SONIC BOOM

for writing that explodes...

 Indies Five

April 2016

(Poetry, Fiction & Art)
SONIC BOOM

...for writing that explodes

Issue Five

April 2016

(Poetry, Fiction & Art)

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to another scintillating issue of Sonic Boom. We were overwhelmed by the number of submissions we received during this reading period, and cannot thank you enough for choosing us as a possible home for showcasing your masterpieces. As writers, we know how lonely the publishing business can get.

The Poetry Shack has eclectic pieces that are bound to leave you puzzled, flabbergasted, or in sheer awe. Each poem was chosen keeping in mind the journal’s overall aesthetics, and our fancy for the experimental, but definitely not at the cost of deliberate obfuscation.

The Paper Lanterns section has a gorgeous array of haiku, in-your-face senryu, some poignant and hard-hitting tanka and sedoka, and our first ever tan-renga collaboration. We have offered you fresh images to ruminate over, and perhaps jot down a few in your physical/mental notebook of favourites.

The Fiction section contains some of the finest work we have published so far, and we are truly proud to present our readers with such unique and individuated voices. This section seamlessly brings together haibun, hybrid work, and experimental narrative techniques with finesse.

The Visual Art section boasts of a plethora of media to titillate your senses and maybe even inspire you to try your own hand at photography or doodling!

Also gracing the pages of issue five, is our interview with poet, writer, professor, and translator, K. Srilata. She talks about her work, inspiration, recurring themes, and much more.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this issue that we have curated with love and a little bit of eccentricity, as evident from the title of our cover art.

- Shloka Shankar
THE POETRY SHACK
In Sylvia Plath’s Kitchen

By Ann Yu Huang

A lukewarm night invites the full house
from both its past and future happiness.
Its significant attachment infiltrates
either the karma surrounded and to whom you know of the flowers
inward—moist, tender, as though it only needed the moon.
Onward, the family shall be kindred
and intricate, inclusive without showing emotion.
Sometimes there is this exposer—exposed
more than iron-wielding stairways and drunken bedrooms. Some
traces—on top the long granite slabs, in front of the bewildered driveway—
to the hollow compartments of a soul? Mingling acts, of
dead lilt, a hospitality more than the hospitality. Which place at your house
inspired these catchy fancies—those illuminations
already showing your generous attitudes to please.
Assertions

By Bruce Sager

I think, therefore I know the river
is only a road, straights, curves, not unlike the imagination,
countless rounds of hydrogen and oxygen. Still, these airy
piranha are at me in the depths of night, all
over me, those rapid trillion teeth.

I think, therefore I know the skies
are one sky – one sky, knitted. Yet the heavens change road
by road, the moon tacks county by county, inflected,
each blue a page, its own, a singularity, each bone-weary, a billion years of passage.

I think, therefore I know the tree
is just a root, a vegetation, this life of leaf and branch,
conscious of light the way a clock, after a million
million minutes, might grow conscious of its gears
and the hands that depend from its gears.

I think, therefore I know this earth
is simply a ship on heavy seas, and I am a twelve-year-old
standing in the rain, waiting for the system, waiting
for a yellow bus. And now it’s late again. Somehow
always late on days like these.
Political Density Poem

By Heath Brougher

The density of falsehoods within politics can rewind and reverse a black hole.
You see you have your verbal garbage being sucked right in. Interesting,
however, is when the black hole reverses and spits dense dark rubbish back upon us, into our brains.
Creating the parameters of a new reality.

Why words and Alzheimer’s?
Original but dead. You can’t bend out your brain. The political polluter is to this.
Sincerely, Halitosis. I’m going to not care what others think of my appearance,
and will steer clear of girls who make a big priority out of this. September braces.
A thick stump.

I raised you from a little cup of water.
You were born in a bottle.
You were born out of a black hole.
79 Degree Probability of Loss

By Jeanpaul Ferro

What beautiful death there is in Madonna de Campiglio,
the peasant people frozen in ice in dance,
the slopes of Austria, and now they call it Italy,
another place you must come, one more dream to put your trust in,

and you can’t believe you’ll ever do it again,
swimming in the light and shadows where you’ve drowned,
the gum arabic and green volatilize of valley Verzasca—
the river where you saw the diver from Lucerne go down three times,
the way you held his girlfriend, the river from the glacier,
minion and nonpareil, crystalline, his body preserved,
Russian experiment in the stone houses of Sonogno,

the ache in my body as you ease yourself against me,
the way your legs cower out, the ecstasy in your pain,
in the white under your flesh in your bones,
the risk, the knife of your spine,
and I take it, twist and turn and bludgeon it,
and the body moves, consumes all of me, and you give in,
and you die in a way, too, so cold here in the Dolomites,
always writing by candlelight, the bathroom out in the hallway,
and dance without music—

the sound of your hands against the piano back in the States.
Quiet Unlearnings

By Kayt Hoch

The white sleeved arms had hands too thin to hold. There was nowhere to walk anyway; no matter what chair she started from.
Rain streaked her bottle thick eyeglasses, the white fingers tried to slip over her eyes but her blinks were a camera shutter; recording, recording. She refused to see what she was told.
The white shoes looked like erasers rubbing the floor though they concealed nothing. Her shutter eyes saw everything.
Voices in white aprons pushing the chairs told her good girls wear white at their weddings.
She wondered if the white made brides just a little bit invisible; maybe made it easier to be good girls. Good girls don’t give the milk away until the cow is bought.
Voices in the yard fluttered the worn white window curtains. She wondered if a fair lady was the same thing as a good girl. She wondered why London bridge was falling down.
Crow, with nothing to say

By Kimberly White

Crow wakes up wearing the shell of the scarab he chased in his dream. The dream was not completely clear, in the way of dreams, but Crow will freely interpret.

Look at the way the scarab shell mirrors the jewel-toned hues hidden in Crow’s own black feathers. Crow turns from side to side in the mirror, lets the light reflect and refract through the prismatic eye of history. The rainbow eye of myth.

