

OLENTANGY REVIEW

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EDITOR'S NOTE

It might very well be a delicate matter to some these days, but honestly the world never ceases to amaze me. People amaze me, with the truly artful ways they express themselves through their writing, photography, and story-telling, with the way they say what's on their mind. They can make something unique out of their public and private moments of inspiration and share it with the rest of us.

This little magazine only provides a small peephole into the thoughts of a few of these most interesting artists. I think we've been lucky indeed to come across them. At least that's the way I feel. And certainly helps to build the solid case here in point: there's some real wonderful talent going on in the world today, and the cool thing is that it's happening all around us right now!

The reason I point all of this out to you is simply to give you the obvious, and ask, please don't lament the old literatures anymore, the new ones are just as exciting, just as original, just as playful and ornery and revelatory. In their beauty and power to imagine, to sing or to cry, to stand up and be counted, they are as important as any gone before. Test it out on these pages with us.

And we're here, as always, to celebrate that beautiful fact with all of you. This summer, why not take us along on your picnic and read one of these pieces to the trees and the winds and the sky? My guess is you'll hear a very cool echoing back beat in return. Thanks for coming along.

Darryl Price | June 21, 2015
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Poem for a Poet | *Amanda Harris*

I do not know what it is
that makes me a spectacle.
Maybe it is my short hair,
my strange imaginings, the way
everything begins and ends
with a fist. All year, the
same discussion. I need to
write happier poems. To
shape myself into something
other than this image of a
knife in the throat. All day,
I have been trying to write
myself into happiness. My
brain lives in obsessions.
The year I began reading
your work, my room was
cluttered with barbells,
with fitness magazines,
with guidelines about how
the body was built to live
on no sugar. I do not know
what it was about your poems
that made me choose books
over my original career goal
of becoming a fitness model.
Regimens did not repulse me,
nor did they change my persona
into some sort of grotesque
narcissist, the way all fitness
professionals become after their
first bodybuilding show.
Any neighborhood comments
revolved around my weight loss.
How beautiful it was to be
young and fit, how I'm not
obligated to hold a door for
anything other than my own shadow.
This is where you come into play.

I had discovered something you
wrote while I was googling around.
There was no homework to do.
I was bored and in perpetual
mourning for a death I could not
articulate. *The world, like
Dostoevsky, is losing at cards*
and its people are nothing but shadow.
Any time I had a conversation
with a gym partner, something
became an excuse to body shame—
our love handles, our fat
percentages, the scales in our
locker room.
There had to be a language
for this slow diminishing
of the self. I did not want
to write away from it, to
manufacture my own happiness
through a kind of pretend world
where angst is neither recognized,
nor wept over. I am not that kind
of woman. I do not see the world
as a sum of its multiples.
In the language of the mentally ill,
there is either love
or the self-hatred
that turns inwards to death.
Happiness is not a factor
in the decision to commit
suicide. Trust me on this
one. I found no catharsis when
I wrote the poem about killing
myself. Dying was just habitual
for me, like smoking a cigarette
or eating dinner at 7.
No, I do not regret using graphic
descriptions of mental illness.
I only regret that it was you who
got bludgeoned over the head with my big,

stupid confessional. You who hugged me.
You who walked up to me at the
bar and studied the outline of
my eyes for the hint of something
other than a girl with a rope
around her neck. Every day,
self-loathing threatens an
invisible black eye. I am too fat,
too stupid, not deserving of the
acceptance letter in my mailbox.
This is why I must imagine
some sort of larger kindness to
grab onto when my body is being thrown
against invisible walls.
Your writing is divine compassion.
I do not believe in god, but
in religion as a temporary language
that holds a place reserved
for better words. A year of heavy
drinking has made me forget my
vocabulary a little. Please do not
ask your writer friends how I unraveled.
Just accept this mutual admiration between us.

The Appraisal | *Joanna Kurowska*

In a one-store warehouse, burly
Latino boys in Chicago Cubs
T-shirts, toss around
storage cartons

A thin-lipped city clerk talks about
poetry—a welcome break in his
daily routine. Poets
are harmless

but for one who has just finished
his earthly task. His corpse
lay seven days before
it was found.

