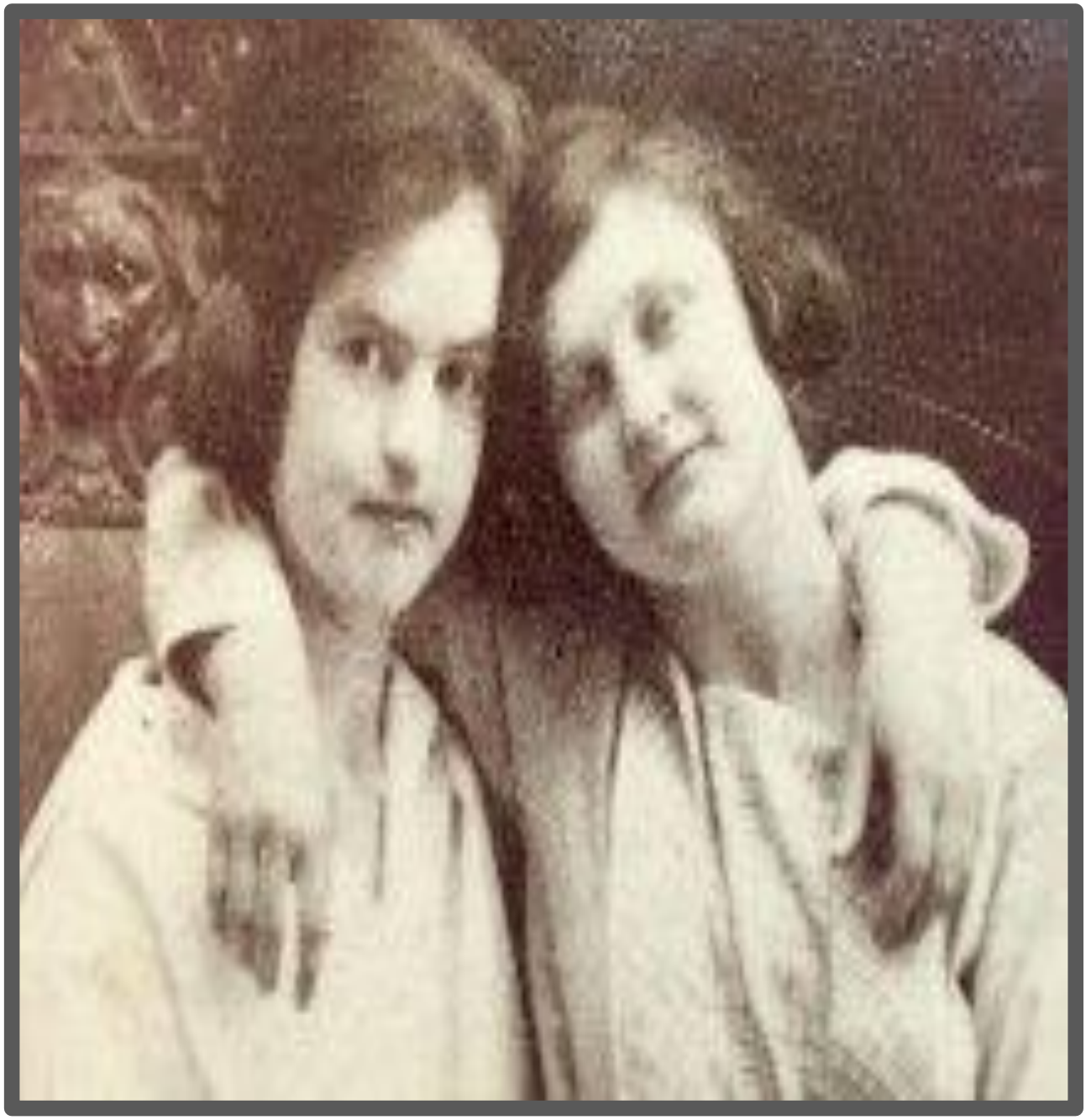

Lingerpost

Lingerpost

Issue 8

July 31, 2015

We make of the fragments of self a form that holds, briefly—that's the poem—then we watch it shatter again—which is, I suppose, that space that the poem fooled us into believing we'd left behind us, for a time, world of fragmented selves, hard truths, glinting ambiguities to be negotiated, navigated through as we make our disoriented way forward, or what we have to believe is forward.

Like being mapless in tough territory, and knowing, somewhere inside, we'd choose this life, and this one only, if in fact we could choose.

