

Poetic Matrix

a letterR on the poetic experience

Fall/Winter 2011, 2012



Joyce Downs

The PDF format for our Online letter can be saved on your computer and printed if you would like to have it available to read at your convenience. It is free for download now but sometime in the future we would like to ask a small fee in order to be able to pay contributors and guest editors. We hope you enjoy this issue. Please send our link along to your associates who might appreciate what we are doing. Information on all of our books is available at our Website.

Poetic Matrix Press P.O. Box 1223 Madera, CA 93639
John Peterson, Publisher & Editor
James Downs, Associate Editor
Member Council of Literary Magazines and Presses (CLMP)
Copyright 2011

All rights reserved. No part of this material may be used or reproduced in any matter whatsoever without written permission from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

“Remember that there is only one important time and that is now. The present moment is the only time over which we have dominion. The most important person is always the person you are with, who is right before you, for who knows if you will have dealings with any other person in the future? The most important pursuit is making the person standing at your side happy, for that alone is the pursuit of life.”

— Leo Tolstoy



Joyce Downs

I am always amazed at how a body of poetry comes together. A book finds its voice, what the author intended for sure, but also what the work itself wishes to say. This may sound odd to some but I suspect that poets know what I am talking about. We write the words and we have a voice but if we are committed we allow our voice to be a sound for what need be said. Each word, each line, each stanza, each piece reaches through to us from some place that knows better than we what need be said; so too a collection, a book, and this group of pieces. I challenge you to find that voice in this issue of our letteR. A. Molotkov starts the voice off; Diana Edwards poses a large question; Tomás Gayton asks us something almost too difficult to take on; Santiago del Dardano Turann gets us deep into the problems of our political lives, and then we are off. Yoshira Marbel speaks directly of pain. Steve De France's RENDEZVOUS WITH A PART TIME GOD almost hurts to read because he does not flinch in his questions. Christopher Seth again is hard to read but don't dare miss it. A long time ago I asked to see poetry that turned the corner on our "diving into the wreck" as Adrienne Rich said. I wanted to see where we go if we really are committed.

Seen by the eye of faith
the cherry blossoms
are always about to fall.
It is a rare privilege to be born
as a human being,
as we happen to be.
If we do not achieve
enlightenment in this life,
when do we expect to achieve it?

—Echu

This and a couple of other quotes, one by Tolstoy and one by Yoka Genkaku, I found recently in the Parabola newsletter I receive, I reprint them here with thanks to Parabola because these pieces seem to embody what this letteR is about. Yearn Choi will not let us get stuck in the wreck and Mr. Downs will literally sing to us. The photos are by my good friend and Yosemite photographer Joyce Downs.

John

Content

Cover Image - Joyce Downs

Tolstoy quote plus Image - Joyce Downs

A. Molotkov 1

Diana Edwards 2

Image - Joyce Downs 2

Tomás Gayton 4

Santiago del Dardano Turann 5

Yoshira Marbel 6

Millard Davis 8

Raud Kennedy 9

Steve De France 11

New Title - A Parallel Universe by Alex Landon & Elaine Halleck 16

Sandy Becker 17

Image - Joyce Downs 19

Samantha Henrikson 20

Suchoon Mo 21

Christopher Seth 22

Sharon Cramer 24

Yearn Choi 26

New Title - Realization Point by Chris Hoffman 28

James Downs 29

Image - Joyce Downs 32

Author Biographies 33

Yoka Genkaku quote

A. Molotkov

A Solitary Journey

you start at one end
you stop at the other

some time passes
are you still the same person?

there are obstacles
inside you

you look around
to see
who might answer

some things happen now
some never
some later

there is no one here

life
takes a lifetime

Diana Edwards

Cathey's Valley 8-15-10

I live in the shade under the perfect hoop skirt
Of the black oak tree
As a speck of dirt beneath an endless clear sky
Watching the fields of golden grass roll over me

I am carried by a breath of breeze
Sweeping through Cathey's Valley
Landing next to a little green ravine
Molding amongst the fresh mud
Hearing the sound of cows jaws gently grinding
Blades of grass
Resting near the water as they feed

At dusk I cling to the sharp shards of rock
That pierce the landscape and stop sweating
From the days heat
I turn from purple to red to green
I lean against my companions
Who can no longer be heard or seen

And as a speck of dust, I rise to meet the heavens
I am the smallest particle of the gaseous cloud
That whirls and wraps itself into the newest, brightest,
And most luminous star
Peering past the other constellations
Set to gaze over the modest foothills
Where I am from



Joyce Downs

Diana Edwards

The Planets Align in June 8-15-10

The planets align in June
Lovers fall in love
And desperate hearts swoon

Mercury mixes with Venus
And they both smash into
Earth and Mars

All the good things
That are ever meant to happen
Begin when summer starts

“No school, no teachers, no dirty looks.”
Simply “TV dinners by the pool...”
And casting worms off the end of fish hooks