In the name of history, Crow devours what is transitory, feeds on the scraps of what others leave behind. In the service of myth, Crow resurrects, flaps his black wings to stir new breath.

These are not the building blocks of a God. It is simply Crow’s dream last night. Tomorrow’s dream will be as different as today’s from yesterday.

*

Winter Crow wears superficial white, just beneath the infidel glare of what you think are just black feathers, shouts back from the aether: Which is more primitive - a Crow becoming a Rattlesnake, or a Rattlesnake trying to become a Crow?

*

Crow breaks his own heart every day, so no one else can. So he can love so much better. So don’t complain when he breaks yours.

Let Crow gather the pieces, drop them from high places like walnuts. Leave them as they fall, an open-ended mosaic in hermetic shades drawn from the aether from which Crow sings.

*

When Crow has nothing to say, that is when Crow has the most to say. Hear the silence of Crow, listen to the ways in which the unspoken becomes the alchemy of art.
Parallel Lives Are Not Supposed to Meet

By Lois Roma-Deelely

I have imagined you, my sister 
(isn’t this what everyone wants to hear?)
sitting on a porch in a wicker chair,  
(the one who sings to)
scents of crushed basil and rosemary  
(the blind what if?)
floating on a breeze from the garden  
(of that two-story house)
where no one knows anyone by name.
Costumes from China

*By Matthew James Friday*

A chunk of triangular wood drops out of a blue IKEA bag full of school storytelling props and dressing-up costumes. All the way from China in a tanker via Hong Kong and Bremen. Not wood. A beautiful, speckled moth, dressed up in its own costumes, stunned after its three month voyage. It flaps to a table, and then, with my customary hands trying to catch it, to the window. Its papery wings are a collapsed fan until I open the window. Freedom for the immigrant, a lonely, foreign end of its story.
New Orleans 1986

By Phil SaintDenisSanchez

my father broke a glass milk jug fresh over the skull
of an armed robber
in our driveway
on a trip back from Langenstein’s
knocked him out cold
stomped his head into the concrete
took his gun and flight
while my mother read us Creole stories from Mere’s books
in Mimi’s attic
Mimi was busy proving time wrong at 94 and blew death off
for another decade before she said why not
Mere was in 1822 watching Marie Lavau’s daughter
free slaves from the auction block
before being shipped off to Santiago to save her from
her own power
she wrote in chalk crosses
and taught her students at Tulane the same dialect
on the steps of my other childhood home Pop called the sonofabitch
with the tech 9 in his belly a sonofabitch
threw cash in his face and walked away for he still
held the real heat
he made it rain before storm clouds rolled in and
brought the four o’clock relief
(summer scorched/made the bricks sweat/
summer heavy as new sin deep inside you)
World War II never stops in his head or on his television
that man can watch the fuck out some D Day docs
the arch of oak trees over Saint Charles trying in vain to teach me patience
Domelise’s serving fully-dressed po boys with glass root beers
brass burning syncopation into the air
infinite ivy fingers reaching up a buildingside to sky
brother i’m home again/sister i’m home again
i dressed as a black jaguar for Mardi Gras
the first costume i chose for myself
floats showered me in beaded luck
they saw me
they felt me
Amy on her long four block bus ride back to the Magnolia
blessed, sweet-scented war zone
Mable on repeat: “that lil 4 year old chile gonna be president one
day” impossibly young i wandered through Audubon Park
identifying mushrooms:
chanterelles, wood ears, even amanitas
telling my mother which ones were safe to eat
The Man Called November 11th
(after Tensai Okamura)

By Robert Beveridge

There is a box—no, not a box, but something that can be opened. It's on the other side of the tracks, that semi-mythical place where grass is a different color, toilets flush by themselves, harlequins predict weather with the aid of caterpillars. Really, we can do nothing but watch; we tend towards cleavage yet find ourselves on parallel paths, never approaching either meaning. The closest we can get is to breathe one another's secondhand smoke, exchange longing-yet-stuttering glances like anime characters over a faulty Internet connection. Whatever it is, don't open it.
This is not a walking meditation

By Samantha Albala

stand

sink weight into heels
engage the pelvis fire
vibrate hands: energy
use instinct: inner tiger

trace movements of body
with closed eyes

red, dusty, not from dust, not fading

an untouchable table holds
Tibetan prayer beads: offering
controlled denied response

everything delicate, a moth
disintegrates in the palm
while the flood goes on

a succulent in the window has a name:
        Anna Kendrick and her beauty

the sunflower has a mood:
        bashful

the restaurant advertises psychiatric help—five cents:
        peanuts

downstairs is a self-portrait:
        sea sick green background
        salt sticking to the man’s glasses

observe
the bicycle
stacks of vintage magazines
high ceilings
rising further and further away
Just pocket a memory

By Trish Hopkinson

The shape of smooth stones,
    though it takes eight years
        to write it down,
        to trace it,
        taste it,
        sense it . . .
    That’s it?

Maybe. Skip rocks
    in a breeze lifting off the sound—
        to match perspective,
        hitched and turned to fly.

The angle, hooked on chance,
    broke the ground
        easy, easy enough.

And far below,
    a small black shadow,
    sailing. Glimmering
        in a garden no one’s ever named.

This isn’t the rain—
    a pattern before a story
        no one wanted,
        a thousand manifestos
        to speak for themselves.

The story built well-balanced tables,
    bunk beds, picture frames . . .
        for hours,
        for hours,
        and wind chimes.
    Yes, that’s a story also.