The Art of Daring: Risk, Restlessness, Imagination, Carl Phillips

Contents

Letter from the Editor

July 31, 2015

Dear Readers,

I've been thinking a lot lately about lineage, personally and poetically. I found old photographs dating back five generations, and already I've created ghost narratives and poems for each one. Strange and fitting that I try to understand heritage, past motivations and desires of the long dead, through writing new poetry. Is this method born of risk or faith? I can research and devise educated guesses, but ultimately every imagined movement belongs to me; however, I like to believe continuing bloodlines make each poem belong to my ancestors as well, from Tupelo to Texas, from Wheatleys to Waltons.

I believe poetry works that way too. There are poems I've encountered that aren't mine but have become mine in some small, significant way, like tattooing a line from Mark Strand on my left foot arch. I've borrowed it. And changed it. Poetry bloodlines. There are many of these kinds of poems for each of us.

Why are some of us of lured by certain poems and not others? In *The Art of Daring: Risk, Restlessness, Imagination*, poet Carl Phillips believes through poetry we "speak from our own hauntedness to the hauntedness of others" (69). Poets struggling to not merely express an experience but to respond to an experience. The difference is like the difference between knowledge and wisdom, interpreting verbatim or interpreting through the lens of our own experience. The difference between surviving and being.

I have to wonder: Is it risk or faith every time we present a new poem to new eyes, an old moment to current sensibilities? Phillips says the risk is self-knowledge that can be "dispiriting" and or "destructive" (70). A life without masks, without our personal creation myths that provide us with purpose and meaning. And the faith? That someday the risk will be worth it.

Enjoy,

Kara Dorris
Editor-in-Chief, *Lingerpost*

Blurring World

DARREN MORRIS

The White Mare

News spread of my mother's death
and a few came by
to ask how I was.
Take care, they said, *take time to feel;*
sorry for your loss.

But I wanted to tell them about this horse I knew—

my uncle's filly, playful as a puppy when we were young,
who lipped my ears and nuzzled
my pockets for apples my uncle kept in his.

I visited his farm again after the funeral
where the body and the memory turned to ash
and the eyes were donated to the future as they had been in life.

He told me the story of how he had been the first to arrive
at my parents' wedding and the first to leave.

I had to milk the cows for the second time that day, he said,
by way of some excuse
that he didn't need to give,
as if some final obligation he might tender over her life.

But where was the horse, I wanted to know.

Out there, somewhere, he said. *Watching us, no doubt*.

Two years ago, a maniac came off the road and she went
to greet him at the fence as she would for anyone.

I should have taught her to be afraid.

She didn't shy away even when he raised the axe
or brought it down against
the length of her muzzle,
like a sapling birch cleft and bloody from the blow.

It cost the crops that year to have her saved, if not restored.

Now she'll keep company to no one, and I'll not try to tame her again.

But there was one thing they shared.

I waited with him at dusk on his wood-slat porch.

When all the words like sparrows
went far as they could,
she appeared
at the edge of the clearing, in the oily aura of a spectral terror.

Between the branches she seemed some bifurcated
stand-in for the real, as if
some varied layer of the same

unmitigated desire that rent, that tore her to pieces
between the worlds,
that amputated the massive heart-shaped core,
the stifle from the gaskin,
the withers from the mane

Half-hidden and half-revealed, managing barely the insanity
of being,
but drawn back nevertheless to this maybe life

that beckoned as the dead sometimes do.

Slowly, cautiously, she approached us, quiet as a deer.

Her face,
white as a stone ruin,
and the scar, the lawless bank of some hidden spring,

blindly coursing toward some sourceless source.

I held out what I'd been given to give.

That distance between me and the white mare's remaining eye—
it is
what we are made of most.

She kept it on me, wide as heaven, worried and wanting, flecked
with terror-filled joy.

The apple infinite
to which she bent and took.
For in that vanishing light,

it appeared as blue as grief.

Summering

BRAD GARBER

Senior Party

The field was a polished wood table
across which we read, aloud, our lives
stumbling in firelight, alcohol and sex.

Circle of cars in a vacant lot, all handles
rubbers, glass and metal, cocoons of youth
waited for safety or delivery of death
covered with piss and puke and hope.

She was the one in the autumn embers
I was the one with no feet, just eyes.

We left indentations of intentions
in the field, that night, moving apart
having gathered only to disperse.

Years later, rising smoke of coals
reaches my nostrils, reminding me
of how dancing under moonlight
sees the bobbing ships out to sea.

Behind

ALINA STEFANESCU

The Ring in the Rain

Just because I wear a silver ring and there was a banjo whose strings spelled wedding doesn't mean a glass of champagne gathers lips to bubbles like a party. I can desire your lips plastered like band-aids and still come out scarred. I can cry and be described as healing. I can be loved and covered in skid-marks from rush hour traffic. Just because you call this home doesn't mean home is not a form of self-defense. A band-aid heals but remains a barricade. The flag waves but has no hands. Mexican-Americans pour over lower borders like beetles from a moist log but they still die parched. A man may die shriveled, a dehydration. Not even the rain wets foreign lips if someone says this is what it means to be foreign, this is our water, this is our drought, this is our acid rain. This is how we lay highways to fetch a horizon.

