightning? Your old mentor?"

"Elliot is a private man. He wants to live the rest of his life out of the public eye, and I respect that. I don't really have anything else to say."

"Yeah, but do you guys still keep in touch?"

"Listen pal, I just told you I don't have anything else to say. Now, are you going to buy anything or not? Because if you aren't, I wish you'd get the fuck out of here and stop wasting my time."

His face droops into a pathetic frown and for a second he looks like he's going to cry. Then he gets a hold of himself and buys an 8x10 and a poster. I hand him his change and he walks away without another word.

Three hours pass and I pick up a few bucks here and there. Get into a few conversations. Nothing interesting. I'm starting to think about finding the rent-a-cop that's been walking around and asking him to watch the booth while I eat lunch. Some kid, looks about seven or eight, walks up to the booth. At first I can't even tell he's there--his head barely clears the edge of the table.

"Excuse me, please. Can I buy your picture?" he says. He's polite. I can barely believe it. Most people four times his age can't even manage to look me in the eye when they ask for an autograph. I walk around the booth and crouch down next to him.

"Hey there, guy. Where's your parents?"

"My dad is over there," he says, pointing to an owlish guy in a cardigan standing ten feet away. "He told me how you're a hero and how we should buy a photo of you to put in our house."

"Well that's a nice thing for him to say. What does
your dad do?"

"He’s a lawyer. The kind that puts bad people in jail."

"Hey, that’s great. That’s really great. You’re really lucky to have a guy like that for a dad, you know that? Not every kid has a dad that does something they can be proud of. It’s becoming really rare. Listen, you study hard so you can be just like your dad, ok?"

"Okay."

"Good. I mean it now, study hard. Stay away from people who cheat and tell lies and use drugs. There’s a lot of those people out there. You’ve gotta be careful. Promise me you’ll study hard and listen to your dad."

"I will."

"That’s a good man. Put ‘er there." I grasp his tiny hand in mind and shake it. "Ouch! Lighten your grip, champ," I say with a wink. His face lights up and for a second it feels like all of this is worthwhile. I give him a couple photos, no charge. He runs back to his dad, who gives me an appreciative nod. There’s still good people out there. It’s so easy to forget, but they’re there.

Two o’clock, lunch break. Sales have been ok, nothing terrific. They seem to get a little worse every year. The crowd gets worse, too. For every worthwhile customer like that kid there’s twenty or thirty people who seem to exist only to bust my balls. What kills me are the twenty-something student types who can’t enjoy a goddamned thing unless they’re being ironic about it. They wear shirts with pictures of all the old adventurers like its some kind of fashion statement. Almost sold some spoiled little rich punk the costume though. He wouldn’t go above two grand, and I wouldn’t take less than three. Might have been a mistake. I could sure as hell could use the money. No. I’m not selling it for two. I’m not selling it for less than three.

I’m sitting in a VIP room, eating the catered food. I can’t stand these types of places, but at least it’s less crowded than the convention floor. I see some guys from the old days, shake hands, shoot the shit for a while, but we don’t really have much to say anymore. "How’re the kids? Grandkids? Still getting along okay? Alright, see you next year." Some of the comics guys come up to me and feed me bullshit about how I inspired their career, blah blah blah. I want to tell them that if I really inspired them they’d be in law enforcement or the courtroom, putting the scum and vermin where they belong. But I don’t really see the point. I just smile politely and leave the conversation as soon as possible.

I’m just about to head back to the floor when I see Bert Avery walk in the room, all smiles and fake tan and surrounded by his pitiful little entourage. He sees me and flashes me a grin with his big fake fucking impossibly white teeth. As he walks towards me all I can think of is how I’d like to knock each and every one out of his head.

"Paul!" he says, throwing his arm around my shoul-
der, "God, how are you? I haven’t seen you in forever. I missed last year’s convention. I was working on the book, you know."

I shift my body and his arm falls back to his side. "Yeah. I didn’t think you were coming to this one either."