It’s common for some to manifest,
    collision and molecules
        and talismans and wind,
        for the measure of time—
    (That’s it?)
        stretching farther along.
            Just the kind to keep.
**Source:** An erasure culled out from “Just Once I'd Like to Sneak Up on the Wind” by Rob Carney. *Story Problems.* Somondoco Press.
PAPER LANTERNS
adjusting my kigo the sky's blue deepening

- Anna Cates

doing the pointillist talk rain speckles the gallery windows

- Marietta McGregor

writing about the hydrangea he sees a daisy

- Myron Lysenko

raking the sky you don't even have to

- Johannes S. H. Bjerg

first snowflakes –
my grey hair surrounds
the barber's chair

- Rob Scott

snowfall weaving the light at gravity's end

- Mark E. Brager

leaving summer behind escarpment rain

- Tim Gardiner

cross country walk pissing is the ornamentation

- Johannes S. H. Bjerg
the length of the night when it matters why

- Samar Ghose

the melted snow i will catch myself in

- Joshua Eric Williams

zazen...
and how much longer before
I become the pine

- Jayashree Maniyil

fun up to a point learning curve

- David J. Kelly

mindfulness –
my growing pile
of colouring books

- Jayashree Maniyil
succulents
planted in muffin tins
I find some solace
in a place where I can start
dreaming small

- Christine L. Villa

fish bowl
is there a world
outside home

- Vandana Parashar

day excursion
we step into
a new/old world

- William Scott Galasso

the ease of a ballpoint my life on the move

- Kala Ramesh

moving soon –
how will my Scotch taste
in the new house?

- Freddy Ben-Arroyo

afternoon heat
we immigrate into
a watermelon

- Ben Moeller-Gaa

after the party
my key does not open
the neighbor's house

- Djurdja Vukelić-Rožić
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is ancient

- Kala Ramesh

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- Angelo B. Ancheta

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and become blackbirds

- Robert Beveridge

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by moving a chair
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cornstalks offering themselves upward as if

- Matthew Moffett

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describes enlightenment
as ordinary life,
two inches off the ground—
sitting on numb legs

- Robert Annis
love poetry –
the art of naming
a storm

- Stephen Toft

birding
our familial tremor
in my hand

- Karen Stromberg

the texture
of the wicker chair
still on my arms –
the criss-crossing weave
of love and hate
we keep repeating

- Susan Burch

even though
he's a good husband
resentment takes root
between the next load of laundry
and “what’s for dinner?”

- Susan Beall Summers

mercury drops I get the cold shoulder

- Rob Scott

unable to speak my loving you must be enough

- Johannes S. H. Bjerg

roadside rust bucket—
every real apology
we could have made

- Marietta McGregor

not discounting my pauses telephone bill

- Garima Behal
white noise
santa's landfill

- Helen Buckingham

sneakers dangling over the telephone wire participles to(o)

- Marianne Paul

stare down:
that moon will blink,
that moon

- Bob Carlton

three-pillow reading asana
a pea
remains frozen

- Johannes S. H. Bjerg

catfight
the dog beside
himself

- Steve Black

steaming bath
my worries dissolve
into the whiskey glass

wiping mist from the mirror
i add ice to my karma

- a tan renga by Marcus Liljedahl & Anna Maris

first the primer
after that, the undercoat
then the colour –
I follow the instructions
my beautician gives me

- Keitha Keyes
FICTION
Passing Period

By Al Ortolani

Classes are changing, and although I made it to the door quickly, I am beaten by a teacher from across the hall. He pees slowly, washes his hands front and back, dries them carefully with too many paper towels. I hear him pumping them from the dispenser the way I used to jack-up my BB gun. Then there’s another pause, one that I cannot account for. His hand should be turning the door handle, unlatching the dead bolt. My guess is that he combs his thick hair, checks his nostrils for hangers, tongues the gaps between his teeth. In a moment, the bell will ring. My students will be in class, milling between their desks, shooting Instagrams into cyber space. The principal walks the hall with his iPad. As I round the corner, he types a note.

old coach dribbling a basketball through the gym’s twilight
The Death of Film
(after Wiley Wiggins)

By Alien Water

It is still early when Oliver decides to rest on a bench, contemplating life and his place in it.

A man sits down next to Oliver, and he looks like a paradox, a liberal businessman to be exact. Black suit, dirty trainers, cheap charcoal sunglasses covering his eyes, dark hair in disarray, and a copy of Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas (the film) dangling from his filthy, tangent-ridden hands; a true bohemian.

The man takes off his sunglasses and throws them into a nearby trashcan.

“You know, we shouldn’t have to make our eyes conform to the sunlight. Sunglasses are self-imposed prisons for the eyes.”

Oliver thinks about this statement. He decides he likes it.

“Well said.”

“Thanks.”

“I have this song stuck in my head, an original one. It's about how far I've come, but really, I haven't achieved much of anything. What do you think about that?”

“I don't know, what are you asking me for?”

“Don't know, just talking, I guess.”

“Sleep is a myth and super-calculus isn't. Remember that, and everything will make sense. Solitude is a virtue. We are all part of an absurdist mishap.”

The man twists away from Oliver to peruse his copy of Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.

Oliver decides to go to the cinema and ride buses for the rest of the day.
Lake Traunsee

By Alyson Miller

The suitcase washes up first, on a Monday, its grey blue skin scudding onto the shorelines of Lake Traunsee. It contains the purple white parts of a wife with no name, chopped parcel-small and bundled into the travel bag that used to hold old towels frayed by the scrape of wet bodies and the metal belly of the washing machine. Opened by tourists, the sodden flesh of her torso is newly alive with water worms and crabs as pale and pink as fingernails. On Tuesday, divers emerge with a husband of no name, whose limbs are woven around baggage knotted tight to ankles and wrists in a caricature of an octopus or bladderwrack weed. Hanging from the right shoulder, wrapped in a cool slate casing of concrete, is the head of his wife. A rope screwed into the outer shell, she draggles like a Christmas bauble or treat, an imperfect Siamese twin. In the folklore of Salzkammergut, a region whose sound echoes the cut and choke of Seppuku, legends tell of a hippocamp ridden by a grieving mermaid; a lake monster tied to a beautiful suicide, or the reverse. In the cases anchoring his body to the silt and mud of the waterbed, forensics find a pulpy mess of letters, a bag of baby teeth and needle-thin fish bones, and the soft ears of a knitted yellow bear.
What You Were Crying About

By Aria Riding

The night was hungry. You plucked out my eyes with a spoon. There they rolled between the gaps in the table. Then, into the ruts in the floorboards, such rough, splintery channels, still they steered me – as all the blood in my body suddenly rushes past the ears.

