

OLENTANGY REVIEW

spring | 2015



PUBLISHED BY | *Moonkind Press*

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COVER PHOTOGRAPHY | *Sarah Katharina Kayß*

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Yes, that [insert news feed] is happening in the world right now, but so is this. That's not all there is to people and things. The nightly news is just one source of information. It's a fat feed, but it may not be the best choice for your nourishment, intellectual and otherwise.

Just this week Melissa and I saw Seth Avett and Jessica Lea Mayfield at the Southern Theater in downtown Columbus doing the songs of Elliott Smith, plus their own and others including Bob Dylan, Neil Young and the Beatles.

Some beautiful place to get lost, as Elliott Smith wrote, is exactly what it felt like to me. People were happily sharing something besides war, besides arguments, besides politics. We were just experiencing beautiful music together. Simple, yes, but more than satisfying to the inner and outer worlds we contain. It felt so right, so human. Such a relief to the spirit. That feeling is pretty contagious.

There's simply tons of interesting and beautifully wrought stuff going on out there in the real world, too, but we're looking for something specific and particular to us for the magazine and we only know what it is when we see it.

Hopefully you will be surprised and delighted, challenged or intrigued, by what we've found for you to look at this time around. As always, it's our pleasure and a real honor to share these new creative works with all of you. Have a lovely Spring and an amazing Summer.

Darryl Price | March 20, 2015
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Bending/Folding | *Susan Tepper*

This room has smelled
death's animal coat—
burrs and a slick sticky
overgrowth crawling from
ceiling to floor

ventricles harboring soot and
pollen bed-mates:
what else can it offer

To one set on traversing
rocky streams
the hills inward climb of

calm meadow

A day you tramped your horse
over sway and bowl of field
hypnotic under a falling sun

The late autumn grasses bending,
folding as winter approached

Sinking | *Susan Tepper*

This room sinking from duplicity
can't possibly contain
the weight of two men

It's only 9 X 9—
two windows
a door

All that fuel igniting
drowned fast in a cold lake

back when you could still look
down reflective girl staring
this pensive
Now this shape—

sharp edged, triangle lips
unforeseen turns keep
banging my head into walls

Emily as the Plum Tree Takes My Pulse | *Darren C. Demaree*

I wanted the garden
to rest against
the extensions

of my own blood
& when it did
& when it never

relented, I knew
I couldn't die
alone. You will know

the body is mine
by the outline
of her weight

against my fading
energy, my chest
emptying to cradle her.

Here Comes the Sun | *Bill Yarrow*

She lies on her stomach by the side of the pool staring into her towel. On her back, I can make out a pastel isthmus, surgery's pink art or charlatan's scab, I can't tell which. She is beautiful as rare roast beef is beautiful. I stare at the curve of her calf, a crescent of red flesh. I recognize her from the oncologist's office, her appointment had directly preceded mine, but who am I to cast blame? I am in the water myself, a little cool today but tomorrow sure to be hot or hotter. What tomorrow is not hotter than today? I pull myself out and look for some shade, but there is none to be had. Maybe sunscreen will protect me. If not sunscreen, then Athena?

I throw on my shirt and cover my legs as best I can. The sun's the enemy. Was that always the case? Or was I just too stupid to notice? I'm not a good judge of character. I've made friends with pestilence and shiftlessness, hypocrites with swords. I've shaken hands with traitors. The baleful will inherit the earth. Unless the sun gets them first. Praise the Lord.

I should (shouldn't I?) try to save that woman. Why? Because no good deed 'scapes whipping. But she looks the kind that detests salvation. One of those who no doubt resents amelioration too. Well, salvation's not everyone's bag. How sad though to see her incinerate by degrees. I'll alert her she's burning. (Aren't we all?) We're all sinners. Me for sure.

I jump back in the water and wade. But just before I submerge my head, I turn back for another glimpse of her. She is beautiful, well worth frying for, her lissome frame mistress of every billboard in every shade of red, her lithe corpus consort of every flag carved of ruddy color. Long may she wave, I wish her that, even as I see and grieve her intrinsic softness abraded by full-frontal doom.