Our bodies are warmer and our spirits are high
Women thank the lord for shirtless men
As men take turns matching breasts to thighs

Passion runs rampant in the month of June
Young hearts set the beat for other young hearts
And the rhythm fills every room

Even those who feel left out
Shake their emotions off the dusty shelf
For they can not resist the pull of the tide
Urging them to feel things they’ve never felt

For the sake of others and for their own health
They scream “Summer is here!”
And reclaim this time for themselves

Because it doesn’t matter if your bliss lies
In solitude during the cool break of day
Tracing footprints in the sand or a satisfying
Roll in the hay

We are powerless against what the cosmos dictate
Our enchantment with one another
Our romantic and irrefutable, astrological fate

Tomás Gayton

LOST CHILD

I wait in the courthouse
for my 13 year old client
to be brought to Juvenile Justice

After patted down and frisked
by arsenals in uniform
he shuffles from concrete cell
to court room and back
in a parade of shackles & chains

He is a child at risk
who when released
returns scared & scarred
to his steel spring bed
then to the hood
without a neighbor

Where homies share war stories
as cop cars cruise
and catch gang bangers
and want-to-be's
in the ghettos and barrios
of our other America

LOST GENERATION

The Hommies live in the ...hood
without a neighbor...
wearing their belts below their butts
On week days the Homies get down
and bang with the gang
On weekends they deliver girls to the Blade
to beg and bleed for Dollars

When I see homies on Monday morning
their swagger has given way
to standing in shackles
Their sinking eyes and shoulders
betray lives wasting
in the street and in Juvenile Hall
seeking salvation after the fall

Santiago del Dardano Turann

TO SERVE THE BANKERS

“Washington and the regulators are there to serve the banks.” - Incoming chairman of the House Finance Committee, S. Bauchis in the Birmingham News 10DEC10

What shall we serve the bankers for their feast?
 A broiled bail-out with taxpayer liver,
 The Constitution as curly fries in extra
 Large helpings with a savory sauce of debt
 And dollars shucked of meat; just digital shells
 That glisten on the plate as decoration.
 Or stuffed congressional critters basted with
 Black bribes of jellied lobbyists set in cold
 Clear low-fat regulations and to drink
 We'll hand them (with white gloves) tall Waterford mortgages
 Filled with fermented greed from Wall Street's vats.
 Or shall we serve them in another way?
 Boy pages in a 13th century manor
 Their necks locked in a collar set in frills
 That hides the bites of lice and anxious sweat
 That they'll be called at night to service their master.

THE PHOBOS MONOLITH

The silence is a vault sunk in the depths
 Of cold's profoundest nightmares left unchecked
 By any trace of light or warmth in space.
 The large black sphere of Mars rung by the stars
 Loomed over Phobos, sinking it in black.
 But as the moon flew on through space the edge
 Of Mars ignites into a burning crescent
 With the rising of the distant sun.
 Diluted sunlight trickles on the chains
 Of craters and long trenches filled with ice.
 Or is it metal under reddish rocks?
 Then as the light unravels all the shadows
 A tall, rectangular structure is revealed.
 The monolith is a perfect void, as if
 Too strange, too alien for the light to touch
 It coalesced around it in the sheen
 Of ambient silver hinting at a shape;
 A fundamental form for what is formless
 Within the narrow shell of visible light.
 How long has it stood there upon the desert
 Awaiting thought to even brush its edges
 That are illusions over infinite depth?

Yoshira Marbel

My friend

At least I have my faithful friend
He never leaves my side
Lays next to me at night
Wraps its arms around me
Holding me tight
Can't break away
He is here to stay
My dear friend
Pain

Rejection

Wide open space
Filled with laughs
Happy thoughts
Devil's playing
I sit alone
Watching
Wondering why
I cant seem to smile
Abandoned
Hear them talk
Point to me
Then they laugh
Like a blade slicing into my skin
I stare at them
Waiting for the bell to ring
Seeking acceptance
But
Receiving rejection

Yoshira Marbel

Heartbreak

Endless hours
Quiet Contemplation
Tears hitting
Polished wooden floors
Barbed wire
Grating against my raw pale skin
Blankly staring
Waiting...
for a ring

Each time I hear a noise
A touch of electricity
Vibrates through my shattered heart
Hoping it's him

Disappointment
Realization
He is never coming home

Going Home
Porcelain Princess
Perfect in every way
wishing it all away
Underneath
Shattered glass tearing into her perfect skin
Burning inside like scalding hot coals

Begs to be free
Wrapped in lies
Tired of pretending all is fine
Captured
In a self made prison
Built with haunted memories
And forgotten smiles
All alone
Finally she is going home
Buried alive
In all her pain
Covered in dirt
Now one with the earth

Millard Davis

A TREE IN OUR YARD

The young apple tree soon threw out its arms
Encompassing all the ground right below
And often to drop a bushel of apples
To bring us all in who lived close around.
Maybe it wanted to save all that fell
Upon the shaded floor its roots rode upon
After they burst from the mud at its base
Where we would drop, too, out of the swing.
You could even watch apples coming to rest
After bouncing away from rough knobby ruts
Where roots met our shoes as we swung above
To see where the future of the aging tree lay.
But we chose to eat them, then drop the cores,
Bringing in wasps that would sip and rise
To homes in the shrubs we maybe could find
As part of the prize of our coming in spring
And staying past harvest and reddening of leaves
To share what the apple looked over from above.
The years went along and we moved away,
But somewhere inside us the tree held on to stay.

