

• SPRING 2022 •

VOLUME TWO, ISSUE ONE



*Sangam*

LITERARY MAGAZINE

K. ANDERSON • G. AUSTIN • G. BANDY • W. BARGEN • R. BRICKHOUSE  
S. CAMPIGLIO • S. DEUTSCH • J. FOWLER • J. GREY • P. HAMMOND • F. MAC  
M. MANGLANI • W. MCCRAY • N. PACCIONE • A. RUBIN • M. SARWAR  
G. SHAPIRO • M. J. SPIRENG • W. SWIST • J. UDALL • D. WEBRE

*SANGAM LITERARY MAGAZINE*

English and Philosophy Program  
Department of Languages and Literature  
Southern University and A&M College  
P. O. Box 9671, Baton Rouge, LA 70813–2023

*Sangam* is digitally published out of Southern University and A&M College

© 2022 *Sangam Literary Magazine*

*Sangam* is a work of fiction, any references to historical events, real people, or real places are strictly fictional. Other names, characters, places, or events are creations of each contributor, and any resemblance to actual events, including places and people, living or deceased, is merely coincidental.

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this collection or portions thereof in any format. For information and permissions, please contact *Sangam* at [ryan\\_mcguckin@subr.edu](mailto:ryan_mcguckin@subr.edu) or Ryan James McGuckin, Ph.D., Chief Editor, the Department of Languages and Literature, Southern University and A&M College, P. O. Box 9671, Baton Rouge, LA 70813-2023.

Set in Concourse and Equity

Type designed by Matthew Butterick at <https://mbtype.com>

*Sangam* logo set in Edwardian Script ITC

Photography by Heather Brooke

Layout and typeset by Ryan James McGuckin, Ph.D.

Cover art: Mark Rothko. *Untitled (Yellow and Blue)*.

1954. Sotheby's, New York, NY, United States.

<https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/contemporary-evening-n09345/lot.11.html>

Accessed March 2022.

For more information on Rothko's *Untitled (Yellow and Blue)*  
please see the above linked address.

\*A special thanks to Associate Editor Robert Calmes, M.A.,  
for his additional editorial work on portions of this issue's fiction segment.

[ISSN information forthcoming]

*SANGAM LITERARY MAGAZINE*

*Sangam* features and represents works by established as well as emerging writers, irrespective of age, sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or national origin. In this way, *Sangam*, a Sanskrit term for **joining together**, is, in fact, a coming together for all.

*Sangam* typically publishes in the fall and spring of each academic year through the Department of Languages and Literature at Southern University and A&M College's flagship campus in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. As Louisiana's largest Historically Black College and University (HBCU), Southern University is located in a bend of the Mississippi River, a locale with important literary significance, most recently home to Louisiana's previous Poet Laureate, John Smith, who is among its Baton Rouge campus faculty.

## **MASTHEAD**

### **CHIEF EDITOR**

Ryan James McGuckin, Ph.D.

### **ASSOCIATE EDITORS**

Jesus Avila, M.F.A.

Robert Calmes, M.A.

Christine Jeansonne, Ph.D.

James “Michael” Norris, M.F.A.

Ali Rezaie, Ph.D.

### **FOUNDING EDITOR**

Munir Muztaba Ali, Ed.D.



37	Aphrodite Selling Nectar of Forbidden Fruit	MOSTOFA SARWAR
40	Cloaked in Green and Red	MOSTOFA SARWAR
42	O Blue Wrapped Sleep	MOSTOFA SARWAR
44	Feasting on You	GREGG SHAPIRO
45	Storm	MATTHEW J. SPIRENG
46	The Old Guy Who Just Died	MATTHEW J. SPIRENG
47	Interlude	WALLY SWIST
49	Schoodic	WALLY SWIST
50	Postcards, from Maine	WALLY SWIST
54	Passing On	JAY UDALL

#### **FICTION**

57	Althea's Funeral	WAYNE MCCRAY
63	Staying on the Trail	NICK PACCIONE
66	The Embers	DANIEL WEBRE

#### **NOTES**

69	Contributors
76	Submissions and Permissions
78	A Note on the Type

## WAR AND ART

### SPRING 2022 INTRODUCTION



The unrelenting zeal of Russian President Vladimir Putin and his military forces continue to decimate the Ukraine, killing hundreds and displacing millions, while simultaneously crippling the lives of Russia’s own citizens and disrupting economies throughout the world. At the time of this writing, nineteen days have elapsed since Putin announced his special military operation and followed through by attacking the Ukraine, including its capitol, Kyiv, which had nearly 100,000 flee amid the sound of missiles and fighting.

When war emerges, so does art, including music. And considering music, it is hard to believe how the symphonies of famous Russian composer, Dimitri Shostakovich, suddenly feel unsettlingly contemporary, especially his Symphony No. 7, named “Leningrad.” Written in 1941, the symphony references the horrific 900-day Nazi blockade, siege, and starvation of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), which critic David Hurwitz classifies as “an episode of appalling human suffering and great hardship, as well as courage and self-sacrifice.”<sup>1</sup> Out of context, Hurwitz’s commentary could be easily mistaken for the latest reports and worries about Ukraine’s people. In this way, evoking Shostakovich is apt. Perhaps an enduring testament of his music is its ability to explicitly chronicle the fatal “consequences of open defiance” amid the “horrors of Soviet Life” from the 1920s through the 1960s.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> David Hurwitz, *Shostakovich Symphonies and Concertos: An Owner’s Manual* (Amadeus Press, 2006), 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

Sorrowfully, days past seem all too present.

Taking the above into account, I am moments away from witnessing a historic live benefit concert from The Metropolitan Opera at New York's Lincoln Center. Titled *A Concert for Ukraine*, Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin will lead The Met Orchestra and Chorus and a preeminent cast of vocal soloists, including bass-baritone Vladyslav Buialskyi, who hails from Berdyansk, a port city in southern Ukraine, where Russian forces currently occupy the city and surround its citizens, including Buialskyi's family. In dystopic like conditions, Russian soldiers patrol Berdyansk's streets on foot and in armored vehicles marked with Russia's pro-war symbol "Z." Additionally, Berdyansk officials have been ousted all while Russian musical and political propaganda, including past speeches by Vladimir Putin, populate the city's airwaves.<sup>3</sup> As war continues to threaten countless lives young and old alike, a mood of uncertainty looms. In short: the world is watching, which only further impresses the gravity of tonight's Met benefit concert.

Thankfully, this evening's proceeds and donations will go to Ukrainian relief efforts. And yet, while these efforts from Met musicians, directors, arts administrators, donors, staff, and concert goers provide a much needed lift from an ominous climate, to all of those listening, it is tonight's musical program that seeks to resurrect the hopes of all who tend to the live broadcast, even reaching the people in the Ukraine via live stream on The Met's website and, from Kyiv, the Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine, among several dozens of stations around the world.

The concert will feature a selection of musical offerings that are of the moment but also very much speaking to a longer span of historic poignancy, with universally celebrated works of loss, such as Samuel Barber's deeply cathartic and mournful "Adagio for Strings," as well as works of revival and hope, including the Finale

---

<sup>3</sup> Shawn Walker and Isobel Koshiw. "'We're Living a Nightmare': Life in Russian-occupied Southern Ukraine," *The Guardian*, March 14, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/14/were-living-a-nightmare-life-in-russian-occupied-southern-ukraine>

to Ludwig van Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, known to so many as his “Ode to Joy.” Opening the concert, with Ukrainian singer Vladyslav Buialskyi, will be the National Anthem of Ukraine, musically setting the tone of global solidarity for which this concert generates its full efforts of compassion.

This is the backdrop of *Sangam* Spring 2022, which I present in **dedication** to the **people of the Ukraine**. The cover features Mark Rothko’s 1954 painting *Untitled (Yellow and Blue)*. Though Rothko’s work is neither from this moment nor meant as a reference to Ukraine, it is difficult to ignore that Rothko’s enduring abstract expressionism keenly speaks to our dire political contours. Given this growing and collective exigency, we might notice that Rothko’s painting not only shares a likeness with Ukraine’s flag, but it also inverts the colors, visually encapsulating the current state of affairs: a country turned upside down in physical and political chaos to no end. To accentuate matters, *Sangam*’s red border surrounds the Rothko painting, deliberately signaling Russia’s continued assault and suffocation of the Ukraine. Though *Yellow and Blue*’s “vessels of pure color and light” provide viewers a climate of transcendent optimism, the “subtly perceptible strokes of Rothko’s brush” imbues the work with an “exquisite complexity” that transmits the presence of something “implicitly more tragic” beneath the canvas.<sup>4</sup> With these considerations, we anxiously wait and pray for saved lives and the end of conflict.

March 14, 2022



**RYAN JAMES MCGUCKIN, PH.D.**

CHIEF EDITOR, *SANGAM LITERARY MAGAZINE*

---

<sup>4</sup> “Contemporary Art Evening Auction/Lot 11,” Sotheby’s, accessed March 14, 2022.

