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STRATFORD

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The territory where Beliveau Books of Stratford, Ontario, is situated is governed by two treaties. The first is the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant of 1701, made between the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The second is the Huron Tract Treaty of 1827, an agreement made between eighteen Anishinaabek Chiefs and the Canada Company. These traditional hunting and fishing lands and waterways have for generations been shared and cared for by the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, and the Neutrals. We are grateful for the opportunities to engage in the process of learning how to be a better treaty partner.

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James Hall

Lena Slack

talked like a parrot, moved like a jaguar
and acted like a vulture. All the kids hated her.
and she reciprocated.

When something went wrong at her home
she blamed the kids, mainly the Lillibridge kids.
One Halloween night a group of high school boys
turned over nearly every privy in town,
not only turning over Lena Slack's outhouse
but threw ripe tomatoes on her freshly painted front porch.
The high school principal made the entire class go round
restoring privies right-side-up during lunch hour
and scrub each porch clean,
while Lena's evil vulture eyes
willed them all stone dead.

When Jazz became Swing

Shades pulled down, Ray
bribed, paid with candy bars,
Stardust on the turntable,
we learned to swing,
for school tea dances.

Ray used to listen on radio
to Lucky Strikes Hit Parade,
conducting the music with a baton.
He could play the clarinet solo
from Moon Indigo, and transposed music
for each instrument in his band.
Practice sessions were in our home,
solid beat with a strong dance groove.

A local minister preached
on 'The Evils of Dancing,'
said it was 'the act of the devil,'
unbeknownst to him, his son
gathered parent's signatures
approving the high school dance.
Mother was one of the first to sign.

It was the time of
Wayne King, Artie Shaw,
Big Band Music,

couples form a ring,
Susi Q left, Susi Q right,
counter clockwise circling arms held high,
we danced the Big Apple,
when Jazz became Swing.

John Grey

It's The Blues

Despair? Destruction?

How about guitar and a little jump blues.

Hurt's like a hunter

looking for game,

finding six strings,

taking its chances.

Good old gloom.

It's got itself a preacher.

A crowd gathers,

white as rolls of bread.

Strange irony.

All here to hear the history

of a black man's pain.

Stomp their feet.

Clap their hands.

Not enough so he can leave

in a gold Cadillac

but there's always

food and shelter,

medical care,

what his brethren could have

used in the '20s,

now all it takes

is some of that Jack Daniels

waiting for him

in his dressing room

and the club owner coming through
with what he owes
Unfaithfulness? Treason?
Same six strings.
This time in the embittered key
of D.

Mary Anne Griffiths

Moles

Below the blistered wood
a lead fist:

these four little ones
under the thumb
of a blind mother

unfold
like an anxious sky,
cloud-knotted,
remembering sun,
pine-crush, touch
before assuming earth

before fear
sweated the palm
of the nest.

S.A.D.

The screen door is closed against the crickets.
Only eleven tomatoes remain on the window sill,
gathering the colour of the leaves
that weaken their hold on the branches.

On the lit porch
descending into standard time
something is leaving...

Happiness goes like that, turns the latch,
steps out into September,
drawing the dusk around itself
like a jacket against the cold.

Alex Carrigan

Sorry, but I have to rant

Can we please be absurd again
without immediately becoming sad?
Can we please mock the world around us
without using a long sigh as the joke's coda?
Can we please not make
the sitcom depiction of life
be so eerily accurate?
Can we please actually penalize people
for being mean when they think they're being funny?
Can we please cry
because we're laughing,
instead of doing both out of distress?
Can we please stop
using "edgy" to mean
"I want an excuse to be an asshole?"
Can we please
get some new talent in this dive bar?

I want to roll my eyes
and be assured they'll set back into place
so I don't look like a broken ventriloquist dummy.
I want to chortle and guffaw
without having to blame my hoarse voice
on laryngitis when someone at work tomorrow asks me.
I want to be able
to clap my hands
and crush mosquitoes at the same time.

I want to see others make observations
in a way that doesn't generate hashtags for cancellation.
I want to cry so much
that the sea levels will stop declining
and my apartment suddenly becomes beachfront property.
I want to be "ironic,"
and only because I know
how to use that word in its proper context.
I want
to see some new talent in this dive bar.

Can we? Please?
I want it.

Cooper Cassius (1/20/21)

For Brenna

Today,
what did he see when he
first opened his eyes?
Was he blinded by the lights and sounds around him?
Did he feel the hands
that passed his tiny figure around?
Did he hear his parents exhaling
when he finally appeared?
Or maybe,
he managed to hear the sounds
and see some scant images
on the television playing
down the hall.

Maybe he heard the news that
history was being made
on the day he was born.
Maybe he then realized
that he had been
born into two new worlds.
Maybe his eyes caught
the glint off Germanotta's brooch.
Maybe he heard Amanda's cadence
as she spoke of
The Hill We Climb.

Maybe he listened when Jenny commanded
“Let’s get loud!”
and followed her declaration.

(His parents,
in the days to come,
will wish he didn’t.)

Or maybe,
instead,
while hands were raised,
while oaths were repeated,
and while promises and pledges
were declared,
he instead focused on the
glint off his mother’s eye.
Maybe he was soothed by
the cadence of her heartbeat
as he laid his fragile head
against her chest.
Maybe he heard his own
heartbeat on a different monitor,
and decided to
tune out the monitor
down the hall.

Today,
this is the only world he
knows of.
He'll learn about the other
soon enough,
but it can wait for now.
It's been an exhaustive day
and he's earned his rest.

Susan Sonde

The Fires of Evening

incinerated the roaches that were climbing my walls. The eternal forest of poverty's hoarded a stream. Every day the edge of the world creeps closer as if, in its infinite raging, it wants to asphyxiate the human race. Life's a torment and towards the end all we really want of it's to know whether sleep will come first, or the pain of dying.

