



These Fragile Lilacs Poetry Journal

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VAN DER KAM

These Fragile Lilacs Poetry Journal

A journal dedicated to poetic excellence

The main goal of *These Fragile Lilacs Poetry Journal* is to showcase strong poetry that illuminates whatever is true, whatever is beautiful, whatever is revelatory, and whatever goes otherwise unnoticed about the world in which we live. Poetry allows us to articulate what it means to live and die. Poetry is also one of the most significant mediums through which to document our lived experiences.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Laura Hanna

IT SPECIALIST

David Hanna

CONTRIBUTING ARTIST

Clinton Van Inman

These Fragile Lilacs is a poetry journal released biannually in January and July. We look for poetry that's tightly constructed and for sharp poetry with strong metaphors, similes, and imagery. We also gladly accept artwork and photographs. Issues are released at thesefragilelilacspoetry.com. The cover art of this edition of Lilacs is a painting by Clinton Van Inman titled *When Lilacs Bloom*.

Submissions: Send poetry and art submissions to thesefragilelilacs@gmail.com. Please do not include any attachments for poems; instead, paste the poems you would like to be submitted directly into your email. You may submit up to five poems per submission cycle. Please do not send previously published work. If your work is accepted for publication elsewhere, please let us know as soon as possible. If you would like to submit artwork or photography, you may submit attachments of images via email to the email address above.

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An Expanse of Time, by Michael Schiffman

Driving the well-worn highway by the river,
twice I have seen an eagle in the sky
wheeling above the bridge reconstruction,
the cranes and scaffolding,
the earth-moving equipment.

In the city my eyes are drawn to the roots
of old trees, bulging above the pavement,
where the concrete has constricted their growth.
Huge excrescences, brown and furrowed,
harsh conceits just above the crumpled sidewalks.

In the school window, mere yards from where
I sit, clouds are reflected
as they push themselves across the sky.
A pair of bees, on the same
sight line, dance an airy courtship.

Downstairs the cat stretches across
the threshold. His body inhabits
two rooms. Read nothing here,
but feline immortality
and enviable nonchalance.

With an honest emptiness I make my way.
Gravity my basest humor.
Urges boil up and then subside.
I sift through them at my leisure.

Dear Stepfather, by Vincent Francone

There's magic in the glass
of port you pour each Christmas
due not to the grape or points
earned in that befuddling system
but in the obedience to whatever entity
first told you that one must pour port at Christmas.

You carved turkeys with skill,
fried my eggs in bacon fat,
and told me that it mattered not how many chords
one knows on the guitar,
or how fast the scales can be run through,
but that style was all
and not having any was an offense.

I learned that Canada Geese mate for life
through an education your toil made possible
and saw their patterns nightly
when you played defender of my mother,
smartly navigated my adolescence
and elegantly swung a hammer.

Indignity's Worth, by Crystal Ramos

i shat on the table
in labor and delivery
when i brought Him
into this world

vomit, too
a frothy green and yellow
His daddy holding
my hair back

cervix staying closed
pitocin prying it open

they put a thing up
my vagina, next to His head
measuring contractions
increasing pitocin
a knife stabbing

five centimeters
epidural
please
soaking cheeks
sweat, tears

they tell me to push
and i shit on the table
pain tearing through
the epidural
His head tearing through
my vagina

a red screaming thing
placed in my arms
and i smile.

my Son.

The Significance of Blue-Dappled Eggs, by Bill Kirby

Some say you can learn a lot from birds.
Observe how the sparrow sweeps the
street for possibilities, for some scant
hint of a thing
to feather a nest.

Peer into a camellia bush
to discover the muted mother
cardinal perched defiantly
upon her babies,
unmoved by her mate's
brilliant uselessness.

Make yourself invisible
one dewy morning and listen
to the symphony of curling calls
from green to green,
a bird Esperanto
Byzantine in its complexity.

Know that there exists
an avian hierarchy,
a pecking order
of the first magnitude.
The woodpecker is just as
deadly as it looks,
but the thrush is more
forgiving.

Eagles are the Brahmas,
vultures the Untouchables.
Owls must be the Druids
of the Bird World,
and Penguins the ambassadors.