The clerk has a problem—how to
appraise the poet's belongings
kept in scotch tape-sealed
cardboard boxes.

What worth to put on index cards
for a thesis; an old woman's
photo, a grocery list,
a dirty comb?

pictures taken at the Baltic sea,
notes about some foreigner
by the name of Mme
Blavatsky?

endless dusty copies of a conference
program on an exotic writer;
old papers, two expired
train tickets?

From a box one of the boys has kicked
a coin rolls; the clerk picks it up,
balances it expertly
in his fingers.

We | *Joanna Kurowska*

for John

One night I woke up to your face:
a white patch sewn upon darkness.
The night's black hole was repaired.
I gazed into your eyes' pools.

It was as if we were in the silence
of a deep, deep ocean—the two fish
sending messages indiscernible
to any ear. Our bodies talked.

What priests and rulers fear
is always beyond their reach,
was happening. The Universe's
golden vein—life—branched out.

Life happened. Smiling, we were
set free. As usual, faithful death
sat near us. We did not know yet
she was a friend—we do now.

Yes, there are those who kill,
who put people in cattle cars,
those, who never have enough;
whose homes are balloons of fear.

We went out and saw myriads of stars
burning and falling, and being born
in silence. Among them, you and I
patching light onto the night's dome.

An Indirection | *Gary Hardaway*

The bones are chilled now, past
invigorations of the coming spring

and its entanglements
of roots and tendrils, leaves,

and the fragrances
of petals and pollen.

Deformations of the frost
have left the hard tubes scarred

beyond recoveries of warm rain
and fragrant air.

To numerous now, the fine fissures
of the freeze and thaw of decades.

The filigree of stress leaves
the framework too fragile to move.

An Agent of the Positive Writes Home | *Gary Hardaway*

Dear Jenny,

I've learned that everything they taught at the Academy is true. Depressives put up little resistance to the Program. They seem to almost welcome it, in fact, as if relieved.

You never know, though, how the Bipolars will react-- submissive and cooperative one minute, wild-eyed and elusively energetic the next. We always get them in the end-- with nets, if they're still manic, or with a helping hand once they crash.

The dangerous ones are the three-phasers—sad and hysterical as a child losing a mother, crazed as a cornered wolf, or-- and this is when they're most dangerous-- stealthy as a snake under a rock, waiting for you with a knife or broken bottle instead of fangs.

We see our work as weeding the yard. We want a thick and uniform grass, trimmed and healthy shrubs, and just the right beds of seasonal color. The sad and angry are the dandelions and crabgrass that must be pulled and burned for the good of the whole landscape. What we do is vital for the health and beauty of all the lawns in all the neighborhoods.

My Commander says that once we get all living Negatives tracked and eliminated, we'll begin to focus on the dead ones whose books and paintings, music and movies, act like hidden seeds of the sad and negative weeds we're pulling up by the roots now. I wonder, as she does, how we let these ugly things remain so long in our museums and libraries without removing and destroying them.

I think I have a bright future in the Program. Whenever the Commander brings us all together in the Hall of Joy to celebrate our progress, she seeks me out. She says I have a wonderful smile and such enthusiasm for our campaign. She's even asked me to join her table for dinner more than once. Your Bobby may make Captain soon.

Yours in the Most Positive Way,
Robert

The Small Blue House | *Gita Smith*

There was a man who lived in a small, blue house on a coast overlooking the sea. The blue of the walls was so beautiful that people came from distant towns for a look. It was of such a hue that each person who looked at it was reminded of some joyful childhood memory and went away happier.

The man painted his little house every two years to prevent its destruction by salt winds blowing off the sea. First, he bought four cans of paint: two were specific and different shades of blue, plus one a rich green and one of white. Patiently, on his small porch, in a giant can, he mixed and remixed and added more of this or that until he arrived at his spectacular blue that was like no other. He loved the smell of oily, exterior paint and the bite of turpentine in which he soaked his brushes.