At the window a grimy little landscape's eavesdropping on me, the idiot apprentice seated in a classroom shoulder to shoulder with restless fire ants. I put in long days at the blackboard. The instructor sits with eyes closed. My resume says I'm a well-versed polyglot with a penchant for extant languages. I'm a thief. My greatest fear is getting caught. It wouldn't be the first time.

Once I rode over mountains in an air balloon that popped. It happened in the season of clouds. We never gave them a thought. Our thoughts centered on the knotholes in the forests below and the many lurid ways to bring sparrows to tears. Life's a bore. The rats treading the puddle of multi-colored light my Tiffany lamp throws off know so and swim from here.

I'm a renegade, an atom which broke long ago from the sun, and the Gods' favorite blow-up toy. My father was a gardener, his voice thundered among the plantings and stunted them. His hands on my body drew blood. I grew tired of the blows and of sunlight sparring for a place between them.

The wind told me its truth and I cast my father from my heart, but time returned him repeatedly from the erased millions.

The days broke their backs on me. Stole my identity. I searched for it by way of long division. Hoped for a windfall, for something mercurial to take its place. When all failed, I grew angry and my anger crossed boundaries, called on the days' latest refinements of cruelty. Made me make others kneel in pain.

Sucked deep within fury's vortex, I stole a child's peace of mind and watched as if hypnotized what my callousness did, saw night replace his days and blow in upon him cold and starless. This is my confession. *Here* I say

to that vacancy occupying the cross, to the noose at the end of my rope: scrub me clean. Make me innocent as a newborn's ear wax and worthy of humanity's embrace. Give me altars in abundance, each emblazoned with the Milky Way. A Luna moth presiding, silk worms spinning their rope beds, their sutures for our wounds.

When Is A Flower More Than Itself?

When like us it longs for perpetuity more than water. Time under the moon's influence is ratting us out, littering the landscape with corpses. Suicides too find it easier to off themselves with the toss of a coin: *heads I lose, tails I lose* and everything betwixt's a lie. Time's on holiday between naps; its absence contributes

to mortality. The clouds exhale their ropes of mist then die. The rains bring dry rot. Gone the freshly forked bales of hay, the peaks and tourist buses that climbed them. The mountains grew muddy and washed away.

The heavens are being plowed under but not the rat. Behind every wall a nest. Over every shit house fly the wind thinks to send, it bickers and with teeth and claw defends until the palm of night comes and crushes it.

Is nature amiss or the God? Are they even differentiable? What to do if the air flares up, a struck match igniting our totality? What if doing nothing appeals because doing anything might cast us into the sea like the chum we once were. Superstition you say? Ask the rains I say the deluge that doesn't stop.

I've grown long in the tooth contemplating our fragile world and try to live accordingly in the cramped corner life's leased for me. But my curiosity's always prevailed, been outsized in fact, big as the Liberty Bell. A facsimile hangs from my neck. When the wind gusts, its peals

crush ear drums. Then my face turns red. And oh shame, it pulses in my twenty-watt socket like a thousand-watt bulb.

Humans, we're the product of a dysregulation. Taking us from our knees and standing us upright, was the God's first mistake. The second was granting us a brain.

The air's turned salty. I'm selling shoelaces door to door to people who don't want them. I apologize even when no one's there. My abstemiousness, I'm told is charming. All this charm feels leaden and weighs on me. I'm not fleet of foot like some who pursue, with such an easy gait what makes them happy.

I throw my hat in the ring but never win. This rankles my Maker. He's bet on me and doesn't like to lose. It's a no-win situation. The rows and rows of us, are just a blur of bodies to Him, a people distinguished

only by their fuzzy desire for the truth, sending them to their houses of worship every Sunday. Causing them to stay home the rest of the week for fear of it.

David Estrangel

Writer's Block

Funny,
these blank pages—
so full of promise,
full of regret—
with capacities, infinite,
to trap pith,
shaken from the rafters,
and narratives that
rage.
How fatal
those delicate strands of cerulean,
crisscrossing sheets
like cobwebs,
waiting
to embrace
another
kill.

Mother's Milk

It's been a year
since the blush was kissed from your cheeks,
stolen away
with the morning sun,
leaving us here
with only the chill of starless night
as a guide.
How the void you left behind
lingers
like restless ghosts of marigolds
and burnt almonds,
following
from room to room,
fingering dusty frames
and long abandoned books,
stealing space.
Yet, I see nothing.
Shall I look behind bookcases
or cobwebs in dark corners?
Under the stacks of magazines you never read
or those secret places—
old purses and shoeboxes--
that hid your treasures
from prying eyes
and sticky fingers?

Where is that
thing
I once found bitter
that, now, tastes so sweet?
Won't you sing to me
just one more time?

Peter J. King

Bi[bli]ography

i.

I seem to have been waiting here for years,
while others come and linger
for a day or two
before they leave.

My spine's as naked
as the day that I arrived —

have I been forgotten,
left to fade here,
gradually becoming
foxed and fusty?
Can I really be so hard
to catalogue?

ii.

Weeks you spent in
intermittent local history,
discovering my life,
your nimble fingers leafing through
my past —

until I threw you out,
incensed at finding
underlining in my early teens,
a dog ear at my leaving home.

iii.

Out of print.

My name expunged from catalogues
and indices
and reading lists;
footnotes, endnotes

scoured, redacted, leaving
only scattered clues
that I was ever there:
an overlooked citation,
maybe, or a contents page
that points at nothing,
just a jump
in pagination.

Conveyor

I have made a small mark on the belt in biro.

The belt's seen better days, but bears
a stream of cardboard boxes right to left.

I put a little envelope of seeds in every box.

On my right sits May;

she puts a bag of compost in each box,

and on the other side of her sits Jean,

who adds a plastic flowerpot.

May shoves her compost

in Jean's flowerpot, in fact,

and then I place my envelope on top.

On my left sits Sheila,

taping shut each box of compost, flowerpots, and seeds.

Oh, and on Jean's right sit Anne and Rose;

they fold the printed, stamped-out sheets of card,

and make the boxes

into which Jean puts the pots,

May the compost,

I the seeds,

and then which Sheila seals.

