

Poetic Matrix

a letterR on the poetic experience
online letterR 11
Spring/Summer 2011



backyard rainstorm

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Poetic Matrix Press Website designed by Atomic8Ball

From the Publisher

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2011 issue of our online letter. Over the winter our press slowed down a bit after a very busy year. We took some time to catch up on a number of projects; complete them, get them set-up in new distributors and put the word out on them. We have one new project coming out very soon — Joan Michelson's *Toward the Heliopause*. In 2002 we did a chapbook for Joan titled, *Letting in the Light*. Her husband had recently died unexpectedly and *Letting in the Light* was her attempt, as poet's do, to come to some understanding of this loss. *Toward the Heliopause* includes these poems and others completing a full 10 year cycle on her loss. *Toward the Heliopause* was first published in England where Joan has lived and taught for many years. Our involvement gives this fine book a presence in this country. The reading is heart wrenching and glorious, full of love and loss and a deep look at a deep love. Anyone who has lost a loved one will find solace and tears reading *Toward the Heliopause* and will, I believe, find a moments recognition where one's heart, though closed, may open.

Our books continue their journeys out into the literary world. Small Press Distribution (SPD) is helping our distribution to both the trade and to individual book buyers. The Council of Literary Magazines and Press (CLMP) continues to take our books to Book Fairs around the country most recently in Houston Texas. Poets House, in New York City, once again will place our books at their yearly **Showcase**. This is our 5th year with them. All of our books are placed in their permanent collection. If you're in New York City on June 28th go by and see what they are doing and say hello to them for us. Poets House, 10 River Terrace, New York NY 10282; www.poetshouse.org.

Spring is trying to come to us here on the west coast and so it is time to plan some hiking. Last year Poetic Matrix Press put out a remarkable hiking guide by Peter and Donna Thomas tracing the path John Muir took on his first trip to Yosemite in 1868. Their guide gives a wonderfully detailed map of his travels, adds their

continued

own reflections following the trail and collects John Muir writings about his first trip. We give a short look at it here.

This issue includes a facinating array of pieces from: Matt Kazy-Garey, cherry rao, Minh-Tam Le, Ken Kesner, Twixt, Simon Perchik, Joan Michelson (with excerpts from *Toward the Heliopause*), Caroline Hagood. Also included are pieces from this publisher John Peterson, Carol J. Baker, Howard Lee Helm, J o h n Sibley Williams, and James Downs.

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in the circle

Matt Kazy-Garey

Alphabet

Letter combinations.

Words, phrases, and sentences.

Paragraphs, short stories, and novels.

Unsophisticated to multifaceted groupings
connect and send messages.

Diversity will only benefit one's piece.

In some way, twenty six letters
communicate to everyone.

Intricately designed, for a specific sound.

Some words sound similar,
or are even exactly the same.

Meanings differ entirely.

Countless numbers of words,
worthy of comparable tasks.

Sadly the same are repeated continuously.

Knowledge of new words appears to be extraneous.

Why learn? No one will understand.

It's like a different language to most.

I don't know the point
and many don't either.

Scrounged is a one-syllable word.

Why utilize it when

You can say scavenge or rummage.

It likely won't achieve its purpose.

cherry rao

i called you my butter cookie

i know them way back, packed
in the supermarket, stacks after stacks
labeled blue, each blue can
our big city's favourite, wrapped in red
spring's warmest gift.

it must have been your baby blues, or me
overwhelmed in a scent
so flattering, in a way
so sweet, it caters my court,
your ship.

crunchy touches, sugar on top, taste
on my tongue, the best flavor
unlocked — the best thing i know from your country —
all these golden pieces of loveliness
sink in memories.

Minh-Tam Le

Identity

Who am I?
Do I dare ask why?
Who are you?!
Is it that I have the illness?

Has forgetfulness clung to me?
Everyone around makes sounds to each
Other
Their faces review understanding
It cannot be

I speak the only language I hold
My hair is more bold
Faces!
Not the same as mine

“Let me go,” I cried
The lady with the white coat
Holding me like a rope
Tied desperately to a wind blown boat

I run like a frighten horse
Pushing door by door
Breaking through this building’s inner core
Light brightly laid my course

Outside at last
I feel like lost waste
Where is the ox?
Pulling the heavy carts

continued

Minh-Tam Le

Has the automobile industry changed?
Cars are walking the streets
Motorcycles are rare
What is today?