He did this on the Summer Solstice and painted the entire house on that one glorious day of unending light.

Years passed, and even though he was alone, he was quite happy, cultivating the sea oats that sheltered and also fed beach mice. He catalogued birds, watched the tourists down below his house on the beach, and when he felt like eating fish, he stood on the pier at high tide with the others and wet his line. He was regarded as an oddity by some of the locals: a man his age, living alone up there, what was he up to? Were children safe near him? Was he a convict who'd served his time? Still and all, he was likable enough, so they always moved their minnow buckets and opened up a space for him on the leeward side of the pier. He hoped for sea bass, but he was content with perch and mullet, also.

One day, a woman came by to see his blue house. She was medium in every way except for her hair – a cascade of darkest brown rappelling down her back, wave after wave. It shimmered in the light breeze that lifted the strands around her face, a face that was transfixed. She stood, legs slightly apart and arms relaxed at her sides, her chest moving up and down in shallow sobs. Tears followed, and then she bent at the waist and, keening, clutched her sides. The man opened his door and took a tentative step toward the woman whose hair had fallen forward about her face in a protective canopy. At that moment he knew what the Greek Furies must have looked like.

She accepted his offer of Kleenex and a glass of water and sat on his porch until calm, again. "I am so embarrassed," she said. "I don't know what happened to me."

The man knew, but saying "It happens all the time" would have trivialized her experience. Instead he smiled and sang a verse from Lyle Lovett's song, "This Old Porch."

Come evening, she was still there, and they shared a pot of blue crabs and a bottle of gentle white wine. She wanted to know everything about him, but he spoke only in the present tense. She was unabashed and spoke of her past and all the paths that had led her to his door. She stayed the night and then the next and the next.

One afternoon, the man drew her a bath and, although she was reluctant at first, she allowed him to wash her hair. Touching it in a wet state, running his hands through the lather, wringing the water out when he was finished—he was ecstatic. He had never touched a woman in this way: it seemed more intimate than sex. He thought, “She has allowed me to care for her crown, for the apex of her beauty. “

He was not sure about the future, not sure whether she wanted him in her life for all time. The house was very small. One would have to go outdoors to give the other privacy, which seemed like no big thing at first. She too was not sure about the future, though for different reasons. She was a wanderer, not one to stay in any place for long. She had yet to see the wide world and taste its spices and the salty skin of men coming in from the fields or the scented faces of men just shaven. But she stayed at the small blue house where the air was clean and gulls screamed greetings.

The man continued his life just as before, noting bird species and caring for the vegetation along the dunes, striding along a beveled path worn into the landscape a hundred years before by horse shoes and boots of the first settlers. When he thought about her leaving, he felt an extraordinary urge to just keep walking, to never go back to the small blue house, to walk into town some miles distant and take all his money out of the bank, stuff it in his pockets and walk away. But he did none of that and strode back home.

He realized the truth of his situation. The woman had gypsy in her and a wanderlust. She and he were not meant for each other. When he found her on the porch with wine and a wedge of cheese, her exquisite hair was coiled around her head in a braid, and she had fastened the ends with a tortoiseshell clasp. His eye danced over the many shades of brown before him. He wondered if he could mix paint to match that hair and end his blue period.

They looked at each other for a while and then, without speaking, she went indoors and returned with a packed knapsack and sturdy walking shoes. He didn't protest, but he stood and folded her in his arms and touched a few loose hairs.

“I fell in love with the idea of love,” he said.

“It's not the same thing, though, is it?” she said.

“I want a lock of your hair,” he said. “I'll get a scissors.”

He led her out to the yard by his tomato stakes and wheelbarrow, where the sun made her beautiful and took her braids down. “Just for a moment,” he said. “Just so I can snip a little where it won't show.”

She agreed to this and shook out her hair. He reached into it as an explorer might reach into a jungle and part the foliage. He reached again in another place. And again.

“It's IMPOSSIBLE,” he said, in a panicky voice she hadn't heard before.