Hour after hour.

Day after day.

And what with the endless empty chat,

the piped-in Golden Oldies,

and the old conveyor's constant din,

I would go mad, I think.

But I have made a small mark on the belt in biro,
carried round and round and round and round...
and though the boxes with their pots and compost
can't surprise me,
my mark can.

And as long as it surprises me,
no one will die.

DS Maolalaí

our puppy

she's old now. keeps
pissing. ruins
carpets regularly.
some trouble
getting on
and off the bed. creaks
when we touch her
like a water-
logged piano.
can't manage being walked
more than twice
around the block.

a poem should put
some coda here—
some hope or some
trite lesson.
it won't.

Joseph A Farina

analize

nostalgia has become
my drug of choice
available at any time
in quantities large and small
free to take or refuse
audible by spinning 45s
visual in vintage reflections
streaming in videos
comforting and easy
a reintroduction to lost friends
favourite places no longer standing
first loves to love again
alive in a closing of an eye
and the releasing of a sigh
tears the only side-effects

Mark J. Mitchell

Homage to Montale

Le loro canzoni

Le trombe d'oro della solarità

(The golden hours of sunlight

Pelt their song)

—Eugenio Montale

I limoni

Trans, Jonathan Galassi

Listen everyday poets,
lemons are trying to teach
you just how to sing
an almost perfect, just-past-noon
day. Hear the notes reach
towards white flowers. Look
across blue water. Let
blooms almost tickle your ears.
Breathe deep as they
call back that tea party
no one wanted but someone
insisted on—Earl Grey
and store-bought scones.
You sat outside under pale sun—
not this lemony sky.
Everyone told traveler's tales
that weren't true then
but flower in memory. Now look,

see the one sail, white
knifing through blue water.
Lemons just above your eyes
drip color and scent.
That deck calls your name. Go, sail
with gods so old
only half their names remain.
Sing that.

Under a Ghost Light

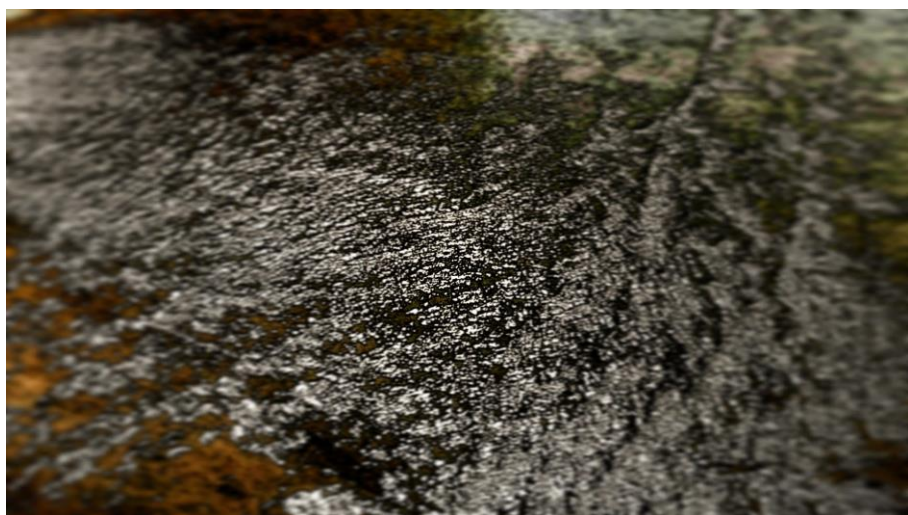
We're falling out, she said without going.
The damp concrete floor chilled tender bones. Things
were off. Her chicken wire cage twisted south
and ancient clothes shone white. Her tiny mouth
with no sound of her scar's cold song.

Go if you want, he didn't say, staying
stiff as a lamppost. Before today sings
its arid blues—one note—an unraveled truth
will roll past your eyes like fictional news.
The programs shorter than time. The play's long.

Her small religion forbids the showing
of teeth. She can't laugh. She gathers snow. Flings
it at the cracked window that almost pouts
at him. Glass rains on misbegotten vows.

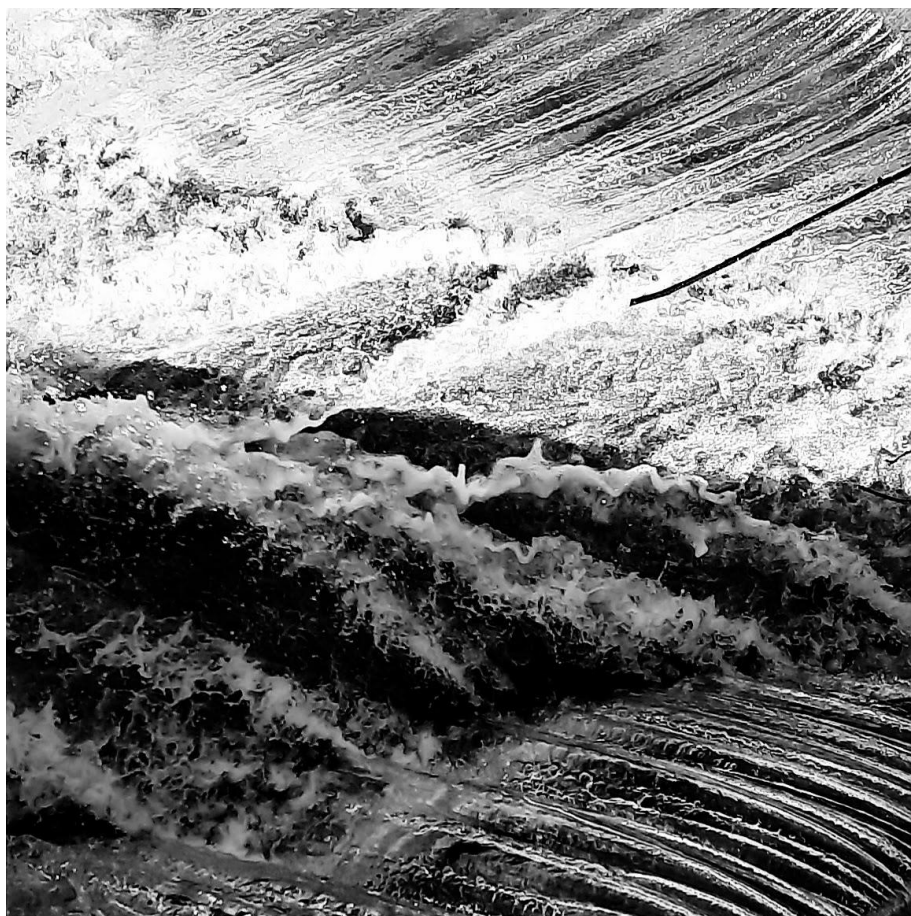
Turning, his eyes miss her hands, where no rings
disturb their life lines. Palms spread the play. Wings
hide a prompter whispering "The script is wrong."