Raud Kennedy

Afghanistan

In bed, prolonging the moments
 before pushing back the covers.
 The voice on NPR, a reporter in Afghanistan,
 refers to the spring fighting season
 as if he's announcing the opening
 of ski season at Mt. Hood Meadows.
 I brush my teeth, minty fresh, extra whitener.
 Death tolls from suicide bombings.
 Toweling off after showering, it's total US casualties,
 a number that could be the population figure
 of a small city. A city of dead young men and women.
 The refreshing lather lifts my beard
 as my triple bladed razor shaves my face kissable smooth.
 Tell me again why we are there while I am here.

Getting Through the Day

How hard is it to get through your day without getting angry,
 or swearing at the car in front of you for going a little slow?
 Or hating someone you really just don't understand?
 How hard is it to get through your day
 without pulling a knife or chambering a bullet?
 How hard is it to not thrust that blade or pull that trigger?
 And what does it mean for the rest of us
 if the people you respect, look up to, idolize,
 encourage you to do just that? To thrust, to squeeze, to kill.
 Are we back to building backyard bomb shelters all over again?
 I linger over the Cold War and laugh at the peace dividend.
 I hear songs from the 60s and laugh some more.
 Love thy brother? How can I love someone
 who can't get through the day without taking from another
 that which is most precious?

Raud Kennedy

Meeting my Past

Some insights are so clear to me today
that I accept them as truths.
But only a few years ago
I would've been hesitant
to consider them at all.
If I met my old self on the street
and we talked over a meal,
I'd consider him problematic
and be concerned for his future.
I'd have no desire to be pals
and would walk away after our meal,
relieved to be free of him,
and he'd probably feel the same.
His addictions would make him uneasy.
My sobriety would remind him
of the demons nipping at his heels
that he would soon have to face.
But he'd come up with another reason
to avoid that thought.
He'd say to himself,
that guy is quiet, that guy is dull,
and his impatience to lift his next drink
would write me off.

Steve De France

RENDEZVOUS WITH A PART TIME GOD

Who is the gaunt stranger in the train station?
 There---where he slides into the crowd.
 See how he stands perfectly still in the dark.
 Why is it only you & I see him?
 Only you and I hear his ragged breathing,
 see his puss & pock marked face,
 smell his breath of fetid hemlock wine.
 See where his burning gaze settles
 and seethes on that smiling salesman.

Where are the holy Gods to shield
 all these less significant people?
 Which one is the God for brothels,
 gutters, & darkest corners of the city?
 Don't the weakest sinners need God most?

Will these less significant beings only be
 assigned a non-union God? A second stringer.
 An hourly part-time God? A daily substitute.
 A God without a corner extraterrestrial office.
 A second banana God without
 a gold key to the celestial toilets
 A shabby ruffian kind of God ---
 one who hangs out on park benches,
 or in public urinals,
 & sleeps in his clothes at bus stations?

Will this non-union scab of a God
 foul up the sanctity of the last prayers of the dying,
 or mar the last rites of this dying salesman so badly
 that the bureaucrat Gods malingering in heaven
 will simply mark an "X" in the space
 left open for "lost" & then chuck his soul
 in the dead letter box?

DOES IT MATTER WHERE THEY DUMP YOUR BODY?

You sleep where they left you,
 sleep where discarded,
 blackness-----
 blackness at first.
 Does it really matter
 where they put your body
 once your dead ?

Steve De France

An oil sump, an alley
 a black ocean, or a golden box?
 You won't care anymore,
 for you will see---a field
 burning with buttercups
 sheltered by flamingo-colored trees
 See yourself rise like a wraith
 under red moonlight,
 as if from deadly sleep,
 but strangely refreshed to walk
 afire in blazing flowers.
 You stumble over a mythic
 crumbling stone bridge,
 haunted by all who make this journey.
 You at the bridge's apex
 stare down time
 as if through luminescent water.
 You reach back
 for the lost land left behind
 and drop a black stone.
 It is swallowed without sign,
 no concentric circles expand
 to mark the known edges of land.
 You in the forever fading red moonlight
 can't find yourself anymore. . .
 You have become part of the rock
 of the bridge, of the water
 and of the Flamingos
 feeding
 on the purple landscape.
 As the poem closes you can not move.
 You have become part of the land,
 bound up in the arms of the earth,
 your body parts disintegrate and your
 spirit navigates beyond all known stars
 as the life force seeks the earth again.