Hoping that one eye might witness the other in its plight, you drew their attention with a little dance; your boot coming down. One eye saw the other squelch, though I did not, but I know the sound and the smell. Like a princess sleeping unwashed in the cinders of the hearth of a tall tower, amongst burned remnants of a wooden boy, a spinning wheel, some shavings of foot meat, strands of dwarf cum, and longer strands of hair.

You put an eye in my hand and went out (or pretended to have gone out). You always leave. Though we loved and knew each other, we were a patchwork of pieces that was no longer one. It is much the same between my eye and I, this eye that rolls to and fro, that cannot rest – it does not feel at home in this socket. Nor in the other, where it trembles like a mouse, spilling inconsolable tendrils of nerves and tears as if mourning at a mirror's grave. I cradle the eye gently, as gently as possible, but the ache shoots through the back of my skull. All the same, just the same. Like you and me. I'm bound by my attachment. In my palm, my own eye (or is it your eye, I didn't see) reminds me forever that I was watched and watched – and how I was watched and watched and watched, and again I was watched, and then I was watched, and I was watched interminably, without rest. Carelessly, I let my eyes roam freely. But you. Never. You kept a tight rein over your own, always trained upon me.

Finally, I looked at you. In your eyes, I had already committed a crime. You wanted me to see how you felt. You didn't come back. I heard you ravaged scores of princes…before one crept up behind you and did you in while you were devouring sacrificial virgins. But you were crying about me.
Poot

By Bob Ritchie

James is a dog. No judgments, please; remember that Dog is Man’s best friend. And remember also that Shepherds were the first to witness the holy electricity shining above the crossed-child. That James is a dog doesn’t mean he isn’t human like the rest of us. The preceding may seem irrelevant.

We hold these truths to be self-evident that all LPs were created round, endowed by their creators with catastrophic vibrations; ask James. The dog.

Is it not said that the light dazzling one’s eye is truth, while the goldfish swimming ‘round and ‘round is merely Harold? To put it another way: that one’s spouse farts while asleep does not make that person capable of great and smelly things—not without the aid of your cooking.

“A-one and a—say, wasn’t that a marvelous job your boy said he did but didn’t do on your Cadillac?”

“You bet. And folks, if you think your kids are inveterate liars who think only to overthrow your household, get online and download Dr. Roppert L. Wagner’s Sodium Pentothal for the Masses. It’s great for finding out what the sneaky bastards have been up to at 4 o’clock in the blesséd AM. And ladies, those suspicious stains on your husband’s shirts? ‘Nuf said. Back to our movie.”

Soda is an important part of any dream of wealth, but why is that envelope slicing my tongue? ‘Cause I can’t sleep and the phone is off the hook? It can get out of jail but not pass go fuck a tree. See, the dog leaves my leg alone. “Don’t come back until you’ve graduated from Disneyland!” The party never ends.


I can’t see: get your finger out of my ear. My scattering senses, outcome of a bum leg, an evening drunk, a neurotic tendency. Dulled and blurred, I fall. I die. I lick the village stamp: it screams. The point? No points, just meaningless lines in space. Interpretation is everything. To fall back on convention. To use structure. To crave it, need it. To dream. The 21st Century Schizoid Man, addicted to the struggle of the mind, creates structure from naught. We live our lives within our minds; James the Dog frolics with a chair. It is a memory; it is a structure. Is it a dream? Increasingly difficult to distinguish the real from the unreal.

But today, I hurt. Last night was the worst of my life. Everything fell apart in a few words. I went insane and wandered, aimless, at 4 AM, screaming, crying. I would have curled up in a ball and wept my life, except I had promised to go straight home.
A friend rescued me before my will to live could hitchhike a passing leaf. I lost my structure, and, almost, my life.

James the Dog understands structure. James the Dog was James the Man, until he grew to understand structure. Now, James is a dog. Don’t judge. He shed his structure. It fell away in a hot fit of emotional trauma.

James is a dog.
Taking out the Garbage

By Eva Roa White

Zoe wakes up crying.

Her dream is of the sticky kind, the kind she can’t shake off, even after a long, cold shower.

Barefoot and with wet hair, Zoe all but runs out of the house to escape the lingering dream. But even the unexpected cold breeze of a Midwestern August morning does nothing to clear her mind, though it gives her goose bumps on her damp brown arms and legs. She wishes she had thrown on jeans and a sweater, instead of just grabbing yesterday’s thin shift. And dried her hair. And worn shoes.

But she can’t go back inside yet.

Instead, she sits shivering on the tree swing behind her modest blue bungalow. Strands of dark, soppy hair stick to her face as she calls her best friend on the other side of the Atlantic. Claire, who is probably still at work, doesn’t answer; but her voice comes through. Zoe smiles weakly, her friend’s words almost chasing the dream away; she pictures Claire tilting her frizzy blonde head to one side as she records the message.

“Claire, appelle moi!” Zoe almost shouts at the disembodied voice, feeling a moment of panic, as if it all depended on this one connection. Slowly, she closes her eyes and forces herself to take three deep belly breaths, before picking herself up and going back into the house.

Wrapped in her old red bathrobe with wool socks on her feet, Zoe takes another electronic trip, this time via her high-speed Internet connection. Though coffee steams caffeine and warmth through her body, her thin fingers are still numb, pecking at the keyboard slowly but resolutely, much like hungry hens looking for a worm.

Where is he? Zoe knows the man in the dream got married. She wonders whether the now-wife is satisfied. Do they have children? Is he a good father? Does he ever think of her? Does he too wake up bloated with dreams about unresolved times?

When she finally captures his name with her electronic lasso, Zoe pauses. Does she really want to know? She takes another sip of coffee, sighs, then releases the virtual rope and lets him go.

