



**Winter 2017**

## From the Editors

So here we are, our first post-election issue. We're tired and bruised and on edge, regardless of whom we voted for and why, our heads spinning from attempting to gain some semblance of balance and equilibrium. Here's where the art comes in, in helping us to grab on to something that makes sense and that we can actually identify with, that doesn't beg for our vote, that doesn't make us suspicious, doesn't make us wonder when it will eventually sell us out. It just exists for us to do with it what we will.

And that's where this issue comes in, too. We hope it is whatever you need it to be – a diversion, a balm, a source comfort of inspiration or motivation. We just hope that it penetrates the noise and makes its way to you in one way or another. And then, if you're feeling ever-so-generous, you can forward it along to someone else, someone unaware of the work we do, someone who's work you think we'd appreciate. Chances are, we probably will.

Until next time.

Eric Evans &  
Kathy Sochia,  
Editors

Cover images: Ink Publications

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## Safe Zone

by Jim Babwe

I need a safe zone--  
no sharp metal corners  
or dangerous objects  
to threaten my delicate psyche.

I need a safe zone--  
some shadowed place  
to protect  
my subconscious  
from potentially  
painful experience.

I need a safe zone--  
a kind of a cave  
where first aid attendants  
and mental health servants  
stand ready to soothe me.

I need a safe zone--  
where it's quiet enough  
to allow me to sleep  
through ambulance sirens  
from the company next door  
when I'm trying to study  
while I'm watching the news

spewing daily disaster  
faster than I can request  
the rest of the world  
to respect my space  
when I'm sad.

I need a safe zone--  
away from rules  
and explanations and complications  
and why do you want me  
to tell you the story again  
about the jaywalking citation  
I got from a cop  
who was rude  
not to listen  
when I told him  
politely how frightened  
I was when I pleaded,  
DON'T TAZE ME, DUDE!

I need a safe zone  
because I'm depressed  
every day  
and I just want the world  
to leave me alone.  
I need a safe zone.

## **Distilled Inspiration**

by Chad D. Barber

Pantomimed excitement from a discerning caucasian.  
Now long convoluted, inspirations distilled.  
Perpetually attain this and these,  
and all of those distilled inspirations.

## The House In The Shade

by Michael Brownstein

I shot the shadow through the head  
and watched grey-black shade dribble onto the walkway.  
Is there a line for drywall screws,  
a break in the copper pipes at a joint,  
water flushing out to the concrete floor,  
a thaw in the pipes, a breath of ice?  
I can fix this--this being my house after all--  
my house of shadows, of Phillip screwdrivers,  
power drills and power saws, router bits, bent nails.  
I watch the shadow try to rise,  
watch it fall, watch it settle onto the ground motionless,  
its liquid staining the hardwood floor.

## **Mother, Turning 89**

by Michael Estabrook

Watching my mother cry slouched  
in her wheelchair as I leave her at the airport  
will stay with me for a long long time.

She's fragile now, tenuous  
confused by what remains  
frightened by what is yet to come  
focusing on the past because  
she hasn't much future left.

Her spirit harkens back to a once-rigorous  
existence but her frail flesh fails her  
her legs unsteady  
her back bent and aching  
her hands too weak to open bottles and jars.

But she remembers driving Kay's Harley  
into a curb back in '47  
to stop it from getting away from her  
after forgetting where the brakes were  
and she remembers who the female singer was  
in the Glenn Miller Orchestra in the late 40s.

She strains towards the end  
of her life to cling onto the past  
as if her life depends upon it because it does.



## The American People

by Eric Evans

The American people are the canvas upon which politicians paint their abstract works, smearing, blurring, shading, anything to obscure the obvious, logic ill-defined for the sake of a dubious point.

The American people are the fantasy projected outward, a movie shown on the back wall, an assemblage of the anonymous, tired and yearning just like the statue says, waiting on the respite from our supposed best interests.