Wicked Funeral | *Michael O'Connor*

Pale, quiet lines assemble
In muffled morning air,
In collection to celebrate
Woeful loss and despair.
Somber men seek solace
From a solitary fear,
That but from heaven's grace
Tis they that will lie there.
"Wicked, wicked death, be gone.
You're not welcome here"
But it sits like a cool shadow
In a lonely corner chair,
Ignoring the pleas of mourners,
Mourners everywhere.

Morning Dew | *Michael O'Connor*

Polished beads of crystal dew clung fast,
Silken, tight to bladed grass,
Threatened always dry extinction by
Apollo Atepomarus' daily pass.
Then dusk, in silence invades the day,
Orange fire dims Delphi's parting rays,
As silken dew in dawn's turbulent wake
Returns by night in softened silver haze.

The Beauty in Things | *Don Tassone*

Roasted verlasso salmon. Piquillo pepper sauce, broccoli, redskin potatoes, horse radish sour crème. \$23.

It was the first entrée that caught his eye on the menu, which was posted on the window. He was trying to cut back on red meat. But he was too hungry to go vegetarian tonight. So salmon sounded perfect. And at \$23, he knew he could still have a glass of wine and not bust his expense account. After so many meals on the road, he could do the math in his head.

He pulled open the heavy oak door. The warm air and the scent and sound of sizzling steak drew him inside.

"Welcome to Julian's!" said the hostess, sounding cordial but not really paying attention.

"Do you have a reservation?" she asked as she busily crossed names off the waiting list.

"Good evening," he said. "No, I don't. Do I need one?"

"No," said the hostess. "I just like to check. Will someone be joining you this evening?"

"No," he said quietly. "Just one."

Finally, she looked up. He was as handsome as he was unassuming, and he now had her full attention.

"Very good," she said softly.

He traveled a couple of days a week, almost always alone. But he had never gotten used to sitting at a table by himself. It made him feel awkward.

"Do you serve dinner at the bar?" he asked.

"Yes, of course."

His eyes scanned the restaurant, looking for the bar. But he didn't see one.

"Right this way, sir," said the hostess.

He followed her through the restaurant. The bar was in the back.

They walked by a ladies-night-out table. Several of the women stopped chatting and looked up as he passed. He looked away, as if he didn't notice. But he did notice. He had simply grown used to it.

"Will there be anything else?" asked the hostess.

"No," he said. "Thank you."

"Enjoy your dinner," she said, lingering for a moment, watching him as he made his way into the bar.

The room was dark and cozy, with just enough space for three tall tables. People were having dinner at two of them. A fire crackled in a stone fireplace, which took up much of one wall. The bar itself was short, with only three stools, all empty. They were the kind with backs, which he liked.

He didn't drink much, but he liked bars. He appreciated their clean lines and vibrant colors. His favorites were the ones where the liquor and wine bottles were carefully arranged on glass shelves and backlit.

This bar was like that. There were two shelves against the back wall. On each was a mosaic of bottles, varied by color and height. He stood back for a moment to take it in, as an art lover might study a painting.

"Good evening, sir," said the bartender. "May I start you out with a drink?"

"Good evening," he said, saddling up to the stool on the right. He was always careful to leave enough space for others.

"Actually," he said, "I'd like to go ahead and order dinner."

"Very good," said the bartender. "Would you like to see a menu?"

“No, thanks. I was looking at your menu outside. I think I’ll have the salmon and a glass of your house chardonnay.”

“Excellent choice. Anything else? A cocktail before dinner?”

“No, thanks. But I will take the wine, please, whenever you’re ready.”

“Very good. Let me place your order, and I’ll have your wine in just a moment.”

He felt the warmth from the fire on his back and realized he was still wearing his coat. He stood up to take it off, looked around and spotted a coat rack in the corner. He went over and hung up his coat.

He was walking back to the bar when he saw someone come in from the restaurant. It was the hostess, followed by a woman.

“Here we are,” said the hostess, looking his way. “It looks like we have one open table and, of course, the bar.”

“Thank you,” said the woman, as the hostess took one last glance, then disappeared.

He sat back down. He wondered if the woman might come over, but he didn’t want to stare. So he took his seat. His glass of wine was waiting.

He took a sip and looked up. Once again, the colorful bottles caught his eye. But now, looking more carefully, he realized there was a large mirror behind them. In it, he could see most of the bar. And in the space between the rows of bottles, he could see the reflection of the woman who had just come in.