Jennifer Wenn

Hannah's Lament

*for Hannah Horsley,
my great-great-great-grandmother*

Norwich was my home, looming large in East Anglia,
a different church every Sunday for you
and a different pub every night,
third city in England they say,
with our Castle and Cathedral;
but the twisted, narrow backstreets are what I knew,
with the river cutting through like a jagged blade.

I was born the year of our Lord 1816,
Dad was a gardener for those with money,
Mum's hands were full with all of us kids,
poor St. Benedict's our neighbourhood,
on the west side, just inside the old city wall,
where everyone just tried to make their way,
where the river wasn't far, always whispering
a gentle siren call, but Mum kept us away.

Oldest girl I was, and so Mum's helper,
cleaning, cooking, looking out for the little ones,
but I learned to read and write, proud of that I am,
was nobody's fool, and so when I caught
Thomas Horsley's eye, a coppersmith like
his father John, well, I knew a good thing, I thought;

we married September 1837, the river just
a sigh a few streets over.

To Heigham we moved, just outside the old wall,
two madhouses nearby, as poor as St. B's,
yet near work and Thomas' folks,
and what we could afford; but low-lying,
damp and foggy the air, for the river, slinking
here and there through swamp and marsh,
was close.

Our children started coming, I loved them all,
but little Edward, oh, he was special,
right until he fell ill and we lost him, just three years old;
we are sorry, but God's will they said, the others need you,
they urged, young Harriet and little Tom;
but I had trouble hearing through the
pain and the crying of the river.

Came 1846 Thomas' Mum gave up the fight,
all swollen and bedridden, and so John now alone;
money getting scarcer, the Hungry Forties
they called them, and they sure bit hard;
Thomas, he kept at it, when the work was there,
but with one thing and another the idea made sense:
Move in with John, not far, nearer yet to the creeping flood.

Another son! Spitting image of our lost one,
so we named him Edward as well.
But the river flowed on: Thomas lost his job,
started over as a bricklayer's labourer
while I kept the children fed and clothed
in the shadow of the beckoning waters.

Like a thief in the night it came,
September, 1854: John took sick,
the Cholera they said. Terrible his suffering,
his insides trying to get out; nothing worked,
he soon turned blue as the ocean, then was gone.
Three days later, and I'll never forget,
I don't feel well Mum, Edward moaned;
and soon he was in bed listening
to the river slip away.

Typhus this time, they said, and soon
he was burning up, then the rash came;
weaker by the hour, didn't know where he was
or anything else. Thomas and I stayed round the clock,
but nothing worked, and soon my second Edward,
like the first, was gone, and heard only
the hymn of the river.

We are so sorry, they said, *but now*

young Harriet and little Tom still need you.

Thomas, he tried too, and I listened, but
in the still of the night I visited the river, and
when the moon was right, a quarter full and growing,
I could see my babies.

We flowed onward a year and more,
to the spring when my first Edward
would have been fourteen, and
the day when the second was eight;
I went down, I could feel them there,
but the moonlight was yet a tad weak.

Eleven more days, June 8, waxing quarter moon,
fine early summer's evening, I slipped away along
the familiar path, and there they were,
my Edwards, in the summoning water, and
when the nightingale rested I could hear them call,
asking for Mum. All else, any thought of future,
of my poor Thomas, or Harriet and Tom,
faded into the gathering gloom and I
fell into the river's embrace,
reaching out for my lost dear ones,
borne down by the past and its struggles
like an anchor.

And when the moon is right, and the air is quiet,
if you can still find the spot and
the river is willing, you just might see
a mother and her sons locked
in an eternal embrace.

Robert Beveridge

Neuroma

for Mikio Fujioka

One foot in a place
where a foot should not be
and the next thing you know

you're at the bottom
of a ravine, neck
at a funny angle, a bundle
of nerves, a puzzle of flesh.

Not much to do but look
up at the stars, await rescue
that may never come.

The stars in the form
of a fox look down, start
to build the inevitable bridge.

Yuan Changming

South China Cicada

no human ear has ever heard of you
 cloistering yourself deep in the soil
 silently sucking all sounds from roots
for more than thirteen years in a row
 until high up on a summer painted twig
you slough off your earthly self
 pouring all your being in a single song
 before the sun sets for the yellow leaf

Frederick Pollack

Aptitude

The smell of these long-disused
corridors lined with lockers – had they
been K-6? Middle? High? It combines them all:
the *inside* of a nostril;
victory becoming relative becoming shame;
I’Absurde; as well as, here and there,
the familiar spoor of fear. Additionally, now,
the odor of the desperately clean
old. You push this from your mind;
it’s willfully perverse, unhelpful, and
unkind. Your mother looks again
at the instruction sheet, your father looks away.
Is this the right room? he re-asks;
you repeat that it is, he won’t believe you
even when he’s sitting there. Throughout
the drive, assuring them, him: It’s
all math – if a train is going
so fast, when will it arrive; or How much can
the last man carry –
You’re good at it (though actually she’s better).
She knows the questions won’t all be like that
but her gaze is calm though her voice isn’t:
You took this, dear? Yes I did, long ago.
Ages ago. It’s a snap. Will you have to
usher them in, hands on backs, last kisses?
But it’s the press of others in the hall,
arriving, that pushes them, hordes.