“I can’t decide. And since I can’t fucking DECIDE, I’m taking it ALL. You can regrow it, can’t you honey?”

He pulled a machete out of the wheelbarrow and, with her head yanked back and her hair gathered into his fist, chopped at her hair until he was holding it all: three pounds or more. But, hey, his aim had been terrific. There wasn’t a nick on her. True, her remaining hair looked like shit, but that’s the price you pay.

The woman ran back to the porch, back to her knapsack, frantically passing her hands all over her head for cuts. When she found none, she spat in his direction.

“What the hell?” she screamed, “what’s the matter with you? What did I ever do to you?”

The man pointed to a spot on the ground, the spot where she had stood the first time she looked at his small blue house.

“You trespassed.”

Curbed | *Adel Souto*



This Gravity is Not Enough to Hold Us Down | *Tiffany McDaniel*

the strawberries
are
growing
strange

i should
stop
eating
them

the seeds
are sticking
to my
teeth

they taste
like something
side
by side

as if
we are
still
married

and i
don't yet
know
the

silence
you'll
give
me

Motel Heaven | *Tiffany McDaniel*

i bought
a bag of
ice

found an
orange
in it

god
is
melting

the orange
is so

cold

Translation | *Charlotte Hamrick*

What did he whisper
in those last hurried
moments when her hair fell
across her lips and his hand
left hers. He was there,
then he was gone. A straight
grey spine receding
in the distance, swallowed
up in the growl of the crowd.

Summer on the Outskirts of a Small Michigan Town, 1959 | *Wendy All*

In the weeds I pick a daisy,
tart green apple scent and lazy
buzz of bees sing pollen's wonder
from the inborn spell they're under.
Wind so warm in wandering passes
rustling lofty, fragrant grasses.

Breezes whisper, flirt and plays
with the dancing sunny rays
that sprinkle freckles on my nose
while I smile and dream and doze
on my bed of Queen Anne's lace
in this enchanted summer place.

Working at my desk I find
in my tired, fitful mind,
I withdraw from life's ordeals
to that haven where it feels
blissful in its soothing charms,
wrapping me in loving arms.

Could I then have known such treasures
were the seeds of later pleasures?
over time they germinate
to savor at a later date,
like dried flowers pressed as art
in the scrapbook of the heart.

The Harmonies | *Wendy All*

In the mood indigo twilight,
my dog is an unmade bed.
While feathered paws
twitch in dreams,
her snores rumble
like damp sheets tumble

in the dryer. Resonant
with ancestors who howled
at the moon, she stretches
to a crescent and
croons a sleepy tune
in the key of canine.

Fortune | *Wendy All*

“This is million dollar rain”
my Grampa christened it.
I can hear his thick
Hungarian accent, see

his breath suspended
like a talk balloon
in that mix of drizzle
and mist. It percolates

like recipes for
the perfect time to plant
held deep in the roots
of my farm-girl fingernails.

A legacy absorbed
on walks through
Grampa’s orchard
our galoshes slush past

black lace branches
of promise.
A simmering soup
ideal for kitchen

gardens. We finger
seedlings into moist
soil nourished by
wisdom cultivated in

family trees, watched
them take hold like
my fingernails
caked with earth.

What You Should Know About My Friends | *Woodrow Hightower*

In her free time Lola throws harpoons at a dartboard
“Better than a baseball bat to the wallpaper” she says
The manuscript Arturo works is called Funhouse Visionary
Gabriel will jack up your hopes using barbed wire and sleeping pills
But knows you might hate him in the morning
Addie uses a forked tongue to measure the sugar in sweet potatoes
Leo logs a diary to help keep his head above water
Marie says cane liquor and cut glass always make her happy
Sophia starts her lawnmower with a sledgehammer
And is called a slut by a second cousin living in Gardenia
Ryan believes the minerals in his body are calcifying
Mason creates fatescapes with a blowtorch and colored sand
David keeps his middle name stored in a two-car garage
And has a thing for black ink and ticket machines
Emily makes neckties that double as tourniquets
Olivia tells me I’m simpleminded and she could be right