The adolescent
Where are the white dresses of innocence?
And the black outfits?
Is today a holiday?

Who are you?
The white coat lady asks
I try to concentrate, while standing on the
vigorous grass
“Vietnam!” I shouted aloud

My body feels fainted
What is your name?
The lady’s mouth moves
I steadied myself

Pointing to my lonely heart
Words unsure
“Khanh Thi Que”
The lady looks quizzical

Soft white hand stretched out
From the white coat lady
Familiar papers shouted
Crying like a baby

It’s me
Your Identity
Keep me close, but remember
Your soul is the true you

Minh-Tam Le

My mind flashes
Memories flow like a water stream
It makes me want to scream
I want to know

The roles I play
My personality
The environment
And my people

Everyone has an identity
Even me
A girl running from a bombed city
Everyone has an identity

Ken Kesner

AMERIKAN

cigar

ette butts

on a

floor board

of a

fifty

seven

che
vy

one shot wonders

we all reckon things
even reconstituted prophets

starkest infamy of the era the assassination of that character

happened with an edit
not an edict

when the muse stood still and silent
as the shadows beneath those eyes

and

i'm just a patsy was cut from i'm just a patsy kline fan

now

that was the day the music died

Ken Kesner

plato

as you say see
language as thought says
can you

as

once knew

a woman with beauty fell in love
settin tibetan sun watchin

another girl

saw same
as eye became

golden orb

decried no decreed

she'd have like but twice

with both removed restored with gold

cries as the thought never to be seen

knows

what beauty

recedes

Ken Kesner

history of weaponry a

minotaur in metaphor as silent
i've to say

twilight whispers to define

can mean so absently

stemming in revelry of a slow
logic

where used to be

chaotic symphony

an honored mime has spoken

and i'm to defy

Twixt

Big Nothing Of Fog

I watch a big settle-gentle nothing
on the bright recipient mountainside
cloud-slide as water would in vapor-phase
volleying nothinghood.

Centrifugal/Centripetal

Lost cores loose the force that silly-circles
outer parts, also ask their orbit's thoughts,
inputs sought.

Night Work

The night does nice work, has quite a light touch,
a cool dew or frost, or something else moist,
it leaves just in time for notice to surface.

Advice

I know one with the foresight of a gun
(lucky for me he's not trigger happy)
who has helped me with my long-range planning
factoring in the pull of gravity
not to mention wind velocity
and the grave result if the safety's off.
I've benefited from his advice twice:
one once given, second on reflection:
in this way I hit by ricochet.

Simon Perchik

*

Without any flowers
you are still breathing
— without a throat

still eating the warm air
though what's left from the sun
is no longer blue

hides the way your grave
is covered with stones
and still hungry

— you could use more stones
a heaviness to become your arms
one for working harder

the other invisible
leaving your heart
lifts from the dirt

your mouth, your eyes
and the sky letting go the Earth
as if you weigh too much.

Simon Perchik

*

As if it finished its last meal this log
sits back, waits inside for the stove
the way ashes roll over and all around you

trees are burning on rivers
that came from the first fire
still settling down as thirst

and the heady smoke flames leave behind
to be remembered by — from day one
their slow climbing turns, at first

threatening to gut the place and now
you can't live without them though your fingers
after so many years have become airborne

safe from the dangerous shadows all night
dripping between each breath and your mouth
left open — you pour in wood

to get death started: an arriving flame
surrounded by the Earth and tiny holes
— it's the only way you know how.

Excerpts from a new book by Joan Michelson. An extraordinary depiction of loss and love.

Toward the Heliopause

Joan Michelson



LETTING GO

You are not here.
You are never coming back.

I repeat this daily.
Impossible to learn.

Anniversaries arrive.
Post in your name.
A gift you might have sent.

Propped against your pillow,
I sit on our bed.

Here between my thighs
your feet used to winter.

Last night our daughter,
nearly grown,
slept on your side –

her bones like your bones,
long and lean and strong.

She dreamed she breathed
for you. And you
were here. She woke to find

that I was holding her.
And then – a stir of air,

and then, and now, and now
the letting go.