From Where I Sit

That figure from the past –
sometimes a sage, sometimes a man of blood –
to whom I like explaining things, or whose
incomprehension I enjoy,
would see our 60-inch flat-screen,
most of the day, as an inefficient mirror
or an idol of some sort. Or if he came
from a culture that admitted dark
eternities, as a shrine to them;
the clunky speakers, once state-of-the-art,
that flank it, obvious attendants.
And would marvel at the big cupboard
beneath them, grey steel. Who would craft such a thing?

We only watch at night. Two hours
cable news – Trump’s coup, fascist gangs,
the fires, the dead – then some
politically honest foreign cop show.
There are so many serial killers
in the world. The steel drawers hold
five thousand classical CDs; it took a week
to transfer them from their “jewel-cases” to
clear holders. Then YouTube came. How many
obsolete things can you find in this picture?
No one will want them, and the cabinet
is very heavy, but perhaps
I’ll die before I have to deal with it.

Kendra Nuttall

The Day the Mountains Disappear

My dog whines at the door,
waiting to sunbathe on the balcony
as she does every day.
Every day the sky chokes on smoke
from long-distance fires
the wind can't break up with.
It's wild, how the mountains
still open their arms to gather
the sun anyway,
reaching through the smog
for one last embrace.
I can almost imagine the gasp,
great Rockies drowning in gray,
praying for the wind
to move on again.

The Great Salt Lake Is Shrinking

At some point we will have to drop
the “great” from its name and call it small
like the brine shrimp living beneath its shore.

All good things must come to an end,
this is true.

A little sunshine sparks smiles;
too much burns skin.

A little rain brings green;
too much makes floods.

And when there’s not enough—
we drown in our droughts,

the air heavy with heat
and hopelessness—

except for the brine shrimp,
thriving since the Triassic.

Call them small, but they built a home
out of God’s forgotten tears.

They took the sting of saltwater—
disappointment after disappointment,
and drank it in.

All good things must come to an end,
but as long as brine shrimp still swim,
the small salt lake is Great.

Ron Tobey

Boston Common

my fiancée and I take the train from Durham to North Station
day after we hear the news November 23
during a French Revolution history class
a planned holiday to wander the historic city center
Boston Common and Public Garden are cold wet hard
we laugh share our intimacy in urban anonymity
shambling old men disheveled and somber
scold us for callous gaiety this historic moment
year ago I change buses to Philadelphia
hopeless men the outflow from Robert Lowell's decrepit aquarium
discarded schedules tickets gum wrappers cigarette butts
blown against the dirty walls of Boston's old bus terminal
inside squatters crowd the lobby for warmth
the brick row houses of Beacon Hill with pulled curtains
narrow gray stone paved streets
decorative black horse hitches on granite curbs
rich and famous people pretend to reside here
live on yachts and horse estates in Weston and Wellesley
the office buildings along Tremont and Boylston
steel skeletons hung with drab stone screens
same corner same building
where my grandfather's land development office
generations earlier booms streetcar suburbs
where he meets my grandmother
a piano student who takes lessons in the Steinway showroom above
the storied moral majesty of the State House

veiled by mayoral and ward politics
at the summit of the park's slope
we stand across the street
where giant finned cars nose forward like fish
and a savage servility slides by on grease
to view the Shaw Memorial
where I bring each of my children
of age to understand
to pose for a photograph in front of St Gaudens' sculpted portraits
Negro troops and Colonel Shaw *alto-relievo*
march out of their marble background into eternity
no compass but moral certainty

Brian J. Alvarado

neverise

ever since the big lacuna,
i've been aiming to
soothe an angry itch,
compulsively picking at
a defenseless eyelid lined
in insistent sand, and
watching for fickle sun
to hit the corner pane like
an old DVD player on standby

i'd often blink for a while
and miss it miss its mark
again, but i couldn't pretend
to care anymore once you
were gone and i a lonely stone

hell, if i could get any higher
i'd tie a cravat on the moon
and hold it close the
way i should have you,
making it proud to return
in full bloom each night, and
pressing myself lost in a crater
of its remission, where
satellite chagrin can't get me

goldbrick

lived too long in quicksand shadows
hunched and shriveled, strait remains
miles along a gilded aisle of forgiving
concrete on which to paw and scrape
confirmed yet unblessed palms

of hands apt to curse every cobble,
yellow still to feel the scorch and
scrutiny of the unblinking loupe
that is adulthood, and winding up
burnt anyway from inside-out

by witness Saturn's saddening
return from the born-again
grocer, sporting new moons, and
milk for old mother and child
light years spoiled on the way

JBMulligan

the hospital room

These pale faces of concern
that mean to the old man next to me
(tall, skinny, balding,
skin like flour spotted with grease)
what he'd miss (wife and son)
and what would hold him
like a hand in an empty hand at night
if he died—
are somehow strange and familiar.

Their voices are brisk
concerning the operation,
finance, the will,
what friends will help with what,
how long it will take to recover—
and loose and lazy
with family and neighborhood gossip.

Sometimes his voice trembles;
his wife's succeeds in a steadiness
she grips like a handle.

Their son is mostly silent
while his mind noses
from what he can't say
to the lights of passing cars outside.

Angela Acosta

My Dear Encarna

Querida Encarna,
my dearest, how are you?
When your parents named you
Encarnación did they know you'd
embody resistance,
willing into being
a queer gender defying writer,
an elder who died too young?

Have tea with me for
I know your alias (Elena Fortún) and name by heart,
but most adore the work you sent upstream
to the twenty-first century, the sapphic
Hidden Path to your soul.

