

THE  
WELLINGTON STREET  
REVIEW

ISSUE ONE



MARCH 2019

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STREET  
REVIEW



**Issue One | March 2019**

**Annabel Mahoney** (Editor-in-Chief) & **Katherine Mills** (Editor & Co-Founder)

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## *Letter from the Editors*

It's documented that in older versions of the Roman calendar March was both the first month of spring and the first month of the year. Whether or not that's true, March makes an excellent time for the publication of our inaugural issue of *The Wellington Street Review*.

We've been blown away by the quality of submissions we received, and choosing which to publish has been the subject of some interesting editors meetings. The variety of subjects in the poetry and prose featured in this issue is testament to the unique voices and experiences of our writers.

This issue begins with ***To Wilfred***, Edward Ashworth's address to noted World War One poet Wilfred Owen. Edward captures images in his writing comparable to the skill of his subject, and sets the tone for our conversation with the past. The evocative flash fiction ***Count Your Breaths***, by Northern Irish writer Chris Wright brilliantly captures moments of death and life in fluid prose. Closing this issue, we have Gareth Culshaw's poem ***Sick Bay***, based on *Gusev*, the short story by Anton Chekhov. Engaging with pieces of historical work of any form is something we look for, and Gareth's poem is a vivid and direct response to Chekhov's original piece.

We hope our readers enjoy the selection we have curated and appreciate the hard work that has gone into each piece. If you'd like to know more about our writers, look for their social media information in their biography underneath their work. Please feel free to let them (and us) know what you think!

All of our writers have given us the opportunity to publish exciting, original work and we thank them for taking the chance on a brand new literary magazine. To everyone that has submitted, everyone that has followed us and everyone that is reading, thank you. This is for you.

Yours,  
The Editors

## To Wilfred | Edward Ashworth

Beloved Poet; the war has long ended, old pal.  
How do you like the state of the world at peace? Does it suit your rhyme?  
Is it improved by your message? Does it boost the troops' morale?  
Does it sing in rhythm with Heaven's chime?

*(Or is it Heaven..?) It has to be, old friend; Hell was on earth.  
(Though Satan was not so cruel as to drive far from hearth  
Innocent men, rather than undeserving sinners.)*

Poet, I would pity the Living. For, after all,  
War only ever ends for those it forced to fall.  
They who live know that it shall start again  
but those who sleep ignore they died in vain.

*(This far-flung echo...)* Do you recognise these lines?  
Yours, my friend. They read them sometimes,  
When they remember your words were true.  
Then they come home and talk of waging war anew.

You care not for statues built to your glory,  
Nor for crowds gathered to hear your poetry.  
But only for what could have been;  
Another sky, ever serene,  
Under which fathers do not bury their sons.

But nothing may rouse you now.  
Nor toll of peace, nor anger of guns.  
Though you now lie under better skies,  
You cannot see them, nor ever will.

### Writer's Commentary

*'To Wilfred' was written after contemplating the emptiness of a World War I cemetery as opposed to the liveliness of its occupants before the war happened. I often wonder, like many do, what would the dead think upon seeing the world as it is now, or if they were conscious of what happened to them. It often is a hard blow to a WWI historian to see the entire life, art, humour, and character of a soldier they researched simply summed up by a white headstone and their death-date engraved upon it.*

## 4<sup>th</sup> November 2018 | Edward Ashworth

### Wilfred Owen's last letter, 31st of October 1918

*'Dearest Mother, (...) there is no danger down here – or if any, it will be well over before you read these lines. (...) Of this I am certain you could not be visited by a band of friends half as fine as surround me here. Ever, Wilfred X.'*

The 2nd Manchesters bending their backs under low brick ceilings,  
Holding onto each other to find their way away from shellings,  
Feeling not the weight of fate on them, but dreams of merrier days,  
For they were together now; glee on their lips and hope in their gaze.

But for now grey fumes hover over them; underground just lantern-lit  
In this dreaded place echoing outside's ghastly noise they must sit—  
W. O. laughs plentifully; nudged every second, by their jokes elated  
Believing that never from this cheery bunch he should be parted,  
He waves the smoke away; keeps inking his already blotted letter,  
Writes that he expects cease-fire soon, and home all for the better.  
Soon a whistle would resound; the draft dropped in stagnant water,  
Never recovered but to disappear, drowned in the upcoming slaughter.

Only from afar they hear sappers rushing to their brittle bridge,  
Dodging shells when running from atop the field's salient's ridge,  
Some lying on the sodden ground, nails digging into their head—  
They reflect: 'Crossing the bridge, what a cynical metaphor!  
For the Lord shall decide to make this very place the deathbed  
Of those who will not succeed in reaching the other shore!'

Though Poets are oracles of Heaven; there they must return  
And exalt their fate with tragedy, lest their wings should burn.  
So he fell. – His hand holding a Webley dripping with mud,  
Rather than the pen kept in his pocket drenched with blood;  
His men rushing past – blades forward, not one of them heeding  
The mass grave of forlorn souls on which they were treading.

Should one be so careless as to feed these furrows of thick clay  
— with drafts abandoned by their dying owner?  
To open his mother's door while bells ring for Armistice day  
— knowing her son shall never come back to her?  
For he would not know peace. His poetry immortal witness  
Of what had driven him to bitter end through Europe's madness.  
His tombstone a pale white in a common grave of fallen youth,

Hollow amongst too many Dead, devoid of a senseless truth:  
He trod the Earth once; he was a man before being a martyr.  
He lived, smiled like you and me– and now he may speak no longer.

#### **Writer's Commentary**

*Wilfred Owen is a very important figure in my life; whereas I used to be exclusively interested in the French side of History, getting an interest in him, his life and his work made me switch to the British and got me started in attempting to write poetry.*

*'4th of November 2018', as its title indicates, is a piece written for the centenary of his death anniversary. It relates through poetry what happened that fateful day. After enjoying a last night together in the cellar of the Forester's House, in Ors (now a museum about Owen), the 2nd Battalion of the Manchester Regiment were sent to attack the Germans through the Sambre-Oise canal after the Royal Engineers built bridges over the water for them. Owen was killed that day, just a few days before the end of the war; his mother would only learn it right as the armistice bells resounded.*

Edward Ashworth was born in Corsica but gained an interest in British history & culture after teaching himself English.

He has been awarded several prizes by the French Ministry of Education and the French National Veteran Office for his work on the First and Second World War.

## Final Supper | Anne O'Leary

I buy her a meal before I let her go. Fair's fair, she's been a good employee, and never let it be said I wronged anyone.

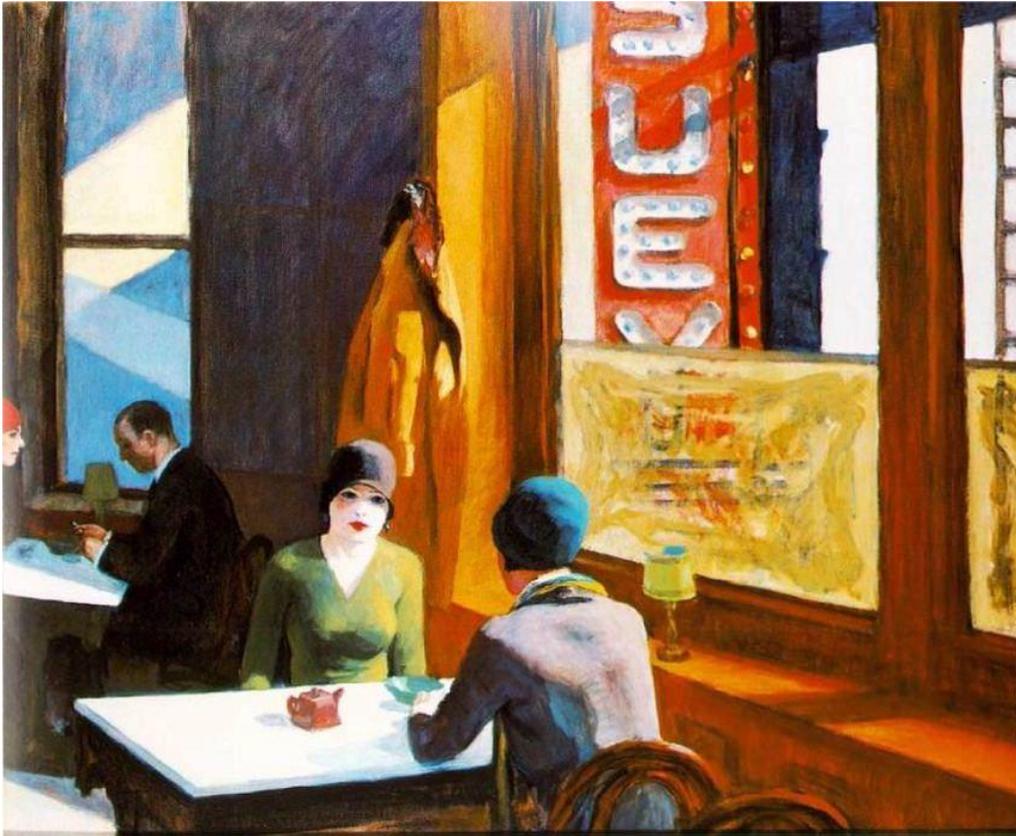
I am sorry to have to do it because it will be hard to find another seamstress who is so meticulous. She never cuts corners, never takes the lazy way out. Her needlework is immaculate and her eye sharp. The fabrics we work with are delicate and expensive, and she is one of the few who could be trusted never to snag the lace or get stains on the silks. She was good with the fittings as well. She didn't talk back when the clients complained, didn't talk at all if they chose to ignore her, and never jabbed anyone with pins, no matter how greatly they deserved it.