THE LAST WEEK

On Sunday we went for coffee.
My leg in plaster
and on crutches, I went slowly.
I told you, *Go ahead.*

On the way I met the phys-ed teacher
who does yoga.
He had half an hour. *Good,*
I said, *Come meet Geoff.*

Next time I saw the phys-ed teacher
was the Thursday after.
I told him you were dead.
He looked at me. *But*

we just met. I said, *It happens.*
I didn't see him after that.
I heard he returned to Sydney
with the girl he met.

So we had coffee Sunday. Monday
my plaster cast came off.
A bus ride Tuesday. You angry at
standing room only.

Wednesday you had your hair cut.
Of Thursday, do I remember?
Yes. You gave your evening class a miss
and did some desk work.

Friday we went swimming,
the three of us together.
I was still counting lengths
when you left for work.

You called out, *Enjoy your shopping.*
Winter coats, I moaned. *See you.*
Half-past four we saw you.
Then we found your will

and the letter-poem from Satan
filed in your computer.
It was time-marked two a.m.
that Friday, your death day.

LAMENT

And are you gone from me?
And are you dead?
Who loved me always
and now prefer the wind.

And is it spring
with an untimely frost?
And are the bushes sticks?
And berry-flowers dew?

And do I waking wake?
And is this floor the earth?
And do I breathe in smoke?
And is this wind?

Oh are you not alive?
Who loved me as your own
and gave me seasons
battered with the sun.

HEIRLOOMS

There is no last goodbye but a last touch
and then a final look or glance that lives

inside the future. *A prince*, you wrote of Jim
when you saw him readied for the fire.

A prince, we write of you, our magic prince
to kiss awake or kiss for a long sleep

and a forgetting. So we found the building where
they checked you out, confirming *ischmaemic*

ventricular. And I signed the form.
Never mind. We were expecting 'heart'.

There was time (we had forever) to whisper
some last words, to leave a special letter

and to cut some of your greying hair.
We'll take care of that, he said. *Wait here*.

He took our letter, scissors and our envelope
and left us staring through your cage of glass.

The hair is in the drawer with snips of mine.
And there your father's watch, your specs, a pen

and even after years, the smell and taste
of burnt tobacco wedged inside your pipe.

Caroline Hagood

What Lolita Wishes She Could Say

There she is,
a young snow girl,
a slow see-thing in pain.

She remembers when blood fell
on her skin like undigested snow,
the last laugh of old Jack Frost,
that icy bugger.

As she sees it,
people can be separated
into starers of the distance
and those who think it
better left unseen.

But she knows
the sights will continue
to fall down upon
the eyes and uneyes alike,
regardless,

a planet of the periphery
orbiting always in the side mind,
seen finally when the third eyelid rises.

Speaking of seeing,
she wants to tell him
about the broken slants of light
where her inner barn was kicked in
by the horses.

She wants to tell him
of the hay walls
she built in her mind
to hide the disfigurement.

Her past haunts her
like strained things seen
from the back of moving cars.

Caroline Hagood

She dreams of hurricanes
and knows home to be
the broken in her.

She wonders if she lived in the '60s
if she would have sold her soul
to rock 'n roll or merely
loved it from the shadows
as was her way.

She wants, in the widening calm,
to tell him what she really is,
but she's not sure she knows
for certain.

What she does know
is that her mind is a series
of road-side lights seen squintingly
till strangely luminescent.

She knows that she has
a garbage man's knack
for making the rubbish of her life
into a chapel that is positively Sistine.

She can still smell
the stray dogs that love her creations
because she would rather die
than see them hurt
like she was.

Instead, she tells him,
"Carve a space for me
out of sugar and light
and name it after
all the dogs I have loved,
call it everydog
and leave it pure."

Caroline Hagood

Word Painting of a Psychiatrist

When I first saw you,
curled in toadstool of mind's eye,
I wanted to learn how to paint
so that I could explain in colors
the conversation of your skin tones,
the shock talk of hues that was your body.

I wanted to convey the pickled awe
at the inside of my throat as I looked on you.
Even at 16 I knew what you were: wunderkammer,
a madness of sense-awakening things,
astonishment soup and wonder mushrooms
in a boy shape, you most treasured
cabinet of curiosities, you.

But I cannot paint, so I write you.
First, I talk about your very dark hair,
much-coveted and positively full of wolves.
It moves when you move, as though you were
the wind blowing that hairy planet.
Blackstar, blackbird, fly me somewhere
on those unfathomable strands.