<https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/contemporary-evening-n09345/lot.11.html>



## **POETRY**

**KEN ANDERSON**

MRS. GRAHAM'S SCHOOL FOR DANCE

In a picture frame, I strike a dancing pose (ta-da!),  
A pudgy Fred Astaire in a white tuxedo, top hat in hand.

Once I gawked as Fred went skipping  
Up a flight of dance steps (tap, tap, tap)  
To glittering stars. I longed to run right into the film  
And lace up my own pair of wings.

In dancing school, I out-tapped drumsticks, poised  
*En pointe*, and pranced the minuet, proud  
As a racehorse winning the Triple Crown.  
A radiant youngster trained at the barre  
In tandem with the lithe *danseur*  
Who danced in his dreams.

Mrs. Graham had pinned me like a rhinestone brooch  
On her improvised TV show, and every week  
Coppelius made a newfangled toy  
With a wind-up key in its back. The local Shirley Temple  
(Big smile) tap-danced on air.

In junior high, I tooted trumpet, second chair,  
Like green beans next to steak. Red-haired Danny beat me  
Out of first, first up, then down the scales like Fred on steps.  
In high school, though, I blew him off his chair  
And lay down my horn like a gun.

Thespian next, I played the *ingénu*.  
A teacher drove me to the ruins  
Of a Southern mansion set in oaks.  
I hemmed and hawed and drove myself

Where I sat in the car  
Outside a cathouse strung  
With Christmas lights. With care,  
I lay that exciting secret down  
On paper, kept like a fossilized fern.

Now I set a candle in the center  
Of three facing mirrors. I call this setup: poem.  
One mirror hangs in the mind; one, the heart;  
And one, the body— flame, the image flickering in each.

Thus, Art stepped forth. The piano banged, all  
The way back to a one and a two  
And a hop, shuffle, step, kick, hop, shuffle, step.

**GEER AUSTIN**

**URBAN HIGH**

Pigeons spiral above Brooklyn  
Roan and iridescent gray/green  
Showing their pearly undersides  
As they descend. A circle of wings  
Reflecting sunlight like jets  
Homing in on an airport.  
Their pigeon guy stands atop  
The tenement next door  
Waving a giant wand, the birds  
Mirroring his motions. Co-dependent  
Them for food  
Him for companionship  
They dip and swirl, an avian tango.

**GEORGE BANDY**

**BEFORE**

The world has yet to be transected  
With latitude and longitude,  
Yet already etched  
And upholstered in blue  
To fit the general hue  
Of the ocean planet theme,  
The H<sub>2</sub>O standard,  
Whether bluebottle mottled,  
Or shades between,  
And life was soupy strings  
Of protein yet to be decanted:

Life in a bottle:

With many a strider  
Striving to escape  
Undersea currents  
And tidal basins,  
While tugged to hidden summits,  
Not mountains  
But their negatives:

Edgy trenches submarine:

Microscopic swimmers  
At every depth  
Whipping to oases of vulcanian vent,  
Or gliding with scummy in-tides,  
Swirling caught,  
Until they break the surface

To hitch a ride  
Shore-bound, light bound,  
Supported by nothing more  
Than surface tension  
And a riddle.

**WALTER BARGEN**

MEMPHIS BLUES AGAIN

*August 16, 1977*

1

I was there when Elvis died.  
No, I wasn't on the grounds, in the room,  
In the mansion. I had no upwelling feelings  
Of sorrow, grief, regret that I never  
Really listened to his records,  
Or went out of my way to see  
His movies, though I remember  
Clearly reading the Army *Stars and Stripes* in 1958,  
Or, at least, the caption under a photograph,  
His hair cut short, I guess to keep lice  
From enlisting in his hip-thrust martial music.

Though he was drafted and stood  
In his G.I. fatigues, half-smiling,  
Stationed in Germany, far enough away  
Not to further undermine the moral character  
Of youth, even as I was discovering  
My young life in a second-floor apartment,  
Always in search of another remnant of war  
In some nearby field, just to cherish a spent cartridge,  
To find a rusting bayonet, to know lives lost and rescued,  
Twenty years before Elvis' own swan song,  
Though now I can join the legions  
Of sequined impersonators, crooning my few  
Faltering chords of Heartbreak Hotel.

2

I stared past the sliding glass doors'  
Half-open curtains, the second floor  
Motel room just four blocks from Graceland.  
I wondered what I was going to do  
Now that I'd hung up the phone, told  
There would be no work today,  
The vastly white, surging crowds too difficult  
To drive a pickup through  
To get to the Mississippi's flood plain.

No concrete pipe to lay, no joints to grout  
And waterproof, no walls to form and pour,  
No after work clang of horseshoes,  
Drink beer and lose money,  
Exchange jokes as we tested each other,  
Could we really laugh together,  
The white foreman hired from a nearby state,  
Hired to oversee an all-black crew. Decades after  
His death, the music somehow different.

**ROBERT BRICKHOUSE**

A DISTANT LAND

Wake to fog—*brouillard*—clatter and clank  
Of a market unfolding below  
Through the streets of the town.  
Vendors of flowers, spices, olives, liqueurs.  
A thousand years of this clamor and bustle.

We drive in mist deep into the hills.  
The sun finally breaks through, a flash on a lake.  
We stop for coffee in an old stone inn,  
Dark with low ceilings, a chatty *patronne*.  
A mustachioed gent at the bar  
Takes *vin blanc* and toast for his breakfast.  
Two friendly dogs wander through  
To much laughter, a refill of wine.

On a leafy path in a village park  
We eat our sandwich and grapes under the trees.  
At about this hour, would be just before dawn,  
My mother stirs in her sleep.

In time the phone rings.  
*Can you hear me? I'm so sorry. Her heart...*

In late afternoon sun, across a canal,  
The lock-keeper's lodge empty and cold.  
There's a green field with cows and chickens and sheep.

**ROBERT BRICKHOUSE**

FAMILY LORE

Down a gravel lane through the cornfields  
Past the mines, the town with its brick school,  
He drove home from Number One, walked out  
With the dog to water the garden  
At day's end with buckets from the pump.  
She'd wrung a chicken's neck, baked plain loaves,  
Filled canning jars through the afternoon  
On the stove they kept in the cellar,  
Their shelter during the tornadoes.

Fireflies high in the trees, he rested  
In his armchair with his briar pipe,  
The radio tuned to the murmur  
Of a ballgame. She sat across with  
Needles and thread; the mantle clock chimed.  
He'd gone into the mines at age twelve,  
At twenty-one sailed off in steerage.  
She came over the following year  
When they could afford better passage.  
To a land of scorching summers,  
Winter drifts; built a house, a new life.  
Raised five children, saw them all through school.  
He was scornful of neighbors who pined  
For the old country. "If they love it  
So much, why did they leave?" She often  
Pondered this riddle and remembered.  
On hottest nights some slept on the floor  
By the screen door in hopes of a breeze.  
The freight trains whistled past the far fields.

In hard years homeless men would hop down.  
They knew a simple meal could be found.

**STEPHEN CAMPIGLIO**

LAMP OF POETRY

I turn you on and off.  
You turn me in and out  
To the tree line

Of a soggy, barren athletic field.  
Clouds of cigarette smoke  
Push the fog into a hybrid mass.

Listening to the passing of water,  
I counsel myself, and think of you  
As the ball out there on the dark grass,

Covered in dew, ready for me  
To retrieve you, or intimating  
That I should leave you behind.

**STEPHEN CAMPIGLIO**

**RESEARCH THE POEM<sup>5</sup>**

As part of the city's rededication project,  
Adler Alley that runs between  
Vesuvio Cafe and City Lights Books  
Has been renamed "Jack Kerouac."  
In the storefront window, his face  
On a dust jacket inside a display case  
Peers out into sidewalk traffic.  
I have my celebratory drinks  
On the second floor of the bar,  
Looking down on the sign,  
Then walk outside to Jack Kerouac Street,  
And enter at "000."  
After two or three knobless doors,  
Which must be emergency exits,  
The sign at the other end reads "End,"  
And I turn the corner, amused.  
An ancient tenet held  
That our notion of death  
Was only the inability  
To connect the end with the beginning.  
Considering this, I round the block,  
Pass Jack again, and repeat the tour  
Of this dank alley, bookmarked  
By the fat emptiness of the zero  
And the lean authority of the letter.  
Several years later,

---

<sup>5</sup> An earlier version of this poem first appeared in the journal *Sahara* (Worcester, MA: 2002).

While living on the east coast,  
I call San Francisco City Hall  
For a statement about the rededication,  
But the planning board clerk  
Finds no record of Jack Kerouac.  
I know, I say, I know where it is.

**STEPHEN CAMPIGLIO**

**WORK IN PROGRESS**

The afternoon work led nowhere; the artist, gone.  
As evening arrives, the rhythm of traffic drives

Window-shaped lights through undrawn shades,  
Which sweep across the room

And past the easel in the dark corner  
Where an unfinished canvas stands;

Evanescent brush strokes by an alien hand,  
Work that leads somewhere.

**STEVEN DEUTSCH**

SNOWLINE

All night  
The neighborhood  
Houses shuck  
Their tents  
Of snow.