Encarna, if I may,
let us go on a walk,
a short jaunt through your Madrid,
and may I show you the iridescent glow
of your rainbow kin
who stare without shame,
love without limits
and follow the paths
you knew were always there.

Charles Watts

For Olga, Starting with O

o we were never real friends
squatting on cheap Tijuana blankets
on the college commons
drinking Portuguese wine from bottles
with hips like some aged blues chanteuse
and sharing our work and loves

rumor had it that you slept
with every poet who visited campus
in order to get published, that
never would the muse
really strike you down, that
you were a truffle of the common kind
fit only for stews and cooking

these I took as the jealous rantings
of poets who feared that you would succeed
and they would be left to publish
in obscure journals read by perhaps
dozens of failed writers and sold
at library inventory reduction sales
for a quarter apiece

and I left town and never wrote and
that was that, until I came back
two years later and found
your first book and loved the work

and asked around and found
your house with a rainbow decorated
sign on the entry saying no men allowed
and curtains on all the windows
and suppressed giggles oozing out
and no one
would answer the door

Eryn Hiscock

“The Most Beautiful Suicide”

Evelyn McHale: 1923-1947

“I don't want anyone in or out of my family to see any part of me. Could you destroy my body by cremation? I beg of you and my family—don't have any service for me or remembrance for me. My fiancé asked me to marry him in June. I don't think I would make a good wife for anybody. He is much better off without me. Tell my father, I have too many of my mother's tendencies.”

—McHale's suicide note

President Truman was in office.

Dishonored Lady

was a hit at the box office.

Just yesterday,

Boulder Dam was

renamed Hoover.

Frank Sinatra sang *I Believe*

on the radio all week.

A war hero asked me to marry him.

I said ‘yes’ knowing

I'd never make a good wife.

Please tell my father

I have my mother's

“tendencies.”

He'll understand what I mean.

I dropped my scarf first
from the Empire State Building's
86th floor observation deck
at the parapet's precipice,
watched the sheer white fabric's drift, delicate,
before me like a ghost's garment to pursue through
my coming plummet,
hoping, at last, to be,
graceful as a graveyard-spiraling ballerina
hurtling through her dying pirouette

to smash my pinup's imprint
violently onto the roof of a
parked Cadillac limousine,
crash-land into eternal
photogenic perfection
near Fifth Avenue,

string of pearls and white gloves intact,
a swan dive's savagery evidenced only by
shredded stockings.

My brutal memento mori
made *Life* Magazine's "Picture of the Week."

Oh, look how prettily, how serenely, and how precisely
she sticks her final landing,

onlookers, bystanders and magazine subscribers
might say.

Look what a beautiful suicide she's made.
Good Lord,
she's simply breath-taking.



AT THE BOTTOM OF EMPIRE STATE BUILDING THE BODY
OF EVELYN McHALE REPOSES CALMLY IN GROTESQUE BIER
HER FALLING BODY PUNCHED INTO THE TOP OF A CAR

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Source: rarehistoricalphotos.com. Photographer: Robert C. Wiles

Deadbeat Dad

His mounted deer head's black marble eyes'
last vision is still frozen within, unshared.

Outside, trees snared by their roots
tangle downward, clenching the Earth
deeper and deeper every year;
their scaly trunks, their scarred, ringed flesh
a hoarding of time's callouses.

The moon's pearly eye
great cataract in the sky's
confined to its one-way orbit,
spinning, reeling.

In the beginning, Creation's deadbeat
was catapulted by a massive cataclysm,
so mother said once for cold comfort
by way of explanation for his absence.

Doug Stone

On My Evening Walk

Moth flutters around my porch light,
celebrating after straightening up
the geometry of evening so it matches
the night sky and the stars make sense.

A cat slithers though the gutter, fluid
as water, eyes full of things I can't see.
Like a sudden downpour, the cat spills over
the curb, soaks into the dark and is gone.

The ground groans as if it has eaten
too much and needs to loosen its belt.
Bats explode through the dark like buck shot
scaring the glow out of the streetlights.

A mound of dirt snores beside the neatly
gouged grave that is too afraid of the dark
to sleep. Tomorrow, a yellow bulldozer
will wake the dirt and bury the grave's anxiety.

I've reached the zenith of my walk.
I will follow the celestial breadcrumbs
the moth's left back to my house
where this began and where it will end.

Contributors

Angela Acosta is a bilingual Latina poet and scholar. She won the 2015 Rhina P. Espallat Award from West Chester University for her Spanish poem "El espejo" and her work has or will appear in *The Blue Moth*, *MacroMicroCosm*, *Rainy Day Literary Magazine*, and *Pluma*. She is currently writing a dissertation on female and queer writers in early twentieth century Spain in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at The Ohio State University. Her poem "My Dear Encarna" pays homage to one such writer, Encarnación Gertrudis Jacoba Aragoneses y de Urquijo, known by her pen name Elena Fortún. She was a successful Spanish children's book writer who also wrote an autobiography titled *Oculto sendero* that was not found until after her death and was only released in 2016, followed by the English translation *Hidden Path* in 2021.

Brian J. Alvarado writes and occasionally sings. Some of his recent work is featured and/or forthcoming in *Thimble*, *FERAL*, *Trouvaille*, *Cajun Mutt*, *Squawk Back*, *Beliveau*, and *Ekphrastic*, among others. He stole a BA in Creative Writing from Susquehanna University. He won't be found. <https://brianalvarado.com/writing>

Robert Beveridge (he/him) makes noise (xterminal.bandcamp.com) and writes poetry in Akron, OH. Recent/upcoming appearances in *Torch the Veil*, *Open Ceilings*, and *Presence*, among others.