The American people are a restless centipede, the limbs a series of contradictory stumbles and steps, a teenager with just-discovered powers and only the faintest notion of marshaling them, as full of wonder and fear as the dignitaries who try to meet our wandering gaze.

**Poetry Lesson 1**

by John Grey

a poem  
is words

arranged  
in such  
a way

so as not to be  
financially  
viable

## Hour Before the Ferry

by Kenneth Gurney

The mousy girl with little feet  
holds her belly bulge from the bottom—  
the unborn child seems half her size  
when viewed from the bench.

Around her young neck hangs  
a wooden crucifix that appears to be  
birds-eye maple with a light coat  
of satin stain and a leather thong to hang from.

From her unadorned sandals  
each middle toenail shines neon pink polish  
while the other toes wear mostly dirt  
and no echo of decoration.

She patiently watches as the barista  
pours hot water into a tea pot,  
a bag of something herbal feels the stream,  
the rising water line.

Aching, my knee tells me water is about to break  
from its holding place, but it turns out to be  
heavy clouds that drop rain upon the bay,  
the sidewalk, the black umbrellas surging upward  
outside this harbor cafe with its obligatory seagulls  
seemingly oblivious to the weatherly change.

## Rereading

by Robert Ronnow

Rereading the poems of others  
and my own. Community across  
time and graves. What's left  
exceeds in significance  
one's last moment. Yet  
his last moment must have been  
exceedingly important  
for the poet.

Nothing he did that day will seem meaningful.  
While we prosecute the war  
a pileated woodpecker and red squirrel  
compete for sunflower seeds.  
A winter slow  
to assert itself.  
I can still see my mother's father and his bowl  
of filberts, almonds, walnuts  
quiet weekday mornings.

Both grandfathers read sports  
pages religiously. I don't know  
if my grandmother who gave me the  
anthology of, to date, dated  
unreadable poems read poetry.

I remember my mother's mother spoke  
rarely as an animal.

Writing but not knowing where I'm going  
unlike Joan Didion justly  
cannibalizing candidates  
who didn't read the Constitution, Bill of Rights or  
Federalist Papers. It's late,  
I have not vacuumed or shopped for food.  
Instead I reread  
Phil Levine's *Salami*.

## **Marionette**

by Sanjeev Sethi

In the statuary of my branular orb your figurine shines the sharpest.  
When fate conspires to have us face to face you bring to naught  
the herringbone fabric I primp your mannequin with. I like the layers  
I pad you with: you're you, plus my decoupage. This suits our setting.  
The dominion of physical distance invigorates our weal with you  
chirking best inside me, heedful of my heart as your homestead.

## Choir Boys

by David Tuvell

How J.D. play  
house all life, still  
never witness his  
roommate, coming home,  
leaving, either way.

J.D. squint chestnut,  
tender girl-eyes, got  
soft, hairless boy-thighs.  
Next gospel meeting,  
J.D. want get baptized.

Muck-ditch, tree-branch,  
dirty Sunday britches,  
Loquat tree bulb ruckus.  
Busy tracks, freight-car  
chicken. Church men's  
room, next in line,  
J.D. taste chalky  
baby-cut carrot.

Velcro-beard cheek pounds  
damp-hay-bale shoulder-blades.  
Post hole digger pops up  
deep-soil mushrooms beside,

while inside, squeals, distant-  
close, strange as wheat-penny  
smell of shh-fingers, while  
a hazel eye leaks copper-  
rusty petro-jelly tears.



## Contributors

**Jim Babwe** is a native Southern Californian who knew almost everything when he was 19. In fact, several years later, after he graduated from Cal Poly with an English degree, he blatantly displayed his superior intellect by circling misspellings, marking grammatical errors, and grading bathroom graffiti. These days, he's glad he's not 19 anymore. And he will even admit to checking on the proper spelling of "graffiti." He can't seem to remember whether it's two f's and two t's, or one f and one or two t's. Even when he spells the word correctly, it still looks like something's not quite right.