“One more spring,”  
You’d chant  
As if urging  
On the nag  
You had two bucks  
On to win.

By tomorrow  
The snow-  
Line on the ridge  
Will show green  
At its  
Edges—  
Dabs of  
Watercolor  
On a fresh canvas,

And the walkways  
Will be pockmarked  
With icy puddles—  
A gag gift  
From the departing season.

Sleepless,  
I look back  
On what  
The winter  
Has taken  
And what still  
Binds us.

**JAMES FOWLER**

SHAGGY SAGA

In the city of roundabouts, we fly off on tangents.  
The shopping and dining are good at first,

But choices swamp us. Cardigan or naproxen?  
Pressure-assist or Android? Grilled squid or earbuds?

We are constantly battling the GPS,  
Flummoxed to tears by the infotainment.

Face it: we'll never be our gearhead kids.  
We've grown scared of our bossy fridges.

Then we see the ad from Lady Gray:  
*Treat yourself to a soothing cortical cleanse.*

The \$10 coupon seals it. We find her spa  
Sandwiched between the tenderloin and crystal districts.

"Relax and let my patented pipe cleaners do their magic."  
Scoffers would fake-sneeze "lobotomy," but

Minty-fresh scent effervesces through our skulls.  
We rush hillward to test our mythic minds.

"I spy with my inner eye...a king!" "Lame, fishing?"  
"Uh, no." "Vanquishing varlets?" "Nope." "What then?"

"Picking his teeth." False start. A passing bishop  
Takes pity and sets us back on track:

"There's something mysterious going down on Easy Street."  
Sure enough, everyone there looks like a figure

From a Renaissance perspective painting. They gesture  
In large, deepening ways. Some use handkerchiefs.

Encouraged, we follow a man in plaid underground  
To chambers of Muscovite splendor linked by tunnels

At great speed. In one of them we meet a sage  
In soiled garb who counsels us on beasts and seasons.

“This is your stop,” he says on parting, and we  
Climb endless steps, pausing to recover breath.

At last, we emerge into daylight, only to be swept up  
In a gathering of tribes on the march against

Dark powers sullyng the land, greedy barons oppressing  
The poor. The foes themselves never show, instead

Sending mercenary knights who use their horses  
To shove the peasants around. As we find an exit,

The glass-shattering and scorn-pelting has begun.  
Disheartened, we trek on until we arrive at a lake

On whose shore a crowd builds boats from the sheerest  
flexible wood. Yes, we too will paddle to a new country.

We christen our beaver-shaped vessel *Intrepidness*  
And launch upon the waters. One after another

Brave crews sink beneath the waves from all  
That oaring with snow shovels and hockey sticks.

We alone reach the island paradise rich in birds.  
Ducks, geese, swans, peacocks, flamingoes, etc.

Lots of birds. Enough to shake a stick at.  
Because they're always underfoot. An archipelago

Might have been preferable. With a choice of isles.  
Choice is good. Better odds of happiness, right?

**JAMES FOWLER**

SOMETHING ELSE

Take those who, after running  
With bulls and bears, leave the race  
And throw in with manatees,  
Runoff nitrogen their new *bête noire*.

The coder equal to the slyest malware  
Suddenly pulls the plug. Last heard of,  
He's in the desert making collages  
From rusted soda and diner signs.

It waits patiently in darkness,  
That private Lascaux so different  
From everything the world's screens  
Flash in beguiling resolution.

Smoky glimpse of hoof, spear tip,  
And the Madison Ave. whiz kid  
Is teaching Spanish to tough customers  
In hard-luck Wilkes-Barre.

All along it's been something else.  
Not the winning record, but the smell  
Of fresh-cut grass, the pop-fly geometry  
That seemed dead flat in books.

For decades you bust hump for  
The custom-built by the fairway,  
Only to like best the distant  
Ridge out the bathroom window.

It starts beyond property lines,  
Past ironclad legal fictions.  
Follow through fields, groves,  
See yourself at stream's edge,

Plain elements of the journey,  
As if days were stages of growth,  
Space not the measure of empire  
But extensive heart country.

It's like you've been accenting  
The wrong syllable these many years.  
Or the first time you cottoned  
To one of those quick-shift pictures.

A goblet, you said, brought up on  
The merits of filling and draining.  
The next moment, something else:  
Two faces intent on a kiss.

**JOHN GREY**

**THE POSSIBILITIES**

Our paths never crossed.  
Good for both of us.  
I was married at the time.  
There was a night  
When I was away from home on business,  
With cash in my pocket  
And a driving urge between my legs,  
That I could have sought you out.  
I'm not sure how it would have gone down though  
How much desire, how much business deal.  
I've never approached passion on such terms.  
But, lying in a strange bed,  
I sure could imagine the sweat of it,  
My nostrils sated with a hot perfume  
And you, maybe as desultory  
As a wife ten years to the good  
But, at least, in my lurid hopes,  
Moaning and groaning,  
Mumping and bumping,  
As if you were paying me.  
I'd never have learned your secrets.  
There's no price for that, I'm sure.  
You could have had a mother  
In a nursing home,  
A child asleep in the next room,  
Maybe even a guy  
On your emotional radar  
Who, you vowed, must never know  
What you do for a living.

But I never made the call,  
Feared how filthy, how rotten I'd feel after,  
Even if there were moments  
I enjoyed the masquerade.  
So, we never met.  
Maybe you found yourself another  
Client instead.  
Or there could have been an hour or two  
When you felt the need  
But no one was there for you.  
He was in a hotel close by,  
Calling home, then finally nodding off to sleep.  
That's my secret.  
It's not ours.

**JOHN GREY**

**THE HOME THROUGH HISTORY**

It was the cave at first.  
Or thatched branches

held up by sticks.  
And then the stone pile

On the hillside, the log hut  
In the valley.

It was, most of all  
An enclosed space,

Protecting its inhabitants  
From the weather

And the wolves outside.  
It grew upward.

It grew outward.  
Primitive shelter

Beneath the  
Highway overpass

Or in a doorway  
Was the least of it.

But from there  
Came the lean-to,

The shack, the cottage,  
The tenement building,

Apartment block,  
Farmhouse,  
  
Suburban home,  
All the way up to  
  
Mansion and palace.  
Almost everybody  
  
Moved in some place  
Along the way.  
  
The few,  
Not always the most deserving,  
  
Ended up in  
Those luxurious estates.  
  
There's still one or two  
Who live off what  
  
The land provides,  
Sleep under the stars.  
  
I can't decide  
Where they belong on my list.  
  
Sometimes, I think the beginning.  
Sometimes, I'm sure it's the end.

**JOHN GREY**

**AS A FATHER ADMIRES HIS DAUGHTER'S NEW CAR**

In my dream, you slept in black shroud,  
Utterly dead—there was this deep silence,  
Killed in a three—car pileup, because you had  
Lost so much, now drove fast enough to  
Give the rest away—seventeen, a young woman,  
Blitzed by metal and tar, on a highway with  
Your teeth knocked out and your arteries severed—  
Nothing beautiful, just a rank coldness,  
Eyeless eyes staring up at me, maybe a tremble  
Of the lip, a feckless tongue struggling to say  
The word “stupidity” or was it “stupid you.”

But I'm awake now, on the front porch,  
Waving as you fumble with the keys,  
Drive off to the store or a girlfriend's  
Or maybe up and down the suburban streets  
Just to hear the radio blast.

In my dream, I identified you through  
Red eyes, dark guilt—I had driven you  
Even with my hands far from the wheel—  
Detectives scoured the wreck for  
Evidence of me—my sleep was taken  
Away in chains—a courtroom sat behind  
My right ear—a jury of fathers found me  
Guilty as you have often charged—  
The judge pulled away your shroud, folded  
It into a black hood, slipped it over his face,  
Was about to pronounce my death sentence,

When your eyes opened, your body twitched,  
You were alive after all.

No, that was me rousing this morning,  
Rubbing my face, dousing it in cold water.  
And I'm awake now, on the front porch,  
Waving as you fumble with your keys.  
Just remember, wherever you're headed,  
I've already seen you there.

**JOHN GREY**

**MY PLACE IN THE WORLD**

The teacher pointed to a country on the globe  
And asked me to name it.  
I knew it was Canada, but I shook my head  
And said nothing.  
“What’s happened to you, John?” she asked.  
I had made a decision not to be so smart.  
My brains had been getting me noticed.  
And not in a good way.

That was one of my early lessons in life.  
Cool had nothing to do with intelligence.  
And attitude was all the rage in sixth grade.  
Girls were not yet in the frame.  
My mind was attuned to the car I’d  
Be driving when I grew up,  
The uniform I’d be wearing,  
Not the pretty young woman on my arm.  
Identify a car and model as it zipped by  
And you were a kid to be reckoned with.  
Finding Canada on a map  
Could get your nose broken.

I didn’t totally abandon my head, however.  
I read books in secret.  
Not just adventure stories.  
I thumbed through the encyclopedia.  
Like an addict, I couldn’t help myself.  
And I retained facts that are with me to this day.