Next I talk about your smile.
Wry on the rocks, Cheshire-Cat-style,
a jaunty, crooked marvel, peeking out of
conspicuously unsmiling crowds, like a frozen margarita
in a world of compulsory milk,
that moves when you talk, but never leaves.

Caroline Hagood

Then I describe your ears, a little big, maybe,
but this is what makes them perfect.
One day, I have a wild vision of swimming in them,
an ear-fish in waxy waters. While inside,
I discover Thumbelinas and convenience stores for fairy folk.
As I leave, I swear I see the tiny headlights of a clown troupe
spreading out of your acoustic organs, lighting my way.

Finally, I add your eyes to the equation.
Neck plus shoulders plus these shining things equals you:
Someone who crouches close to see the villagers' pain,
peers into brain valves and mind machinery,
eases the ache of neural connections,
goes at endless melancholy with a wrench.
I remember when I was crying and you
told me with those nervy orbs everything I needed.
I knew then that this is what you did for all those people
in your factory of gentleness,
where you keep the invisible things
that matter most to people
safe in those great big eyes of yours.

Word Painting of a Psychiatrist was first published by Quail Bell.
They can be found at: <http://www.quailbellmagazine.com/>.

John Peterson

tadpoles

-for *devon*

last night the pond was the size of a small hat
ten or fifteen of you holding on enough water
only to cover your back and keep the sun off

foot prints of coon and coyote dog and deer
and small bird circling down from reed covered
banks across cracked mud and soggy bottom

you squirm hoping against time and biology that
legs will sprout in time a race against summer sun
large and small creatures an eternity of narrow chances

one of you moves from runny mud back legs
near strong enough unsure that this is the time
but choices going fast as noon day

feeble hop out of dwindling mud toward
parched landscape that may offer escape
from the certainty of diminished water

you will make it if time and biology
cross precisely

John Peterson

break apart

i feel like i'm slowly losing that crack
in my chest the one where sweet wind blows

if I stay long enough hawk or raven will come
first just circling then maybe there in the tree

if i can break apart and crumble like stone
gone to seed i'll feel those wildly beating wings

fly through

John Peterson

not here and here

still and not still
silent and not silent

buddha says nirvana is not here and here

listen and the ear travels across the meadow
high up into the pine and deep
below the oak

silence spreads like fingers on skin
coyote jogs onto the meadow
a doe and her two faun stand with us
eye to eye and then leap up hill

ground squirrel and grey squirrel
scouting seeds on the forest floor
a store for them a worker for the oak
doing and not doing

raccoon leaves the circle of light
oily movement perfect and not perfect

the night a great yin absorbing the world
long and deep without definition
until raccoon brings oily movement

owl a hole in the mind
and fifteen coyotes the calling
of a primal people
inside coyote god

John Peterson

your feathers long and golden
sitting in the top branches of the grey snag
three days six foot wings with the note
of the flute through the *black oak* leaves

bird people allow the orange wing
give away

not here and here
not here and here

Claire J. Baker

LET IT BE

In the changing skies of circumstance
let us be
like flocks of birds
guiding each other
by touching wings.

BERKELEY PLANTINGS

In the 60s we took the kids
on a park outing:
their arms were stunted
but they planted sapling pines
with their feet.
(we had pre-dug the holes).

They broke up clods, shoved
earth around the little trees,
pressed it firmly, then pushed
the water jugs over
onto the new roots.

Today when we drive past
Hearst Street Park
evergreens reach tall.
We smile, knowing.

Claire J. Baker

FELLOW TRAVELER

Should a star
fall into our hands
we need not place it
back into the sky.

If we must break new
ground, why not start
with the land
on which we stand...

If we feel we are
on our way, though we
haven't moved an inch,
we are on our way.

Fellow traveler,
we don't have to fly
a hundred miles
to know we can soar.

Claire J. Baker

BLACKBIRD MUSIC

Two flocks gather at opposite ends
of a mountain meadow.

Suddenly as if
responding to the wind's baton
or some wild instinct
both flocks glissando into the sky,

hover a stream of blue apart —
treble chords
on clefs of air,
nuance of a lullaby.

Sweeping higher
the two flocks merge
point and counterpart.

Not touching a wing, not missing
a beat, each bird flows back
into its own flock.