Alex Carrigan (@carriganak) is an editor, writer, and critic from Virginia. He has edited and proofed the anthologies *CREDO: An Anthology of Manifestos and Sourcebook for Creative Writing* (C&R Press, 2018) and *Her Plumage: An Anthology of Women's Writings from Quail Bell Magazine* (Quail Bell Press & Productions 2019). He has had fiction, poetry, and literary reviews published in *Quail Bell Magazine*, *Lambda Literary Review*, *Empty Mirror*, *Gertrude Press*, *Quarterly West*, *Whale Road Review*, *Stories About Penises* (Guts Publishing, 2019), *Closet Cases: Queers on What We Wear* (Et Alia Press, 2020), *ImageOutWrite Vol. 9*, and *Last Day, First Day Vol. 2*.

Yuan Changming hails with Allen Yuan from poetrypacific.blogspot.ca. Credits include Pushcart nominations besides appearances in *Best of the Best Canadian Poetry* (2008-17) and *BestNewPoemsOnline*, among others. Recently, Yuan published his eleventh chapbook *Limerence*, and served on the jury for Canada's 44th National Magazine Awards (poetry category).

David Estringel is a writer/poet with works published in literary publications, such as *The Opiate*, *Azahares*, *Cephalopress*, *North Meridian Review*, *Poetry Ni*, *DREICH*, *Horror Sleaze Trash*, *Terror House Magazine*, *Cajun Mutt Press*, and *The Blue Nib*. His first collection of poetry and short fiction, *Indelible Fingerprints*, was published in April 2019, followed by three poetry chapbooks, *Punctures* (2019), *Peripheries* (2020), and *Eating Pears on the Rooftop* (scheduled for July 2022). His new book of micro poetry, *little punctures*, will be released in 2024 by Really Serious Literature. Contact David on Twitter @The_Booky_Man or via his website www.davidaestringel.com

Joseph A Farina is a retired lawyer living in Sarnia, Ontario. An award winning poet, his poems have been published in *Quills Canadian Poetry Magazine*, *Ascent*, *Subterranean Blue*, *Tower Poetry*, *Inscribed*, *The Windsor Review*, *Boxcar Poetry Revue*, and in the anthologies *Sweet Lemons: Writings with a Sicilian Accent*, *Witness*, and *Tamaracks: Canadian Poetry for the 21st Century*. He has had poems published in the U.S. as well, in the magazines *Mobius*, *Pyramid Arts*, *Arabesques*, *Fiele-Festa*, *Philadelphia Poets and Memoir*, as well as in the Silver Birch Press *Me, at Seventeen* Series. He has had two books of poetry published: *The Cancer Chronicles* and *The Ghosts of Water Street*.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in *Penumbra*, *Poetry Salzburg Review* and *Hollins Critic*. Latest books, *Leaves On Pages* and *Memory Outside The Head* are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in *Lana Turner* and *International Poetry Review*.

Mary Anne Griffiths has been writing poems and short stories since grade school with a few publication credits. She lives in Ingersoll, Ontario, with her husband and two cats. "I'm pretty ordinary."

James Hall is a writer and medical professional working in Chicago with interests in cider craft, cross country skiing, and mythology. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Front Porch Review*, *Blood and Thunder*, *Love in the Time of Covid*, and *Poetry and Covid*. He recently completed the manuscript for his debut novel *Canticle of Dreams*.

Eryn Hiscock's writing has been published in literary journals, zines and anthologies internationally. Her online articles have earned millions of views. Her most recent publications appear in *It Calls From The Forest, Volume 2* (Eerie River Publishing, Canada) and *Inlandia: A Literary Journey*. She's been nominated for a Pushcart Prize for the short memoir piece published in *Inlandia*. Amazon author page: <https://www.amazon.com/Eryn-Hiscock/e/B08J3QGW5J>

Peter J. King was born and brought up in Boston, Lincolnshire. Active on the London poetry scene in the 1970s as writer, performer, publisher, and editor, he returned to poetry in 2013 after a long absence, and has since been widely published in magazines and anthologies. He also translates poetry, mainly from modern Greek (with Andrea Christofidou) and German, writes short prose, and paints. His currently available collections are *Adding Colours to the Chameleon* (Wisdom's Bottom Press) and *All What Larkin* (Albion Beatnik Press). Web site: <https://wisdomsbottompress.wordpress.com/>

DS Maolalai has been nominated nine times for Best of the Net and five times for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry has been released in two collections, "Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden" (Encircle Press, 2016) and "Sad Havoc Among the Birds" (Turas Press, 2019)

Mark J. Mitchell was born in Chicago and grew up in southern California. His latest poetry collection, *Roshi San Francisco*, was just published by

Norfolk Publishing. *Starting from Tu Fu* was recently published by Encircle Publications. He is very fond of baseball, Louis Aragon, Miles Davis, Kafka and Dante. He lives in San Francisco with his wife, the activist and documentarian, Joan Juster, where he made his marginal living pointing out pretty things. Now, like everyone else, he's unemployed. He has published two novels (*Knight Prisoner* from Vagabondage Press and *The Magic War* from Loose Leaves Publishing), three chapbooks, and two full-length poetry collections so far. His first chapbook won the Negative Capability Award while he has recently been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Magazine appearances include *The Comstock Review*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Santa Barbara Review*, *Runes*, *Lilliput Review*, *The Lyric*, *Buddhist Poetry Review*, and *Mas Tequila*.

JBMulligan has published more than 1100 poems and stories in various magazines over the past 45 years, and has had two chapbooks: *The Stations of the Cross* and *THIS WAY TO THE EGRESS*, as well as 2 e-books: *The City of Now and Then*, and *A Book of Psalms (a loose translation)*. He has appeared in more than a dozen anthologies, and was recently nominated for the Pushcart Prize anthology.

Kendra Nuttall is a copywriter by day and poet by night. She is the author of poetry collections, *A Statistical Study of Randomness* (Finishing Line Press, 2021) and *Our Bones Ache Together* (FlowerSong Press, forthcoming). Her work has appeared in *Echolocation*, *Spectrum*, *Capsule Stories*, *Chiron Review*, and *What Rough Beast*, among numerous other journals and anthologies. She is also a poetry reader for *Capsule Stories*. Kendra lives in Utah with her husband and poodle. Find her online at kendranuttall.com.