**Chad Barber** is a 32 year old writer from Buffalo, New York. He works full time as a Sous Chef, and will be receiving a degree in the culinary arts in late 2017.

**Michael Brownstein** has been widely published throughout the small and literary presses. His work has appeared in *The Café Review*, *American Letters and Commentary*, *Skidrow Penthouse*, *Xavier Review*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Free Lunch*, *Meridian Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*, *The Pacific Review*, *Poetrysuperhighway.com* and others. In addition, he has nine poetry chapbooks including *The Shooting Gallery* (Samidat Press, 1987), *Poems from the Body Bag* (Ommation Press, 1988), *A Period of Trees* (Snark Press, 2004), *What Stone Is* (Fractal Edge Press, 2005), *I Was a Teacher Once* (Ten Page Press, 2011), *Firestorm: A Rendering of Torah* (Camel Saloon Press, 2012), *The Possibility of Sky and Hell: From My Suicide Book* (White Knuckle Press, 2013) and *The Katy Trail, Mid-Missouri, 100 Degrees Outside and Other Poems* (Kind of Hurricane Press, 2013). He is the editor of *First Poems from Viet Nam* (2011).

**Michael Estabrook** is retired. No more useless meetings under florescent lights in stuffy windowless rooms, able instead to focus on making better poems when he's not, of course, endeavoring to satisfy his wife's legendary Honey-Do List. His latest collection of poems is *Bouncy House*, edited by Larry Fagin (Green Zone Editions, 2014).

**Eric Evans** is a writer from Buffalo, New York with stops in Portland, Oregon and Rochester, New York where he currently resides. His work has appeared in *Steel Bellow*, *Decades Review*, *Dead Snakes*, *decomp magazinE*, *Red River Review*, *Posey*, *Xenith Magazine*, *Anobium Literary Magazine*, *Pemmican Press*, *Remark* and many other publications and anthologies. He has published eight full collections and three broadsides through his own small press, Ink

Publications, in addition to a broadside through Lucid Moon Press. He is also the co-editor of *The Bond Street Review* as well as the resident dramaturg for Blackfriars Theatre.

**John Grey** is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in *New Plains Review*, *Stillwater Review* and *Big Muddy Review* with work upcoming in *Louisiana Review*, *Columbia College Literary Review* and *Spoon River Poetry Review*.

**Kenneth P. Gurney** lives in Albuquerque, NM, USA with his beloved Dianne. His latest collection of poems is *Stump Speech*. To learn more about Kenneth visit his website at [kpgurney.me](http://kpgurney.me)

**Robert Ronnow's** most recent poetry collections are *New & Selected Poems: 1975-2005* (Barnwood Press, 2007) and *Communicating the Bird* (Broken Publications, 2012). Visit his web site at [www.ronnowpoetry.com](http://www.ronnowpoetry.com).

**Sanjeev Sethi** is the author of three well-received books of poetry. His most recent collection is *This Summer and That Summer* (Bloomsbury, 2015). His poems are in venues around the world: *Off the Coast*, *Zoomoozophone Review*, *Spirit Fire Review*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Degenerate Literature*, *Linden Avenue Literary Journal*, *Darkrun Review*, *The Blue Mountain Review*, *The Penwood Review*, *Squawk Back*, *W.I.S.H. Press*, *The Five-Two*, *Novelmasters*, *Bluepepper*, *Otoliths*, and elsewhere. He lives in Mumbai, India.

**David Tuvell** hails from from Atlanta. He's written poems for the *New Orleans Review*, *The Steel Toe Review*, NYU's *Minetta Review*, KSU's *Share*, *Eyedrum Periodically*, and other publications. His English B.A. comes from Kennesaw State University, and he studied substantially at the University of Florida. Outside of poetry, his path has been quite various, and he's made his way through things like software engineering, information science, and labor.

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