I love them all
It’s less complicated that way

The Note | *Brenda Bishop Blakey*

It was 1984 and *The Karate Kid* was a big hit. Every nut strapped on a black belt and offered karate lessons. The kids at school bullied me regularly and I really wanted to learn self-defense. Mom complained that there was no way we could afford to dole out 49 bucks a month for classes, much less buy the uniform and gasoline to go there. “Ricky,” she would start in, “You think the blue bird of happiness is just going to fly over and dump that money down our chimney?” Then she would really get on a roll. “Well, while he’s at it, he can take over for me at the pub in the evenings while I chauffeur you up and down the road to Bruce Lee lessons.” No wonder dad left.

It was 1984 and at the age of 12 I still believed I would go to hell if I touched myself and I was sure Mom could see through walls. Early on, I figured out she knew stuff because she regularly raided my wastepaper basket. She found a scribbled note that changed her mind about karate. It said ‘I want to die. I want to die. I want to die.’ She locked the note up in a metal cash box, put it on the top shelf in her closet, tossed me into the forest-green Fiat and raced me to the nearest karate school. She paid two months in advance and told the teacher, “He needs to lose his baby fat and get some self-esteem.” After that, I occasionally left well-placed notes that helped her see things my way.

It was 1984 and I knew that I would never be good at the whole martial arts thing. The sensei would tell me to find my internal chi and that would enable me to withstand a punch or make a kick. He would say, “All power is just behind your belly. Look. Knot of belt – just in front of navel – navel is eye of chi.” Then he would let out a scream as he buried his knee in my soft middle. Chi? What was it anyway? Some mumbo-jumbo, meta-physical, board-breaking trance? In my white uniform and belt I looked like a giant marshmallow just waiting to be smashed. Could chi do anything about that? I thought ‘there’s never a bluebird of happiness around when you want one.’

It was 1984 and I was about to find my chi. It was a sunny Sunday and Mom and I were washing the Fiat. The emergency brake must have failed or maybe I left it off while I was secretly pretending to drive. The car began to roll. Mom tried to stop it but the momentum swept her along. The car bowled her under and pinned her beneath the tire. I lunged for the bumper and lifted it off the ground in true Herculean effort while she dragged herself out from underneath. Miraculously, she was only bruised. We weren’t quite sure what happened exactly. But, that day, I began to believe that there was always a bluebird of happiness around when you really needed one.

It is 2015 and it’s been 3 weeks since the funeral. Natural causes. The nursing home insisted her room be cleared by month end. Fortunately, besides clothing, there was only her Bible, her scrapbooks, some trinkets of jewelry, a key and a locked cash box. I unlocked the cash box and found a bundle of hand written notes. The note on top of the bundle I remembered all too well. I read the familiar block print, ‘I want to die. I want to die. I want to die.’ At some point during the last 31 years Mom had written on the bottom of the paper. It read, ‘Dear Ricky, thank you for all the notes, son. Each one helped me to be a better mother. Stay happy.’

Our Love Is Enough | *Darryl Price*

To stop the world from exploding
Like Krypton. It has to be.
Like purple flowers we're there on
Burnt battlefields. It raises its flag,

Too, and continues the march toward
The dreaming sun in spite of
All the smoke and ash this
World has to offer. Our Love

Is enough to weather the ice
Cold precipitation of all loud hateful
Partiers above and below the radar
Of Kind thinking. It has to

Be. Our Love is enough to
Set free the zoo animals. Our
Love is enough to protect the
Creature that contains all sea creatures

From irreparable harm. It has to
Be. Our love is enough to
Filter the smog into breathable air
Again. Our love is enough to

Write the poems that witness the
Whole truth and not just some
Of the lies that are bought
And sold on the nightly news

Like used cars. It must be.
Our love is enough to turn
Back the four horsemen and their
Spaceships, turn them back into constellations,

Back into fireflies. Our love is
Enough to ensure that walls and
Bridges are there to welcome strangers
And not to incite greedy tendencies.