Later, Zoe will explain to Claire that, in the dream, the trash bags she carried were white. Two full bags. And that one broke, tearing itself right down the middle, spilling pink words and papers, but no sand, no wind, no coral reef. And, that when she looked up, there was the man’s shadow, leaning against the light pole across her house, watching her take out the garbage.
Psychiatry

By Gabriel Patterson

misdiagnosed...
a pharmacy
on every corner

“I feel like my whole life has been spent drinking one ethereal fountain drink. Condensation droplets gather at my pores, shifting ice cubes cool my heart, thin red and blue lines run alongside the white noise of my mind,” I explain, hearing the scribbles of a felt tip pen soak her notepad. “So when my wisdom teeth were extracted last week and the dentist told me I couldn't drink out of a straw for a while, I remembered the guided path my chocolate milk made through the twisted turns of a crazy straw one morning before school.”

“Someone has embedded green straws into the world's psyche,” she smirks, trying to make light of my situation. She then asks the color of my crazy straw, the one I had as a child. I tell her it was red, even though it was really green.

trying to avoid
the light pole
we crash the light pole
Sometimes it Snows in Vegas

By Gabriel Patterson

Fold your sheet of paper into fourths. Begin cutting. Sharp cuts, long cuts, cut exquisitely. Don't unfold it yet. More people will come holding their own folded papers. Some of them careless. Accidental snips seep blood into paper. Imagine those papers a place on the map, a place with no snow. We provide human precipitation. Past lives scatter our descent from storm clouds. Every person a dream, every dream a snowflake, crashing against wet asphalt. We'll flurry the skies. Visibility decreases in the chaos. 6,000 people a month join a growing mob. A 100-degree storm. These snowflakes simulate wilted oleander petals touched by desert sun.
Luminous

By Marietta McGregor

Before she begins work, she chants the paint spectrum—viridian, cadmium red, bismuth yellow, rose madder—then slaps a wash across the canvas in the shed she calls her studio, although it’s only the laundry. She’s pushed the washer into a corner and claimed the space for an easel. With the colour orison, she conjures whirling goddesses to stand beside her on the concrete floor, and bear witness to her sleight-of-hand in creating beauty out of nothing—vermilion, cerulean, magenta.

Her children call from their sunlit disorder outside her grey room, but she doesn’t hear. She’s laying down paint, making herself again, fine and strong—antwerp blue, gamboge, sap green. Suddenly, she loses her way among the browns—raw sienna, umber, ochre. Deserts and plains grind her up and spit her out in the dried-blood colours of dead beetles. Dust from the laundry floor is in her eyes and the carousel attendants have left. The smears she makes run amok, dark as sorrow—carbon black, paynes grey, bone white.

She opens the door to the day, and for the first time, sees her children.

blinking your shape lost into sunshift

Note: The monoku was first published in Under the Bashō, 2015.
Lankan

By Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois

1.

She is Sri Lankan. She keeps telling me I’m a great writer, which annoys me, but she insists. I say: If I’m a great writer, why aren’t I rich and famous?

She says: Until the giant sleeps, the dwarfs play everywhere. That is both folksy and elegant, but I lose my patience and say: Well, don’t call me great anymore. Truth be told, I’m one of the dwarfs. Besides, calling me great stimulates egotism and, as a Buddhist, you know that’s not desirable.

Okay, I’m sorry. I won’t call you great anymore. She goes walking around the lake. When she returns she says: You know what I think of when I see cranes? I think of tying their long necks together. They have lovely long necks with tiny soft feathers. So white. So white.

I say: that’s not nice. You’re a mean girl. Mean.

She smiles, and I see that I’ve missed her meaning.

2.

She says: Home is not where you were born. Home is where all your attempts to escape cease.

I say: Did you make that up? She is surprisingly smart, but maybe the fact that I am surprised by her intelligence is only proof of my own prejudice and condescension.

She says: No. Some philosopher, but I can’t remember his name or address.

I say: Here with you, I have no desire to escape. I must be home.

She smiles.

But then it hits me—I’ve never had a desire to escape from anywhere (a miracle for a Jew). I’ve enjoyed everywhere I’ve ever lived, whether it was in a ghetto or a forest, in a sawmill camp along a highway, in an apartment across from a semi-professional baseball field, in a shabby room, sharing a kitchen with a guy, where the ancient burger grease was inches thick, in a house next door to a prison where my wife was incarcerated, in a chamber of smog, in a chamber of pulp mill fumes, in a condemned bar, in a bed with the legs set in water pails to keep me from getting malaria, in a malaria ward, in the servant’s quarters of a youth hostel in Tanzania, in an apartment across from a mill pond {He hugged his melancholy to his breast as if it were inherited farmland that many ancestors had sweated over. He lacked success or satisfaction, but melancholy was a vast ocean much greater
than the mill pond across the street from his apartment, where logs floated, barely submerged, waiting to be plucked and sawn up for the mill owner’s profit. Under the melancholic’s apartment was a hidden stairway which led to a small hidden cellar where, during the depression, a whiskey still created the amber fluid that sets our souls soaring. But this melancholic doesn’t bring a bottle with him. He just goes down there and sits in the dark and silence, his back against the cold wall, his buttocks on the cold floor}, in a commune populated by Tasmanian Devils, in the basement of an avant-garde museum which featured plaster casts of vaginas and which sold “cunt soap” in their gift shop.

Like I said, I’ve enjoyed everywhere I’ve lived. I’ve been comfortable everywhere. I’ve never longed to escape. It was only circumstances that sent me on to the next place.
Midway

By Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois

1.

It’s cold and rainy on the carnival midway. Only the masochists are out, and the desperate, the recovering alcoholics who are terrified by the idea of going into a warm bar, the meth heads who have blown up their homes, blown up their mothers who’d been sleeping on the couch with aggravated expressions on their faces.

I’m there with my kids. I buy them blue popsicles and they eat them in the rain, avoiding mud holes when they can. I’m fulfilling my responsibility, teaching them about life.