But, in the playground,

It was back to panning for popularity.  
I shared a stolen cigarette.  
I produced a model Ferrari racing car  
To the astonishment of all.  
And I could talk at length  
On James Bond's gadgets and guns.  
But not his women of course.

So, I found some friends  
But my heart wasn't with them.  
They were as dumb as goalposts.  
They longed to grow up  
So they could say "fuck" in public.  
They couldn't find Australia on a map  
Let alone Canada.

The break wasn't clean and in the moment.  
It was more of a drift.  
They slowly went one direction, I another.

The teacher pointed to a country on the globe  
And asked me to name it.  
"Romania," I declared.  
Actually, it was Yugoslavia.  
I was on my way to being me.  
I just wasn't there yet.

**JOHN GREY**

**THE TORTOISE ON THE HILL**

Hundreds of millenniums  
Slowly ascending the gentle hill  
Encased in a hard shell

So it's taken its time  
Getting here

Though it's evenly paced  
And deliberate  
In its motion

Like all that's solid,  
Continuous,  
And with a rhythm  
No drummer could slow down enough  
To beat.

Hundreds of millions of years,  
Intricately patterned,  
An elongated head  
Of wizened skin  
And eyes of semi-curious stone.

Any moment now  
He'll notice me.

Compared to the reptile,  
I'm newly hatched.  
He'll be looking around'  
For my eggshells.

**PEGGY HAMMOND**

BENEDICTION

there is always  
a loosening,  
a floating away.

end of day,  
a child's  
errant balloon

drifting higher,  
subsumed  
in our blink.

end of love,  
a slender cord  
slipping our

grasp,  
leaving fingers  
curled around

ache left  
behind as  
parting gift.

end of life,  
a silent lifting,  
infinitesimal

shift, light  
fraying  
darkness

as you quietly  
pass  
through.

**FRANCES MAC**

**A DEBUNKING**

We are instructed not to panic in the event  
Of an emergency. This is misinformation.

Laminated escape plans, the confusion  
Of arrows and red lines, the smoke,

The intruder, the storm, the warm flush  
Of imminent harm—some trigger will blow

Up death into a real and building toppling  
Beast. Panic will emerge from its burrow

As a competent fist; it will dim cries, make  
The neon of an exit sign glow caustic,

Firm the muscles as they rush against  
A blocked door, pump the legs

Into a graceful sprint. We will harbor  
Among snakes in unmown grass,

The tender of our Achilles exposed.  
We will do our best. If bitten

Or shot or vanquished, the error is  
Never fatal. That is the other myth.

We go on and on and on and on.

**MIRIAM MANGLANI**

**THE THREE WORDS**

I remember what you told me by the sea,  
your cocktail breath mingled with the salty air,  
reflections of the beach in your green eyes,  
and your face streaked with sunblock  
speckled with sand.

The teddy bear you won  
for me by playing *Whac-a-Mole*  
sitting expectantly next to you,  
its legs hanging over the concrete wall.

The soft music from the Ferris wheel in the distance,  
just loud enough to be heard,  
briefly washed out of the fresh air by  
the squawking flock of seagulls taking flight.

Perhaps they knew we needed privacy  
to allow you to wake the three words  
that were always there,  
always nestled between us like sleeping children.

The ones I said back to you,  
to allow you to feel them throb,  
as you brushed strands of hair from my face  
and let me taste a bit of your cocktail.

**ANELE RUBIN**

LATE WINTER

A thick mat of brown leaves  
Covers the ground under the trees  
On the edge of the park,  
Leaves, it seems, from years of falling.  
Leaves fall when trees are done with them.  
These have not been raked, blown, or swept  
Away, kicked through, or taken in.  
Plastered on the earth,  
They winter under snow  
And each fall grow a new layer  
Though *grow* isn't right  
To say about the dead.  
They fuse together beneath  
But on top you can see  
Each pale brown leaf  
Still distinct  
As sun catches  
The last traces of snow.

**MOSTOFA SARWAR**

APHRODITE SELLING NECTAR OF FORBIDDEN  
FRUIT

*Protesting the arrest and torture of Pori Moni<sup>6</sup>*

I heard: Alexander, son of God  
As his mother Olympias claimed  
Brought the alluring statue  
Of his beloved sister  
All the way to India

The fear of *Gangaridai*  
Ancient kingdom of Bengal  
Nearly incited mutiny  
In Alexander's Macedonian Brigade

"Better run away, Alexander,"  
Whispered Zeus  
"Run, run, Alexander"

The marauder, plunderer  
Never dared tread East of *Beas*  
He ran, ran away

During his retreat  
Alexander, the Coward, left behind  
The statue of his loving sister  
On the bank of *Iravati*

I heard: Chanakya and Chandragupta,  
Alexander's Indian mercenaries, while deserting  
Stole that statue.

---

<sup>6</sup> A movie actress of Bangladesh.

And buried  
That seductive sculpture  
In the *Yamuna*

No wonder  
Ancient ritual was followed  
With impunity

I heard: on the sandy shoal  
Of *Yamuna*'s sepulture  
She appeared for a while  
Lord Krishna played *Sringar*—an erotic raga  
On his magic flute

A thousand years passed  
*Yamuna*'s stream current  
Transported that joyful statue  
Deposited it downstream  
By the lower Ganges  
Under a mango-pine

I heard: aggrieved Zeus, the father,  
Breathed life into that lovely statue  
Perhaps these are tell-tales  
But under the mango-pine  
In the wet smell of a paddy field  
Of erstwhile *Gangaridai*  
Everybody saw  
A sensuous Aphrodite  
Far from the river *Iravati* of *Punjab*

Erotic Tsunami  
Invaded land and ocean  
I heard: an octogenarian in London  
Found again his youth  
Played *raga Sringar* on magic flute  
Spreading the scent of night Jasmine

All over the Brick Lane of Tower Hamlets  
It could be tell-tale

I heard: worms of Bengal  
Are dancing in wild merriment  
In the polluted reed forest  
One can see the primal  
Dirty dances

Perhaps these are tell-tales  
I heard: Aphrodite is selling  
Ambrosia, nectar of the forbidden fruit

**MOSTOFA SARWAR**

**CLOAKED IN GREEN AND RED**

Autumn's sky was not loud  
With thunder and rain  
It was covered with white cloud  
On morning's infinite pane

In the panorama of poplar catkins  
Red China-rose gently hugged  
The night-flying jasmine  
And paper gardenia blushed

The pandals were built for  
Durga Puja  
Goddess Durga would adore  
Magical Bijoya

She would celebrate victory  
Over evil's territory  
Mists of joy would caress  
Merriment would coalesce  
Over the ravaged terrace  
Happiness would harness

Suddenly, from the arid desert  
Appeared the dangerous herd  
Venomous scorpions  
By strange mutation  
Metamorphosed demons  
Toxic killer scorpions

Factory-made zealots  
Made-ugly maggots

Dangerous robots

Incendiary bigots

Blazed and looted the market

Killed and filled the casket

Raped and blazed

Killed and raped

Cops silent with musket

Dead filled the basket

Temples bloodied and damaged

Cities and towns ravaged

*Bangladeshi* witnessed

Everybody silently braced

Gloated, political robbers

Of all shades and colors

On the banks of the Ganges

Drunk on nectar of vengeance

Cloaked in green and red

Masqueraded and dressed

Murder and laughter

Horrible slaughter

Waves and blood scatter

All by the river

Humanity plundered and raped

Hindus ran away and escaped

Their land torched and grabbed

Rulers danced and news blabbed

*(Communal violence against Hindus, the religious minority of Bangladesh, continues and it peaked on October 13 when, on a bogus pretext, criminals attacked the arena of annual Durga Puja festival destroying sacred idols. Following the first attack, criminal mobs vandalized temples and torched Hindu homes at various locations throughout the country. It is happening every year, and no justice is in sight.)*

**MOSTOFA SARWAR**

**O BLUE WRAPPED SLEEP**

*For the memory of Yasunari Kawabata<sup>7</sup>*

O blue wrapped sleep,  
O ethereal plant!  
Play, play the melodies of rainbow  
On your sparkling-colored leaves.  
Here the mathematical metaphors  
Make me tired forever,  
Make me tired,  
Like the metaphysical passion of the center of nucleus.  
Please take me,  
Take me away from this sick world,  
Take me on the wings of sleep.

Show me the beautiful paintings  
Bring me melodies,  
Dreamy pictures of my memories,  
And be the lovely of symphony,  
And then caress like infinite love...  
Call me with loveliest words...  
For many years I have been plagued by insomnia  
I am tired...o blue wrapped sleep!

I have seen the glowing neon Tokyo  
Like a sleepless owl—  
Everywhere the luring face of billboards.  
I have seen blinking stars  
And the chronic-diseased world—

---

<sup>7</sup> A Japanese Noble Laureate in literature, who committed suicide in 1972.

I am weary of seeing all these.  
Now I have come to this sea-beach,  
O ethereal bird  
Unfolding your blue wings,  
Take me on your mysterious hyper-plane,  
Take me to the Land of Lotus-Eaters,  
Take me to the Land of endless sleep.