"Oh, I won’t be here for long. I’m just doing a book signing for a couple hours. I’ve got people to work the booth for the rest of the convention. The past six months have been simply insane. I never expected a reaction like this to the book. It’s been amazing, frankly."


"What did you think?"

"I didn’t say I’d read it, I said I heard about it."

"You haven’t? God, Paul, you need to. It will probably affect how you look at the past more than you’d think. I’ll have to get you a copy. In fact, I’ll have one of my people run it over to your--"

"What’s it called?"

"Confessions of a Sidekick."

"Confessions."

"Did you confess that you’re nothing but a goddamn fraud?"

He gives a little nervous laugh. "What are you talking about, Paul?"

"I heard about the things you said in your book. I heard the things you said about the man who took you in when you were nothing but the bastard son of a prostitute and taught you what was right. I heard all about your little confessions. And I know that they’re all lies."

"Paul, I know you don’t want to think of Bob that way, but that’s what happened. I’m not trying to drag anybody through the mud. I’m just trying to tell the truth."

"The man is dead. He can’t even defend himself from your lies."

"Paul, listen, please. Give the book a shot. I think you’ll find--"

"I’m not reading the book. I say, my voice barely above a whisper. "Not now or ever. And if you don’t get out of here right now, I’m going to beat the living shit out of you."

"Paul," he says, with some smarmy expression of mock-pity on his face, "I think we need to sit down and have a long talk."

I swing towards his midsection, but he’s too fast. I underestimated him. He looks pudgy and soft, like the pretty boy he’s always been, but he still has his speed. Goddamn it, he’s always had such speed. He grabs my arm by the wrist and pushes it under my chin. There’s an eternal second where the room is suddenly silent and it feels like every pair of eyes in the room is focused on us. Bert puts on this big phony smile and gives off a big phony laugh and slaps me on the back. Everybody assumes we were goofing around, so they stop staring and chuckle and go back to their own conversations. Bert’s entourage walks over, like they can tell something has gone wrong. One of them, a bald black guy, looks like he’s about four hundred pounds. I think about how I would take him out,
if I had to.

"Nothing to worry about guys," Bert says. "Let's head out to the convention floor, alright?" I'm about to walk away when Bert suddenly hugs me. I think it's just for show, but he leans close to my ear and whispers, "You'd better just forget about this, Paul. You're getting to be an old man. And don't ever forget that I was always better than you." Before I can say anything he's turned around and headed out the door.

Ten forty five. Long fucking day. Sales picked up in the evening, though. I'm nearly out of Bx Os. I think I stashed an extra couple hundred in one of my bags, got to remember to dig them out before I head back tomorrow. I'm driving back on the freeway when I see some gaudy bar with a neon sign and a tropical theme. It's exactly the sort of place I hate, but the hotel is another twenty minutes away and I realize that I need a drink. Badly. I walk in and it's everything I suspected and worse -- blaring rap music, nothing but kids, a bunch of frat boy assholes all over the place. They shoot me these horrified looks, like I was their dad walking into the room while they were screwing their girlfriends. I find a place by the bar and wait while the prick behind the counter finishes flirting with some girls. "What can I get you?" "Whiskey. On the rocks. Double." Might as well do this thing right. I put a couple drinks away. I'm working on my third when a brunette, I wonder if she's even out of high school, walks over. She's wearing some slutty top and mini-skirt, it might as well be her underwear.

"Hi," she says. "My friend over there wants to know if you'd like to buy us drinks." She points to a thick blonde at the other side of the bar who's putting her hand over her mouth, trying to stop giggling.

"How old are you?"

"We're old! We could totally buy them for ourselves if we wanted to. But we looked at you and thought, 'there's a distinguished looking gentleman who knows how to treat a lady. I bet he'd buy us a couple of drinks.' So what do you say?"

Clever little bitch. "I don't think so, sorry."

"Oh come on! I'll even give you a kiss on the cheek."