We are the aliens,
the unknowables.
We cannot flit,
nor careen from elm to elderberry.
Can't draft upon a whisper

while the earth pivots
on a cloud.
Footbound to our sidewalks
and bridges over waters
that seem like arteries
of a vast being to a
bird's eye.

Each twitter of a wren's wings
signifies the limits of our aspirations.
Each downy feather that slowly skitters
to the grass mocks our heaviness.

There is vast import in
the blue dappled egg,
but not for the flightless.

Waiting for Ireland, by Erika Goodrich

Outside was almost black
that night you took my tiny

hand & we danced around
the empty airport terminal.

Pressed together, our bodies glowed
electric, like glimmering stars

we saw far in the distance.
What're you afraid of? you asked,
looking down at me. Back then,
I didn't know how to say anything.

So, I stared into the dark
horizon & watched blinking lights
taxi the tarmac.

Field Flowers, by Erika Goodrich

Look.

We are dying—for months

no rain. Air, so arid

we choke-up dust.

Sand granules
cut our throats

& there is no food to feed
these hungry mouths.

Can't you see
our thirst?

Our tongues
hanging—
like animals
panting, parched
at your dry-well.

Won't you feed
these brown leaves?

Mist these mountain tips,

Touch us—

Let us know,
we are alive.

The Gift of Love, by Michele Martin Taylor

Gloomy.
Some days tear me down
Tasks too hard, must keep going
Sadness comes from too much knowing
My responsibilities

Then my son, a poet of nine
Looked at me so sweet and fine
And said to me, a single line'
Which changed my life
From then to now
This is how.

As we walked, in evenings gloom
He said,
"Mom, where you walk, the flowers bloom."

California Summer, by Michael Lee Johnson

Coastal warm breeze
off Santa Monica, California
the sun turns salt
shaker upside down
and it rains white smog, humid mist.
No thunder, no lightening,
nothing else to do
except sashay
forward into liquid
and swim
into eternal days
like this.

Biographies

Vincent Francone is a writer from Chicago whose memoir, *Like a Dog*, was published in the fall of 2015. He won first place in the 2009 Illinois Emerging Writers Competition (Gwendolyn Brooks Award) and is at work on a collection of poems and stories.

Visit www.vincentfrancone.com to read his work or say hi.

Erika Goodrich has a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing and Literature from William Paterson University, and a Masters of Library Science from the University of Buffalo. She currently lives in Tampa, FL. Her work has been published in *The Creativity Webzine*, and *The Mindful Word Journal*.

Michael Lee Johnson lived ten years in Canada during the Vietnam era. He is a poet, editor, publisher, freelance writer, amateur photographer, small business owner in Itasca, IL. Mr. Johnson published in more than 925 small press magazines online and print. His poems have appeared in 27 countries as of this date, he edits, publishes 10 different poetry sites, with over 98 videos on YouTube. Michael Lee Johnson was nominated for 2 Pushcart Prize awards for poetry 2015, and Best of the Net, 2016.

Bill Kirby is an English teacher in the South and has had several short stories and poems published in various journals and magazines.

Clinton Van Inman was born in Walton-on-Thames, England and graduated from San Diego State University. He has been a teacher all his life having recently retired from the Tampa Bay area where he lives with his wife, Elba.

Crystal Ramos graduated with a BA in English from Valdosta State University and is currently working on her MA in Professional Writing at Kennesaw State University. Her work has previously appeared in *The Doctor T. J. Eckleburg Review*.

Michael Schiffman has spent three-quarters of his life thus far in three different fields: academia, the manufacture of men's suits, and wine sales. It appears the last quarter is being devoted to writing poetry.

Michele Martin Taylor has painted and written poetry since she was very small, demonstrated by a photo at age two, depicting her fleeing her mother who thought she was too young to manage a sharp pencil. In junior high, she remembers the elation she felt when one of her poems was selected in an anthology of poetry by California school children. Grateful and proud to have made a lifelong living as a professional fine artist, she is honored to also find public interest in her poetry. Needless to say, as much as the creative arts demanded inspiration and talent, she had to work very hard at many institutions to bring her work to a fuller, more accomplished realization.