But I cannot have a thief in my employ. Rich women won't stand for their jewels being stolen, even when they can so easily replace them. When she was caught she cried, as they always do, and mentioned the sick children yet again, and the absent husband, but what choice did I have? She had to be dismissed.

And so here we sit, meal had, tea drunk. I've brought her to my favourite restaurant because, although she's leaving in disgrace and can't have the usual farewell with the other girls, she deserves a thank you for all the years. She hardly touched her food, unused to so fine a restaurant, no doubt. But I had the chop suey, which was excellent. We're here at the best time of day as well. When the sun goes down, the neon sign outside the window is switched on. It's so cheerful, all that red and yellow. Like Christmas.

I indicate to the waiter that I wish to pay before my final task, which is to tell her that I cannot, in all conscience, give her a character reference. I am a good Christian woman with a respectable business - I simply cannot lie and recommend her as a person of integrity. It would reflect poorly on me. Reputation is everything.

In response to Edward Hopper's *Chop Suey* (1929)



Anne O'Leary lives in Cork, Ireland. Her work has been published in *Fictive Dream*, *The Drabble*, *Jellyfish Review*, *Dodging the Rain*, *The Nottingham Review*, *Spontaneity* and *The Incubator*. She won the Molly Keane Award 2018 and From the Well Short Story Competition 2017, was runner-up in the UCC/Carried In Waves Short Story Competition 2015, was shortlisted for the Colm Tóibín International Short Story Award 2016 and highly commended in 2017, and longlisted for the Irish Novel Fair 2016 and RTE Guide/Penguin Ireland Short Story Competition 2015.

She blogs about writing without at [anneoleary.com](http://anneoleary.com) and Twitter [@wordherding](https://twitter.com/wordherding)

## Noli me tangere | Juliette Sebock

*in response to Thomas Wyatt's  
"Whoso List to Hunt"*

O, Sir, dreaming of that hunt, that ride,  
Your prey, your prize, has good reason to hide.  
Surely your dear flees for she is already claimed,  
But would she be a doe that is not to be tamed?

To touch, to kiss; to kiss: perchance to love:  
No, never love. *for Cesars I ame—*  
Jewels and bruises 'round her neck stake his claim.  
She dare not speak the truth: *for mine I am.*

*Cesar may collar me, chain me, claim me,  
But I will not be his as he wishes.  
for duty to Him is eclipsed by my  
duty to mine and myself. Then, my king.*

Dear she may be, but a deer she is not,  
not tender-footed, nibbling fresh green grass.  
She is wild to hold and not to be caught,  
Cunning, and ruthless when necessary.

She may seem docile, but she is no doe;  
She is powerful and threatens all you know.

### Writer's Commentary

*"Noli me tangere", from my upcoming micro-chap 'Boleyn' strikes a conversation with Thomas Wyatt's "Whoso List to Hunt," believed to be about Anne Boleyn, attempting to return some degree of agency to her that is lost in Wyatt's original poem. Before turning to poetry, I did quite a bit of work as a historian, in both American and British history, particularly surrounding the Great War and Tudor dynasty, which is where my interest in Anne and the plan for this micro-chapbook came into play.*

Juliette Sebock is the author of *Mistakes Were Made* and has poems forthcoming or appearing in a wide variety of publications. She is the founding editor of *Nightingale & Sparrow* and runs a lifestyle blog, *For the Sake of Good Taste*. When she isn't writing (and sometimes when she is), she can be found with a cup of coffee and her cat, Fitz. Juliette can be reached on her website or across social media.

## A Pen Boasts (from an Anglo-Saxon riddle) | Rosemary Appleton

*þæt is wundres dæl,  
on sefan searolic þam þe swylc ne conn,  
hu mec seaxes ord ond seo swipre hond,  
eorles ingeþonc on ord somod,  
þingum gepydan, þæt ic wiþ þe sceolde  
for unc anum twam ærendspræce  
abeodan bealdlice, swa hit beorna ma  
uncre wordcwidas widdor ne mænden.*

it is a wondrous thing,  
an ingenious thought for those who don't know of such things  
how the point of a single-edged knife, the right hand,  
a person's inner thoughts and a sharp point together  
all work to this end - that I, with you,  
can confidently deliver our message  
for us two alone, so that no one can broadcast  
more widely what we two have said, each to the other.

### Writer's Commentary

*Another way of looking at the interplay between the past and the present is to look back at some of the earliest literary languages, such as Anglo Saxon. I have created a loose translation in A Pen Boasts and I have included the original text because I think it is so evocative to see the original old letter-forms as well as the form of the riddle.*

*I have given the answer to the riddle as the poem's title because, now that we no longer whittle pens from pointed reeds, I don't think anyone would get the answer! But it's such a fascinating little riddle because the pen sees itself as the key, or the engine almost, unlocking or driving the whole written text. Having to make a pen from a reed with a sharp knife makes writing so much more physical, more muscular, than it is today.*

*The poem equates the written word with privacy and intimacy and this makes for a really intriguing ending: why should the message remain with the writer and their pen? Why should it not be repeated more widely? Perhaps this hints at a romantic intrigue or a family feud. At any rate, I feel that translating from an ancient language is, at first, a kind of archaeology, then a way of revoicing the original text through my interpretation, in a direct relationship with the past.*

Rosemary writes in the wilds of East Anglia, fuelled by coffee. Her work has appeared in *Msllexia*, *The Fenland Reed*, *Spontaneity* and other places. She tweets [@BluestockingBks](#).

## Umple | Robert Boucheron

Over the centuries, Umple suffered more than its share. The documented history of the city is fraught with disaster: earthquake, famine, plague, and war. The tourist in the motorbus looks up from the guidebook surprised to see that anything still stands.

Located in the mountainous region of the Caucasus, amid a tangle of international borders and ethnic groups, Umple derives from the Greek *omphalos* or Latin *umbilicus*, meaning “navel,” as Gibbon explains in a footnote in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The name suggests a relation to Delphi and its oracle stone, or an origin myth in which people emerged from the bowels of the earth.

Dr. Delahanty’s archaeological investigation reveals a past that stretches back to the Neolithic Age. Stone substructures in the crypt of the cathedral, tunnels and vaults formed by massive slabs, resemble dolmens in Brittany and megalithic tombs of the western British Isles. Were the vaults erected by a pan-continental prehistoric civilization? This theory is debatable. Until Dr. Delahanty publishes his work in a format open to scholarly review, we have only his notes and rough field sketches.

In the fifth century, the Byzantine monk Euphemius mentions a fort or walled village, a primitive outpost on the distant frontier, peopled by barbarians of doubtful loyalty, and certainly not orthodox. As Gibbon relates, chronicles in Greek of the eastern empire are a horrid series of sieges, cruelties, brutal slaughter, lightning raids, forced conversion, conflagration, oppressive taxation, and denial of basic human rights. The list of attackers and bloodthirsty hordes includes Gauls, Persians, Scythians, Huns, proto-Germanic and Slavic tribes, Vikings, Tartars, and Mongols. Moslem warriors mounted on horseback and armed with flashing swords joined the battered city to their vast world empire. More recently, the Russians gobbled it up, only to disgorge it when their empire collapsed.

This tumultuous history of conquest and cultural disarray has left its mark. The architecture of Umple is a palimpsest of erasure, insertion, overlay, whitewash, and ambiguity. Is the city Western Asian or Eastern European? Old buildings that withstood the ravages of time are solid stone with minimal hints of ornament and style. They look like blocks of masonry anywhere, gray and mute, with casement windows like bright little eyes, peaked tile roofs like indomitable hats, and chimneys like fingers that stubbornly point upward. A stone arcade surrounds the marketplace in the centre, ponderously vaulted to shelter buyers and sellers from the weather, and formerly from arrows and flying rocks. The carved fountain is a restoration of the medieval one. The heroic statue of St. Durans is modern, based on a grainy heliograph.

Parts of the city wall survive, especially where later buildings engulfed them. They show a variety of building techniques from several centuries, with obvious signs of rebuilding, repair, and reused material. Of special interest are the stones taken from houses destroyed one way or another. The Round Tower undoubtedly enhanced the defensive circuit, and the Gate of Martyrs may be the one mentioned by Euphemius.