"How about you and your friend go home where you belong and stop acting like a couple of whores?"

Her mouth hangs open and she exhales a little affronted cough. She storms off. About five minutes later I see four guys in muscle shirts and basketball shorts coming my way, idiotic confidence on their faces. Perfect. One of them taps me on the shoulder, hard, and I turn around.

"You've got a mouth on you, old man," he spits. "I want you to go apologize to our girlfriends."

"And if I don't?"

"You'd better," says one of them. His hair looks like spiked plastic. "If you apologize and buy us a round of drinks, we'll let this thing go. But if you don't, we can go
outside and settle things there."

"Tall order for a bunch of little bleached-blond faggots," I say. One of them starts to take a swing at me but his friend holds him back.

"You're going to regret this, grandpa. Let's go outside right now."

"Fine by me." I toss back the rest of my drink in one gulp and get up. They follow me closely as I walk out the door and around the back of the bar. I stand with my back to a green dumpster and they start to converge on me. The adrenaline kicks in and the dull haze of alcohol clouding my brain is gone in an instant. It feels like it's been centuries, but this is something you never forget. I get too excited and hit the first one with everything I've got. His nose shatters and he slumps to the ground, unconscious. Got to be more careful. I want to make this last. I let them land a few punches and it feels like I'm in a pillow fight. I work up a sweat, keep the remaining three on their feet for a couple minutes. Then I decide to finish them off. I turn and hit one of them with a kick to the stomach, putting something extra on it just for fun. His breath leaves his body and he hits the pavement in less than a second. I take another one out with an uppercut, twisting my head at the moment of impact to avoid the spray of blood from his mouth. The old tricks still work. All that's left is the guy who tapped me on the shoulder. He's fallen to his knees and he's bawling like a newborn baby. He tries to beg, but all he can get out of his mouth are sobs and moans. I lean in close to his trembling face.

"You want mercy? You want mercy from me? You won't get it. I've seen shit that would turn your hair white. I've seen shit that would break you down into nothing. I've beat it all. I've killed men a thousand times stronger than you."

I could walk away. I could leave him here and let him thank God, let him pick up the pieces of his meaningless life. But not tonight. I rear back my fist, and--KAPOW!
He saw her there, alone, before he crossed the Guadalquivir, on the other river bank beside the mountain of oyster shells that grew through her long years. Each shell was husked apart by calloused fingertips and the ripe tongue was torn outward and flipped end over end across the ancient sun to fall in her basket. She was even older than the river and measured her age by fossilized sediment beds. When she rose up to greet the stranger, she stood like a black, gutted-out coastal tower, and he, who had passed over the yielding delta, stepped forward, channeling the divining rod of his mind into her subterranean lake of inner life. Her soul grew wings and flew away as a butterfly, but he took out his net and unsheathed his pins and pursued her. The gust of his unwelcome presence startled the black and white storks nesting in the pines and launched them upwards into the bright sun. So much dislodged radiance and feathers rained down between them, that it was as if the earth had spoken, shielding with black and white light the inner oyster of her virgin soul. And he was blinded, snapping shut his sight of the white pearl of ancestral wisdom within her depths, locked up from those who had forgotten, which left her as she had always been, immortal.
Impressionless
Drew Bauguess

Easy mediums don't enact nor
ignite lethargically catalyzing debris;
in fiction, one claims disownership,
yet writers know no valid cleave;
for fact bitingly proves otherwise,
exposing penman as mad murmurer
desperately searching the he(a)rd,
within quiet visual symbols.
Apathetic wrist captains
sail through falsely lived jails,
"pro"-reducing creation,
confiding achievement
as new, varied ink-sort;
when puzzles have players
merely stirring-up dirt,
hexing devoted enthusiasts.
I'm surprised blank exists,
because zero leaped from
place-holder to nothing,
without birth or perish;
and I yearn for void,
... a silently harmonic
spatial resonance...
thriving by deaf echoes.
Handing me an ice cube for inflamed canker sore, "Really?" – "no, falsely", I open this raw trap imploringly, hoping she'll relieve my gaping mouth; but her refusal insists I take ease instead.