2.

I create midnight poetry readings. I litter the city with flyers, yellow, pink and light blue, the colors of baby’s breath, reassuring, comforting colors. But in the end, I am the only one who attends.

3.

When we get home, soggy, muddy, and they’ve gone to bed, I turn on my Latino laptop. The tiny fan keeps me warm. I have a hundred messages from people wanting me to like them. I don’t even know them, but I like them. I like most people.

4.

During the Independence Day parade, I scored off the Frito-Lay truck, bags and bags of chips. I was faster than the old farmer who was handing out samples. My hands flew like three-card monte. He was a potato. I was a potato slicer. Man cannot live on chips alone.

5.

The wooden folding chairs from the thirties that the county bought for audiences after a stage was added to the back of the one-room schoolhouse seem to ask: Where are the children? Where is the audience? Why are you sitting in the dark mumbling obscurities to yourself and calling it art and fulfillment?

6.

I ran to the House of Flavors truck. Ice cream flowed out as on a Charlie Chaplin conveyor belt or an I Love Lucy production line. We were all jolly as we mind-melded with obesity. Live long and prosper, we told each other, though we knew we would do neither.
More of us are wearing suspenders, I notice. More massage therapists are charging by the pound. It’s cynical and callous, but they do it anyway. Like the Gold Rush, any one of them can get rich off one vein.
Inventories from the Wasteland
(an ekphrastic response)

By Rony Nair

The deepest woods bear pathways. Twinning up over “Welcome” boards;
department stores
stock piles of sewage stowed away
from vision.
Necrophiliacs and butterfly parks. Stalk-eyed train tracks.
Curving alleyways; splinters of grass.
Escalator stairways, glass-frosted
giveaways fronting up as talismanic signboards.
Run down shanty towns papered over washed laundry boards.
Bags filled with yesterday’s scabs. Mental eyewash.

Photograph: Rony Nair
I came by yesterday to walk with you,
“Who walks through woods anymore,” you said,
“other than those crazy souls. Bereft. Alone.”

A fair distance from Paris. People traipse out behind stadiums;
to let themselves release, in conservatories, where
birds mutate into carnivores in evolution;
reversing the score.
Pterodactyl plates in museums no longer bear signage or signature plates,
as the moors who stand guard hold inquests. In selfie mode.

So the pathways curve in sonorous ways.
The birds still congregate on solitary mannequin shaped
trees set up to adorn tanks filled up to resemble lakes.
You said, “Who walks anymore, anyway! And these woods aren’t woods anymore.”

Billboards scream of car parks and trees, viscerally
placed to draw our breath;
spasmodic. Entwined.
Ghost-ridden. Laughs before lights seems to be the name of the game.
No Cigarette zones and stubbed out reams. Fairy godmothers,
empty dreams,
cars plying into driveway stores.
Rubber machines. Gravel.

If you still want to not walk alone
over petrolite spirits,
there’s green bunds and verdant hillocks.
Just down from the liquor store.
You said, “Stuck between longing and love,
I’m not too sure anymore.”

The moral police occupy swathes of foliage.
Corruption is legal, but a kiss would kill.
There’s a stage ready for the next conservation advert.
Beside the stash, there’s carwash tracks;
gargoyle taxidermists stuff elephants next
to toy trains that run east to west.
Plywood lines in fracture echo across territory
long held in abeyance; marked by silhouette rings
curved into the next golf course. Refreshment sins.

These are places down under
where we knew the score.
Peopled tents
and rancid bores
extended hands; and comedy out of an Elmore Leonard bookended triage.
You said, “There you go again. With something that means nothing.”
I sat down. And retched.
VISUAL ART
New York Futurism by Kyle Hemmings
Diptych by Olivier Schopfer
sow period
finding a new dimension
of my primal dream
Closed Doors by Bill Waters
claustraphobia . . .
what to do with these
crowded spaces inside me
fighting for time
and attention
Civilly Disobedient by Kayt Hoch
Spectransit by Angad Arora and Deepika Chauhan
Three Sheets to the Wind by Kyle Hemmings
The Cosmic Wars by Stephen Nelson
Zen Doodle by Jayashree Maniyil
deep breathing   the large hearts of bodhisattvas
Letter (Un) by Alexander Limarev
words -

bareback
electron cowboys.
source code corrupt
-ing time and space.
(e = something
squared...) as if anyone asked.

click click click click
click click
click click click click
click click click click
click click

click click

click click

click click

click click

click click

click click

— Est. 1991 and not much
whatever new any-
way

alt/\x
Zendala by Jayashree Maniyil
our spruce
broken and charred
now half a tree
tells the world
survivors live here
Organic Doodle by Safiyyah Patel
Internal Levels by Angad Arora and Deepika Chauhan
INTERVIEW WITH K. SRILATA

K. Srilata is a professor of English at IIT Madras, India. Her collections of poems include Writing Octopus, ‘Arriving Shortly,’ and ‘Seablue Child.’ She co-edited the anthology, ‘Rapids of a Great River: The Penguin Book of Tamil Poetry.’ Her novel, ‘Table for Four,’ was long listed in 2009 for the Man Asian literary prize, and was published by Penguin. Srilata’s work has also been featured in ‘The Blood Axe Anthology of Indian Poets.’

SB: *Bookmarking the Oasis* is your ninth book. How do you see a book is on its way? Is it something you consciously invite and work on, or is it driven by something beyond you?

KS: With poetry books, typically, it is hard to “see” them in the shape of books. It is, more often than not, a case of one poem and then another and then another – till somehow you look back and feel you have enough for a book and that the poems work together. It is like looking back and finding your own footprints. But at this point, this tipping point, I begin to obsess about putting them together and work consciously to organize things that way.

SB: What has changed from your first book of verse to now?