PREFACE TO THE AVENUE OF SOULS

For Shaula

Before the last black crow struggles
 on its creaking wings,
 gliding across a green canopy of trees
 to hastily clatter down on sharp talons,
 clicking across ancient tombstones.

Steve De France

Before
 falling evening---solemn as any soldier
 going into battle, settles down
 to wait for the striding of the dark.
 Before the evening sun
 squints out of sight at the far horizon
 & a few gray clouds hover like
 tattered hawks over a new kill.

Before
 steamy wet & antique streets
 in New Orleans gather the shameless,
 homeless & heartless into a single beating
 reptile heart & folds them
 into nervous sleep and into the consciousness
 of the long hot smells of the Mississippi night.
 Before
 the last bitter word
 falls
 from the last argument,
 & the needle falls from the trembling hand.
 Before suicide, revenge
 & murder settle
 over the peeling paint of window sills
 in the meanest rooming houses
 and in the rich man's mansion
 on Saint Charles Street.

Before
 my hand carves
 words on this paper,
 & before
 my heart tells me it isn't worth doing,
 before my mind starts
 pulling funerary cars
 for my dying spirit.

Before
 you step on
 or have your dreams
 stepped on,
 and

Before
 you mutter
 into the growing night
 that you believe

Steve De France

in nothing.
Not even
this gathering night.

Before
you swear to me
love
is the last hope of the desperate;
before
you tell me
about the hole in the ground
where they toss our bones
before
forever.

Before
you tell me the little guy
is the world's sucker—
and before you sing
to me of Wall Street
and international commerce
and how it
demeans and enslaves
us all.

Before
you tell me how
noble
you are.
How you'd set this
raving world right
with a benign
fiat
that would make all our sorrows
as soft
as kittens' tongues
in ivory milk.

Before
you paint a picture,
tell a story,
write a poem,
carve a rock,
pray to gods,
or raise hope in
willing flesh.

Steve De France

Before
these things are done,
take my hand.
Tell me
the biggest fear
you have ever known
that you still know...
And after
all this is said
and after all this is between us,
let us sit quietly
on what solid ground
there is, and agree
that none of our lives
are what we thought
they should be,
hoped they might be.
Before
the night gets
too thick to breathe,
or too dark to dream in,
before
all this
let's think of ourselves
as the last of the
rational beings.
And as we sit here
on the Avenue of Souls,
outside of Mexico City,
tentatively waiting for a
celestial translator
to interpret the garbles messages
spoken to us by the orderings of this night.

Give me your hand---it trembles so
and before we sleep, let's just say,
it's getting very dark now.

Recent Publication

A Parallel Universe

by Alex Landon and Elaine Halleck

263 pages, retail Price \$19.95

ISBN: 978-0-9827343-7-7

The Book

Here is a unique bringing together of non-fiction (the lawyer's perspective) and fiction (the writer's view) on a topic of devastating concern to victims and the accused. Alex Landon (the lawyer) and Elaine Halleck (the writer) explore a particularly difficult topic; the effect of laws enacted in the aftermath of brutal child abductions and murders on those accused of lesser sexual crimes or those falsely accused and the effect on society as a whole.

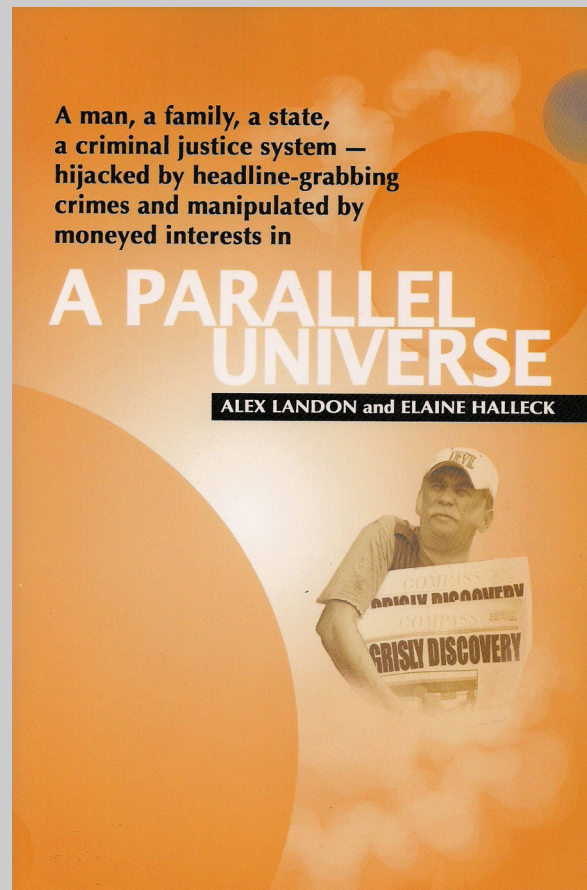
"In 2010, with the ink hardly dry on the first draft of this book, yet another clot of sexually motivated murders triggered a new aneurism in California's collective consciousness. The sorry and sordid killings of two teenagers, Chelsea King and Renee Dubois, evidenced uncanny similarities with the 2002 series of child abductions and killings that sparked the political mayhem that exiles people into the "parallel universe" detailed in these pages.