Armed with a guidebook and a pair of sturdy shoes, the tourist will have to search for these landmarks. The Umpali do not bother about the past. They dispense with bronze plaques and interpretive signs. Few historic artifacts or works of art remain from all the carnage. There is no museum as such. The city is a memorial, they say.

The Caucasus was once considered the source of white skin, freckles, and flaxen hair, but racial theories clash with facts on the ground. Did each invader leave a memento? Whatever their complexion, the Umpali are light-hearted and grounded, nimble on their feet, and quick to tell you what they think in a dozen languages. Not because you will spend money, but out of the goodness of their hearts, they welcome you with open arms. They shower you with kisses, and they escort you to lodging, dining, and shops that feature curious handicrafts. After all they have endured, they maintain a cheerful outlook. They have gone through the worst, and the best is yet to come. In this, they resemble the Hyperboreans:

Beyond the ice and the north wind,  
Beyond death, they have won  
The exit from the labyrinth  
To everlasting sun.

Nominal adherents of several religions, they believe in themselves more than anything else. Each home has a shrine of family portraits, framed and assembled on a fireplace mantel or the lid of a piano. Among the ancestors and children are objects—a lock of hair, a gold watch, a clutch of baby teeth. A mother places a bit of food from the family meal in a saucer there. She may light a candle.

If you ask her about this, she is wary and evasive. These are her loved ones, living and dead. They do not consume the food. She blinks away a tear. She begs you to accept another cup of the fragrant tea grown only here, on the rugged mountain slopes.

Robert Boucheron grew up in Syracuse and Schenectady, New York. He worked as an architect in New York and Charlottesville, Virginia, where he has lived since 1987. His short stories and essays appear in *Bellingham Review*, *Fiction International*, *London Journal of Fiction*, *Porridge Magazine*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and other magazines.

He can be found on Twitter at [@rboucheron](https://twitter.com/rboucheron)

## Relic | Gail Ingram

The hairy fetlocks and porringer feet  
draw you down  
to earth / their white noses  
dipped / against the plough /  
they pull lines /  
through pliable dirt / it always looks to be  
good black soil / not root-bound or full  
of river-bed boulders  
that Massey Fergusons will one day bury  
without lather / Their shoulders brace against  
the yoke / an old-fashioned word that  
primary schools should remove  
from spelling lists / You feel reduced  
to childhood / imagining  
fat-mooned nostrils blowing frosty clouds  
across the field / 'paddock'  
feels wrong with the Alps  
scenically placed  
on the horizon / and you have a picture  
of your hand running up the sweat-whorled neck /  
looking into that eye / fluid with forbearance / while knowing  
they are kept sequestered here / only  
for this billboard of / The Southern Man /  
to pull that long  
draught / on a mighty tale.

Gail Ingram's poetry has recently appeared in *Poetry New Zealand*, *Atlanta Review*, *Blue Five Notebook* and *Manifesto*. She has a new poetry collection *Contents Under Pressure* coming out in April 2019. Her awards include winner of New Zealand Poetry Society and third prize Poets Meet Politics international poetry competitions.

She can be found at [theseventhletter.nz](http://theseventhletter.nz) and on Instagram as [@gail\\_ingram\\_poet](https://www.instagram.com/gail_ingram_poet)

## Impromptu: Olympian Sonnet | Ian Charles Lepine

These columns hold no more a roof up high,  
And yet they stand erect as through their duty,  
And never dream upon the ground to lie,  
But must forever bear their solemn beauty.  
They have not rested throughout many an age,  
And cannot suffer marble souls to mourn  
Their fallen brother, broke upon this stage,  
The body of whom they see with every morn.  
They have borne witness to the desecration  
Of a world order they held high and holy,  
And yet they do not turn to desolation,  
For they now see their world return though slowly.  
A roof they hold no more; they bear the sky,  
And every soul that casts its eye up high.

—Composed before the Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens  
October 27, MMXVIII

### Writer's Commentary

*The 'Olympian Sonnet' was composed while visiting the Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens. The structure has been almost completely destroyed by time, and now only a number of columns remain standing, next to one broken upon the floor. There is no roof now and they seem to support the very heavens.*

Ian Charles Lepine is a novelist, playwright, poet, pianist and English graduate. Born in Mexico in 1994, he has dedicated his life to the creation of an interdisciplinary artistic project spanning a number of domains such as music, literature, and foreign languages.

He has been published in Mexico and Colombia and has self-published over fourteen different titles across all literary genres and three languages, English, French, and Spanish. His comedy of manners, *The Paths of Formless Love* was shortlisted in the 2018 international writing competition 'Shakespeare's New Contemporaries' organised by the American Shakespeare Center.

He can be found on Instagram at [@ian\\_charles\\_lepine](https://www.instagram.com/ian_charles_lepine)

## **Anchoress | Phyllida Jacobs**

What I wanted was to fall, untouched  
Into this happy grave. No sound  
But litany, no light but candlelight,  
No thought but my own.

The day they walled me in,  
A sullen rain fell on the churchyard.  
The last drops I felt were round,  
Soft as a child's fingertips.

When they placed the last stone,  
I smiled.

In this cell six paces wide, two long,  
My eye roves on nothing, my hands  
Scrabble in the dirt where I will rot,  
To keep them hard, without beauty,

And the pain and the joy are so great  
I forget my prison, my penance,  
My suffering, my self.

I am weaving a crown of solitude,  
And I am a hungry woman;  
God's bride, starved of sunlight.

### **Writer's Commentary**

*This poem is from the perspective of a medieval anchoress, women who chose to spend their lives shut in a cell next to a church in a life of contemplation and prayer. It was inspired by the writings of Julian of Norwich, an anchoress who wrote in the early 15th century. I wanted to understand what would motivate women to elect to live in this way, and imagine how it would feel to be completely cut off from the world.*

Phyllida Jacobs is a poet living in London. Their work has been published or is forthcoming in *The Writer's Block*, *Murmur House* and *Eye Flash Magazine*. They have been commended in the Foyle Young Poets Prize and the Timothy Corsellis Prize.

They can be found on Twitter at **@PhyllidaJacobs**

## **The Emperor Reversed | Megan Russo**

Your eyes undress me behind the glass  
And I will watch you through hooded eyes  
Hiding my gaze though yours is unwavering  
Unsettling depths  
Desperate and hungry.

*More.*

A demand for a feast of my flesh  
Your tongue wetting your lips  
Slimy with your desire  
Pressing closer  
Hands splayed across the glass.

*More.*

Rags shed like weathered skin  
No veils left to conceal me  
Your eyes wide  
Filled with a darkness  
Fists now pounding for my attention.

*More.*

You press closer  
I shift away  
Giving you one fleeting glance  
Relishing the barrier between us  
I see your lips moving.

*More.*

### **Writer's Commentary**

*The Emperor Reversed comes from my love of mysticism and my desire to explore the effects of the male gaze. The Emperor reversed tarot card is all about power struggle. The upside down position is a sign of instability, and loss of control, which is something I have been fighting with in my own life over the years. I've been using poetry to explore my issues and emotions, and I feel like I've found a lot of peace by doing that.*

Megan Russo is a writer and dungeon master currently living in Austin, TX. She attended the University of Cincinnati majoring in Studio Arts with a focus in Printmaking. Her work has been published by *Palm Sized Press*, *Cauldron Anthology*, and *Royal Rose Magazine*. Read more of her work at [meganrusso.com](http://meganrusso.com) or on Twitter [@forgewithstyle](https://twitter.com/forgewithstyle)

## If it pleases the court the accused is 28, married, unemployed, resides at Vauxhall Gardens | Anita Goveas

Maria Fernandez reads out bits of the newspaper to her husband every day, although ink catches on her soap-worn hands. Last thing at night, when the babies are sleeping so he has no excuses not to listen. He dwells on the successful arrests of criminals, she likes stories of royalty that take her back to her Goan childhood, but it's something they do together. She looks forward to it every milk-soaked, nappy-scented, shriek-filled moment.

"Anthony, the Princess Sophia Duleep Singh's in court again for not paying her taxes! I thought you said she'd learnt her lesson?"

The Princess is one of her idols, a god-daughter of Queen Victoria. She'd grown up in the spotlight, a debutante, a fashion icon, a child of the last ruler of the Punjab. Transplanted by the British Empire and a man's promises, shining out like her father's Koh-I-Noor.

Maria's read stories of the suffragists, seen cartoons, but she doesn't read those out. Anthony says they're all dissatisfied women who haven't found their proper place. She can't imagine why a respectable woman would end up in court, what would be worth the shame.

"She loiters outside Hampton Court in a fur coat with a placard. Votes for women! What would they do with it? Better they stick to recipes. She'll give us Indians a bad name" He turns over, exposes his fat reddening neck, and snores.