Grasping frozen water, I gently tongue the spot; "I don't know if I should". "Quit being a baby pussy." Grossly offended and trying not to envision, I set and suck sting, admitting blunt frailty. "Better?", asked bitingly. "Numb isn't exactly healed." "Alright, don't thank me." Of course I'm appreciative; yet now she's lost concern or at least pretends ignoring. My swollen lips droop; April kisses reassuringly.
Isabelle Sophia in her red plastic sled across the snow fields, late in February. She will be four come this May. She likes to let her hands ride out alongside the sled leaving her tracks in the white as we go.

We have stopped many times to remove mittens and shake out snow.

We stop again. I notice her teeth they are chattering slightly. I reach my hand against her cheek. She stifles a shiver.

You are cold.

Yes Daddy, I am cold.

Then it’s time we go home.

No! She demands. The cold reminds me that we have to go down to the river.

I finish dusting out the ice from her mittens. I put them back on and puff up the scarf about her neck before turning the sled toward the banks of the Kennebec where we sat last fall to watch the beavers come and go from their palace of branch and twig and a warmth that can only be built and not simply walked into.
1

Looks like I am alive again.

2

On a night when I can feel the stars with my tongue,
euphoria
through my pilgrim hat.

3

I present myself
as one of the more impoverished voices,
as a page
with its edges torn off,
with its center gone
and missing.

4

I have no command over the language (never had),
it has completely overtaken me.
Words
have always had their way with me.

5

As a child
I was
momentarily soothed by the symbol for infinity,
the rest has been flawless.

6

Dawn to dusk,
and then again to rise
for work,
for the contested shelter of these days.

Yet that I am unable to return with anything more
than what must be let go of.

Perhaps I am aflame.
Moths keep circling my head.

I step out on to the prairie vast,
I strip myself down to a whirlwind.

In a moment of pure camouflage,
tears for my self running down the face of my self.

The hoax is now complete.
I can hear myself thinking about nothing.

The bell has spoken.
The spell is broken.
Blossoms like I never.

World where I loose my voice.
Dear Phil, Jim, Rachel, and Mike,

Thanks for your invitation to send in a sequence of poems about the same story that work together. These poems are about me at twelve years old when I lived in the artists loft next to Andy Warhol’s Factory in New York City. They involve people with different schools who collectively contribute to the art world and to each other an outlook on the world which, incidentally, has never faded. I’d like to include these for NEXUS.

My best wishes,

B.Z. Niditch
**EXPRESSIONIST**  
*(Manhattan, 1977)*

He expected suffering  
to only last till dark  
that dream life possesses  
only doubts until morning  
but starves  
(next to his kitchen step ladder  
taking his piece of pear)  
three faces came to him  
on a treasured ceiling  
in this sleeping summer  
his current and future  
which he expected  
in his desiccated absence  
to paint on dilapidated canvas  
without their shadows  
even to hurt even obliquely.

---

**SURREALIST**

You buy the vegetables  
frozen by darkness  
in the kitchen  
where paint accumulates  
in an avalanche  
of greens and reds  
everything is closed  
ever imagining Saturday  
near the unmade bed  
the minor bird starts  
to quiver from cold  
you stir yourself  
for a reason of impatience  
demanding each color  
would kiss your hands.
At twelve
you whisper to me in central park
that you are a daughter
of a displaced person
with no country or flag
retelling your father
after the war
was a missing person
and had amnesia
until he started to draw
and became a minimalist.

A day later
when you drove past me
on your motor bike
with a small action painting
behind you,
silence and even love
had a form
which curled inside me.

There are exiles
back in Petersburg
when it was Leningrad
there was Sasha
he always knew when the train
whistled in his hasty vision
somewhere out there
among a confetti parade
for a fireworks holiday
wanting to hear the station bell
now an exhausted memory
in featureless stone.
ANOTHER MONA

Maybe you will find that pose again
but you like your art linger like an enigma
even when I was eleven
and started to visit you in the loft
since no one was home and only you reached out to smile
when I carved up your breaking eggs and you put on jazz and gave me brie.