"While Elaine Halleck's portion of the tale shows how policies of the criminal justice system might exile one person from any sustaining contact with his community and from any protection by civilizing principles that have evolved over the centuries, Alex Landon's non-fiction sections show how these policies have had severe effects on many other people and on the community at large. The ruinous expense of such policies is an important point in many of Landon's chapters." - from the Introduction

Author Biographies

Alex Landon is an attorney specializing in criminal law. He is an adjunct professor at the University of San Diego School of Law, teaching Corrections and Sentencing for 26 years; past president of California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and the San Diego Criminal Defense Bar Association; and former Executive Director of the Defenders Program of San Diego, Inc. He is a frequent speaker at seminars and public programs.

Elaine Halleck is a journalist, graphic designer and linguist. She has contributed to publications including the (Detroit) Metro Times, the Tokyo Journal, the Sacramento News and Review and the Guadalajara Reporter.



Sandy Becker

PASSING OVER

Silence is never silence.
How can I describe it?

A sieve that allows new light
to enter. The universe

taking a deep breath
then letting go,

movement of a stream
under ground,

blood coursing
through veins

that seem to whisper
some secret,

almost
audible.

You find yourself
in the company of those

who have passed-
your father, your friend.

Nothing need be
approximated with speech.

Silence, sanctuary,
time without end,

first and final love.

WHEEL OF LIFE AND DEATH

Samsara, the Buddhists call it;
the world only as visible
as one's particular eyes allow.
Much of it nothing
but phantom limbs
that can't be left behind,
death simply another cage.

Only now, I'm invisible.
Isn't that what I strove for
in life? Now I can breathe
without lungs, feel a sting
without nerve endings,
see without eyes. Just look

down below, how people
rush through days as if nothing
will change, consume all
they can – never enough.
Even now, here, how I long
to have hands to grasp
sand and ocean, no matter
they slip through my fingers.

Sandy Becker

AFTER MUCH TREMBLING, STILLNESS

The razor-wire that
fences you from the sky
permits you
entrance at last.

You dote on each rise
and fall of breath-
how unmistakable.

The air itself
once manna
you would never taste;
you savor each bite
through hard crust
to soft center,
each dot of butter's unction.

You stretch each knotted limb,
its clotted blood undammed,
rivers unstopped.

You could stay here
at this opening
the rest of your days;
it would be enough.



Joyce Downs

Samantha Henrikson

For the Wolf to See

There was a path
Ingrained and dark within the woods
There was a wolf that watched me
And in the air
Among the trees and afterthoughts
Like thick dew over all the plots
The wolf arranged to be set free
A soft solo
Played hovering above the shots
That fired at the wolf in knots
As he cried for my company
I heard the howl
And so the forest led me in
I was for the wolf to see

Suchoon Mo

Future And Past

your hope for future
died in your past

how many times
must it die?

Why He Loves Her So Much

he has given away
he has given away all his love
now he has no more love left to give
that's why he loves her so much
she does not ask or beg
as a fallen cherry blossom does not

Christopher Seth

FUZZED OUT BLOOD

I walked down to the shady brook
 the silent dying encrypted stream
 of a knowledge foretold
 that brought back reverie and disgust
 a full blown labyrinth
 archer's broken crib
 swaying listlessly in the wind
 it was time for the rust stoppage
 to uncrustify itself
 from its bed of nails insistence
 on skewer pig skewer
 the fewer the lewd brood purer
 a lackadaisical shock of a curer
 and whirr whirr whirrer
 the lip sink encrypted drink
 all around the iced over drink
 a shallow callow saying in times eyes
 playing lightly in times on end
 a snapped back collapsing
 of a flowing forgone conclusion
 and fortunate or unfortunate
 instantaneous decision
 fabled porage pourer on the prowl
 mounting werewolves and frowning
 in a sickening throwback
 to the blankly stated tumble down
 chainmail standing
 peaking mountain understanding
 I walked down to the shady shallow brook
 and subtly but surely
 put a gun to my head
 and pulled the trigger
 my grey glistening matter
 floating effortlessly down the stream
 I forgot what it was
 to be old
 to be young
 to live forever
 or to exist in the moment
 it silently fluttered out
 the idea and the understanding
 murdered in mid flight
 convalescing in a super enhanced tone
 amongst the watchers of
 pre animated flesh
 a promise unbroken and re found
 impounded and un impounded myself
 and found within and without