She was standing in the doorway, looking around the room. She walked to the open table, paused and stepped over to the hearth. She held her hands up to the fire and rubbed them together slowly.

She was tall and thin, with long, brown hair. She wore a dark blue coat and a white scarf. He couldn’t get a good look at her face. But he guessed she was in her mid-30’s, like him.

Watching her in the mirror, he began to feel a bit voyeuristic, so he looked down at his glass of wine. But a few moments later, hearing footsteps behind him, he glanced back up. In the mirror, he saw her approach the stool to his far left.

“Do you mind if I sit here?” she asked.

“No,” he said, pivoting slightly to face her. She was quite plain-looking. “Not at all.”

“Thanks,” she said.

She took off her scarf and coat, then hesitated, not knowing exactly where to put them.

“There’s a coat rack in the corner,” he said, nodding toward it. He thought about offering to hang up her coat, but that felt too forward.

“Thanks,” she said.

He watched her as she walked to the coat rack but faced forward as she turned around to walk back to the bar. She passed behind him and hitched herself up on the stool, leaving one seat between them.

“Good evening, miss,” said the bartender. “May I start you out with a drink tonight?”

“Yes,” she said, glancing at his wine. “I’d like a glass of your house cabernet, please.”

“Very good. Would you like to see a menu?”

“No, thanks. I saw it out front. I think I’ll go ahead and order dinner.”

She looked over at him, as if to make sure that would be OK.

“By all means,” he said. “I’ve just ordered dinner myself.”

“Then I’d like the filet mignon,” she said, “medium rare, with a baked potato and mixed vegetables.”

“Sour cream?”

"Yes, please."

"Very good," he said. "I'll be right back with your wine, miss, and some fresh bread for each of you."

Fresh bread. Please hurry, he thought. After hearing "filet mignon," he was suddenly feeling famished—and a little wimpy for ordering the salmon.

He turned to her.

"My name is Michael," he said, smiling and extending his hand.

"Hi, Michael," she said. "I'm Sarah."

Her hand was thin, but her grip was surprisingly strong. She held his hand tightly and didn't let go right away, causing him to face her a moment longer. He looked into her face. It was as plain as winter wheat. But not for long because her eyes, which sparkled like emeralds, lit it up. They made it lovely. It was as if her face were a blank canvas on which some unseen artist was just beginning to work.

And the part of him which did not like to stare gave way to the part which was drawn to the beauty in the most ordinary things. And so, for a moment, he looked into her eyes. He could not avert his gaze. Nor did he want to.

Nor could she take her eyes off of him. She had never seen such a good-looking man, at least not in person. His skin was olive. His eyes were blue. His jaw was strong. His cheeks and chin were covered with stubble. His black hair, combed back, fell down to his shoulders, curling at his neck. She wondered if he was a model.

"Here you are, miss," said the bartender, setting down her glass of wine. "Enjoy."

And with that, at last, she released her grip. He let go too, and they both swiveled back toward the bar.

"Cheers," he said, raising his glass.

"Cheers," she said, grateful for the opportunity to see his face again.

She watched him take a drink. He was not wearing a ring.

"So what brings you here?" he asked.

"Business," she said. "I'm here on business."

"Me too."

"I'm visiting customers."

"So am I."

"What do you do?" she asked.

"I'm sort of in the furniture business."

"Sort of?"

"Well, yes. I'm in the office furniture business."

Office furniture? Now she wasn't sure if she was more curious or less. He sensed her hesitation.

"I'm a designer," he added. "I work with high-end clients to design executive offices."

"Sounds interesting," she said, sounding relieved.

"It is, most of the time."

"Most of the time?"

"Well," he said, smiling, "when my clients let me design."

This time, she didn't ask for clarification. She simply smiled and tilted her head, as if to say go on.

"I mean my clients are very successful," he said. "But they're business people. They're not designers. That's where I come in. When they let me design, when they take me seriously, I do my best work."

He looked down at his wine glass, squeezing the stem between his fingertips. What am I doing? he thought. All she did was ask me what I do.

"When they take you seriously?" she asked.

"Yeah."

"Why wouldn't your clients take you seriously?"