IMPRESSIONIST

She stood forever his model from gestures of a past memory
this July knows us only by a past
where shadows were images under her shadows which could slip away
with distance only a moment indecipherable and indifferent to a love effaced by limitless noontime.
at the doorway a child is dancing on Persian rug.
Let's not feel anyone
you dreamed of Botticelli
like some private affair
yet you told me
on the sofa bed
when you kept notebooks
near your mascara
and you imagined yourself
next to his tomb
four nights in a row
ripping me apart
with laughter and tears.
she had been making passes at me all year when I finally got drunk and fucked her on the kitchen floor.

I couldn't get it up at first but after staring at a poster of a spread eagle rock and roll chick with spiky breasts I got it up all right.

Once finished I layed down on top of the sheets while she cleaned herself off and I smelled the sex that the talking head shows say "sells so well!"

Once asleep I imagine I'm fucking another girl in another kitchen in another part of my life and I'm working on a snake that attacks my nuts.

"are you awake?"

It's 8:30 and my hangover has just begun.

"yeah, but I need some aspirin and booze to forget what just happened"

"fucking asshole!"

I was talking about the dream but I don't miss her and enjoy all the covers to myself.
it's a long time when you don't want to talk to someone.

especially on your cell phone or home phone or
soup can and string phone
swear to god... five minutes were just uncomfortable
pauses in between
meaningless comments attempting to mask our thoughts on
whether we would have more meaningless sex tonight.

sex
it's a good catalyst for unnecessary drama in the life of a
twenty, thirty, forty, or
fifty something.
If we do it and I still feel nothing, then I'll be real kinky
to scare her off and make her friends think
I was abused or something.

feet fetish or snowballer?
wait
I think her friend is into both.
Her father was there when I put sunglasses on over our blind love and took my heads-or-tails chances between wilderness and decorated kitchen counters: the shadow of different outcomes.

He looked in my eyes and I could see in them the old tires, the piece of scrap they carried with me inside, and the laces of thin threads carved around my hairy skull, the dark matter laying around with no grace.

I saw her, with her tinged confidence and small-time talk of mud bathes. Her and whose army concluding that gateways only open with golden keys and the low dead-end lock pickers who stand outside are sorely vain. Candles brighten when the flicker gets more breath to wind itself around, she said.

I could have smiled back to her father, whose times were as rough as mine, old and irish, whose bones were sandstone like mine are. But frowning, gesticulated know-how with pupil dynamism, and made sounds with my sneaker bottoms on wet grass.

Her love was above my old extension cord livelihood and thus skin does appear fragrant in white rose gardens. Her and her magic tricks illustrated disappearances and made slow audiences roll over with gut laughs and sorrow whatnot. No one saw the foggy stage curtains roll back from their corner institutions and kiss in the center, where she stood behind covered, smiling.

Her father's smile, that intuition, that motive for billboard signs that say, drink this, smoke this, and unwelcome over dinner-tables. Representatives, it seems, voted from different states the worldview of young men, grey colored, and not so big-time, not so friendly.

I confronted the reflex to look down with savage practicality and unworthy ignominy. Not listening to her previous words about justification, honor, and what's supposed to be worn with brown ties and black shoes, I very suddenly became, born of myself,
a beast, which to him I was, an abhorrent outlet of his daughter’s rebellious urges.

Without loftiness or basement space I harnessed her from the tips of my fist-forming fingers and the emptiness that she carved and what I could fit into that emptiness: love substances and sex and god and birds and other animals that we shared sights with opposite cage walls at the zoo that we were coming home from. And the sun and god... the moon, with its pale glow and beauty, unmatched, but for that of her beneath it.