**GREGG SHAPIRO**

FEASTING ON YOU

*for Aaron (1959–2006)*

On a blue blanket on the Esplanade, you were still  
Wearing the wristwatch he gave you. The gift  
You couldn't accept from the man who shared

Your sense of humor in tasteless greeting cards.  
There was no room for you, so you made yourself  
Uncomfortable on the grass. The bugs swarmed

Above us, as if they knew before the night was  
Over, we would have picked someone apart  
Like vultures and left the rest for them.

**MATTHEW J. SPIRENG**

**STORM<sup>8</sup>**

The trees on the ridge could be on the move,  
marching off as storm clouds threaten—or  
are the clouds receding after the storm,

a misty light on the hills and valleys beyond?  
There is no way of knowing which. It could be  
a series of storms, one about to hit soon after

another has gone. The trees on the ridge  
give no hints, really, and the first impression  
that they are mobile is false. They are waiting.

For the storm to come? For the sky to clear?  
For a change in seasons? It is what trees do  
best. They spend their whole lives waiting.

---

<sup>8</sup> After “Storm,” archival pigment print from *Dreams and Other Things* by Gloria Baker Feinstein.

**MATTHEW J. SPIRENG**

**THE OLD GUY WHO JUST DIED**

The old guy who just died was  
the only person besides me  
who knew about the time

I showed up to help cut down  
a huge ash tree in the woods  
behind his house, but the chain

was dull on my chainsaw—really,  
really dull, so dull it might have been  
easier to cut the tree by hand

with a crosscut saw. You'd have  
thought the tree was made of steel  
it was such a struggle, and I

felt like a fool for showing up  
with a saw so dull, a complete fool  
only the old guy and I knew about

all these years—around forty years,  
I'd say—only now he's gone and I'm  
the only one left who knows—or knew,

assuming he told no one just as I  
told no one, not a single soul  
for all those years before this.

**WALLY SWIST**

INTERLUDE

At seven bells,  
Sunday morning carillon,  
We sit in the rose garden  
With the zodiac sundial  
Behind the arboretum,  
The sunlight making  
The gossamers shine  
And flash up and down  
Their lengths in the trees.

American yellowwood petals  
Thick beneath its trunk,  
White and fragrant.  
Beside the pond, we pick up  
Tulip tree buds, loosened  
From its eminent height,  
Looking like painted oriental  
Parasols, dropped on the path.

On the bridge over the falls,  
We rescue a dragonfly,  
Thorax adhered to pavement,  
From its being too sticky with  
Pollen, by moving it onto a leaf  
With my pocket comb,  
That we carry over to the grass  
Still glossed with dew,  
Before it surprises us  
When it flies out of our hands

To dart beneath tree shadows  
Along the river.

There are so many windblown  
Petals fallen onto the pond  
The eddies swirl with  
A white and pink froth.

This is our interlude.  
This is how we pray.

**WALLY SWIST**

**SCHOODIC**

The sun beats on the blocks  
Of rocks the sea pounds  
Against. Wave after wave  
Of what is insurmountable

In raw nature's power  
Openly demonstrative  
Here at Schoodic, point  
Of elemental essence,

Of sensing what is immense  
About both distance  
And proximity. Schoodic,  
Your breadth echoes within

And resonates through us  
With each sea-surge,  
With each boulder traversed.  
You move us past

The uncertainty of being  
Within your shore and remain  
Within us by the extended  
Breadth of your expanse,

By our briefly inhabiting  
What is an inimitable eminence,  
And by just standing amid your  
Sea-hammered sun-lit presence.

**WALLY SWIST**

POSTCARDS, FROM MAINE

1.

An osprey nest  
Atop the metal girders  
Connecting power lines,  
Its large round basket  
Of sticks holding  
Their fledgling chicks,  
Heads emerging  
From above the woven  
Rims of nesting.

The magnitude  
Of an osprey's wings  
Row through air before  
It folds them to dive  
For fish in the sea  
To nourish their young brood.

2.

Nesting loons  
Call to each other through  
The early afternoon  
Across the glassy  
Silver reflections  
Of Green Lake.

3.

There is a saying, "When you go  
To Maine, don't bring the city

With you.”

When you go to Maine,  
Leave your troubles behind.

While you're in Maine,  
Assume responsibility  
To respond to the awareness

To find a new  
Frame of mind.

4.

At Acadia,  
Taking the carriage trail  
To the bridges at Hadlock Falls,  
Spearmint along the scrub ditch,  
We pause at the first  
Of two bridges, hobblebush  
Growing among the stones,  
The falls just trickling down  
Ledge to ledge;  
The trail trimmed with  
Light purple blueberry flowers  
Growing in lavender clusters...

And just outside the park,  
The azalea bloom is at peak—  
In bright pastels  
In Thuya Gardens.

5.

The vermilion splendor  
Of sunset brimming beyond  
The summits along the ridges  
Looking north,  
Then settling deep

Within the darkness  
Of the thick Maine woods,  
Green lake fading  
Into the audible lapping  
Of luminescent shadows.

6.

Walking down to the dock,  
They're not an annoyance  
At first, but then  
The buzzing begins  
Nefariously at the back  
Of the head,  
And around the collar  
Of my jacket,  
Before they start to swarm,  
And the cloud of mosquitoes  
This late May morning  
Makes me feel,  
By the amount of attention  
They're paying me,  
That I just might be  
A fancy pastry  
In a French bakery.

7.

Ambling up  
Blue Hill, finding  
The first lupine  
Of the season  
Amid bluets and buttercups  
Dotting the grass,  
We stop at the crest  
Before the clustered trees  
To turn around

To view a living postcard  
Of Mount Desert Island  
Shimmering in the heat haze  
Across the bay,  
The lupine appearing  
Below us now more clearly  
Along the downward slope,  
  
Yet another and another  
Blooming in different shades of blue.

8.

Just thinking of taking the time  
To watch the incoming low tide  
  
Rush in under  
The bridge over Reverse Falls,  
  
Then to experience the outward  
Rush back out into  
  
Blue Hill Bay at high tide;  
To sense *that*, after the *delight*  
  
Of seeing the power of it all  
Come flooding in to the cove.

**JAY UDALL**

PASSING ON

A silver roadrunner  
embedded in turquoise.  
He wore it, then vanished.  
I hold what he held.

How we enter each other  
more deeply than thought: traces  
of presence in our cells  
and circuits, words and ways.

How we blunder, confusing  
our hard-and-fast perceptions  
with the mysteries they reach for.  
The bird is smooth to the thumb,

frozen in the blue depths  
of his pain I didn't fathom  
in time, eyes too young to see  
what he soothed with bourbon,

cigarettes and bent laughter,  
with small talk and *Eetoi*<sup>9</sup>  
beneath a milky trail of stars.

---

<sup>9</sup> Eetoi: ancient spirit of the O'odham people of southern Arizona and northern Mexico. With Earthmaker and Coyote, he helped create humans.



## **FICTION**

**WAYNE McCRAY**

**ALTHEA'S FUNERAL**

“Come quick,” the chauffer shouted into the limousine directly behind his. “There’s a problem.”

His plea forced the passengers to action because there was a problem. A fight had broken out. McArthur chose today to confront his deadbeat father. A man he hadn’t seen in decades but blames for the death of Grandma Althea. She suffered a stroke while at her third job. Her body found by a fellow hotel housekeeper.

Althea worked day and night, and sometimes on weekends, to feed a mouth that was not hers. Thinking about that so infuriated McArthur that once he turned around to look at his father, he couldn’t help but cold cock him. The blow was so fast, heavy, and hard, it blinded Baron. McArthur then climbed into the back seat and threw punch, after punch, after punch.

The thrashing forced Althea’s three older sisters and some Redbone to escape the limousine. McArthur hadn’t let up and continued pounding on Baron until his mother, Macie, swam through the family of spectators to pull him off of his father. She used all her strength to do so while yelling at him that now wasn’t the time for such foolishness. Pleading that he should leave his father there prone and return with her to the other limousine.

McArthur complied, reluctantly. Baron was left twisted on the floor, groaning in pain. Before storming off, McArthur told his father he had it coming and then tried slamming the car door shut but couldn’t. The Redbone prevented it and entered instantly after that. McArthur soon lowered his long frame into the other limousine. There he sat, feeling cheated. His mother and great uncle joined him, closing both car doors quickly behind them and preventing additional entrants.

“You would pick today of all days,” Macie laid into him. “This is not the place or time for your antics. Why let others know how angry you are? And for what? To get back at him? Control yourself, okay?”

“I’m sorry,” McArthur apologized. “I just lost it. He gave this look that I had to get rid of it.”

“So what!” She admonished. “Let him look.”

“Don’t holler at the boy, okay.” Earl said from the back seat. “It’s over and done with. He whipped his daddy’s ass. Good for him. Baron deserved it anyway and you know it.”

“That’s not the point,” Macie argued. “I expect my son to show some respect and restraint. There’s a time and a place for everything, and this isn’t it.”

“The hell it is,” Earl replied, looking at Macie, before scooting closer to McArthur so he could speak to him. “That lowdown nigger has been a mama’s boy all his life, do you know that? And now that she’s dead and gone, he’s scared. Terrified even. Now you know he’s going to act a fool again, just you wait.”