Next

DARREN DEMAREE

EMILY AS HAVING CRACKED OPEN, WE WAIT FOR THE BLOOM

We were awake
somewhere else
& now we are awake

here, without
a single reversal remaining.
The music,

if it is music,
that plays next, will be
what we consider love

or background
& if we were other
people too,

could end all sound.

EMILY AS WE FORGET ABOUT THE COLT

More bounty
& engine

than simple animal,
I asked Emily

to get thicker
with me,

to carry a mass
of intentions

so weighted
towards each other

that the land
between us

would simply
surrender.

I went too far
in my defiance

of scientific laws
& my hummingbird

was too much
distraction for her.

She was with me, gently
refusing the premise.

Covet

SUSAN GUNDLACH

The Storyteller

Give me three things, she says, and I'll make you a story,
from the magic of words, the mystery of the ordinary.

At first, you could offer me a brown leather suitcase,
a half-eaten orange, and a misunderstanding,
items that tell of an old passenger train speeding along at mid-day,
several travelers intending to get off at different towns. . .
With those clues I might fashion a spellbinding adventure
that involves one intrepid character after another as it unfolds.

Or, maybe you'll propose an old spiral notebook,
an unintended slight, and a silver pocket watch.
Now I see a polished oak chest with one drawer nailed shut,
a visit from a shadow someone with hush-hush motives. . .
And, voila! there it will be, a complicated detective tale
about a murky crime that has no clear villain.

You may even envision a ghost in a garage,
a heartless old man, and a broken violin.
But if you should suggest a small box of quarters,
a secret name, and a chance for redemption,
I would see a little girl with questions
and answers that she can't put into words. . .
If you were to give me those last three things, says the teller,
I'd have to refuse your offer
because that would be my story,
unfinished,
not mine to give away.

Heart Bits

1. Question

Does a heavy-hearted person
bear more of a burden
than one who is heartless?

2. Broken Heart

Halved or shattered,
will the pieces equal
what was whole,
or must we consider
the weight of the sadness
that seeped out?

3. Wisdom

The artichoke
presents itself as an example:
guard your heart
like an armored armadillo,
protecting its secrets,
pieces of a life, that if revealed
might prove rotten to the core,
or surprisingly delicious.

Imitating

EMILY MITAMURA

Fray

You've been waiting, see, and tapping lowed loafers, your grandfather's
pale leather parcels sunken by rain.
They're coming undone at the

seems. You've been finding their threads

in odd places: your brother's pocket, fibrous
and stained in that burned black soup pot on the
top shelf, your ear (the left one,

with the mark the shape of Friday, four o'clock). They come

knotted like prayer shawls and loose between
pages of books you've been meaning to read

for years now. Someone told you once that you were almost definitely to die
next to a pile of such books

and you liked that, but now you think the threads have
other plans. For you: harbingers and half-made beds, a residue

of phantom tree limbs and limber locks
of hair you were meant to be wrapped in. You know

they've been waiting for the kind of wind, that grieving that
wakes you. Because when you find each one, it

is as if that spot were made, avocado inclined scoop, for your hand
to fit, the base of your wrist flush with the

teeth of a wintered secret.

Footnotes[1]

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[1] are where
I walk sweet
with no shoes
so you can read
my skin

that segregating thing
a border less
sturdy than
it suggests itself

a parcel of
unuttered stones (beating)
my frame

hands owed
orange groves
each palm
a maid moment
stretch of skin to
rounded skin

bones
something bright between
echo
and citation

The Distillery

There's selfishness in breaking yourself
down into those pieces from which your
mother made you
from scratch, she always says. But still
you take what maybe
isn't quite yours – the means by which
you emerge Hungarian moonshine, a
soul-own something of
bottled night breath. It's a cure,

in small doses and a remedy in
large gulps, or so old men say as they start their mornings right –
fix ills, find kin all covered in
debris of laughter and fine dusk and answering a

last lark call never did any one too much harm. These days we have to query by courier
our own feet to see
if they want to dance. Unthinkable,

absolutely not allowed, this distillery
of still-life portraits (they
haven't yet forbidden the mechanism by which you
might contain sun cycles but,
I'm sure we'll get there some day). And the human interest

in drinking alone increased one million percent, sources
are certain, the day the news told us
palinka was not to share or sell.