Her father had a firm handshake.
Scott Loy

Man
Drew Bauguess

Untitled
Untitled

Drew Bauguess

Untitled
Untitled

Me
Passing judgement is much easier than being judged, and so we, the NEXUS staff, also submit for your judgement.
Mundane
Phil Estes

Phil Estes is technically the web editor for Nexus. Just don’t call him out on it.

she held one of her empty glasses and smiled at me through the smoke rubbed her hand on my leg the bar had a Cavs-Spurs game she said she may have to puke in my car but isn’t that what love is

I got a margarita it sat in a girly glass with a red rim she pulled her arms under mine and put her head on my shoulder her brown bangs over her eyes

she wanted to go home I took her back to her apartment carried her to bed laying in a ball under covers she said I like you a lot but if you ever hurt me I’ll slash your tires
I’m high on life.
David Kenworthy

David is our graphics department for Nexus. He is a student at WSU and is a Junior studying in Fine Arts. David enjoys microwaving insects in his spare time.
May Day in a Hospital Parking Lot
Rachel Peterson

The sun is coming up
On the other side of the parking garage.
The sky is red,
Or is it my eyes?
They haven't closed since the weekend,
When granny choked on her breakfast
Of strawberry pancakes and coffee.
A red ambulance for a flushed face.

I sit on a green bench
Outside the lobby,
A little growing space
For those waiting to die.
It's too dark to see buds,
But deeper greens lean
Toward human hands.

I smell lilacs,
Not the scent of hand lotion
Massaged onto bruised arms,
But clean and surgical,
Cutting a path to where I sit
With purple sweatshirt loosely pulled.

She wore two blue gowns,
Front and back,
She feared varicose legs and exposure.
But then was when her blue eyes
Could see condemnation.

A black cord connects her to life,
Mechanical rasping.
I left her darkened room
For this morning, for the scent of lilac.
A lust for life
Jim Tarjeft

She had great underwear that I liked to run my hands along while her breath was steady and her eyes closed. I tickled sometimes so she would stir and I would get a momentary opportunity to kiss her face as she tried to settle. I would lay my head on her shoulder and breathe on it a couple of times before kissing it; when she had her arm around me I would rest my hand on her belly when I wasn’t tracing it over her. I pulled her a lot, and when she was awake, doing the same, I would put both my arms over her shoulders around her tightly and squeeze. We breathed heavily our mixed scents and rolled over.

Jim listens to the blues and retires a miser.
When You're Gone
Michael White

The flowers are still fresh,
their scent still lingers in the air
between whiffs of your perfume
and redolent candles burned in pairs.

The furniture is still clean,
dust not settled yet on things;
no real evidence of your arrival
despite damp towels and tangled sheets.

The clock exaggerates the silence,
walls protest the space between,
doors closed as if in silent prayer,
the ceiling staring back in eggshell disbelief

as if it did not, cannot, know
the touch of your fingers
or the taste of your skin
and is jealous of the floors

over which you've padded
and the bed in which I lie awake,
through endless hours; drowning
in the absence you leave behind.
Antler, former poet laureate of Milwaukee, is author of Selected Poems (Soft Skull Press, New York). He also appears in the recent anthologies Poet Against the War: An Eye for an Eye Makes the Whole World Blind: Poets on 9/11; Red, White, and Blues: Poets on the Promise of America and The Soul Unearthed: Celebrating Wilderness & Spiritual Renewal through Nature.

Drew Bauguess is a student at Wright State University. He has been previously published in Nexus.

Alan Britt is from Reisterstown, Maryland. He has been published in Midwest Quarterly, Pacific Review, and Yomimono (Japan). He teaches English at Towson University.

Nathan Elmore received a B.A. in Broadcasting Communications from Cedarville University in 1994 and a Master of Divinity from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Deerfield, IL) in 1999. He worked as a Pastor of Young Adults at Salem Alliance Church in Salem, Oregon, from 2000-2003 and has recently accepted a position with Downtown Community Fellowship in Clemson, South Carolina.

