

• SPRING 2022 •

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Sangam

LITERARY MAGAZINE

K. ANDERSON • G. AUSTIN • G. BANDY • W. BARGEN • R. BRICKHOUSE
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SANGAM LITERARY MAGAZINE

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

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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.

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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.”¹ 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.²

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

² *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.³ 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

³ 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.⁴ 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*

⁴ “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 H₂O 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 POEM⁵

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,

⁵ 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 Moni⁶

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.

⁶ 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 Kawabata⁷

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—

⁷ 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

STORM⁸

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.

⁸ 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 vermillion 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*⁹
beneath a milky trail of stars.

⁹ 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.

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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).

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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*.

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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

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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).

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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.

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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>.

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