KS: A lot, I think! I have changed, too – I have more voices, more books, more poems in my head now. I also feel more consciously like “I am a poet” – previously this writing thing was like a submarine – under the surface, forgotten. I have also begun to make connections between the private and the public, the domestic and the world – in a way I didn’t before.

SB: *Sea blue child*, *Writing Octopus*, and now, *Bookmarking the Oasis*. There is the subtle thought of water that runs through these books. Rain and water figure quite prominently in several poems, too.

KS: I think if you live on the coast, thoughts of water and rain and monsoons – gentle water, not so gentle water raining down on you – is going to be part of your mind space. It is inevitable. I spent many happy and unhappy years as a student in Hyderabad. I found that while I loved the city in many ways, I could not take the feeling of being “landlocked” that came from living there.

SB: How does writing poetry impact your other genres and vice versa? Is there a conscious cutting down of redundancies when you write prose?

KS: Yes. I think there is that cutting down of redundancies. But I can’t help thinking I don’t quite let myself go in prose the way other practitioners do. I hold back, hoping some stories will tell themselves, but maybe they don’t.

SB: You teach English and work as an editor as well. And there is so much written about how to write poetry. Have techniques and rules ever intimidated you as a writer?

KS: No. Never. Also, I never learnt writing formally. And I didn’t work in a publishing house as an editor – so I think there is that. I have been my own creative writing mentor – to a large extent – and what I have learnt from others has usually been through books and conversations.
SB: There is so much more poetry in public spaces today. And yet, it has managed to retain the enigma that has surrounded it for a long time. How have responses from the people in your world changed over the years?

KS: I think – as long as you forget the market, forget about making your millions from poetry, forget about the “official” response or non-response to your work – you do fine. People read poetry, they respond – usually positively and warmly. There is an entire sub-culture of poetry readers and listeners out there – not huge numbers, perhaps – but they exist. And they matter.

SB: Your poems go back and forth from ancient Greek history to recent world politics to deeply personal stories of everyday people. Tell us how you stay inspired.

KS: It is simple. If I don’t write, I begin to feel crabby and become an awful person to live with. So as soon as I catch that happening, I clear up some mind space and write whatever it is that has been on my mind.

SB: How long does it take to cook a poem? Do you constantly edit them even after they arrive as books?

KS: An hour, half a day, and sometimes even ten years. England, 1999 took ten years or more to get written because it took many years for me to understand what it was all about; that experience of having to explain India to a white person living in the UK, the impossible, tricky nature of that, all the shameful admissions about this country – caste and so on and so forth – that one has to make, but does not have the courage to.
CONTRIBUTORS

Al Ortolani’s seventh collection of poetry, *Paper Birds Don’t Fly*, will be released by New York Quarterly books in April of 2016. He teaches English in the Kansas City area. His poems have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net.

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Jayashree Maniyil lives in Australia. Haiku happened to her about three years ago, and since then, there has been no looking back. She enjoys experimenting her way through different forms of Japanese inspired verses.


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Keitha Keyes has spent most of her life in Sydney, but her heart is still in the Australian bush where she grew up. She dabbles occasionally in free verse, but most of the time enjoys writing tanka, haiku, and related genres.

Kimberly White’s poetry has appeared in Cream City Review, The Comstock Review, the new renaissance, and other journals and anthologies. She is the author of four chapbooks, Penelope, A Reachable Tibet, The Daily Diaries of Death, and Letters To A Dead Man; two novels: Bandy’s Restola and Hotel Tarantula. You can find her poetry and collage art on her website, www.purplecouchworks.com, as well as on Facebook, and various refrigerator doors.

Kyle Hemmings has artwork published in The Stray Branch, Euphenism, Uppagus, The Bitchin’ Kitsch, Black Market Lit, Red Bird Press, Snapping Twigs, Convergence, and elsewhere. He loves pre-punk garage bands of the 60s, Manga comics, and urban photography/art. He especially likes the photography of Albion Harrison-Naish.

Leslie Bamford is a published writer of short stories, poems and plays, and a teacher of creative writing and memoir. She lives in Ontario, Canada. She recently retired and fell in love with writing tanka, often composing while walking her dog and taking photographs. To read more of her work, visit www.lesliebamford.com.

Lois Roma-Deeley is the author of three collections of poetry: Rules of Hunger (2004), northSight (2006), and High Notes (2010)—a Paterson Poetry Prize Finalist. Her poems have been featured in numerous literary journals and anthologies such as Political Punch: The Poetics of Identity Anthology, The Transnational, The Wallace Stevens Journal, Bellingham Review, 5 AM, Artful Dodge, and many more. She lives in Phoenix, Arizona, USA. http://www.loisroma-deeley.com/

Marcus Liljedahl was born in the town of Malmö, Sweden, in 1972. He has been working as an opera singer at The Gothenburg Opera since 1998. His poetry has been published in Modern Haiku, Frogpond, The Heron’s Nest, Bones, Under The Basho, Bottle Rockets, and others. One of his haiku has been selected for inclusion in the new anthology, Haiku 2015.

Marianne Paul is a Canadian novelist and poet with a keen interest in minimalist poetry. Her work has appeared in A Hundred Gourds, The Heron’s Nest, Acorn, Modern Haiku, Bones, Frozen Butterfly, and Daily Haiku. She has recently (and joyfully) been experimenting with concrete poetry and visual word play.

Marietta McGregor is a botanist and journalist who has pursued careers from palynology researcher, university tutor, garden designer, parliamentary guide and visits manager at an astronomical observatory, to science and technology communicator. Having spent her earlier writing life explaining things, she now endeavours to let things explain themselves through her haiku.

Mark E. Brager lives with his wife and son in Columbia, MD, just outside of Washington, DC, where he works as a public affairs executive. His poems have appeared in several print and online journals.
Matthew James Friday is a professional writer, and holds an MA in Creative Writing from Goldsmith College, London. He has had poems and short stories published in the following worldwide magazines and literary journals: A Handful of Stones, Bad Idea Magazine, Brand Literary Magazine, Bolts of Silk, The Brasilia Review, Cadenza, Cartillon, Cha: An Asian Literary Journal, Dreamcatcher, Gloom Cupboard, and so on. Website: www.matthewfriday.com

Matthew Moffett lives in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, with his wife and two kids. He is pursuing an MA in creative writing at Central Michigan University, where he also teaches Freshman Composition. He thanks you for reading his poem.