"Some people," he said, deciding to roll with it, "tend to judge a book by its cover."

"What do you mean?"

"Some of my customers, at least at first, see me as a lightweight."

"A lightweight?"

"A pretty boy."

That's understandable, she thought. But she simply said, "Oh."

"They're wrong, of course," he said. He didn't mean to sound so defensive. "I mean they're mistaken about me being a lightweight."

"How do you convince them you're not?"

He looked up to see if she was really interested. He couldn't tell. But then again, he could never tell for sure.

"Through my work," he said. "I show them what I can do."

"I see."

"Dinner is served," said the bartender, returning with both their plates. He set hers down, then his. Michael looked at his salmon, then over at her steak. He really needed to get off this diet.

"What about you?" he asked. "What do you do?"

"I'm an IT specialist," she said. "Essentially, I'm a troubleshooter. My company sends me out to help customers solve big computer problems, the ones we can't handle over the phone or online."

"So, do you travel a lot?"

"Yeah, a lot," she said. "Too much really."

"You don't like to travel?"

"It's OK. It's just that ..."

"What?"

"It's just that I really like working with computers, but I'm not crazy about working with people."

Now it was his turn to simply smile and tilt his head.

"I love math," she explained. "That's how I got into computers."

"That's cool," he said. "What is it you love about math?"

She paused, wondering how much to share. She wasn't sure if this perfect stranger was all that interested. But he did ask. It would be impolite not to answer.

"Some people are put off by math," she said. "But I've always loved numbers. I know it might sound crazy, but there is something about numbers that I find very appealing."

He must think I'm such a geek, she thought.

"What do you think that is?" he asked.

"I'm not sure. But I think it has something to do with being so authentic."

"So authentic?"

"I mean numbers are just what they are. A four is a four. It will never be a five. And it makes no apologies for being a four."

He grinned.

"Well," she said. "It's as unapologetic as a number can be."

He laughed. His laugh was even deeper, but softer, than she had imagined.

"I like numbers because they're real," she said. "They're solid. You can rely on them. And I'm drawn to that."

"You mean you can count on them?"

His pun caught her by surprise. She laughed loudly, and seeing her laugh made him laugh too.

"So how did you get into computers?"

"Well, for a while, I thought about teaching math," she said. "I even did some tutoring in college. But I'm just not very good with people. So I went into computers. That way, I thought I could focus on math and not have worry too much about people. But as it turns out, working with people is now a big part of my job."

"If you don't mind me asking," he said, "why don't you like working with people?"

"I like people," she said. "But to most people I work with, I'm just a computer geek. I'm there to fix their problems. And then I move on, and I never hear from them again. After a while, it makes you feel like just another part of the service contract."

"I see," he said. "I'm sorry."

Oh no, she thought. Now I've made this guy feel sorry for me. Suddenly, she felt she'd shared too much. She felt awkward. She felt like getting up and walking away.

"Thank you for sharing that," he said. "I know exactly what you mean."

His unexpected kindness took her breath away.

"You do?" she asked.

"Yeah. All my life, I've felt people were looking past me. They see me on the outside, and they form conclusions. But hardly anyone takes the time to get to know me. I mean the real me. No one ever asks me what I think."

"I know what you mean."

"You do?"

"Yes, I do," she said, "because no one ever asks me how I feel."

For a moment, they sat in silence.

"It kind of makes you feel one-dimensional, doesn't it?" he asked.

"Yeah," she said. "That's a good way to put it."

"But the good news," he said, trying to lighten things up again, "is that you found a way to do what you love. Math, I mean."

"Yeah," she said, smiling. "I guess you're right. I do get to work with numbers every day."

"How is your food, folks?" asked the bartender.

They looked down at their plates and realized they hadn't eaten much.

"Good," Michael lied. His salmon was as bland as tapioca.

"You've barely touched your salmon," the bartender said to him. "Is it OK?"

"It's fine. But next time," he said with a smile, "I'm going with the filet."

"Would you like me to exchange it?" asked the bartender.

"No, thanks," he said. "But I'd love another glass of wine. How about you, Sarah?"

"Sure," she said.

He looked over at her. She was cutting into her filet. She sliced off a big piece and speared it with her fork. And with a newfound boldness, she reached across the bar, held the meat between them and looked up at him and said, "Please take some of mine. I could never eat it all anyway."