“I hope not,” McArthur replied.

“He can’t help it,” said Macie. “Ever since his father died, Althea put so much of herself into him that he never grew up. It wasn’t intentional, but it ruined him. No doubt about that.”

Earl nodded in agreement.

Baron didn’t think not having aspirations played any part in his mother’s death. None whatsoever. It didn’t matter to him that Althea worked like a man morning, noon, and night as a housekeeper at the Stardust Hotel, the Sisters of Mercy Hospital, and as a cashier at the Sav-A-Lot Supermarket. All the money she earned, outside of her own household needs, went straight into his pockets and on things that made him happy. His greed was sickening and had no bounds.

McArthur turned to look at his mother. “I see why you left him,” he replied. “You clearly saw finicky he was?”

“I did...I did,” she admitted. “A future with him meant not having one. So, I felt I could do better by myself.”

“Oh, how I remember that?” Earl said. “The day when you left him. That nigger cried and cried, begging Althea to go talk to you so you could take him back, but she wouldn’t do it. Told him to man up. I think that’s the only time she ever refused him.”

“I know, right?” Macie replied. “She loved us more.”

“Damn right she did,” Earl said. “Damn right.”

McArthur suddenly reclined, becoming more relaxed, and less angry. And after some self-reflection, he reached over to give his mother a big hug. It was firm and heartfelt. Earl patted him on the shoulder, and they shook hands, albeit in an awkward manner.

“Just do your mama a favor, okay?” Macie continued. “Remember? We came here to pay our respects. Not turn one funeral into two.”

Earl burst out laughing, “I’ll try,” McArthur promised. “Just as long as he doesn’t do anything else stupid, like that stunt he pulled.”

Prior to the car fight, Baron arrived there late and then refused to sit in the front church pews with the immediate family. Instead, he sat in the back with his arm draped across this Redbone’s shoulders, giving her his full attention. Neither of them seemed invested in the viewing. MacArthur, as well as others there, family included, had taken notice, but kept quiet. On occasion, a mourner would approach and give more than a condolence but their opinionated disgust.

The last one forced McArthur to retreat into himself. He took a deep breath, which tilted his head back, and forced his eyes closed. It allowed his mind and perceptions to fade into silence. And with it went reality altogether and into a space where memories hurt. After exhaling, his eyes opened and wouldn’t stop crying. It took several hand wipes of his face to dry it. McArthur spun around but found them gone. None of the seated and standing faces he looked at had one that resembled his own. Where had they gone?

Emma, Althea’s eldest sister, who was sitting beside him, locked arms with him, to prevent him from rising.

“Stay put,” she whispered. “Wait a bit longer.”

Then one mourner, an old lady said: “Young man? don’t be mad.”

“But I am mad,” McArthur replied.

“I know. Lord knows I know that feeling,” she said, holding his chin gently. “It’s so hard to say goodbye and ask why? and not get an answer. Not a sufficient one. But you’re here, because of her, so make the most of it. Alright? Take care, baby.”

He nodded and they touched foreheads before she continued down row, shaking hands, giving brief hugs, and kind words. The family sat there until the viewing concluded. Soon the pallbearers carried the casket to the hearse. He would’ve, and wanted to, but being so tall and elongated compared to them would have created difficulties. McArthur’s father remained absent. As people filed out to go to their cars to line up for the procession. McArthur and great aunts learned where he had been when they went to limousine, the tinted door was opened, to find Baron and that Redbone inside entertaining each other. It made for an awkward scene. So, McArthur entered first so he could sit in the seat ahead of him.

Rage followed.

“Pussy got him. It’s all he knows,” Earl said, his laughter fading. “Would you believe that nigger tried to have Althea’s clothing changed into a dark skirt suit.”

“A suit?” McArthur replied.

“A suit!” Earl said. “Knowing damn well she wanted to be buried in her wedding dress. Good thing that funeral director called when he did. Emma and I hurried over there fast to ensure nothing of the sort happened and her wishes got carried out. In the end, everything worked out and Baron was told to go on somewhere. I should’ve slapped him then, but when you did it, I said: *he got what he deserved.*”

McArthur smiled, proudly.

While sitting there, the mood was interrupted by raps on the window. It was the limousine driver who wondered if everything was alright and told them they were ready to go to the cemetery, but to

get there required that he make room for other family members, into his limousine specifically.

“Sorry y’all,” Earl said happily. “Come on, get in. You know how it is when black folks get together at a funeral?”

Family of all complexions, shapes, and ages simply laughed. An *ain’t-that-the-truth* and *don’t-I-know-it* were said. The lined-up cars began moving beyond the parking lot, into a slow procession, down the road, and then the state highway that finally turned onto a burnt orange colored dirt road. The scenery was beautiful—it was the country—full of open greenspace and fields of fenced livestock under an ocean of cotton blue skies.

After driving a nice distance, they soon slowed to a stop in front of a decorative iron entrance that had the family’s name on it. In the distance, monuments, headstones, and monoliths could be seen. Car doors flung open, and passengers began filing out. As soon as McArthur got out, and looked up, he was astonished by the number of cars parked and parking. One after another. Two rows of them, taking up both sides of the road.

It took awhile for all, young and old alike, to gather to follow the pallbearers and minister leading them. It was a slow lengthy and somber march to the burial site. On the way, McArthur expressed regret to the family and friends for his rude behavior and asked for forgiveness. Soon they all reached the deep pit and circled tightly around it, arms locked, heads hung, and in prayer. Moments later, the coffin was lowered, assorted flowers and trinkets were tossed, along with fistfuls of red dirt. Suddenly, Baron broke down. He fell to his knees and began lamenting, repeatedly calling for his mother. Saying how it should be him down there instead, which elicited a negative response.

“I’ll amen that,” said McArthur.

A low chorus of sarcastic *amens* circulated, followed by shushes. Redbone knelt down to console his father and his performative sorrow, cupping his swollen face against her sizeable chest, and holding him like a hurt child. McArthur had had it.

“Ma, Uncle?” McArthur whispered. “I’m out. I’ll be in the limo.”

Both understood.

As he walked off, he hadn’t gotten far when a loud thud could be heard, along with shouts of shock and disapproval.

“Get him out of there,” someone hollered.

“Lord have mercy, what’s wrong with him?” Another said.

McArthur didn’t even look back but kept walking. Earl was so right.

**NICK PACCIONE**

STAYING ON THE TRAIL: A WEDNESDAY  
AFTERNOON IN JULY AT THE JAMAICA BAY  
WILDLIFE REFUGE

*“Thousands of birds stop here to rest and feed during their summer migrations southward along the Atlantic Flyway.” —from the brochure*

**1**

He sits next to me on the bench beside the trail at West Pond.

“My wife is in the car, waiting for me in the lot,” he says, breathing hard. “She can’t make this walk. I’m supposed to walk. What is it—a mile and a half around?”

A swan floats in the middle of the pond, his head submerged. A song sparrow sings intermittently.

“I had an operation. My heart—but first they had to take a vein out of my leg.”

He lifts his left pant leg above his knee.

“This scar runs all the way up my leg to the groin. And my foot—”

A black bird perches on a log post offshore, stretching its wings.

“You could see, it’s still swollen. But I have to walk, they tell me. I should be walkin’ not talkin’” he says, laughing.

An osprey flies over our heads, pinching twigs and grasses in its beak. We follow its flight to a nest that sits on a wooden platform on top of a pole behind us.

“Nobody’s here today...I better go ahead, so if I drop dead, at least you’ll find me and could tell my wife,” he says, laughing. “There’s only one trail.”

He pulls down his pant leg, stands up, and says, “It’s beautiful here,” and hobbles toward the five Canadian geese marching in a

line across the trail toward the pond.

The black bird's wings are still stretched.

2

"That's a cormorant," she says. "My uncle used to say they're hanging their wings out to dry. Like laundry."

A bird streaks across the sky, extending its neck.

"That's a great egret."

She knows all of the birds. Catbirds, mockingbirds, herons, ibis. And turtle eggs. We look for and find some, their elastic shells broken and rolled up inside of holes in the sandy dirt.

"So, how's school? Where do you go?" I ask. "Hunter."

"And how is it?"

"I graduated this past June."

"Already? It's been four years?"

"Yeah, and you remembered my name."

Christine Kennedy. Last row, next to the last seat. Frosty. Distant. Unapproachable.

"So, did you find something you want to do? Something with nature? Birds? Are you going to graduate school?"

"A dietician."

"Oh...So, what was your major? Was it nutrition?"

"I'm going to be a dietician."

"I see...Did you take any English courses?"

"A couple. In one I did a paper on that play we read, *A Raisin in the Sun*, and my teacher said I—you—were wrong about Walter. She liked the way I wrote it—but she said the husband—Walter—you were wrong about him."

Walking, silent, we stop by an open meadow and see a finch collecting white milkweed fibers from an open seed pod. We identify Joe-Pye weed and yarrow.