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois has had over a thousand of his poems and fictions appear in literary magazines in the U.S. and abroad. He has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, The Best of the Net, and Queen’s Ferry Press’s Best Small Fictions for work published in 2011-2015. His novel, Two-Headed Dog, based on his work as a clinical psychologist in a state hospital, is available on Kindle and Nook, or as a print edition.

Myron Lysenko is a founding editor along with Kevin Brophy of the literary journal, Going Down Swinging. He writes poetry, short fiction, and song lyrics, but his main passion is for haiku and senryu. He tutors in creative writing and is the leader of the poetry and music band, Black Forest Smoke.

Olivier Schopfer lives in Geneva, Switzerland. He likes to capture the moment in haiku and photography. His work has appeared in numerous online and print journals such as Acorn, Bones, bottle rockets, DailyHaiga, Failed Haiku, Gnarled Oak, Modern Haiku, Otoliths, Presence, Right Hand Painting, Under the Basbo, Up the Staircase Quarterly, and Wild Plum. He also blogs at: http://olivierschopferracontelesmots.blog.24heures.ch/.

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Ramona Linke (b. 1960) lives with her husband at the edge of the Mansfelder Land (Saxony-Anhalt) in Germany. She has been writing haiku since 2003, and her interests include sumi-e and watercolour painting, and photography. Her haiku, renku, and haiga have been published in many diverse anthologies, online journals, and calendars. Website: http://haiku-art-rl.blogspot.de/.

Rob Scott was born in Australia, but has spent most of his adult life travelling and living overseas. He currently resides in Stockholm, and stumbled across haiku while living in Japan. He recently completed his Master’s thesis entitled, The History of Australian Haiku and the Emergence of a Local Accent.

Robert Annis received his MFA from the University of South Florida where he works as an Advisor. He was nominated for the 2013 and 2014 AWP Intro Journals Project, won the Bettye Newman Poetry Award in 2014, and the Estelle J. Zbar Poetry Prize in 2015. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in Exit 7, Atlas Poetica, Lynx, Gusts, American Tanka, Foothill, Sweet, and Oracle.

Robert Beveridge is possessed of a weird sort of magic: every time he moves to a different major city, that city’s baseball team wins a major championship (’69 Orioles, ’79 Pirates, ’93 Phillies, and ’95
Sonic Boom

Indians). When he isn't writing poetry, he makes uncomfortable noises with machines (xterminal.bandcamp.com).

Rony Nair was a columnist with the Indian Express. He has previously been published by Yellow Chair Review, Two Words For, Ogazine, New Asian Writing (NAW), Semaphore, The Cadet, The Economic Times, 1947, and YES magazine, among others. He cites Philip Larkin, Dom Moraes, and Ted Hughes as his poetry idols.

Safiyyah Patel writes for catharsis. She has delved into free verse poetry, haiku, tanka, and essays. Her most treasured moments have been in training as a Counsellor and as a Chaplain. Her passions are henna art, zentangles, and doodles. She is also greatly fascinated by psychology and behaviour analysis.

Samantha Albala studied writing from the lineage of the Beat Generation at Naropa University, and the Lost Generation in Dorf Tirol, Italy, at Brunnenburg Castle. She is an author, poet, crafter, and editor. Her voice can be heard at soundcloud.com/keepmindscreative.

Samar Ghose grew up in India, but now lives in Australia with his wife and two daughters. Like most people who discover Japanese verse forms, he, too, attempts to write some.

Stephen Nelson has published and exhibited visual poetry around the world. His latest book is called Arcturian Punctuation, and is published by Xexoxial Editions. He is a contributor to The Last Vispo Anthology, and was also featured in The Sunday Times Poet's Corner. Check out his vispo blog at: www.afterlights-vispo.tumblr.com.

Stephen Toft currently lives close to the River Lune in Lancaster, UK, with his girlfriend and their children, and works with homeless people. His poetry has appeared in a variety of international journals and anthologies. In 2008, Red Moon Press published his first haiku collection, the kissing bridge.

Steve Black, a relatively recent convert to Japanese inspired poetry, lives within a stone's throw of London. His poems have been published in Skylark, The Bamboo Hut, Undertow Tanka Review, and Gogyoshi Monthly.

Susan Beall Summers is a teacher and an editor. She also interviews poets for Texas Nafas, Channel Austin. Publishing credits include Ilya’s Honey, Outrage: A Protest Anthology, Texas Poetry Calendar, Harbinger Asylum, Yellow Chair Review, Nowhere Poetry and Flash Fiction, Di-Verse-City, cattails, Frogpond, Anti-Heroin Chic, Crab Fat, and others.

Susan Burch is a good egg.

Tim Gardiner is an ecologist and poet who has published scientific papers, several natural history books, poems, and short stories. Tim's first full collection of natural history poetry, Wilderness, was published in 2015 by Brambleby Books, and a WWI prose/poetry book, East of Arras, has recently been released.

Trish Hopkinson has always loved words—in fact, her mother tells everyone she was born with a pen in her hand. She has two chapbooks – Emissions and Pieced Into Treetops – and has been published

**Vandana Parashar**, a post-graduate in Microbiology, is a teacher by profession. She is married to an army officer, and is a proud mother of two daughters. She has recently ventured into writing as an endeavour to rediscover herself. Her tweet-sized tales have been published online on *Microtales* and *The Untamed Pen*.

**William Scott Galasso** is the author of fourteen books of poetry, including *Collage (New and Selected Poems)*, published in November 2012. His latest haiku collection, *Silver Salmon Runes*, is due this spring, and has appeared throughout Europe, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, China, Canada, India and the U.S.
FINIS.