His rice had been overcooked today, he'd pointed it out for her own good. She'd made it one-handed while soothing the 5 month old who had the colic. She'd learnt to be ambidextrous at the hospital in Goa where she'd nursed him back to health, before she'd followed his dreams of a different life.

She makes sure to burn his favourite dinner the night she smashes her first window.

Anita Goveas is British-Asian, based in London, and fuelled by strong coffee and paneer jalfrezi. She was first published in the 2016 London Short Story Prize anthology, most recently in *JMWW*, *OkayDonkey* and *X-Ray* lit. She's on the editorial team at Flashback Fiction, an editor at *Mythic Picnic's* Twitter zine, a reader for *Bare Fiction* and tweets erratically [@coffeandpaneer](https://twitter.com/coffeandpaneer)

Links to her stories can be found at [coffeandpaneer.wordpress.com](https://coffeandpaneer.wordpress.com)

## The Pogrom | Merrill D. Smith

She hid in a haystack—  
or—

she climbed into a barrel—  
or--

she crawled  
into a narrow space

in the now long-vanished barn,  
where she became invisible.

Time has fogged the details  
in haze, of blaze and cries--

hushed the terror—the whys--  
the child, my grandmother,

must have felt  
as she heard the boots,

the screams,  
the fire's thunder-roar,

soaring reverberations  
almost forgotten

trauma buried deep,  
but there, waiting to be sparked,

awakened from smoldering ashes  
to flame into a mass in her brain--

and do I carry  
within me the burnt ruins

of that long-ago pogrom--  
an incipient conflagration--

who knows

but the wisdom of generations  
yet flows through my blood.

## **In Memoriam: Their Names | Merrill D. Smith**

My sisters dead now  
I write their names on the church wall--  
so many dead,  
why, Lord, am I still here?

Cateryn, fair of face,  
Amee, sweet and loving,  
Jane who sang like a lark  
and made me laugh—

no more

will I hear the sound  
of their voices,  
though my mind teases—  
wasn't that Jane's titter I heard  
at the priest's stuttering cautions

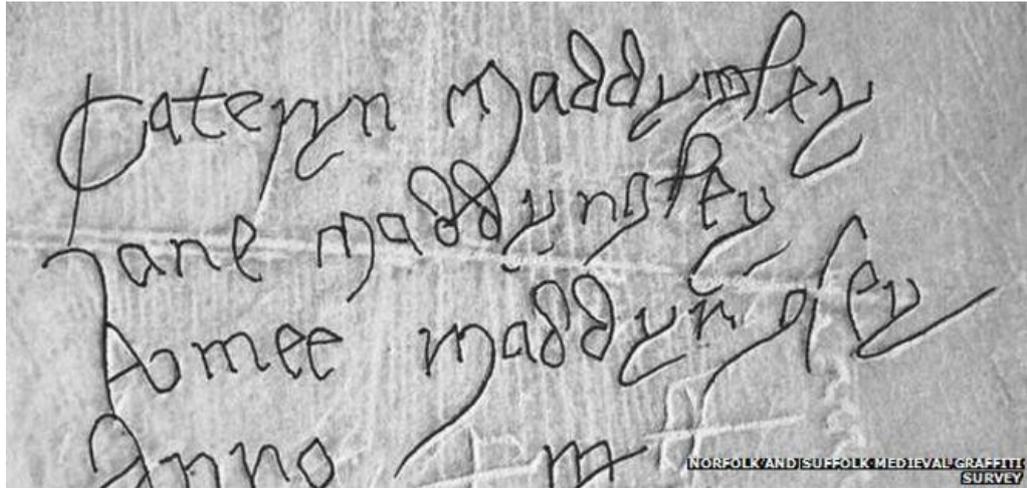
of heaven and hell--  
what does he know of it?

This my hell, my sisters gone,  
the three I most adored  
in this world--  
where they no longer dwell.

So here, my small tribute  
that in some future time  
one may see their names  
and wonder about this trinity

their names left here  
in artless manner  
but engraved indelibly  
on my heart--

Cateryn, Amee, Jane  
Anno 1515



*This poem was inspired by the plague graffiti found on the church walls in a Cambridgeshire church.*

Merril D. Smith is an independent scholar with a Ph.D. in American History and numerous books on history and gender issues. She is currently working on a book on sexual harassment and a collection of poetry. Her poetry and stories have appeared recently in *Rhythm & Bones*, *Vita Brevis*, *Streetlight Press*, *Ghost City*, *Twist in Time*, and *Mojave Heart Review*.

Her blog is at [merrildsmith.com](http://merrildsmith.com) and she can be found on [@merril\\_mds](#) and Instagram [@mdsmithnj](#)

## 1989 | A. S. Kresnak

I saw a piece of Berlin's border wall  
behind a velvet rope, on full display  
and spotlight-lit. These are the last remains  
of cold war fear, defiance, lonely dreams,  
and lastly, this: on one November night,  
the people gathered, flooding through the gates.  
They weren't held back. In fact, the other side  
raised open arms to help them cross the line.  
This was a day the world would celebrate.  
They would make heroes of the refugees,  
asylum-seekers, dreamers, emigrants,  
those tearing pieces of the barricade  
as souvenirs of freedom from that place.  
Who built the wall? I'll ask you this: who cares?  
We've seen the way these countries operate.  
The ending of the border came so fast  
I've learned that walls like this can never last.

### Writer's Commentary

*I had a class on immigration in Europe. The teacher showed us documentaries on migration, from WWII to the Cold War to the modern-day refugee crises. I was struck by how similar the stories were even as decades passed. Living in America right now, I'm finding hope in history: it shows us that there is always something that we can do, no matter how dark the circumstances seem. This poem expresses my hope.*

A.S. Kresnak is a college freshman currently exploring their new state. Their favourite historical period is the Cold War.

They can be found on Twitter [@askresnak](#).

## Dead Poets | Alix Penn

the words of dead men stay dead as I read them,  
even as I am told that  
they  
are  
great.  
Death becomes us all.  
dead men tell more tales than the living, and the living  
(when asked)  
refer me to the dead.

I was not built for poetry, nor hidden prose.  
yet, and yet, it is in dead men  
somewhere in their words  
where the future lies  
(or so I am told)  
I read the words of dead men.

(18/11/14)

Alix is a twenty-something museum professional, nerd and musical theatre connoisseur, who uses her background in disability activism, heritage and academic research to try and cultivate further understanding, engagement and interest in forgotten histories both at work and at play.

She can be found on Twitter at [@histortea](https://twitter.com/histortea)

## The Great Courtesan of Henrietta Street | Olivia Marsh

1755

Everything in London is filling it to bursting and the men never more so; in their multitudes, men are as common as the wet, muddied ballad papers that cling to the pavements. They strewn, like the chair and carriage traffic that clutters its way to the epicentre. O, glorious epicentre, where all the world's best and worst scramble for coin, for lust, for love, for life, for death, for success, for posterity. Choices for the taking.

But in all that choice, she desires only him. Second-rate version of an heir that he may be. A third son? A fifth? She does not remember. She only remembers that he has loved her, or has professed it in so many words. He has whispered on a morning: "My angel, take yourself off and buy a dress, a gown *a la Turque*, and later, I will kiss you and kiss you until you are quite dizzy." Everything beautiful she sets her fingers on was paid for by him. Bottomless fortune, indeed. There ain't no such things. Not for third sons on a cadet branch. And yet...

And yet, there is a pimp far back in her memory who thrusts up her chin and says "Pretty pet, come along now, I'll have you set in no time. You'll beg no more, child" and he had indeed made her Duchess, after a fashion. Aye, her coronet was a man's mettle, all bitter and white, but the luxury was the same. Only those who sleep soundly in their beds each night declare that a mighty harlot cannot look a fine lady in the eye and say '*Aren't we sisters, dear?*' The difference between her urine-soaked alley bed of old, and the silk sheets and fresh linen of new, is startling enough to make her fear ruination to the point of shudders and flutterings; when there is so much danger in London for a woman to fear; that is her nightmare. A flash of cash is enough for her to open up, out of passion, out of fright. What care she for figures, for the strange minutiae of it all? Yet, men make promises they cannot keep all the time, and they close the breach with kisses and sweat-doused nights and sweetness. She knows this, somewhere. It's just that, this time, her heart has quite staged a coup. It has taken over.

Her heart has been cautious but never closed. But she fears she has given it to him, in particular, too freely, as he now speaks the words she has dreaded, the words she has suspected but never quite let herself consider for more than a moment.

"I am tired of you"

And now he says she is a strumpet. A doxy brought high and mighty by other men's money, hard earned fortunes tallied up since the Conqueror. He says "You ought to have remembered that you were mine and mine alone. Instead, you go gadding about the city, always open for business!"

Always open for business! She retorts, she says she has been touched by no other since he took his brief leave, that she has pined only for him. If men have admired her in the streets, that is no fault of hers. Surely, surely, he did not expect her to lock herself away

until his return? Surely, my love...oh, she speaks sweetly now, close as she is to spilling tears, surely he does not mean for her to be cosseted and owned?