Christopher Seth

spike duded wire mesh
 it's OK you can go now
 free passage to something
 terrors there
 terrors there
 I finally left
 hey wild orchid
 burn apart and come die with me
 understanding the wilted price and parody
 a stitch in time saves no one
 and laughs at the railway children's
 desirous escapism
 terrorizing a pulsating
 in and out iris
 scavenging a herded
 carer of the bearer of all sins
 withered ranging rust
 denied in cast out vision
 if it indwells the cut
 the creation receives
 tetanus
 tetanus
 the tetanus to un sting range less folly
 purring into a kittens silent innocent eyes
 cosmic tetanus
 and it poured out mostly unnoticed
 to dribble down on concrete
 splayed across the jagged edge glass
 folding in and out
 frameless drizzle blood
 it looked flooded and runny
 and it was there
 it jaded the timeslot
 of a given allowance
 set forth from the beginning
 harrowing of a mainline lost and found
 silky sucked up gesticulating tightened poise
 crazy
 it lived or died
 and found its peace
 whereabouts unknown
 all fuses blown

Sharon Cramer

Armistice Day, 1984

In the picture on page 1 of The New York Times
 two veterans from wheelchairs salute a statue of able-bodied soldiers
 frozen in space and time
 The Vietnam War was honored at last
 Two senators in the AP photo bend down toward the wheelchairs
 determined yet slightly embarrassed looks on their faces
 Many years later the Vets have won their victory
 their places in history
 for those who fought so long ago

So long ago
 It feels like a movie I saw once
 or a story about my childhood I heard so often I think I remember it
 I was married on Armistice Day in Chicago in 1972
 hopes and dreams
 confusion and laughter
 getting drunk
 Should I have known better back then
 when he invited friends to stay on our wedding night
 in the living room of our hotel suite
 "What's the difference? We've been living together
 and that way they won't have to travel late at night"
 Right
 my wedding night as slumber party
 I hadn't wanted to be traditional
 so it sounded like just another way to be different
 After all my anti-war activities a few years before
 why not be the rebel bride?
 We all stayed up late
 laughing and talking
 In the morning he was surprised
 when I said I wanted to make love
 "There are people in the next room: can you be quiet?"
 I assured him I could if need be
 And I was
 And thus began the marriage

I'm back in Chicago for a conference at the anniversary
 "Returning to the scene of the scene of the crime" I joke
 It's no joke
 The monument, unveiled before the disabled vets
 sitting at attention
 in their permanent chairs,
 is for my marriage, too

Sharon Cramer

Vigilant, the soldiers are on the look out
 They can handle anything
 anything but the wishes
 The wishes litter Chicago as
 in my mind I
 walk by the Drake
 recalling the wedding night
 hurry down Michigan Avenue
 flooded by memories of myself
 as a teenager in love
 believing it would be a happily-ever-after life
 rush past Saks
 when my grandmother's ghost sidles up to me
 and whispers, "Be a good girl, my sheyna maydela"

So long ago
 Now wind whips people into submission throughout the city
 My hopes are like newspaper being blown across the Drive
 Dawn (dark blue to teal blue to gray)
 is in process
 Over the statue in D.C.
 the sky may be the same hopeless color

Armistice Day is Veterans Day now
 for all the soldiers
 living or dead
 who stayed home or went over
 It will always be Armistice Day to me
 Plans for world peace
 at eleven minutes
 past eleven o'clock on 11-11
 Promises to everyone on the planet
 that we would never
 try to hurt each other again

A moment of optimism caught in time
 like a prism catching the light
 The colors are incredible

Four Poems by Yearn Hong Choi from Hawaii

Hawaii

The sea in the mirror,
The white doves in my verandah.
My room on the 11th floor,
And the blue paradise is outside my window.

Hawaii

The center of the world is the ocean.
The center of the island is the waves.
Men on their surfing boards
and women on the waves
approach the shore.
New poetry emerges on their Hula move
regardless of changing seasons.
As a matter of fact,
There is no Spring, summer, autumn and winter
in the island in the Pacific Ocean.
Flowers are blooming,
as the new waves are freshly rolling in
onto the shore.

Hawaii

You need a swimsuit
and a surfing board
for a necessary condition of
happiness.

The sun turns your skin to copper,
and the waves turn your body to an acrobat,
Oh, the vast blue ocean is all yours.

The Hula dancers wave their hands and bodies
as wind from the ocean dictates their mind and bodies,
or the wind dictates the palm trees and flowers.

You need a swim suit
and a surf board
for a sufficient condition of
happiness
on paradise on earth,
if your lover lives on that paradise.

The rainbows on the Waikiki Beach after a shower
mean the engagement of the young lovers
for their everlasting passionate love.

Yearn Hong Choi

Hibiscus Flowers

The hibiscus flowers always bloom in the Hawaiian Islands
with optimum sunshine, daily rain shower and rainbow in between.

A lovely young woman walks out of the hibiscus flowers.

Her name is Miss Liberty;
Her another name is Dancing Fire.

She makes the Islands a beautiful flower garden.
She has grown up with optimum amount of sunshine and daily rain shower
to ride the rainbow over the sea.