He smiled.

"Thank you," he said, instinctively picking up his plate and setting it down between them. He noticed her hand was shaking. He placed his left hand on hers and, with his right, slid the beef off of her fork and onto his plate. Her hand was still shaking, and he held it for an extra moment.

"Will you make mine a cab too?" he called to the bartender.

"Very good," he said.

"So tell me, Sarah," he said, eagerly cutting into the filet. "Have you always loved math?"

"Always," she said, "even as a girl. Of course, that didn't make me very popular. None of the other girls cared much for math, and boys don't tend to go crazy over math geeks, especially when they're about a foot taller."

He smiled. "But you stuck with it."

"Yeah, I stuck with it."

"And I'm sure the boys eventually came around."

"Not really," she said, wondering again if she was being too open.

"Oh, come on," he said. "Surely you had guys after you."

"Not one," she said, shaking her head.

"You mean you never dated in school?"

"What I'm telling you is that I've never had a date."

Good lord, she thought. I can't believe I just said that.

He looked over at her to make sure she wasn't kidding. A certain sadness in her face told him she was telling the truth.

"There are a lot of good guys out there," he said.

"Yeah, there are, and I've been interested in some of them. But none has been interested in me."

The bartender was back with their wine.

"May I take your plates?" he asked.

"Sure," he said.

"Yes, please," she added.

"Will there be anything else right now?"

"No, thanks," they said in unison. The bartender took the hint and retreated to the kitchen.

"You just haven't met the right guy yet," Michael said quietly. "I mean somebody who can see the real you."

She looked at him and smiled. He was so sweet. She took a sip of wine. Her mind tended to work in metrics, and she pondered the long odds of this night.

"What about you?" she asked. "Tell me about you."

"What would you like to know?"

"Tell me why a designer is in the office furniture business."

He took a sip of wine.

"You really want to know?" he asked, smiling.

"Are you kidding? I just told you I'm a math geek and I've never had a date. Bring it on."

"When I was a kid," he said, "I wanted to be an artist. I guess my parents spotted some talent in me because, when I was only six, they signed me up for art lessons and bought me a bunch of art supplies. They even set up a little studio for me in our den. I used to spend hours and hours drawing and painting in there."

"What did you draw?"

"Well, I pretty much drew the everyday things around me—a chair, a desk, a TV, a lamp, a filing cabinet, books on bookshelves. I even drew my sister, my brother and my dog, although none of them would sit very still."

She laughed at the thought of his dog sitting for a portrait. He was glad to know she was still paying attention.

"We had a long, sliding glass window with a thin marble sill in that room," he continued. "My mother put five crystal decanters along the sill. She filled them with water and added a few drops of food coloring. Red, green, blue, yellow and purple. And when the sunlight streamed in through the window, they looked like a rainbow. I sat there and looked at those decanters, and the way the light came through them, for hours. And I painted them dozens of times. They were my favorite things to paint. And they were always a challenge because the light and the colors were always changing."

"That sounds so lovely," she said.

"Well, that's just it. My art teacher had a very different idea of beauty. She wanted me to do mountains and sunsets and windmills. But to me, the ordinary things around me were the real things of beauty, the true objects of art."

"So what did you do?"

"Well, my teacher was pretty stubborn—and persuasive. She convinced my parents I should 'broaden my horizons.' So I began drawing mountain ranges and windmills—things I'd never even seen."

"Did you like it?"

"No! I hated it. But I did it. I painted those things for my teacher and my parents. But I kept painting desks and chairs and those decanters too. I hid that work in a big box I kept in my closet."

"Did your parents ever find out?"

"No," he said. "They had no clue. In fact, they were so thrilled with my landscapes that they sent me to art school for college."

"How was that?"

"Initially, awful. But over time, great because I got exposed to interior design, which I loved. And when I graduated, I went to work designing offices."

"So you stuck with it too?" she asked.

"Yeah," he said. "Except, of course, for a little side trip to learn how to draw mountains."

He smiled and looked at her.

"You found a way to do what you've always loved," she said.

"Yeah."

He looked up at the bottles on the shelves behind the bar. The colors sparkled in the reflection of the flicker of the flames from the fireplace.