But he does expect it of her. He expects a biddable mistress, a wife of sorts, though not quite. All warm and inviting, with a mouth to fill and kiss deeply, and flesh so soft and rounded that he can cup it in his hands as he thinks *'Now this is having my cake and eating it.'* A pretty face to covet, rule and brag on, but never ever be bound to. And in this, he is not quite so different from the others. All the men before, even the pimp who healed her smarting wounds with kindness, kindness that came at a *'Do as I say or I'll blacken your eye'* kind of price.

Do not leave. Do not go, she hears herself say, I am ruined. Who will pay my debts? *Our* debts? she emphasises, debts we trotted up together in our love, in our merrymaking, in our plans for marriage, but he no longer hears her, he abuses her, he shouts and yaps like a fussing puppy.

Hussy! Wench! Snake! Dishonest jade! Lured me in like all your other lovers, who even now make their leave to queue at her door. How can I make an honest woman of a trull? A notorious one, black mould on my family name?

Honest women are what lying, cheating profligates talk of incessantly. A bunch of rakehells predisposed to burning, pathological hypocrisy. In every single syllable, there are visions of maidservants debauched, brothels much used, and dust collecting Bibles much ignored. Who are you to sermonise to me? she must have said. Who are you to pull my conduct apart?

But in the philosophy of it all, there is simply a woman (yes, a courtesan, but a woman all the same, lest, Reader, you be prejudiced against them and their trade) scorned, hurt, misled. A woman who trusted, who believed herself finally in the arms of a future, a new equal, a fine sweetheart to spark upon every night and day. She thought herself safe. She thought herself worthy. She thought herself out of all danger, of all instability past. She thought herself loved.

"I love you" she says, finally.

...and the phrase hangs on the precipice, uttered quietly, sounding monstrous loud, but it doesn't quite account for the flaming sensation of joy she gets when she thinks of him or the feeling that her ribs might split open and pour out her heated blood every time she looks upon his face. Doesn't quite cut it.

To be sure, her man is handsome, pretty even, in or out of his stark white wig, at this moment powdered as vigorously as anything he does. In a poem, they may not call him an Adonis but he is beautiful enough to her. And yet, at the declaration, the words that seemed to be a cat set amongst pigeons, he pulls a face so hideous, so reminiscent of one's first scent of vinegar or of horse manure on a summer's day, that she quite startles herself out of half-fantasy that he will change his mind.

“Love, madam?’ he says, ever so gently, “how could a harlot know the meaning of the word?”

Olivia Marsh is an aspiring historian, currently studying for a Master’s degree in 18th century history. She is specialising in the social history of Britain from circa. 1660-1820, with a particular emphasis on the history of sexuality and of sex work.

She loves to write both prose and poetry in her spare time, inspired by the everyday lives and emotions of past peoples.

She can be found on Twitter at **@myladyteazle**

## **Catch-22, Part 1 | Michael Prihoda**

“you’ll let  
me go

if i give  
you the name

of a Middle-Eastern  
man

i once knew?” even  
if he drowned

in the Black  
sea?

you bring  
the bucket back.

“if you’re not  
a terrorist,

surely you  
know a terrorist.”

it becomes  
hard to breathe.

i am back  
in the womb.

more than water  
makes this unspeakable.

“if you’re not  
a terrorist,

surely you’ll  
give up terrorists.

save yourself.  
why won't you save yourself?"

don't you see?  
every breath

of water  
brings heaven closer?

## Catch 22, Part 2 | Michael Prihoda

i am accused,

the distance

immaterial.

North Africa

is not Los Angeles.

it is certainly not

Vancouver.

you seem

to write history

for the rest

of us.

but

you can't

fuck

with my

geography.

Michael Prihoda lives in central Indiana. He is the founding editor of *After the Pause*, an experimental literary magazine and small press. His work has received nominations for the Pushcart Prize and the Best of the Net Anthology and he is the author of nine poetry collections, most recently *Out of the Sky* (Hester Glock, 2019).

He is on Twitter at [@michaelprihoda](https://twitter.com/michaelprihoda)

## It Was Coltrane's First Soprano Sax | John Grey

he imagined himself playing it maybe  
in that underground railroad of a wind  
blowing up South Michigan avenue

just had to have himself a piece  
of what was already there  
mapped out by his fingers  
coded in his lips

couldn't bust it open at first  
sure the tunes came  
but like doorbells ringing  
when nobody's home

wanted that tone in the upper register  
that could outlast lungs  
by ten dozen notes  
wanted that sweetness  
where air illuminates metal  
buffs its shine  
loops over and through  
like a breathless knot

had to have it

got it

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident. He is recently published in *Midwest Quarterly*, *Poetry East* and *Columbia Review* with work upcoming in *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *Hawaii Review* and *Roanoke Review*.

## Count Your Breaths | Chris Wright

Fine dreams of sweets and the soft lilt of her fading lullaby are torn at the fabric; broken by a terrible wail, like a bird calling out a predator until I have no choice but to rise and gasp and plunge through the surface of a stormy sea. When the distressed caw doesn't become another and the sound stretches into the distance I know what is coming.

The patter of quick feet, the swoop of the bedroom door, Grandmother's warm hand resting on mine, just for a second, in a moment of pure peace.

We take off down the stairs, out into the biting November cold, towards the shelter at the end of the street.

"Count your paces," she shouts and we try to beat our score from the night before and, despite knowing that another fleet of German bombers sweep in from the South East, I am safe as long as she's at my back, tracing the steps of my small feet with her own.

The dust that clings to the city weighs her breaths and slows her steps, gifting me more time lingering in dreams. Slower and slower it takes until full minutes pass for her to shuffle to my room, calling out my name in increasingly strained tones, chased by rack and cough.

I guide her down the stairs and through the front door, the pinching air stealing her stride. I pull and tug with all my little muscles can muster. "Count your breaths," I shout like she is in control.

She falls by the side of the road, slumping down the neighbour's wall, looking up at me with a rueful smile. I count to three and count no more.

Chris Wright is from Northern Ireland. His work has featured in several publications such as *The Bangor Literary Journal*, *The Belfast Telegraph*, *Panic Dots*, *Broadsheet.ie* and *Unsigned*. Chris is a Politics Graduate from Queens University, Belfast and is currently working on his second novel.

He is on Twitter at [@\\_ChrisWrites](#)

## **I forgive... | Madelaine Smith**

They would have me write - they wish for my words -  
though they could have heard me in the court,  
could have listened then to hear what I had to say.  
Now they give me the chance,  
now when the words I write will be my last.

*Gentlemen, Friends and Neighbours,  
It may be expected that I should say  
something at my Death...*

I have lived a long and good life  
through turbulent times  
and now I reach my turbulent end.

*I forgive all persons that have wrong'd me.*

How did I come to this?  
My life has been small, I kept to my hearth,  
though my husband played a larger part  
than I would have liked on the stage of our times...  
and paid the price.

*I did as little expect to come to this Place  
on this occasion, as any person in this Nation.*

I concerned myself as a good wife should  
with household matters -  
the sunshine of domestic life -  
the children, the land, the servants.  
Chatelaine from an early age  
I kept to my sphere, helped the poor,  
tended the sick, welcomed in those in need.

My crime? My crime was,  
entertaining a man of God  
who, I am since told,  
has sworn to have been in the  
Duke of Monmouth's army...  
an invader, a rebel, a traitor.

Would not I, a good housekeeper,  
a fair and generous lady of the manor,  
mistress of my own demesne,  
would not I welcome in one of God's servants?

I welcomed in a man of God –  
yet stand convicted of harbouring a traitor.

The jury, good men all,  
found I had not committed a crime.

The judge - who sends me to my death -  
would not accept innocence as a verdict.

My words were not heard.  
He would not listen.  
I felt surprise and fear.

Once, twice, three times  
he demanded of the jury their decision.

On his third asking the jury,  
eyes down, announced me guilty.

*I forgive all persons that have wrong'd me.*

The judge, eyes on mine,  
announced I was to die...

at the stake...  
to burn... like a witch.

*I forgive all persons that have wrong'd me.*

King James, the second of that name,  
has saved me from the flames.  
Instead I am to die  
by an executioner's axe.

He has given me the death  
my husband did in some part  
impose upon the King's own father.

*I acknowledge his Majesty's Favour  
in revoking my Sentence.*

*I forgive all persons that have wrong'd me.*

The dawn is coming; my time is nearly up.  
I must put aside my pen to pray one last time...

Pray for my soul...

Pray for a swift end.