She becomes an angel.
She is my angel

New Title due out in October 2011

Realization Point

by Chris Hoffman

110 pages, price \$15.00

ISBN: 978-0-9827343-9-1

I especially enjoy the tone of the poems in Chris Hoffman's book, *Realization Point*, the union of his voice with the details and individual lives of his surroundings. Hoffman's language and his close observation of the day, the night, and the moment become one in this work, along with his gratitude for each aspect of the living world and his presence within it.

- Pattiann Rogers, author of 12 books, most recently *Wayfare* (Penguin Poets, 2008) and *Firekeeper*, Expanded and Revised Edition (Milkweed, 2005).

Chris Hoffman's poems speak with a clear meditative voice that bridges the gap between our human lives and the healing spirit of nature.

- Joseph Bruchac, author of more than 70 books of poetry and prose including the best selling *Keepers of the Earth* series.

In This Cold

the snow creaks like old leather.
The ski trail slips between trees
and slants up the valley side,
meaning a nice run coming down.
Pine boughs sparkle with cushions of snow.
The pillowed ice-capped stream
reveals in black gaps its flowing secret.
How unfathomable to stand
here, as the trees do,
through all the winter's nights
or through its trunk-cracking storms.
And how copious
the receptivity of this land
to hold our life water in its bosom.
No wonder that after a foray here
we return peeled and clean
as a bleached bone.



James Downs song lyrics and poems

“Along the blue” a lyric

What will you do with the times you're livin' through
 The World lurches and starts fits and twirls
 Parts some seas and swallows others into
 Ah will we float will we float along the blue

Some have said this place ain't worth it
 They're just waiting for a better thing
 If that is so before they go can't they
 Just clean up a little around them
 make it better for other's dreams

Chorus

Pass along the borderline walk the desert fire
 Speak of truth and words pursuit and some about desire
 Make a sign of calming thought make a sign of peaceful embrace
 These are the signs we take with us as we leave an empty space

Other folks love the World its myriad and its singularity
 They'd give anything to see the animal dances
 New sprout grasses spaced for ants' entrances
 Baby doe lies down next to ancient tree

Trust your intuition we are left in this position
 Walking the sidewalk avoiding the cracks
 Superstition or logical avoidance
 Things will double and then double back

Chorus

Pass along the borderline walk the desert fire
 Speak of truth and words pursuit and some about desire
 Make a sign of calming thought make a sign of peaceful embrace
 These are the signs we take with us as we leave an empty space

Devil or angel tempted or tame
 We try to get it together later or soon
 Whether we're here because we love it
 Or waiting to leave it it's all the same tune

Chorus

Pass along the borderline walk the desert fire
 Speak of truth and words pursuit and some about desire
 Make a sign of calming thought make a sign of peaceful embrace
 These are the signs we take with us as we leave an empty space

What will you do with the times you're livin' through
 Ah will we float will we float along the blue

James Downs

Out reaching lyric with a slow groove pop guitar

“...and the dreams you dare to dream, really do come true.”

If you live your life with arms out reaching
 What would it take to know what you know
 How would we go into that moment and live
 And live oh how would we really live

There is the color blue across the World
 Stretching stretching stretching from one
 Hand to another and to another to another out reaching

When we get something new is it blue or yellow
 Do we turn it over and over viewing it from the first
 oh does it remind us of another thirst we had
 Does it make us glad are there sad times inside too

There is the color blue across the World
 Stretching stretching stretching from one
 Hand to another and to another to another out reaching

I've tried to think what is it that keeps us from flying away
 Or is our sense of home enough to have us stay
 There are worlds out there we've yet to touch
 Worlds we can see through fingers on our hands out reaching

There is the color blue across the World
 Stretching stretching stretching from one
 Hand to another and to another to another out reaching

If you live your life with arms out reaching
 What would it take to know what you know

James Downs

The lining opens to reveal valuables
 -thoughts of the hunted

Little pieces of tape stuck to a mirror
 Where photographs should be
 What would one see if all the hills
 Were to turn upside-down and
 Stand upon a point

Nothing ever becomes a thing
 As much as our thought of it
 How we grovel at the rail
 Of gold bars and insubstantial
 Trinkets that tarnish

Where have all the things
 We cherished gone did we
 Not forget how in a pique of
 Fear and feather we gathered
 Every importance threw them

Hurriedly into a bag of hope
 And tied them in as so to not
 Know they were there or whether
 Others find them with their
 Henchmen's sweep of streets

So what to make of little
 Left-over shards of tape?
 Reminders we were here
 And you can try but will not
 Erase our existence so easily

Rain pours down

Rain pours down
 drenching the ground
 quenching the Earth

A place to start the renewal

Tears pour down
 into the basement
 at the Memorial



Joyce Downs

Author Biographies

Joyce Downs lives and works in Yosemite. She was the editor of an earlier issue of this online letterR. Her photo images celebrates Yosemite and her poetry celebrates her life and love.

