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REAGAN UPSHAW

The Water Lily

Sun, incessant sun, would be its wish,
if it could wish, resplendent as it rocks
upon the gentle ripples. Languid fish
meander through its shadow. From the docks
the mothers call their children back to shore,
an echoing irrelevance, no more.
The water lily rides the lake.

The struggles for survival fought below,
each hungry lunge and desperate retreat,
are nothing to it as it crests the slow,
subsiding slipstream of a distant boat.
A frog may shelter on its floating pad
or be devoured, neither good nor bad.
The water lily rides the lake.

The damselfly nymph crawling from the depths
along its swaying, green umbilicus
does not disturb the lily. It accepts
the pollinating beetle's clumsy kiss
with like indifference. In pelting squall,
it curls into a tight, protective ball.
The water lily rides the lake.

The shimmering reflections of high noon
surround the lily, seeming to construct
a temple for itself, itself alone.
One day its selfish beauty may be plucked
by idle, arbitrary hand, but now
in the unblinking, everlasting now,
the water lily rides the lake.

ROBERT YOUNGS PELGRIFT, JR.

Taking Root

Numberless webs of Anne's royal white lace,
Their crocheted stitching hung with golden braids,
Fall off this ridge into the narrow space
Beside these rusty tracks in wild cascades.

And arcing branches of a sumac bush,
Feathered with gleaming green reds, rise and fall,
They wave sharp plumes in tossing winds and brush
This ancient gritty city building wall.

And rooted in a dark seed, each fine point
Of this green star struggles, each blade and stalk
Seeking the light, forcing the jagged joint
Between shards of this shattered concrete walk.

And so do all these seeds take root and crack
Their bonds of concrete block and steel track.

JEFF BURT

Inspiration

He spoke too often and she too little.
He never learned to stop near the middle,
words like loads of jagged aggregate poured,
she in search of two skipping stones to hoard
for a bright morning with a peaceful lake
and the only motion from the stones' wake.
He could build a road, visible and long.
She lived a quick life, skipped, and was gone.

CONOR KELLY

Terminal

The last train has left for Cincinnati.
I have no need to go there, go anywhere.
So I sit on a bench and arch my back
against the polished wooden slats and lean
my elbow on the metal arm-rest while
I smoke a Newport menthol cigarette.
I read the paper packet -SMOKING KILLS-
and take another drag. What doesn't kill?

Is this the bench of desolation where,
at 3 a.m. when no one is about
and I have smoked my final cigarette
and flicked the butt across the polished floor,
a sullen mode of desperation seeps
from the heating vent behind the bench
and I am restless as a railway rat
scuttling across the tracks that lead elsewhere?

And yet I cannot move from where I see,
across the brightly lit vacant concourse,
a bright blue Pepsi Cola drinks machine,
a bright oasis in a barren space.
I try to bring to mind a line from Yeats,
Shakespeare, Frost; but all that goes through my head,
like a vinyl record stuck in a groove,
is a loop: Pepsi Cola hits the spot.

Most men, according to Thoreau, lead lives
of quiet desperation and they go,
or so he wrote, which I read late one night,
to the grave with the song still in them. But

he never sat upon this railway bench,
he never smoked a menthol cigarette,
he never drank a can of Pepsi Light,
he never missed the Cincinnati train.

"I am a parcel of vain strivings tied..."
That was the song he sang before he died.
I have no song to sing like that. I chant
my refrain: Pepsi Cola hits the spot.
And all night long I sing my one-line song
again and yet again until the strain
of quiet chanting on a wooden bench
brings on paralysis and mental pain.

I cannot move. I cannot speak. I sit
all night and wait for more than dawn can bring
when early morning travellers arrive
and dash across the concourse to the trains
that take them onward, outward, elsewhere, far
from immobility, self-questioning.
I cannot leave this railway bench. Meanwhile
the first train has left for Cincinnati.

C.B. ANDERSON

Sufferance

Though spring might not be fat, it's rarely thin.
We reap its ultra-early harvest like
Those orphans, now adopted, who begin
To realize that they may ride a bike

With friends they've met in their new neighborhood.
We should be thankful for the rising sun
That will not fail to shed a ray of good
Upon our shoulders ere the day is done.

We have so many questions, yet we lack
An adequate supply of ready answers
To get us through the night unscathed, and jack-
Boots are anathema to crippled dancers.

It often rains when we come out to play,
But why this must be so we cannot say.

ANDREW PIDOUX

Steam

The engine got to Tanfield and then stopped,
the station master blew his whistle—loud,
the signal made a clicking sound then dropped
and the driver in his cabin looked right proud.
It must have been a season ripe for steam
for all and sundry wore enormous grins.
The Whitsun brides themselves could never gleam
as brightly as that man with twenty chins
knocking back his scones and jam and cream
down in the upholstered dining car's embrace
or that old boy who, with a pointy hand,
was tracing all the white smoke just in case
it drained from memory like deceptive sand,
for history was the purse from which he'd paid.
Its tracks made damn sure that we never strayed.

JARED CARTER

Hogwash

After a truckful of pigs on their way to slaughter stopped in front of her on a July morning last year, a Toronto woman took out a water bottle and fed the pigs with it, the large swine lapping eagerly at the bottle.

– The Globe and Mail, 25 August 2016

As even He once knelt before
 the dusty feet
Of travelers, so that once more
 the paraclete

Might enter in—she holds the spout
 until your tongues
Receive her blessing. Soon, torn out,
 your heart and lungs,

Your life, your very light, will go.
 Accept, then, this
Farewell—that even you might know
 a stranger’s kiss.