It has to be. Our love
Is there to remind us to
Always be creative givers. Our love
Is enough. Our love is enough.

CONTRIBUTORS

Wendy All is a toy designer living in California, but she'll always be from Michigan. Some of her poetry rhymes because she is also a song lyricist, a member of Broadcast Music, Inc., and the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Her published works appear in *Captured Visions: The Rock Art of Little Lake*, *Good Old Days* magazine, *The Recording Musicians' Directory*, and *The Café Frankenstein Chapbook*. More at www.wendyall.com.

Work by **Brenda Bishop Blakey** appears in various literary journals. Her story, "Pretend", won Best of Fiction at The Corner Club Press and also won a place on the short list for the 14th Glass Woman Prize. Brenda twice won the 53 Word Story Contest held by Press 53. <http://brendabishopblakey.com/>

Charlotte Hamrick lives and writes in New Orleans. Her work has been published in numerous online and print journals, most recently including *Moving Poems*, *Literary Orphans*, and *Camroc Press Review*.

Woodrow Hightower is a native of West Point California. He is a poet currently producing a first collection of material, loosely titled "So Low." His poems and short stories have recently been accepted for publication by *The Axe Factory*, *Bitchin' Kitsch*, *Eskimo Pie* and *Belle Reve Literary Journal*. Hightower resides in San Francisco's Mission District with Twyla, his roommate and two Tibetan spaniels.

Work by **Gary Hardaway** has appeared at *Gumball Poetry*, *Manifold*, *Silkworms Ink*, *Camroc Press Review*, *Connotation Press*, *Divine Dirt Quarterly*, *Cu.ren.cy*, *The Olentangy Review*, *Ochre and Umber*, *The Arlington Review*, *Eye Socket Journal*, and *Blue Fifth Review*. He currently lives in Texas—his native state—and has earned his living as an urban planner and architect.

Amanda Harris has work either published or forthcoming in *MadHat Annual*, *Black-Listed Magazine*, *Camroc Press Review* and many other fine places. When she is not working on her own writing, she is either posting on Fictionaut or editing her own magazine, *The Miscreant*: <http://miscreantmagazine.com>

Joanna Kurowska Ph.D. is the author of five critically acclaimed poetry books, most recently *The Wall & Beyond* (eLectio Publishing, 2013), *Inclusions* (Cervena Barva Press, 2014), and *The Butterfly's Choice* (Broadstone Books, 2015)-reviewed in [Olentangy Review](#). Joanna's creative and scholarly work has been published widely in American and international journals, such as *Adanna*, *The Conradian* (UK), *Confesiuni* (Romania), *Fraza* (Poland), *International Poetry Review*, *Kultura* (Paris), *Olentangy Review*, *Penwood Review*, *Room Magazine* (Canada) *Magazine* (Canada), *Southern Quarterly*, and elsewhere. Joanna lives in Evanston, Illinois, together with her husband John, son Paul, and cat Rufus.

Tiffany McDaniel is an Ohio native. Tiffany's first novel, *The Summer That Melted Everything*, will be published in Summer 2016 by St Martins Press (USA), Scribe (UK & Commonwealth), Signatuur (Dutch translation).

Darryl Price has published dozens of chapbooks, and his poems have appeared in many journals. <http://fictionaut.com/users/darryl-price>

Adel Souto is a Cuban-born artist, writer, and musician, currently living in Brooklyn, NYC. He has written for his own fanzines starting in the early 90s, and has contributed pieces to numerous magazines, fanzines, and websites since. He has released several books, including a “best of”, and a chapbook on the subject of a 30-day vow of silence, while also having translated the works of Spanish poets. His work, both art pieces and photography, has shown in galleries throughout the U.S., as well as in Europe, and South America. His music videos have been screened at NYC’s Anthology Film Archives, and he has lectured on the subject of occult influences in photography at NYU’s Steinhardt School of Culture. As side projects, he produces the public access tv show, *Brooklyn’s Alright*, and is heavily involved with his musical outfit, 156. (adelsouto.com)