Then he looked back over at her. The fire danced in her eyes. Now, though, they weren't just green. Now they were alive with the color from every bottle. And suddenly her face, though still plain, looked so very elegant. It was transformed, not by the bottles or even her eyes, but by a light that came from inside.

He drew a breath and blinked.

"Sarah?"

"Yeah?"

"Have you ever had your portrait painted?"

She paused, thinking he was kidding. But then she looked at his face and saw he was waiting for an answer.

"No," she said. "I haven't."

"Would you be open to it?"

"Yeah, I guess."

"Are you still in town tomorrow evening?"

"Yes."

"Great," he said. "Then let's get together tomorrow. I'll bring my sketch book."

"Really?"

"Yeah, really," he said, smiling and raising his glass. "It's a date."



Sarah Katharina Kayß



Sarah Katharina Kayß

Constellation Pigeons | *Bud Smith*

on these most beautiful nights when I accomplish nothing
dreams and death and power outages, all the same
full of weepy this, weepy that
or waves of synthetic happiness
slapped up or down like a light switch

today I floated green ghost over a sick city
after taking out the garbage, taking out the recyclables
after dropping off my taxes
plz save your applause till the end

birds make trees to sit in
by flying and shitting
spent the day pecking seeds
from pavement

and now, look at me, naked in front of a computer
retired: smile this, chipped tooth that, even did the dishes
as the moon began to gnaw on the building

I'm just one man
sucking in all the pollen wind
exhaling out
rainbow puddle gasoline ocean.

Anbesol and Netflix | *Bud Smith*

leave a voicemail on psychiatrist's hotline
"finally dropping by to see you
I'll bring an extra large pizza"
I've been on my way to see him
for 16.5 years

I stand my cardboard sign
against the broken washing machine

pour two shots of mezcal
drop in tumbler with ice, lime
tastes and smells like medicine
same goo they rubbed on my gums
when I screamed through sharp teeth
in a rainy summer house

our apartment
is in another state
we've moved the bed so we can lay like spoons
her in front, me in back
Netflix on the computer fills a dark room
dizzy light, strobed distraction
gun play noise
in a church

every night
I kill the computer

and in same room, now dark
lay same way, spinning
kissing neck, hair in teeth
slipping underwear to side
—ah, such better kind of light
such better kind of noise

after, we're sticky
and she says my mouth tastes like Anbesol

I say "yeah, yeah, that's what it is.
Hey, got some news, I'm finally going next tuesday"
"where?"
"to get cured on 72nd street"
"oh no! I hope not. don't do that
don't get cured on 72nd street. I like the way you are"

call the psychiatrist back while she's in the bathroom washing up, whistling
psychiatrist answers on the third ring
"hello"

I can hear his TV in the background
he's watching the last episode of Game of Thrones
I'm ahead of him, I know what happens

"turns out I'm not coming to see you
but I'll still drop the promised pizza off though"
"much love" he says, "extra anchovies"
"mos def"
"Bottle of Pepsi too"

my wife does a somersault into the room
a backflip onto the bed
she says, "Debbie at work died"
"Oh, I'm sorry, that sucks"
"we're using her Netflix password" she says

our lives will change now too
our room will begin to spin
our milk teeth that once came in
may fall out while we dream

tomorrow I will beg on the street
for an HBO GO password
my card board sign says:
'WOUNDED VET TRYING TO
SEE PREMIUM CABLE 4 FREE
ANYTHING HELPS
B THE CHANGE U WANT
2 SEE"

He Was a Rescue | *Digby Beaumont*

Ida caught herself peeping through the curtains today for suspicious-looking cars. When she turned back, Sid was watching her. "Don't worry," she said. "They won't be coming now."

She had considered getting a dog or a cat or a canary. Though these three months with Sid, she realized how much she'd missed having another human heartbeat in the house.

She spotted him one night slumped in a wheelchair outside the Bon Accord Care Home, half-conscious, dressed only in tennis shorts and beach shirt, bare arms held tight across his chest against the cold.

The doors were locked, the curtains drawn. They'd forgotten Sid.

Ida kicked the wheelchair brake off and hurried him away. "Let's get you a hot meal and some warm clothes," she said.

Back home, she made up a bed for him in her father's old room.