The flocks fly north and south
into a fugue of clouds.

Claire J. Baker

CHANCES

Fly along with lady bugs,
land on someone's arm
who needs more luck.

Raft down whitewater,
ride the rush
into rainbow mist.

Notice blowing poppies
on a mountain meadow
suddenly stand still.

Walk in wilderness, make
eye contact with a bear
and both move on.

Sunset over the ocean —
a bouquet of roses
mingled with hollyhocks.

On a beach, pry open
a sealed bottle, let
its haiku save your life.

Howard Lee Helm

Touched With Fire

All My Joy
Full Of Anguish
Stained With Beauty
Clouded With Brilliancy
Overcomes Me
Ever So Delicately
Touched With Fire
Impassioned With Desire

What Ails Me
Is Bestowed Unto Me
Sweetly I Embrace You
Deeply You Devour Me
Touched With Fire

Touched By
The Shadows Of Sadness
Embracing This
Inescapable Madness
Dazzled By My
Creative Genius
The Darkness I Admire
Ever So Delicately
Touched With Fire
Seared With Imagination

Empowered By
My Own
Work Of Art
Bent
Twisted And Tangled
Into Beautiful Perfection

Howard Lee Helm

All My Happiness
Full Of Anguish
Stained With Beauty
Clouded With Brilliancy
Overcomes Me
Ever So Delicately
Touched With Fire
Imprisoned My Desires

Your Host
My Disease
You Ravish Me
Ever So Delicately
Touched With Fire
Captured And Cursed
To Magnificently Inspire

Howard Lee Helm

Whirlpool

Circling Slowly
Away From The Sky
Floating Carelessly
Into The Open Eye
Whirling
Near The Overflow
Swirling Into
Vertigo

Into The Whirlpool
We Swirl Uncool
Swiftly Stir My Soul
Away The Blackhole

Drawn Swiftly
Toward The Moon
Vaccuum Tunnels
Twirling Typhoons
Encompassing
The Outerglow
Into Deep Dark
Indigo