The area becomes more wooded as the trail winds through high shrubs and tall trees. We pass an owl's nesting box. "I've never seen an owl here," she says. "Jones Beach in the winter. That's where to go. The western part near the ranger station."

We stop at a lean-to and look through the spaces between its boards. We watch tiny birds cavort in and out of trees that rise from the marsh. Except for when she whispers, “Titmice,” we don’t speak. Not a word.

She prefers it this way, she always did, this one whom I’d see outside of my classroom after school, sitting on the floor next to her locker reading a book. One time I asked her what’s wrong. “Is there anything I can do?” She said, “I’m fine. Everything’s fine... Can I go now?”

“Sometimes,” she says, “going home, the buses pass me right by. I guess they’re not accustomed to picking up people at this stop.”

She took two buses to get here. On a day when there’s nobody here.

She rejects my offer to drive her home.

**3**

In the parking lot, I notice, there’s only my car.

**DANIEL WEBRE**

**THE EMBERS**

Somewhere in a pile of ashes, his true self smoldered. If he could flick away the tip, like the burnt-out end of his cigarette, he might catch fire, flare-up with red-hot intensity. The irony, of course, was doing so would diminish him. It was the spark of life that charred his body.

He blew smoke and looked at Deirdre. She was fresh-faced comparatively, same age but made of better stuff. He stamped out the nub in a glassy-green ashtray she'd brought home from Reykjavik for their tenth wedding anniversary. She'd said she'd wanted tin for ten, but this was nicer.

"Are you ready?" she asked. "Doors open at eight." Her heels clicked toward the mirror in the hallway. She looked stunning in her jade dress. He was proud he was with her, even if ballet wasn't his favorite and people had started mistaking him for her father.

He gathered cigarettes and lighter, stood patting his pocket for keys, then reached for the dinner jacket draped over the sofa. It was getting snug. He'd have to join a gym soon, rather than rely on cigarettes to keep his weight down. "Yes," he said, remembering his promise to be more decisive.

She smiled and took his breath away. Or was it the cigarettes? She'd slipped over to the door and held it for him. He admired how her eyes glinted with the same fierce green as her dress. He held her close, and together they walked into a cold, lamp-lit night.



## **NOTES**

## CONTRIBUTORS

**KEN ANDERSON** was a finalist in the Saints and Sinners first annual poetry contest. His novel *Someone Bought the House on the Island* was a finalist in the Independent Publisher Book Awards. A stage adaptation won the Saints and Sinners Playwriting Contest and premiered May 2, 2008, at the Marigny Theater in New Orleans. His novel *Sea Change: An Example of the Pleasure Principle* was a finalist for the Ferro-Grumley Award. *The Statue of Pan* (a screenplay) is an Official Selection at the LGBTQ Unbordered International Film Festival.

**GEER AUSTIN'S** poetry and fiction has appeared in *Poet Lore*, *Manhattanville Review*, *Fjords Review*, and others. His short story, "Stuart Livingston Hill," was an episode of the podcast *A Story Most Queer*, and his poetry has been performed in the Emotive Fruition series. He is the author of *Cloverleaf*, a poetry chapbook (Poets Wear Prada Press). He lives in New York City.

**GEORGE BANDY** George Bandy's publications include War, Literature & the Arts (USAF), New Millennium Writings, Subprimal Art Poetry, Blue Unicorn, The Saturday Evening Post, The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature, Neologism Poetry Journal, Broad River Review and forthcoming in The Southern Poetry Anthology: Vol. IX, Virginia. His poem 'Return from War' won the Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Award and was published in Icon.

**WALTER BARGEN** has published twenty-five books of poetry. Recent books include: *My Other Mother's Red Mercedes* (Lamar University Press, 2018), *Until Next Time* (Singing Bone Press, 2019), *Pole Dancing in the Night Club of God* (Red Mountain Press, 2020), and *You Wounded Miracle*, (Liliom Verlag, 2021). He was appointed the first poet laureate of Missouri (2008–2009).

**ROBERT BRICKHOUSE'S** poems and stories have appeared in many magazines and journals, among them the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The Southern Poetry Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Louisiana Literature*, the *Texas Review*, *Hollins Critic*, *Chattahoochee Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Pleiades*, and *Light Quarterly*. Poems forthcoming will be in *The Southern Poetry Anthology* (Virginia volume), a state-by-state series of contemporary poetry of the American South published by Texas Review Press. Now retired, he worked for many years as a reporter for Virginia newspapers and as a writer and editor for publications at the University of Virginia.

**STEPHEN CAMPIGLIO'S** work has recently appeared or will appear in *Circumference (Pi Poetry)*, *Glimpse*, *Noh Place Poets*, *Pensive*, *Pinyon Poetry*, *Sangam Literary Review*, *Stand* (Leeds, England), *The Wayfarer*, *Wild Roof Journal*, and *The Woven Tale Press Magazine*. A former winner of the Willis Barnstone Translation Prize for a poem by Giuseppe Bonaviri (1924–2009), his current project, with co-translator Dr. Elena Borelli, will result in the complete translation of Giovanni Pascoli's (1855–1912) volume of poetry, *Canti di Castelvecchio*. For his own work, twice-nominated for a Pushcart Prize, he was a quarterfinalist in the 2018 Codhill Press poetry contest for a book-length manuscript and has published two chapbooks, *Cross-Fluence* (2012) and *Verbal Clouds through Various Magritte Skies* (2014).

**STEVEN DEUTSCH** lives in State College, PA. Some of his recent publications have or will appear in *Pirene's Fountain*, *Evening Street Review*, *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, *Bookends Review*, *Waymark Literary*, *Red Eft Review*, *Thimble*, *The Mark Review*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Rat's Ass Review*, *RavensPerch*, *MacQueen's*, *8 Poems*, *Louisiana Lit*, *Burning-word Literary Journal*, *Third Wednesday*, *Softblow*, and the *Muddy River Poetry Review*. He was nominated three times for the Pushcart Prize. His Chapbook, "Perhaps You Can," was published in 2019 by Kelsay Press. His full-length book, *Persistence of Memory* was published in 2020 by Kelsay. His third book of poetry, *Going, Going, Gone*, was published in 2021.

**JAMES FOWLER** has published a poetry collection, *The Pain Trader* (Golden Antelope Press, 2020), and a volume of stories, *Field Trip* (Cornerpost Press, 2022).

**JOHN GREY** is an Australian poet, United States resident, recently published in *Sheepshead Review*, *Stand*, *Poetry Salzburg Review* and *Hollins Critic*. Latest books, *Leaves On Pages*, *Memory Outside The Head*, and *Guest Of Myself* are available through Amazon. He has work upcoming in *Ellipsis*, *Blueline*, and *International Poetry Review*.

**PEGGY HAMMOND'S** recent poems appear or are forthcoming in *Pangyrus*, *The Comstock Review*, *For Women Who Roar*, *Fragmented Voices*, *ONE ART*, *Burningword Literary Journal*, *Dear Reader Poetry*, *The Hyacinth Review*, *Boats Against The Current*, and elsewhere. A Best of the Net nominee, she has a chapbook out titled *The Fifth House Tilts* (Kelsay Books, 2022). You can find Peggy Hammond on Twitter @PHammondPoetry.

**FRANCES MAC** hails from the Texas Hill Country and currently lives in Washington, DC. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Santa Clara Review*, *Lammergeier*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *Glass Mountain*, *Aji Magazine*, and others. Learn more about her work at [www.francesmacpoetry.com](http://www.francesmacpoetry.com).

**MIRIAM MANGLANI** lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts with her husband and three children. She works full-time as a Technical Training Manager at Sonos. Her poetry has been published in *Village Square*, *Poetry Quarterly*, and is forthcoming in *Spry Lit*.

**WAYNE MCCRAY** was born in East St. Louis, Illinois, in 1965, and grew up in Chicago until 1984. He attended Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He currently lives in Itta Bena, Mississippi, enjoying country life. His writings have appeared in *Afro Literary Magazine*, *The Bookends Review*, *Chitro Magazine*, *Drunk Monkey*, *The Ocotillo Review*, *Ogma Magazine*, *Pigeon Review*, *The Rush Magazine*, and *Wingless Dreamer*.

**NICK PACCIONE** is a retired English teacher who lives with his wife, Noreen, in East Northport, New York. He taught American literature and poetry at a private high school in Queens for thirty-seven years. He studied at SUNY at Stony Brook (B.A./B.S.) and Northwestern University (M.A.). Over the years, his work has appeared in a few independent literary journals. Most recently, his poems have appeared in *Evening Street Review* and *Glimpse*.

**ANELE RUBIN'S** poetry has appeared in *New Ohio Review*, *Cut-throat*, *Poet Lore*, *Chariton Review*, *Rattle*, *Raleigh Review*, *Miramar*, *Atlanta Review*, *Chattahoochee Review* and many other places. Her poetry collection *Trying to Speak*, winner of the Wick Poetry Prize, was published by Kent State University Press. She lives in upstate New York.