A bag of bones. She soon fattened him up: full English breakfasts; Lancashire Hotpot; Shepherd's Pie; Roast Beef on Sundays with Yorkshire Pudding, crispy roast potatoes, greens, carrots, creamed horseradish sauce and gravy; and a range of tasty desserts—her home made apple crumble with cream, Sid's favourite.

She treasures their regular jaunts—to garden centres, tea rooms and other places of interest. She's discovered, too, that he's an avid snooker fan. He'll sit for hours in his favourite armchair in front of her big TV. Sometimes he'll turn to her, his mouth half-open, and point a shaky finger at the screen. She wonders if it's the colour of those balls zipping across the green baize that he's pointing at, or the pleasing clicks and clacks they make. He can almost speak to her, this way.

Her favorite moments, though, are those they share on their seafront promenades. After a while, she'll sit on a bench and they'll spend hours talking silently to each other before turning away to stare out to sea.

Byron Variation: The Sequence of Us | *Craig Kurtz*

For Anni

Away with your fictions of nonsensical romance,
those simulacrum of daydreams that inveigle the brain;
give me the cognizant experience which dwells in real life
and resides, vitalized, in the sequence of us.

Poets may parse and renovate words
fit for chimeras that swoon metrically;
what purposes have we for unconcealed sophistries
when the diapason we play is the sequence of us?

The muses will gambol while Apollo is king
and the stars in the sky encourage comets to sing;
melodious, admittedly, is such numinosity —
yet these night sparks do pale next to the sequence of us.

Statues have grandeur and paintings impress,
utopias cozen with artistic device;
I humbly suggest that our palette's on earth
and our pièce de résistance is the sequence of us.

The rhapsodic afflatus of idyllic design
enlightens all those who subscribe to footlights;
how would we mortals live without tendentious essay
and, yet, I still choose the extemporaneousness of us two.

When crescendos expire and the curtains repose,
when all portraits are framed and denouements conclude thus;
when the endnotes are mulled and the craft gets reviewed,
the only reprise I'll consider is the entirety of us.

Cover Letter | *Craig Kurtz*

OR, POETS VS. PUBLISHERS

Editors of publishing houses,
behold my poetry;
but first enjoy the reading fee:
thank goodness groceries are free.
It took a life to live it
and at least a year to write it;
so with your 30-line limit
it takes a minute to forget it.
This submission's not a multiple,
yours are the only eyes I want;
of course I'll wait a year to hear
you're not accepting in this font.
And, do I have a 'strategy'
for 'marketing' this stuff?
I thought that was *your* job
and my bounced check was enough.
Of course I'll 'social media,'
why write more poetry?
It's only understandable
that publishers would have no money.
Do you want 'edgy,'
or maybe 'something different?';
'Challenge expectation'? Then it
never will see print.
'Tradition is for suckers, history's for idiots;
satire is a bummer and lucidity is kitsch.'
Of course you know what's best
and you have a framed degree;
you're the reason,
for the last half century,
no one's buying poetry.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Craig Kurtz resides at Twin Oaks Intentional Community where he writes poetry while simultaneously surviving the dream. Recent work has appeared in *Aerie Literary Journal*, *Barking Sycamores*, *The Bitchin' Kitsch*, *Burningword Literary Journal*, *Conclave: A Journal of Character*, *Danse Macabre*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Maudlin House*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Teeth Dreams*, *Veil: A Journal of Darker Musings* and *Zouch Magazine*.

Michael O'Connor was born in Hartford, CT and graduated from the University of Connecticut. After spending some time living and working in Ireland and the U.K., Michael returned to New York City to pursue screenwriting. After several successes in the film industry Michael turned his writing to non-fiction historical works on the Second World War, publishing articles for the Centre de Recherches et d'Informations sur la Bataille des Ardennes. He has maintained deep interest for poetry, being influenced by Robert Frost, William Butler Yeats, and James Joyce. Michael currently resides in the Boston area.

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Don Tassone lives in Loveland, Ohio. He recently retired after a long career in public relations and is now "learning to write again." His essay, "Flashpoint," was published in December 2014 in *Red Fez*. His short story, "The Clearing," will run in *TWJ Magazine* in April 2015. Don teaches PR at Xavier University in Cincinnati.

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