Swirling
Twirling
Whirling
Around
And
Around
Lost At Sea
Then Found

Muir Ramble Route

Walking from San Francisco to Yosemite in the Footsteps of John Muir

by Peter and Donna Thomas

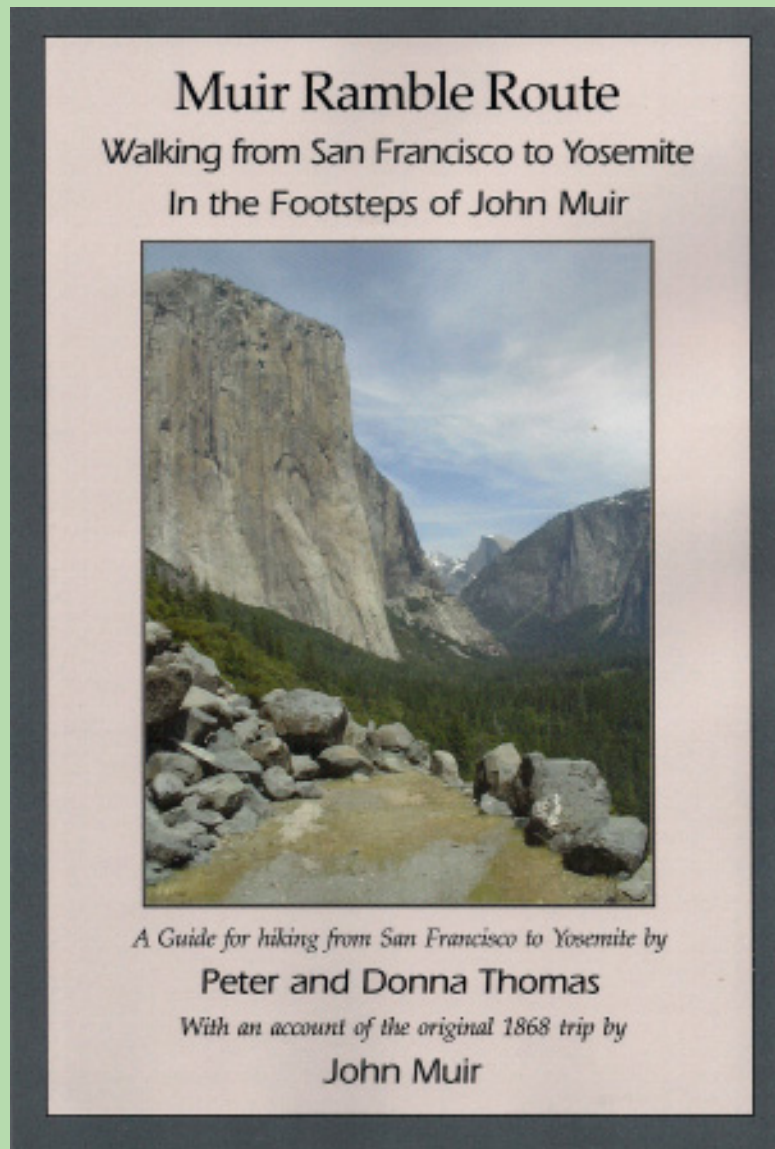
from the back cover

This book is really three books in one. It is a guidebook for a walking/cycling route across California that follows John Muir's footsteps from San Francisco to Yosemite via the Pacheco Pass. It is an adventure book, telling the story of Peter and Donna Thomas' 2006 ramble across California to discover that route. And finally it is a history book, presenting in its entirety and for the first time, the complete story of John Muir's first trip to Yosemite. That trip was taken in 1868, the year before Muir's "First Summer in the Sierra," and it has never been published before, existing in obscurity, in Muir's various writings, until it was reconstructed by Peter and Donna in preparation for their walk to Yosemite in his footsteps.

Here, for the first time and meticulously researched by Donna and Peter Thomas, is the story of Muir's personal journey from San Francisco through the foothills into Yosemite National Park, as well as the route undertaken by the celebrated Thomases who followed in Muir's footsteps. Enjoy your own path-filled wanderings on your way to Yosemite and bask in the glory of God's Wildness.

—Bonnie J. Gisell, *Nature's Beloved Son: Rediscovering John Muir's Botanical Legacy*

Muir Ramble Route is available through the publisher and to bookstores through Bored Feet Press. Retail price \$17.00. ISBN: 978-0-9824276-6-8.



John Sibley Williams

Origins

Most of me
attended
the Big Bang
just to ask it
if other theories
were possible.

My feet
paced holes
in the cosmos,
waiting.

My mouth
prepared
to endlessly
repeat
the appraisal.

My heart quivered.
My heart started
and stopped
quivering.

It answered.

I'd left
my ears
far below
on your
sleeping chest.

John Sibley Williams

Fine Print

I dimly remember
 being
 water
running from the gables
and nourishing
your roses
 to death.

I am sorry
but

the leaves
 were on fire.

Their trees
 on fire.

The grass
and, within,
our buried toes
 on fire.

I am sorry
but

all summer
they had pleaded
for rain
 together
 in one voice

and my open hands
come with a caveat.

John Sibley Williams

Attempts

I am most defined by this hatred of fire escapes
and the concession of sorting waves by their direction.

Nobody leaves the night in pieces anymore.

Why not strike out for all shores at once
with the honest ferocity of *attempt*
and climb from amnesia
wearing only your socks, carrying a net?

I concede there is no true nudity left.
I make love dressed in all the world's love making.
The pieces of other bodies combine perfectly
into my outline.

So I try to climb as far from myself as stairs allow.
I'm huffing by the third floor.
The railings are rusted. It's always raining.
And the roof will only be so high.

John Sibley Williams

Inattention

Fragments of an older world
peek out from the margins.

These poor sketches of experience
still frustrate my teachers.

The loose hieroglyphics run off the page,
onto the desk.
They catch in the black metal binding.

They involve concentric circles
and lines that never quite touch.

They involve you
but look like buffalo.
They seek a different harvest.
They never seek more than themselves.

They are meant to justify
and frame
the nuanced essay
on American history
I've written perfectly on the lines.