*I forgive all persons that have wrong'd me;  
and I desire that God will do so likewise.*

*A found and enhanced poem based on the last speech of Madam Alicia Lisle,  
beheaded in the market square, Winchester, September 1685.*

[powys.org/Murder/AliceSpeech.html](http://powys.org/Murder/AliceSpeech.html)

### **Writer's Commentary**

*In the Square in Winchester there is a plaque highlighting the spot where Lady Alice Lisle was executed for harbouring fugitives during the Civil War. She was 72 years old. For Heritage Open Days in 2018 the local Loose Muse group of poets put on a reading entitled 'Extraordinary Women' in a church just a few hundred yards from the execution spot. Lady Alice needed her voice heard. The line 'the sunshine of domestic life' is a reference to *Sunshine of Domestic Life: Or, Sketches of Womanly Virtues, and Stories of the Lives of Noble Women* by William Henry Davenport Adams*

Madelaine lives in Winchester. At the age of four when asked if she wanted to be a hairdresser or a nurse when she grew up Madelaine answered that she would rather be a poet. Having now grown up she thinks she ought to get on with it. Madelaine has worked in bookselling, publishing, theatre, museums, and was editor of *New Writer* magazine for five issues.

Madelaine has had work published on *Ink, Sweat & Tears, Paper Swans* (online and in print anthologies), *Perverse Poems*, and as a part of the *Silent Voices* project ([silentvoicespoetry.wordpress.com](http://silentvoicespoetry.wordpress.com)) in *South Magazine, Reach*, and *Panning for Poems*, as well as in local anthologies and exhibitions.

Madelaine has three unpublished novels in a drawer. She can be found on Twitter **@MadelaineCSmith** and Instagram **@madelainecsmith**.

## Disguise | Megha Sood

The acrid smell of the past  
that rotten gut-wrenching smell  
that fills you with disgust

the reflection of the memory  
so deeply etched in your  
sullen mind  
the one you fervently try to erase  
the emptiness,  
deeply seeded in your soul

like that in the eyes of the orphan  
left at the step  
of the church  
that metallic taste of  
those brackish memories  
lodged firmly in the back of your throat

never to be spat out  
lodged like the toothpick in  
your warm supple throat  
every breath brings you pain  
grief changes you in different ways

you build up a facade  
built on the broken lies and empty truth  
those empty smiles try fervently to  
cover your broken truth  
which rears its head then and again

like those incense sticks in the graveyard  
my broken smile  
disguises the pain.

Megha Sood lives in Jersey City, New Jersey. She is a contributing author at *GoDogGO Cafe*, *Candles Online*, *Free Verse Revolution*, *Whisper and the Roar*, *Poets Corner* and contributing editor at *Ariel Chart*.

Her 290+ works have been featured in *521 Magazine #Sideshow*, *Oddball*, *Pangolin review*, *Fourth and Sycamore*, *Paragon Press*, *Royal Rose*, *Visitant Lit*, *Quail Bell*, *Modern Literature*, *Visual Verse*, *Dime Show Review*, *Nightingale and Sparrow*, *Piker Press* and many more. Her poetry has recently been published in the anthology "*We will not be silenced*" by Indie Blu(e) Publishing and upcoming in six other anthologies by US, Australian and Canadian Press. She recently won the 1st prize in NAMI NJ Dara Axelrod Mental Health Poetry contest.

She blogs at [meghasworldsite.wordpress.com](http://meghasworldsite.wordpress.com) and can be found on Twitter at **@MeghaSood16** and Instagram at **@MeghasWorld16**

## When People Ask Me So How Do You Feel About the War in Ukraine? | Nicole Yurcaba

*A Ukrainian can be pushed down for a long time, but when his forehead touches the ground, he'll rise up and no one will stop him.*—an old Ukrainian saying

I think of Evgen, who, five years ago emailed a picture of his grape-eye and the blood-creek cruising his face.

My father, 75, was in his bedroom, searching for his passport and packing his suitcase, determined to die in the mother

country. I, at 26, postponed studying literature in Kyiv. I think how many times I cancelled and re-planned.

*It's too unsafe, my father says. Listen to your father,* my mother pleads. Listen! I am always denied

home, return, chance, existence, identity. I am a woman of two countries, but in one tanks roll through my wheat-

fields; my sunflower fields, now snow-covered, are imprinted with artillery and bomb blasts, are stained with the lives

of brothers, of cousins, of sisters and century upon century of rape and enslavement My willows bend and creak, and I remember my grandmother, how she wiped tears from my cheek

and said *You, like Ukayina, are large and beautiful—*

*a mystery no one's meant to decode.*

### Writer's Commentary

*In a Ukrainian family that came to America as political refugees, I learned vast amounts of history. My family is very political, and from a young age I learned to debate not only American politics and history, but also international politics and history, specifically Russo-Ukrainian relations. Because of my family's history in Ukraine and America, and as many of my family members were imprisoned in Nazi camps, I have a deep interest in World War II. Thus, I admire people like Horace Greasley who defied camp guards and high-ranking Nazi officers. More recently, because of my own desire to return to Ukraine—a return that has been delayed more times than I can count due to the current*

*Russian invasion of Ukraine—my poetry has focused on what “home” is to people like me who live as part of a culture’s diaspora on soil where we don’t necessarily feel we have an identity.*

Nicole Yurcaba, a Ukrainian-American writer, teaches in Bridgewater College’s English department, where she also serves as the Assistant Director for the Bridgewater International Poetry Festival. Her poems and essays appear journals such as *The Atlanta Review*, *The Lindenwood Review*, *Chariton Review*, *Still: The Journal*, *OTHER.*, *Junto Magazine*, *Whiskey Island*, *The Broadkill Review* and many others. When she is not teaching, writing, or traveling, or dancing to Depeche Mode and Wolfsheim in goth clubs, Yurcaba lives, gardens, and fishes in West Virginia with her fiancé on their mountain homestead.

She is the Assistant Director of the Bridgewater International Poetry Festival, on Twitter at **@bwaterpoetfest** and Facebook at (Bridgewater International Poetry Festival).

## The Litigator | A. M. Walsh

"Attorneys study every letter;  
in smoke and stench they hone their stings" - Osip Mandelstam

My desk is                    a paper armoury:  
the keys clink                like a chain lifting ordnance  
into                            my keyboard  
but there is no                boom  
my broadside                 is  
just a                          swoosh.

I am a hired gun             for different faces,  
a professional                chameleon.  
I'll name the price         for you to become  
my temporary                enemy.

A. M. Walsh is a poet and lawyer living in Yorkshire. He started writing poetry in 2018 and has been published in the web magazines *Chaleur*, *Royal Rose* and *Drunk Monkeys*. He is presently working on a pamphlet.

You can find him on Twitter at [@amwpoet](https://twitter.com/amwpoet) and Instagram at [@amw\\_poet](https://www.instagram.com/amw_poet)

## **An Arkansas Airwoman Cheats Her Death | Kathryn Slattery**

i.

I am sure I saw you outside of your house-  
But memory refuses you any other backdrop.,  
A never changing world,  
Except at Christmas when four angels  
Spelling N O E L adorned the never played piano.  
Every year the obligatory Christmas visit  
Brought three little girls racing in-  
To be the first to play the big joke  
Switching them round to spell L E O N.  
Your stove and refrigerator as old  
As your wooden leg  
You refused to have refitted.  
All the fixtures in your house  
Including your hair and wardrobe  
Frozen in decades past.

(ii)

A plane fell from the sky  
Crashing through the Live Oaks  
Adorning itself with their Spanish Moss  
So it hung like tinsel from the wreckage.  
Gators scrambled away from the impact  
A propeller gradually slowed  
Until the words Banks-Maxwell  
Revealed themselves upside down.  
For four long days the propeller stood still.  
You kept your life, but lost your leg

And with it your spirit.

(iii)

When you put on your old jazz records

Did you imagine yourself whole again?

A woman who saw U-boats in the Gulf of Mexico

From a cargo ship bound for South America

Beheld the birth of jazz

Saw Satchmo's cheeks puffed out like two Frigate birds

Accomplished pilot

Training the men deemed worthy to join the cause.

Unsung, you sacrificed your leg and more-

Then returned to Arkansas

To a piano that never made music

In a house where time stood still.

#### **Writer's Commentary**

*From the moment I started writing, I have wanted to compose something that pays tribute to my great aunt, Adele Thorell - a woman who was ahead of her time and witnessed so much history first-hand. I remember a woman who listened to jazz incessantly and never left Stuttgart, Arkansas. However, she was so much more than this. Attending Tulane- she was in New Orleans for the birth of jazz. Whilst travelling to see her brother in South America, she and her parents were forced to stay below deck for most of the trip when U-boats were spotted in the Gulf of Mexico. Finally, an accomplished pilot, she trained fighter pilots during World War II. Her adventures came to an abrupt halt when she crashed in the swamps of New Orleans and lost her leg. She returned to Arkansas and never left again.*

K.T. Slattery was born in Memphis, Tennessee, and grew up just across the state line in Mississippi.

She attended Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama, where she studied English Literature and Philosophy. K.T. now resides on a mountain in the West of Ireland with her husband and an ever increasing amount of rescue pets.