Bagger

Everything passes through his hands
and nestles in
That space, so that he understands
by touch the thin

Imported crisps, the Bleu d'Auvergne,
the Riesling waved
A moment, then expertly turned
to make a cave

In which the roses go. "And may
your day be nice,"
He says, and quickly slips away
to get the ice.

STEPHEN DICKEY

No Word Exists That's Not a Scar

No word exists that's not a scar
In someone's mending mind,
Reminding like a pulsing star
Of light years left behind.

But words do cleanse, like falling rain—
yesterday's stagnant slough;
collective memories lighten pain,
distilling life like dew.

Don't Look Now

Don't look now, but Lost Creek's there on the map,
in sunlit meadows under masthead clouds.
I'm doubling back to it, caught in that trap,
all that that mica emulsion enshrouds.

Want to pan for that golden creek, o brother?
It's dawning on me how far light can travel—
from one boyhood prospector to another,
eddying out of time, swirling silt and gravel.

Let's trek once more, two old explorers, through
meadow and canyon, spinning backward too,
like those stereoscopic stagecoach wheels,

to see how jarringly like home it feels.
And that rusted safe, on it side, blown open—
it's long since gone, if you were maybe hoping...

KIM BRIDGFORD

Jesus is God's Selfie

Seen on a T-Shirt for Sale in a Window

Because it was inevitable, for God
Knows everything—not only pain and love
But Facebook, iPhones, all technology—
Jesus would become his father's selfie.

It makes sense, really: an earthly view of God
To share. The awe of light makes you believe.
Those posing by Kardashians or Jay-Z,
Adele and Taylor Swift, or Bey,

Have nothing on the son of God. How many
Times can *this* be posted on a wall?
And just like Jesus will reflect his father,
So those who stand with him will sound the call.
“Like,” “like,” they click. Around the earth they travel,
The “likes” of love, of all the tongues together.

JANE LECLERE DOYLE

The Carousel

Dry Leaves blow through the Carousel
Past sightless peeling eyes
Of ponies stuck on lifeless poles
Dolphins who have lost their souls
And a bird that never flies

On broken mirrors reflected are
Scenes of years gone by
When joyfully the dolphins sprang
As music from a calliope rang
So too, the barker's cry

When children climbed on painted beasts
To wave as spinning by
From gilded ponies who trot and prance
Frogs and swans caught in the dance
Or birds that gaily fly

As time moves on and we grow up
Such delights lose their spell
While peeling paint for childhood grieves
In eddies spin the wind-blown leaves
Just not the Carousel.

Contributors

Reagan Upshaw's poems, articles, and reviews have appeared in *Able Muse*, *Bloomsbury Review*, *Hanging Loose*, *Light*, *Poets & Writers*, *the San Francisco Chronicle*, and many other publications.

Robert Youngs Pelgrift, Jr., is a graduate of Princeton University, A.B. 1971, and of Harvard Law School, J.D. 1974, and received the Special Diploma in Social Studies from Oxford University in 1969. He practiced law in New York City for many years, and is now an editor for a legal publisher, working in New York City. His poems have been published in various anthologies and in *The Lyric*.

Jeff Burt works in mental health. He has work in *Atticus Review*, *Across the Margins*, *Spry*, and *The Watershed Review*.

Conor Kelly was born in Dublin, Ireland and spent his adult life teaching in a school in the Dublin suburbs. In 2011, he retired to a small village in the Charente region of France to play boules, sample the local cuisine and run a twitter site, @poemtoday, dedicated to the short poem and a Tumblr site (poem-today) which publishes a classic or a contemporary poem on a daily basis. He has had poems printed in American, Mexican, British and Irish magazines.

C.B. Anderson was the longtime gardener for the PBS television series, *The Victory Garden*. His book of poems, *Mortal Soup and the Blue Yonder*, was published in 2013 by White Violet Press.

Andrew Pidoux is the author of *Year of the Lion* (Salt, 2010) and winner of an Eric Gregory Award from the Society of Authors (1999). As well as contributing to *The Rotary Dial*, he has had recent work in *Drunk Monkeys*, *Pedestal Magazine* and *Writers' Hub*. His long rhyming poem "The Squatter's Tale" appeared in *Descant* in 2014.

Jared Carter's sixth book, *Darkened Rooms of Summer: New and Selected*

Poems, is from the University of Nebraska Press. He lives in Indiana.

Stephen Dickey has had poetry appear recently in *Indefinite Space*, *Asses of Parnassus*, *Quarterday Review* and *Trinacria*. A short story appeared in *Word Riot* last year. One poem is forthcoming in *Skidrow Penthouse*. He has published several translations of Croatian and Serbian short stories and novels, including with NWUP (*Death and the Dervish*, *How to Quiet a Vampire*, *Ruta Tannenbaum*), and YUP (*The Walnut Mansion*).

Kim Bridgford is the founder and director of Poetry by the Sea: A Global Conference, www.poetrybytheseaconference.com, and the cultural curator of the Poetry by the Sea Reading Series at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Center City, Philadelphia. The editor of *Mezzo Cammin*, the online formalist journal by women, she is the founder of The Mezzo Cammin Women Poets Timeline Project, a comprehensive database of women poets, both at www.mezzocammin.com. Twice nominated for the Poets' Prize, she is the author of nine books of poetry, including, most recently, *Human Interest*. She is completing a three-book series, *The Falling Edge*, with visual artist Jo Yarrington, and is the recipient of grants from the NEA, the Connecticut Commission on the Arts, and the Ucross Foundation.

Jane Leclere Doyle was born and raised in rural Southern Indiana, and educated at Indiana University. She now lives in Ithaca, New York, having retired from Cornell University after thirty years as a research technician in a plant molecular lab. She writes poetry, music, and novellas.