James Downs

Wept

bare ridge wind-swept three
feet of snow chimes peel out in time
nowhere else to go

*

covered like brick by
mortar settled ready sealed
edifice of snow

*

over sharp ledges
pour water cold crystal stars
moon light pulsed edges

*

crystal breath inside

same as out Winter gripping

brrrrr of early Spring

*

burning off Winter

takes many logs buried thoughts

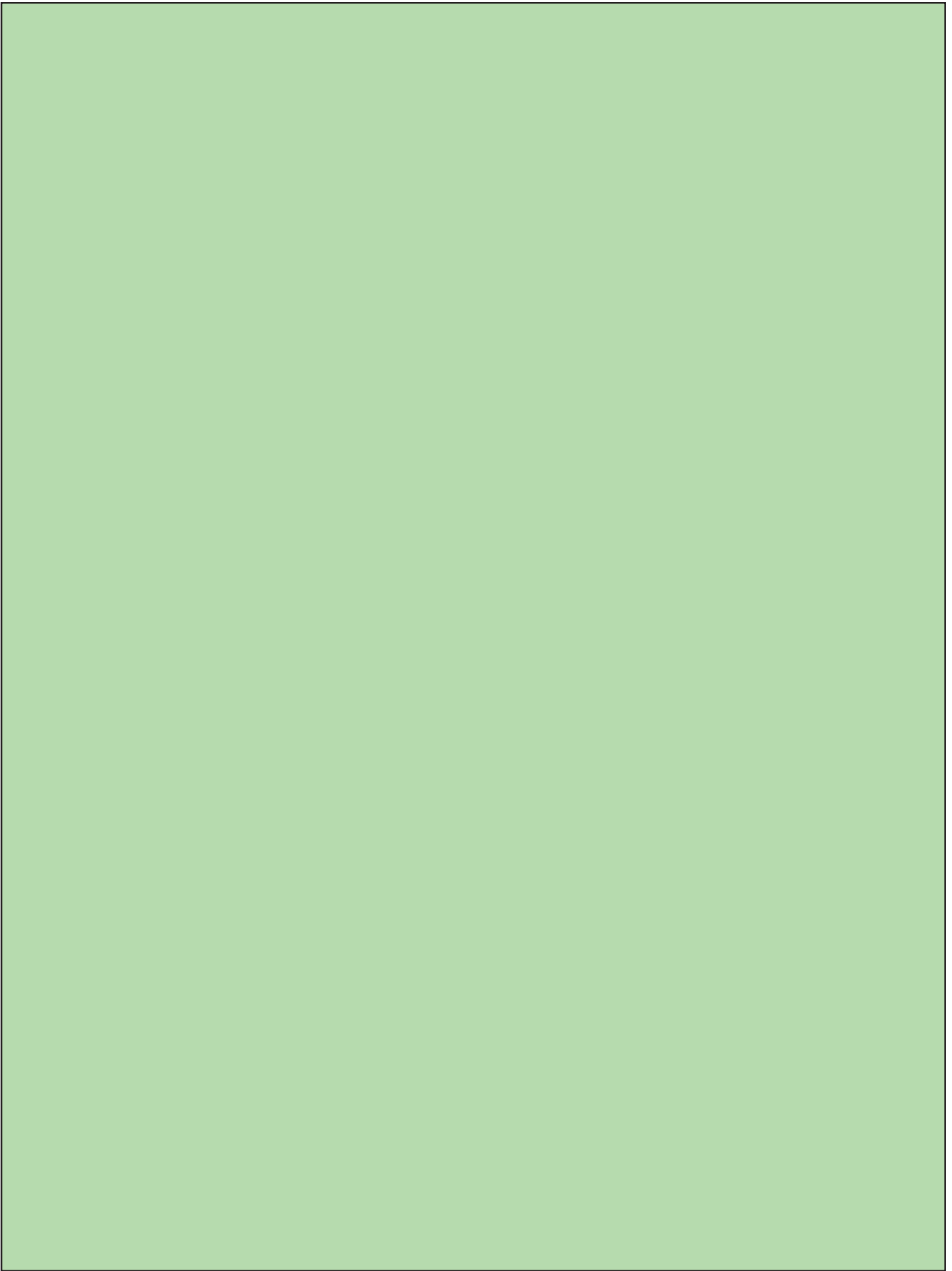
must be dug again

*

bare ridge wind sweeps off

all extraneous mind duff

readies us for Spring



Biographies

Matt Kazy-Garey - I am a college student at the University of North Dakota studying aviation. I am currently enrolled in a creative writing course, which is my reason for writing this poem. I am enrolled in the Army ROTC program here and have my full tuition and flight training paid for totaling about \$200,000 dollars. In the future I plan to fly US army helicopter and serve for my country as an officer in the military. I am not submitting this to make money, but rather in the interest of others that should understand a very simple, overlooked thing much more.