A. Molotkov is a writer, composer, filmmaker and visual artist, and co-founder of the Inflectionist poetry movement. Born in St. Petersburg, he arrived in the U.S. in 1990 and switched to writing in English in 1993. He is the author of several novels, short story and poetry collections and the winner of the 2011 Boone's Dock Press poetry chapbook contest for his "True Stories from the Future". His credits also include the 2010 New Millennium Writings and 2008 E. M. Koeppel Fiction Awards, and two Pushcart nominations. "The End of Mythology", a collaborative chapbook by John Sibley Williams and A. Molotkov, will be published by Virgogray Press in 2012. Molotkov's work has appeared in over 50 publications, both in print and online. Visit him at www.AMolotkov.com

Diana Edwards I wrote both poems during my first summer in Yosemite, where I continue to reside and find inspiration in nature everyday.

Tomás Gayton is a poet and began writing verse soon after graduating with a Juris Doctor from the University of Washington. Tomás is also a Civil Rights attorney, social activist, world traveler, teacher and lecturer. His poetry is his life in verse. His books include: Vientos de Cambio/Winds of Change, a bilingual volume of poems; Yazoo City Blues; Two Races One Face with John Peterson; Dark Symphony in Duet with the late Sarah Fabio and Time of the Poet. Tomás currently lives in San Diego, California.

Santiago del Dardano Turann I was born in April of 1968 in Cincinnati, Ohio and grew-up in rural Butler county. I do not have a college degree and have worked blue collar jobs my whole adult life. My main interest besides poetry is martial arts.

Yoshira Marbel I am 27 years old and come from South Africa. My new book entitled "Unspecified" is due for release, and can be ordered at www.modernevil.com.

Raud Kennedy is a writer and dog trainer in Portland, Oregon. To learn about his most recent work, Portland, a collection of short stories, please visit www.raudkennedy.com

Steve De France, MFA has traveled widely in the United States. On more than one occasion he hitchhiked across America. He rode rails on freight trains, worked as a laborer with pick up gangs in Arizona, dug swimming pools in Texas, did 33 days in the Pecos city jail as a vagrant, fought bulls in Mexico, and dove for salvage off a small island on the coast of Mazatlan. His poetry has been published in most of the English speaking countries of the world. Some recent publications include, The Evergreen Review, The Wallace Stevens Journal, The Sun, Rattle, and many others. He has won writing awards in England and in the United States. He continues to write poetry, plays, essays & short stories.

Sandy Becker Her full length book At the Well of Flowers was published by Virtual Artists' Collective in Winter of 2011. Her chapbook Foreign Bodies was published Spring 2004 by Carolina Wren Press. She feels blessed to be part of a community of gifted poets in Bucks County.

Samantha Henrikson I grew up in Illinois and moved to Arizona immediately after high school. I shortly started my career in aquariums and fell in love with marine biology. As for poetry, I often heard words come to my head while doing various activities so I decided to write them down. As time went by more and more words came and developed into poetry. I have collected my poems ever since then.

Suchoon Mo is a Korean War veteran and a retired academic living in the semiarid region of Colorado. His poems and music compositions appeared in a number of publications.

Christopher Seth I am a writer, a musician, and a psychology student. I have written several books and several albums of music. I always remain in the flow of creativity and find that this makes life interesting and worth living. please get back to me one way or the other.

Sharon Cramer, Ph.D., a SUNY Distinguished Service Professor at Buffalo State College, was an academic leader and scholar for 26 years before returning to poetry. She is the author of three scholarly books and 25 articles. Dr. Cramer has given over 100 presentations and keynotes in 23 states and two provinces in Canada. She completed her Ph.D. studies at New York University, earned an M.A.T. degree from Harvard University, and a B. A. from Tufts University.

Yearn Choi came to the US from Korea in 1968 to pursue a PhD in Public Administration at Indiana University. Already established as a significant poetic voice in Korea, Yearn continued publishing poetry both in Korea and the US while teaching and writing in the changing field of Political Science. Yearn published widely in academic journals and op-ed pieces for newspapers from The Washington Post to the Korean Herald. He became the first member of the Pentagon to work on the emerging field of Environmental Policy. Yearn Hong Choi's memoir *Song of Myself: A Korean-American Life* was published by Poetic Matrix Press in 2010.

James Downs is a poet who lives and works with his lovely wife Joy in Yosemite. He has published a chapbook *Where Manzanita* and a full-length volume *Merge with the river* (Poetic Matrix Press) with Yosemite as the setting. James is the Associate Editor of Poetic Matrix Press and writes/edits a monthly column for the Poetic Matrix Press website entitled "Poet's Comments Into the World". He is also writing song lyrics for a talented musician friend.

When we see truly, there is nothing at all.
There is no person; there is no Buddha.
Innumerable things of the universe
Are just bubbles on the sea.
Wise sages are all like flashes of lightning.

—Yoka Genkaku (665-713 CE), Shodoka