Noah Falck currently teaches poetry to the elementary crowd in Dayton, OH. His work has appeared in Can We Have Our Ball Back, Speernt.com, Nexus, Orpheus, and elsewhere.

Arthur Gottlieb is from Tigard, Oregon.

Taylor Graham is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in the Sierra Nevada, who also helps her husband, a retired wildlife biologist, with his field projects. In addition to Nexus, her poems have appeared in America, Grand Street, The Iowa Review, The New York Quarterly, Poetry International, and elsewhere, and she’s included in the new anthology, California Poetry: From Gold Rush to the Present (Santa Clara University, 2004).
Brian Kellett is a freshman at Wright State University majoring in Art Education. He’s “into shooting things with his Canon digital camera and working on his website kosinedesign.com.”

Scott Loy grew a beard. It changed his life. He’s the bassist for the band Defend Means Attack.

Charlie Mehrhoff is from Oakland, Maine. He has been published in Nexus before as “Scarecrow.”

Eric Newland is a student at Wright State University.

B. Z. Niditch is from Brookline Massachusetts and has been published in Nexus before.

Kyle Nuske wrote a story about comic book heroes, but has, surprisingly, kissed a girl or two in real life. In addition to publishing a collection of short fiction, he plans to edit several volumes of the under-appreciated poetry of Marvin “Bad News” Barnes, a leading candidate for the ABA’s Rookie of the Year award in 1974.

Dawn Nyberg received her BA from Wright State University in 2000, and MFA in Creative from the University of Miami in 2004. She was the recipient of the James Michener Creative Writing Fellowship and the Larry Donovan Prize for Poetry. Her work has appeared in Grand Lake Review and Mangrove.

Gary Pacernick is an English professor at Wright State University. He has been published in past issues of Nexus. He interviewed Allen Ginsberg once.

Frank Praeger is from Houghton, Michigan.

Dee Rimbauld is an artist and writer, living in Glasgow, Scotland. He is author of two full-length collections of poetry and one novel: The Bad Seed (Stride, 1998), Dropping Ecstasy With The Angels (Bluechrome, 2004), and Stealing Heaven From The Lips Of God (Bluechrome, 2004). His art and writing have appeared in hundreds of print and internet magazines worldwide. He is editor of The Book Of Hopes And Dreams and The AA Independent Press Guide. His website is at: www.thunderburst.co.uk

Anis Shivani was most recently accepted into the Iowa Review, Prairie Schooner, Times Literary Supplement, Barrow Street, XConnect, Margie, Good Foot, Luna, Iris, and other journals.

Max Snavlin is from Westminster, Maryland.

Spex, also known as Mark Keineth, writes casually and manages the on campus radio station, WWSU (106.9 FM).

Kymberly Steel-Fannin is a second year student majoring in English at Wright State. Her love for poetry is second only to her love for her children.

Joe Taleroski’s first published story appeared in a local paper the month before it went under. Undaunted, he has since done poems, book reviews, essays, and the occasional short play. At the end of the long hard day he crashes in Central Ohio and dreams his homesick dreams of Pennsylvania.

David Trame’s poetry has appeared in The Shop, International Poetry Review, Stand, Dream Catcher, Orbis, Diner, and other magazines.

Anthony Walstorm is an American expatriate poet living in Madrid.
Linda Woolven has published 24 poems in journals across Canada, the United States and England. Her poems have appeared in journals like, Dana Literary Society, Amethyst Review, Write On, Sepia Poetry Magazine, New Mirage Quarterly, The Kaleidoscope Review, Canadian Writer’s Journal and Fullosia Press. One of her poems received an award from Dana Literary Society. She has also published a short story in Happy.

Nadav Zohar went to Cleveland Heights High and then Arizona State University, where he spent a year studying music and philosophy. He is currently a transfer student at Wright State seeking a degree in Motion Picture Production. He enjoys playing music, reading, writing, watching basketball, playing sports, and doing pretty much everything else. He is never bored.