Frederick Pollack is the author of two book-length narrative poems, *The Adventure* (Story Line Press, 1986, to be reissued by Red Hen Press) and *Happiness* (Story Line Press, 1998), and two collections, *A Poverty of Words* (Prolific Press, 2015) and *Landscape with Mutant* (Smokestack Books, 2018). In print, Pollack's work has appeared in *Hudson Review*,

Southern Review, Salmagundi, Poetry Salzburg Review, Manhattan Review, Skidrow Penthouse, Main Street Rag, Miramar, Chicago Quarterly, The Fish Anthology (Ireland), Poetry Quarterly Review, Magma (UK), Neon (UK), Orbis (UK), and elsewhere. Online, his poems have appeared in Big Bridge, Diagram, BlazeVox, Mudlark, Occupoetry, Faircloth Review, Triggerfish, Beliveau Review, and elsewhere.

Susan Sonde is an award winning poet and short story writer. Her debut collection: *In the Longboats with Others* won the Capricorn Book Award and was published by New Rivers Press. *The Arsonist*, her fifth collection, was released in 2019 from *Main Street Rag*. Her sixth collection, *Evenings at the Table of an Intoxicant* was a finalist in the New Rivers New Voices 2019 contest. *The Last Insomniac* was a 2019 finalist in The James Tate Award. Grants and awards include, a National Endowment Award in poetry; grants in fiction and poetry from The Maryland State Arts Council; The Gordon Barber Memorial Award from The Poetry Society of America. Her collection, *The Chalk Line*, was a finalist in The National Poetry Series. Individual poems have appeared in *Barrow Street, The North American Review, The Southern Humanities Review, The Mississippi Review, American Letters and Commentary, Bomb, New Letters, Southern Poetry Review*, and many others.

Doug Stone lives in Western Oregon. He has written three collections of poetry, *The Season of Distress and Clarity, The Moon's Soul Shimmering on the Water*, and *Sitting in Powell's Watching Burnside Dissolve in Rain*.

Ron Tobey grew up in north New Hampshire, USA, and attended the University of New Hampshire, Durham. He has lived in Ithaca NY, Pittsburgh PA, Riverside CA, Berkeley CA, and London UK. He and his wife now live in West Virginia, where they raise cattle and keep goats and horses. He is an imagist poet, writing haiku, storytelling poems, spokenpoetry, and producing videopoetry. His work has appeared in several dozen literary magazines. His Twitter handle is @Turin54024117

Early in his career, **Charles Watts** had an underground play (“Visigoths”) produced in Los Angeles, which led to scriptwriting contracts for several TV series, including *Kojak* and *Here Come the Brides*. He fled Hollywood, got an MFA in poetry, and went to Iran to teach literature at several Universities. For five years, he edited *Seizure*, a magazine of poetry and fiction. He has also been a cab driver, social worker, refugee worker in camps in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Costa Rica, and owner of a tour company. His poems and stories have been anthologized in *Road Poets*, *Adirondack Epiphanies*, *Schroon River Anthology*, *Northern Oracle*, and *Karma in the High Peaks*, which won the “People’s Choice Award” for best book of 2010 from the Adirondack Center for Writing. His poems won the Patricia and Emmett Robinson Prize (2015 - Poetry Society of South Carolina) and first place at the North Country Writers Festival twice. His books include *Cure Cottage* (five one-act plays), *Raptures* (short stories), *Waking Up in a Beautiful Room* (poems), and *The Road to Swat* (a chapbook of travel tales). He currently splits his time between Charleston, SC and Lake Placid, NY.

Jennifer Wenn is a trans-identified writer and speaker from London, Ontario. Her first poetry chapbook, *A Song of Milestones*, has been published by Harmonia Press (an imprint of Beliveau Books). She has also written *From Adversity to Accomplishment, a family and social history*; and published poetry in *Beliveau Review*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Watchyourhead*, *Open Minds Quarterly*, *Tuck Magazine*, *Synaeresis*, *Big Pond Rumours*, *the League of Canadian Poets Fresh Voices*, *Wordsfestzine*, and the anthologies *Dénouement* and *Things That Matter*. She is also the proud parent of two adult children. Visit her website at <https://jenniferwennpoet.wixsite.com/home>



the Stratford Quarterly

a journal of contemporary poetry

Issue 2 Winter 2022

The Stratford Quarterly

Call for Submissions

The Stratford Quarterly is a **free, digital journal**, published four times a year, showcasing Canadian, American, and International poetry. At the present time, there is no payment available but there are **no** submission or reading fees of any kind. The editorial staff is volunteer-oriented. Contributors will be able to download a free PDF of the issue they are in from the Beliveau Books website:

beliveaubooks.wixsite.com/home/magazines

Please submit between 1 and 6 poems

Please email your submission as a separate attachment (MS Word only please).

Please include a brief bio of yourself as well in case your work is selected for publication.

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There are no particular themes in *The Stratford Quarterly* other than exceptional writing.

The subject matter is open, though please don't send in any work that is derogatory to or demeans a person's gender, orientation, race, ethnicity, faith, etc. No graphic violence or pornography.

Please send only new and/or previously unpublished offerings (We **don't** regard social media sharing as previously published).

We welcome submissions from ALL poets & artists (though please keep in mind the aforementioned), and we especially encourage writing from folks who are BIPOC, LGBTQIA2+, Women, People with Disabilities, and Individuals who have been marginalized.

The Stratford Quarterly stands in solidarity with **Black Lives Matter** and against the oppression, abuse, and exploitation of our sisters and brothers which have been going on for centuries right up to the present day. It's critically important to use the platforms we have to speak out in opposition to injustice, hatred, and violence—in this context perpetrated against the Black community; and also against Indigenous Peoples (both in this country and around the world), People of Colour, People in Poverty, People with Disabilities, Women, Children, and members of the LGBTQIA2+ community.



Angela Acosta
Brian J. Alvarado
Robert Beveridge
Alex Carrigan
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John Grey
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