Find her on Twitter at **@KTSlattery1**

## Bonnie | Steve May

*Guess who came to the factory this morning...Steve McQueen. To pick up his new Bonnie. He had this girl, Maureen, from the office, sitting on the back for some photos. You should have seen her face. What a sight. Steve McQueen and our Maureen!*

Me dad made motorbikes at Triumph Engineering in Meriden. He had a hand in the Bonnie from the word go. He'd come home knackered but buzzing from the factory and talk like a kid about this great new bike. He felt he had a stake in it even though he was only on the shop floor.

The original Bonneville, a thing of beauty, a classic. A work of art in tangerine and blue separated by a single hand-painted gold pinstripe. Stripped down fenders; 115 mph; a real hot rod for for the US market. "The Best Motorcycle in the World" said the blurb. Who could disagree?

I was never a biker, me, but in 1974 I bought an ancient Honda 50 that managed 50 miles from Stockport to Leeds in just under 8 hours then clapped out, kaput.

It was Honda that eventually killed off Triumph; too heavy, too expensive. Though the Bonnie lived on, it was never the same as in those early days, when me dad raved about its sculpted tank and sturdy frame.

The Triumph Bonneville, a mythical machine, famed for jumping that barbed wire fence in The Great Escape. McQueen on top and a little bit of me dad in its battered frame.

*The Triumph Bonneville was first produced at the Meriden works in 1959. Steve McQueen visited the factory to pick up his new bike in 1964.*

Born in Coventry, UK, Steve May has worked extensively in the field of drama-in-education, including winning an Edinburgh Fringe First with Wigan Young People's Theatre and leading a Performing Arts Department at Sunderland College. More recently, living in Sunderland, he has worked as an acupuncturist and returned to his original passion of poetry. He regularly performs his work around the NE of England and further afield. He has had poems published in *The Writers' Café* and the anthology *Mixed Emotions* and won the 2019 Shelter Poems for Home Competition, judged by John Hegley. He is a Poetry Society (UK) member.

He is on Twitter at [@s\\_may\\_uk](https://twitter.com/s_may_uk)

## Gardens are for burying secrets | Nikkin Rader

don't let him in your house,  
so I dug a hole and put our found corpse in it,  
but he began to sprout,  
a lazarus taxon I can't unmouth,  
reappear in fossil record—  
    phoenix fire or witch inspired.

he wept like my father under blue TV lighting in the dead of night,  
but redhead deadman risen, made only to unearth the crops—  
    miraculous lies spewing from liquored lips

besides magic protection for the openings of his body, man has equal need for the magic protection over openings to his dwelling, roofs of holy places, windows of holy places, a lust for strong protection more important than ordinary domestic windows. Without chimney, smoke from fires can sustain you. Travelers cannot escape the stoking, the he-smoke and she-smoke, other-smokes ignored.

or, liveth and believeth in the rise and fall of sun, to street dance on uncut rocks by moonlight days after the tomb-vowels: he who thou lovest etched over plenty arcadia or echoed near our abode. no more plague on these stems from nearby death sea, just pesticides to keep the undesirables out, wrongdoer bugs exiled, sickle backs of heathens, tying all hoe down, hose 'round tree, enmity rising from rosebeds—

he came in grave-cloth and stunk of wet shit, a beetle dwelling in his eye, black as soil, its iris wisp or sea-wine. ever since he came here the fungal curse returned, tainting berries and roots buried. sulky vision intrusive on tongue. you are not the same man born from below, no, you

became something else when under the earth, skin rotting, mind melting, in want.  
wishing instead for him to shed his skin for me to wear, then go disappear back to—  
    from whence did you come?

I tell creature to hop o'er my fence made of dogwood tau,  
but he leaves behind crushed butterflies,  
worms crawling over aluminum can tabs, chewing plastic. if only  
I could ground his bones into compost until we are all barren land-selves.

bodies bore of gender yet we do not make for lovers, taking to empty dirt hole.  
keepers abstaining roamers thru bay of salt circles and needle thread traps,  
we tire of them and spike faucet, water spew & shout:  
let me cultivate the trance that burns cloudy— wets our palms splayed over fire—

sleepy somber would you drop arsenic down wishing wells or fleece wool 'round neck  
cool in early morning light? seen uphill: the man reborn of unwanted might  
running down towards town before children wake.

remember, not all dead things stay lying and  
not all living things simple kept– breaking bread–  
shaking off what thoughts of you burrowed into my peach–

Nikkin Rader has degrees in poetry, anthropology, philosophy, gender & sexuality, and other humanities and social science. Her works appear in *Occulum*, *the Mojave Heart Review*, *peculiars magazine*, *littleddeath lit*, and elsewhere. You can follow her twitter or insta **@wecreptoodeep**

## Black Tuesday | Holly Salvatore

cheap and dirty  
I break bottles in the driveway when I'm angry  
our house sinks a little more each day  
we reinforce with I beams  
bats colonize the attic  
I stain my skin orange with ore  
bathing naked in the creek

I want to tell you a story about a boy selling newspapers, breathing ozone through his paper mask  
The streetlights are on and I can't breath I love you  
I want to tell you a story about infidelity, but instead I tell you a story about smog  
so thick I cut words in it, my hands are stained black  
You tell me to go wash them without even looking

"There is no royal road to the solution of smoke." -- St Louis Post Dispatch  
on November 28th, 1939, we all go blind as an inversion chokes the city  
I blow the coal dust out of my nose until my sleeve is ruined  
Remember this? How we tamed nature and killed it? We said we were sorry, we just didn't  
know  
it couldn't live in captivity  
when the sun doesn't come out for the 9th day in a row  
I think of you kissing me and nothing else

carbonite solarite  
this can't go on forever  
you call me your dirty girl and I think "high-sulfur, bituminous,  
I'm your dirty, dirty coal"  
back at the house we replace the floors  
crooked windows and doors  
I tell you about my past life as the smoke commissioner  
how I did my best  
but it wasn't enough



A cartoon from the St. Louis Post Dispatch, November 26th, 1939, page 18

### **Writer's Commentary**

*On November 28th, 1939, St Louis, MO had what Wikipedia calls "a severe smog event." In actuality, St Louis had been having air pollution issues almost since its founding; the city passed its first smoke ordinance in 1893. By the 1930s, St Louis was the most polluted city in the country. In large part, the smog was due to the use of "soft" high-sulfur, bituminous coal mined from southern Illinois just across the river. Bituminous coal burns "dirty," but it was cheap and there was tons nearby, so everyone used it.*

*Seventy years later, my parents bought a house that was built on one of the old Peabody coal strip mines in the area. Each year, it sinks approximately 1/16th of an inch into the improperly re-filled mine, resulting in slanted flooring and crooked doors/windows. Set something round down and it will make its way across the room.*

*So, this is the history of a city that brought itself back from the brink and the history of my life there.*

*It's also a way of self-soothing about climate change, because I feel powerless.*

Holly Salvatore is a farmer in Boulder, CO. They tweet [@Queen\\_Compost](#), and are excellent at naming chickens. Find them outside.

## The Clairvoyant | Patrick M. Hare

I never met Thomas Calame. As he died in 1956 - well before I was born, much less interested in art - I came to know him as we do most artists: first through the lens of their works and only later, if at all, through stories, biographies and informational placards. With Calame, however, even his works are becoming less well-known with the passing years; so much so that a painting *of* him (Rene Magritte's *La Clairvoyance* [1936], in which a man in a dark suit is depicted painting a bird in flight while looking at an egg on a side table) rather than a painting *by* him is the most viewed work with which he is associated. It is perhaps not surprising that Calame's fame is waning; he was never a master painter nor a bold conceptual artist, the two requirements for lasting impact on the canon. Likewise, he has so far failed to fall into one of the accidental frenzies that grips the art auction world. No biographies of him exist and barely a line is devoted to him in the encyclopaedias. His paintings can be divided into two groups, distinguishable not by their different techniques - for he painted simply and realistically throughout his career, favouring simple colours and bold lines - but by their subjects. Like the surrealists with whom he is grouped, many of his paintings depict impossible things: gravity-defying cities, labyrinths that were also tigers, the corpses of mythical beasts in still-life. As surrealist works go, these are generally considered rather pedestrian. His other works depict the startlingly mundane: eggs, birds, landscapes. Within this group of prosaic subjects are several hidden depictions of the unthinkable - the future.

Calame's works are now scattered throughout the world, filling out the surrealist and modern galleries of provincial museums. The museum in Canton, Ohio has one and so I must have seen it growing up, but it wasn't until I chanced upon one of his canvases (*Self-portrait IV*, a weedy lot with drifts of trash piling up against a peeling fence) in the Kunstmuseum Bern that I became interested in his works. A docent saw me puzzling over the painting one day during my lunch break and we fell to talking. She mentioned that one of the museum's retired conservators, an Australian by birth, had known both Calame and several of his colleagues. In town for a conference followed by a week of vacation, I asked if it would be possible to meet the conservator for coffee. From that meeting and the several that followed it, I have assembled the following information/biography/sketch.