**MOSTOFA SARWAR**, Ph.D., M.S., M.Sc., authored three books of Bengali poems (*Binosto Rupantoror Bikartotto*, *Anulipi: Antorongo Muhurte*, and *Prarthito Nirbasoner Unmad Podaboly*) and published poems and literary essays in Bengali and English magazines and reviews in Bangladesh and the United States. He was recognized for his literary contribution by the World Literary Center of Bangladesh at its North American Conference in New York in 2003. For his literary contributions and community leadership, he was awarded at a reception of over six thousand people in Madison Square Garden (New York) by the Federation of Bangladeshi Associations in North America in 2000, during the Annual International Meeting. His recent opinion work has been published in *The Advocate* (Baton Rouge), *The Times Picayune* (New Orleans), *Daily Advent/Opera News* (New York), *The Daily Star* and *Bdnews24* (Bangladesh), *The Straits Times* (Singapore), *Phuket News* (Thailand), and *Newsbreak* (Philippines). He regularly writes opinion editorials in Bengali for newspapers in New York and Dhaka. He is also a weekly commentator on politics and current affairs at TBN24 (a Bengali live television channel broadcasted out of New York), and occasionally appears as a commentator on NEWS24 and Ekattor TV (two news

channels broadcasted out of Dhaka). He co-edited a book on geophysics published by Springer Vieweg (Germany) and received a distinguish associate editor award for journal *Geophysics*. Dr. Sarwar, is professor emeritus of geophysics and former Associate Provost at the University of New Orleans, Dean and former Interim Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs & College Provost at Delgado Community College, and Commissioner of the governing board of Regional Transit Authority of New Orleans. He also taught at University of Innsbruck (Austria), University of Pennsylvania, Indiana University, and Dhaka University (Bangladesh). He worked as a scientist at Shell Technology Center (Houston), and senior research fellow at the United States Naval Research Laboratory in NASA's Stennis Space Center. He could be reached at [asarwar2001@yahoo.com](mailto:asarwar2001@yahoo.com).

**GREGG SHAPIRO** is the author of seven books including the expanded edition of his short story collection *How to Whistle* (Rattling Good Yarns Press, 2021). Recent literary magazine publications include *Exquisite Pandemic*, *RFD*, *Gargoyle*, *Limp Wrist*, *Mollyhouse*, *Impossible Archetype*, and *Dissonance Magazine*, as well as the anthologies *Moving Images: Poems Inspired by Film* (Before Your Quiet Eyes Publishing, 2021), *This Is What America Looks Like* (Washington Writers' Publishing House, 2021) and *Sweeter Voices Still: An LGBTQ Anthology from Middle America* (Belt Publishing, 2021). An entertainment journalist, whose interviews and reviews run in a variety of regional LGBTQ+ and mainstream publications and websites, Shapiro lives in Fort Lauderdale, Florida with his husband Rick and their dog Coco.

**MATTHEW J. SPIRENG'S** 2019 Sinclair Poetry Prize-winning book *Good Work* was published in 2020 by Evening Street Press. An eleven-time Pushcart Prize nominee, he is the author of two other full-length poetry books, *What Focus Is* and *Out of Body*, the latter a winner of the 2004 Bluestem Poetry Award. He has also published five chapbooks. He was the winner of *The MacGuffin's* 23rd Annual

Poet Hunt Contest in 2018 and the 2015 *Common Ground Review* poetry contest. His website is [www.matthewjspireng.com](http://www.matthewjspireng.com).

**WALLY SWIST** has published over forty books and chapbooks of poetry and prose, including *Huang Po and the Dimensions of Love* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2012) selected by Yusef Komunyakaa as co-winner in the 2011 Crab Orchard Series Open Poetry Contest, and *Daodejing: A New Interpretation* (Lamar University Press, 2015). His translations have been and will be published in *Chiron Review*, *Ezra: An Online Journal of Translation*, *The RavensPerch: Adding Breadth to Words*, *Solace: A Magazine of Diverse Voices*, *Transference: A Literary Journal Featuring the Art & Process of Translation* (Western Michigan Department of Languages), and *Woven Tale Press*. Recent books of poetry include *A Bird Who Seems to Know Me: Poems Regarding Birds & Nature* (Ex Ophidia Press, 2019), the winner of the 2018 Ex Ophidia Press Poetry Prize, *The Bees of the Invisible* (Shanti Arts, 2019), *Evanescence: Selected Poems* (Shanti Arts, 2020), and *Awakening & Visitation* (Shanti Arts, 2020). Forthcoming books include *A Writer's Statements on Beauty: New & Selected Essays & Reviews*, *Taking Residence*, and a translation of Giuseppe Ungaretti's *L'Allegria/Cheerfulness*, all with Shanti Arts. Additionally, he is also the author of *Singing for Nothing: Selected Nonfiction as Literary Memoir* (Operating System, 2018).

**JAY UDALL** has authored six books of poetry, most recently *Because a Fire in Our Heads*, winner of the 2017 X.J. Kennedy Prize. His previous volume, *The Welcome Table*, won the New Mexico Book Award. His poems and short stories have appeared in more than 100 publications, including *North American Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Rattle*, and *Verse Daily*. He lives in northern Virginia with his wife and daughter.

**DANIEL WEBRE** received an M.F.A. in fiction from McNeese St. and a Ph.D. in English with creative writing concentration from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. His short fiction has appeared in *The Bitter Oleander*, *Xavier Review*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, and

elsewhere. Currently, he lives in Louisiana where he teaches first-year writing and literature.

## SUBMISSIONS AND PERMISSIONS

Committed to excellence in writing, *Sangam*—home to Louisiana’s previous Poet Laureate and Southern University’s Languages and Literature Department—asks that you send us your best unpublished short fiction, poetry, or creative non-fiction, irrespective of length, subject, or style.

We look to welcome new writers while also feature contributors that have been nominees and recipients of esteemed writing awards, prizes, and honors, such as the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Pushcart Prize, and Poet Laureate, as well as publishing original work and translations with leading journals and presses, including *American Life in Poetry*, *The Iowa Review*, *New York Quarterly*, *The New Yorker*, *North American Review*, *Oxford University Press*, and *The Writer’s Almanac*, among others.

We carefully consider every submission and are looking forward to you being part of *Sangam*’s emerging position in today’s literary tradition.

**Submit** your best unpublished short fiction, poetry, or creative non-fiction, irrespective of length, subject, or style to Ryan James McGuckin, Ph.D., Chief Editor, at [ryan\\_mcguckin@subr.edu](mailto:ryan_mcguckin@subr.edu), listing your genre of writing in the email subject line. You should attach your writing as a PDF to ensure your formatting remains intact. In the body of your email, please write a brief third-person biography that includes any previous publications or relevant awards.

We now read submissions throughout the year. We aim for our **response time** to be within six to nine months.

Regarding **simultaneous submissions**, we understand the acceptance time frame for many magazines and journals can involve

delays. For these reasons, we support simultaneous submissions. When you send us your work, let us know if it is a simultaneous submission and please notify us at your earliest convenience when an aspect of your submission has been accepted elsewhere.

Currently, we do not print any works with referenced materials that require **permissions**, such as archival documents, artwork, or photography. We do, however, welcome works that reference such materials so long as writers do not display them in their manuscript.

## A NOTE ON THE TYPE

*Sangam Literary Magazine* currently uses Equity and Concourse, serif and sans-serif typefaces designed by Matthew Butterick.

**EQUITY**, used for *Sangam*'s headings and body, finds its inspiration from the work of English typographer Stanley Morison, a typographic consultant to the Monotype Corporation, for which he oversaw the design of such household publishing typefaces as Baskerville, Bembo, Gill Sans, and Times New Roman, among others. Despite the ubiquity of these designs for commercial and personal print, Butterick created Equity from Morison's typeface Ehrhardt, a 1938 revival of the 17th-century type known as Janson.

**CONCOURSE**, used for *Sangam*'s header and footers, finds its roots in W. A. Dwiggins's typeface Metro. Aside from Dwiggins being credited as the one to coin the term "graphic designer," he modeled his Metro typeface after the 1922 font Erbar, the first geometric sans-serif typeface that inspired many types still in use today, such as Gill Sans and Futura. As Butterick notes, the charm of Metro, like all great geometric sans serifs, is its ability to be "historical" and yet "contemporary." Concourse that captures this essence of Metro but does so by imparting "versatility, warmth," and "personality" to those that have the pleasure to witness its keen design.

For more information on Matthew Butterick, see <https://practical-typography.com>. Additionally, to view Matthew Butterick's typefaces, visit <https://mbtype.com>.

*Sangam*

LITERARY MAGAZINE

• VOLUME ONE, ISSUE TWO, SPRING 2022 •

KEN ANDERSON

GEER AUSTIN

GEORGE BANDY

WALTER BARGEN

ROBERT BRICKHOUSE

STEPHEN CAMPIGLIO

STEVEN DEUTSCH

JAMES FOWLER

JOHN GREY

PEGGY HAMMOND

FRANCES MAC

MIRIAM MANGLANI

WAYNE McCRAY

NICK PACCIONE

ANELE RUBIN

MOSTOFA SARWAR

GREGG SHAPIRO

MATTHEW J. SPIRENG

WALLY SWIST

JAY UDALL

DANIEL WEBRE