Cherry Rao, a 20 something, graduated from the University of Hong Kong, with majors in Fine Arts and English Studies. She has been working in art galleries and areas of arts education, cannot stop loving art, will never stop writing poetry. She writes therefore she is.

Minh-Tam Le - I am a junior at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. I have published in my high school's literary magazine several times. I was also the winner of Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps's 9/11/01 Remembrance Essay Contest in September 2005 and September 2007. In 2009, my short story "Forever" was published in the Vietnamese Student Organization's literary magazine. I have also taken the course "Beginning Fiction Writing" in Spring 2010 at my college.

I am minoring in East Asian Language & Literature and enjoy including some aspect of Asian culture in my works. I hope to teach English to children in Japan as a member of the Japanese Education Program (J.E.T) by 2012.

Kenneth Kesner - Other poems are in A Little Poetry, The Arabesques Review, BlazeVOX, Counterexample Poetics, decomP, Eudaimonia Poetry Journal and Zone Magazine; degrees from Constantin College and Braniff Graduate School of the University of Dallas; work supported by the governments of the PRC and the ROC.

TWIXT is the mononym-onym of Peter Specker; he has had poetry published in MARGIE, The Indiana Review, Amelia, California State Quarterly, RE:AL, Pegasus, First Class, Pot-pourri, Art Times, The Iconoclast, Epicenter, Subtropics, Quest, Confrontation and others. He lives in Ithaca, New York.

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poems have appeared in Partisan Review, The New Yorker and elsewhere. For more information, including his essay "Magic, Illusion and Other Realities" and a complete bibliography, please visit his website at www.simonperchik.com.

Caroline Hagood - I'm a poet and professor of literature and creative writing in New York City. I have written on arts and culture for The Guardian, Salon, and the Huffington Post, among others. My poetry has appeared in Shooting the Rat (Hanging Loose Press), Movin' (Orchard Books), Angelic Dynamo, Ginosko, Quail Bell, and Manhattan Chronicles. I am pasting below an excerpt from my full-length poetry collection, Dispatches From Inner Space.

John Peterson poet and publisher of Poetic Matrix Press.

Claire J. Baker's work often appears in Blue Unicorn, Song of the San Joaquin, Brevities, Medusa's Kitchen blogspot, Poet's Lane website and others. She studied under Stanley Kunitz and Kim Addonizio. Claire is a self-named peace and social justice advocate, a longtime member of The Coolbrith Circle. She helps plan and coordinate the Bay Area's venerable Poets Dinner, this March 2011 its 85th annual.

Howard Lee Helm is a composer of electronic ethereal music. His imaginary and inspirational writing style evolves from these canvasses of sound. He resides in the Napa Valley of California with his terrier, Daisy.

Peter and Donna Thomas are American papermakers, book artist, authors, active book art instructors, environmental activists, and outdoor enthusiast. In 2004 Quarry Books published their *More Making Books by Hand*, providing instructions for constructing 12 different binding structures pioneered or developed by the Thomases. In 2010 Poetic Matrix Press published their *Muir Ramble Route*, a guide book for walking from San Francisco, California to Yosemite National Park following the route of John Muir's first trip to Yosemite taken in 1868.

John Sibley Williams is a poet and small press publicist residing in Portland, OR. He has a previous MA in Writing and presently studies Book Publishing at Portland State University, where he serves as Acquisitions Manager of Ooligan Press and publicist for Three Muses Press. His poetry was nominated for the 2009 Pushcart Prize and won the 2011 Heart Poetry Award. His chapbooks include *A Pure River* (The Last Automat Press, 2010), *Door, Door* (Red Ochre Press, 2011), *From Colder Climates* (Folded Word, forthcoming), *The Longest Compass* (Finishing Line Press, forthcoming), and *The Art of Raining* (The Knives Forks and Spoons Press, forthcoming). Some of his over 100 previous or upcoming publications include: *The Evansville Review*, *RHINO*, *Rosebud*, *Ellipsis*, *Flint Hills Review*, and *Poetry Quarterly*.

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. For eleven years he has run the writer's and musicians performance night, *WORDS*. James is the Associate Editor of Poetic Matrix Press. He is also writing song lyrics for a talented musician friend.

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