\*

The Thomas Calame depicted in *La Clairvoyance* seems to be an accurate representation, for those who had met him described him thusly: tall, thin, even for the times, with a mushroom-like head, an impression only heightened by dark hair that seemed to have slid off his crown to lie clustered about his ears. The painting is also a good representative of his sartorial preferences - black suits with simple straight lines. While he and Magritte looked very similar at the time of the painting (which Magritte, with characteristic humour, described as a self-portrait), their appearances diverged as they

aged: Magritte filled out, Calame did not. Magritte kept more of his hair, although it all whitened. Calame's thinned and whitened on the crown of his head, but it stayed thick and dark below, giving his head its fungiform aspect. Among the things not captured in the portrait: Calame was partial to French cigarettes which he smoked continuously; he moved quickly with a very quiet step; talked little but when he did he would gesture emphatically with both hands. He was excitable, not given to socialising much. He had few friends, but he was fierce in devotion to those he did make.

Calame was born in 1907 in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, a small manufacturing centre in the mountains along the French border. The only child of a reasonably well-off lawyer and distantly related to the 19<sup>th</sup> century painter Alexandre Calame, he showed an early aptitude for art. Unwilling to bring an instructor to their house because of the cost, his parents did begin sending him to study in town at the age of eleven. His education was challenging, as would be imagined of one with his ability, even though the precise nature of that talent would not be recognized for many years. Instead, adults described him as overly imaginative, prone to fancy, and unable to focus on the task at hand. His talent lay hidden so long because while he could easily draw or paint from his imagination, if asked to paint or draw from a model, be it a person, still life, or landscape, his brush or pencil would produce an image of the scene unlike that in front of him. Childish drawings of the view outside the classroom in the morning would depict a night scene during a different season. Houses in the distance would be shown in ruins, or new houses would appear in empty fields. Still-lives were grotesqueries, full of desiccated corpses and rotten fruit, or they showed bare tables, or piles of unrelated clutter. When asked if that was indeed what he saw, he could only respond with incomprehension. Demands to repeat his work would produce a different image. Thus obstinacy and stupidity were added to his list of character traits. Despite this, by the time he came of age, several of his paintings had made it into regional shows, and he developed a reputation as a promising young painter.

Catalogues record 137 paintings and drawings by Calame, of which thirty-one have been lost or destroyed. Seventeen of these, comprising most of his early output, have the distinctly dubious honour of having been destroyed in the first V-2 strike on London in 1944. Of the remaining fourteen, most went missing during the war from friends' homes when the home was destroyed, or were presumed stolen or sold. To date, none have resurfaced.

The painting of the bird shown in *La Clairvoyance (egg III)* was one of only two series of paintings he is known to have produced: *eggs I – VII*, and a series of works titled '*self-portrait*' that were discovered posthumously. It is unsurprising that neither series depicts in an obvious fashion either an egg or Calame. Both series are now distributed among half a dozen museums throughout the world. The egg paintings (two of which were destroyed in the V-2 strike) depict, in addition to the mature bird in flight in *egg III*, an omelet (*egg II*), a fluffy chick (*egg VI*), a cat with the broken body of a bird in its mouth (*egg I*), and a single feather stuck in the crook of a tree (*egg IV*). It is not clear if multiple paintings depict the

same egg or if each canvas was created from a different model. This point would reasonably be considered vital, as it would settle at a stroke the debate between determinism and free will. Calame, though, seemed uninterested in the question, relying on servants to remove and do what they would with his models. The supposition that an egg, or *the egg* depending on your philosophical bent, ended up breakfast for the servants is irresistible. The series was produced in Paris between 1933 and 1936, where Calame had moved in 1928 to gain more exposure. There he met Magritte, Max Ernst, Miró, and others active in the surrealist scene. He found a ready home with surrealism and its depiction of realities that are impossible, or at least very improbable. It was an easy field in which to paint purely from imagination. It did not afford enough of an income to live on, though, so for a time he painted by commission. This came to an end after he spent three months in 1935 working on a portrait of a prominent Jewish family. He refused to paint portraits after this, and indeed no more paintings of any subject are recorded until he moved to London in 1936. He appears to have spent most of the intervening years closeted in his rented room.

In moving to London, Calame was following Magritte, who was living under both the patronage and the roof of the poet Edward James. It was there that Calame asked Magritte to paint him. It was also during this time that Calame exhibited the egg series, as well a number of typically surrealist paintings. When war looked to be inevitable, he fled England for Australia, where the unchanging nature of the landscape provided him with a chance to have his brush produce the same scene others saw.

It is not known when he produced the series of paintings titled *self-portraits I – IV*. Some have suggested that they were produced in Paris after his failure at portraiture, but there is no record of their storage or shipping to Australia. I believe it more likely that he only painted them after arriving in Australia, having had a chance to come to peace with what they would show. The series is composed of the following subjects: An an open packing crate with the lip of a dark green jar lid just visible inside; a single tree off-centre in a level grassy field with farm-covered hills in the background; a broken body in dark cloths lying, head at an impossible angle, at the bottom of a set of marble stairs, a pool of blood spreading to encompass the body; an empty, weedy lot in front of a peeling wooden fence. Many people assume that these were titled whimsically in keeping with the proclivities or of his early friends. Those sympathetic to New Age mysticism and certain forms of Buddhism assume they are meant to show the universal connection between all living things. They are not these things, though, at least not fundamentally. He was simply being honest in the naming.

The paintings were not found until several years after his death, when a manager found them in a storage room he had taken out in Perth. He died in his small house outside Perth in 1956, following a fall down a full flight of stairs. He appears to have simply tripped. The fall broke his neck and fractured his skull. His will dictated that he be buried in his native Switzerland, but his estate was unable and his relatives unwilling to pay for transportation

of his body from Australia. He was cremated, his ashes deposited in a small, simple urn, and this was shipped to his hometown. A proper burial was also out of the question. A cousin who had met him only once scattered his ashes on a field outside Columbier. I visited it before leaving the country, and while the field is intact and the tree is still standing, albeit with a number of rotten branches, it is only a matter of time until the growing town overtakes the field, leaving a peeling fence bordering a weedy, trash-filled lot in its wake.

Patrick M. Hare writes fiction and photophysics. He lives near  
Cincinnati, Ohio, USA.

He can be found on Twitter at **@NKUPMH**

## **Fy Duw, A David Jones Pastiche | Gareth Culshaw**

I said Oh! where is the song?

I looked side to side.

(He's teased me in the past  
with his shadows in sunlight.)

I knocked the door for his answer.

I have knocked since childhood

waiting to be announced.

I have walked my feet over the paltry tarmac.

I have travelled along the dead leaves  
ancestry beliefs from book to song.

I have blinded my brain

searching the sky and sun.

I have sensed His bruises

in wood and stone.

I have glanced at technology.

I have listened to words

without bigotry.

I have kept my breath

when in the unknown.

I can walk past Him

when my head is in the next century.

I have gazed at the sky to see the birds in case I might  
hear the voices of the earth, in case I might believe that  
God is in their throats. I have sung to the oak tree, be my  
father and for the grassy fields I thought I sensed some  
murmurings of His creature, but Fy Duw, my ears heard the silence  
of mining and the horrifying coin a coliseum-glue....O Fy Duw.

## Sick Bay | Gareth Culshaw

*(Based on the short story 'Gusev' by Anton Chekhov)*

Gusev lies in the sick bay. The ship breaks up waves that are in search of beaches. The iron groans from squeezing between currents.

Illnesses feed off his body then wait to jump into another. His eyes scratch away the morning as he wakes. He tries to yawn but his jaw

is a rusty hinge on a cemetery gate. The boat goes up and down kneading the sea. Gusev thinks of home. His family and friends talk,

he replies with unhinged words. Slobber slugs down the side of his mouth. The ship calms down happy at last to be on the sea. A porthole is open

allows a breeze to escape the outside. The heat crushes the skin of the ill. Gusev grabs his knees, so they don't spring his body into the sea. Gusev asks

a soldier to take him up top deck. They look into nothing. The waves try to outdo each other, manure and hay fills Gusev's nostrils.

"There's nothing to be frightened of. It's just scary, like being stuck in a dark forest." says Gusev.

Three days later Gusev dies. They sew him up in sailcloth, fill it with iron and place him on a plank. The priest speaks then the board is tilted.

Gareth lives in Wales. His first collection, *The Miner* is available from Futurecycle. His second is due in 2020. His main critics are his dogs, Jasper & Lana, who prefer sticks to poems.

He can be found on Twitter at [@CulshawPoetry](https://twitter.com/CulshawPoetry) and his website, [gculshaw.co.uk](http://gculshaw.co.uk)

## **Call for Submissions**

The Wellington Street Review will open for submissions on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019  
for our June issue, themed *Pride*