For now we learn slow burning tricks from
your neighbor, a distinctive skin – a
coffee-can and wire transaction, we will not
be caught. Your neighbor, who lives
on the other side of your back-

yard fence knows how to best brew the stuff. Fences make good
playthings, you've been told, and neighbors make good
partners in crime. But always

reporters come around and
their bodies trim your nerves, the way their limbs become houses
when no one is looking
and your voice is dripping slow
into two copper pots wrapped with piping.
Your neighbor barrels it, your tone, taps small iron nails all around
to make sure homesteads, grasping, peeping, won't
spoil the drink.

Meanwhile his wife keeps locks
on Magyar kits, swaddles babes in her own brown hair,
brushing live wire so long she looses
track of trains coming in
needing to be met. 'We are becoming very – how do
you say? – homogenized.' he frets, and
sips his illicit self. The papers all say, he
tastes like plums, apricots, a
slap in the face.

Lineages

We've been thinking a lot lately about poetic lineage, how our poems belong to us and the poets who have inspired us. We come to poetry to understand the world, to remind us to value it and each other. Derek Walcott said, "Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole." There are poems we encounter that aren't ours but have become ours in some small, significant way. We've borrowed, ingested, adapted these poems—they have become our poetry bloodlines. Here are a few.

Enjoy.

*Kara Dorris on **"A Blessing" by James Wright***

When I first read "A Blessing" I found myself in that field, like so many fields in Texas, like the fields I grew up in, and I felt the velvet nose of those ponies, like so many others that have nuzzled my hands. I felt the loneliness of those two ponies, of driving highways past grazing horses, cows and goats. I could see their liquid kindness and wonder how anyone could harm them. And I felt myself break apart because I knew this is a dangerous world. A world of barbed wire and an overvalued sense of ownership. I broke apart knowing there is so much more in this world to understand, and so much more I've yet to experience. And knowing I can never know it all. When I read this poem, I changed, I opened, I became a more attentive poet and a better person. Such small moments—ponies in a field alongside a highway, reading a poem—but both are fused in my blood now.

A Blessing

James Wright

Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota,
Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.
And the eyes of those two Indian ponies
Darken with kindness.
They have come gladly out of the willows
To welcome my friend and me.
We step over the barbed wire into the pasture
Where they have been grazing all day, alone.
They ripple tensely, they can hardly contain their happiness
That we have come.
They bow shyly as wet swans. They love each other.
There is no loneliness like theirs.
At home once more, they begin munching the young tufts of spring in the darkness.
I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms,
For she has walked over to me
And nuzzled my left hand.
She is black and white,
Her mane falls wild on her forehead,
And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear
That is delicate as the skin over a girl's wrist.
Suddenly I realize
That if I stepped out of my body I would break
Into blossom.

Brad Garber on ***"The Passing of the Backhouse" by James Whitcomb Riley***

I would like to say the most influential poem in my life was something by William Carlos Williams, Robert Frost or Raymond Carver. That would be a lie. During the years 1957 – 1968, I journeyed to a family cabin on a small lake in Ontario, Canada, to spend a summer month every year with my Grandfather "Pops." The cabin, built of logs in the 1930's or 40's was dark and full of mice and red squirrels, books and fishing lures. In the evening, the small cast iron stove in the main room warmed the cabin while I played card games or drew pictures under a small table lamp. There was no running water, so every morning Pops and I ran the wooden fishing boat out onto the lake and dipped ten-gallon buckets into the water for drinking and washing dishes. The toilet was an outhouse that sat in the pines, about a hundred feet from the back door of the cabin. And there, stapled to the inside of the door, was a poem by James Whitcomb Riley, "The Passing of the Backhouse." Every day, while I was using the facility, I read the poem. By age 5 or 6, I had it memorized and happily recited it at family events, whenever I could.

The Passing of the Backhouse
James Whitcomb Riley

When memory keeps me company and moves to smiles and tears,
A weather-beaten object looms through the mist of years.
Behind the house and barn it stood, a half a mile or more.
And hurrying feet a path had made straight to its swinging door.
Its architecture was a type of simple classic art.
But in the tragedy of life it played a leading part;
And oft the passing traveler drove slow and heaved a sigh
To see the modest hired girl slip out with glances shy.

We had our posy garden that the women loved so well
I loved it too, but better still I loved the stronger smell
That filled the evening breezes so full of homely cheer,
And told the night - o'ertaken tramp that human life was near,
On lazy August afternoons it made a little bower,
Delightful, where my grandsire sat and whiled away an hour.
For there the summer morning its very cares entwined.
And berry bushes reddened in the steaming soil behind.

All day fat spiders spun their web to catch the buzzing flies
That flitted to and from the house, where Ma was making pies.
And once a swarm of hornets bold had built a palace there,
And stung my unsuspecting aunt--I must not tell where;
Then father took a flaming pole--that was a happy day--
He nearly burned the building up, but the hornets left to stay.
When summer bloom began to fade and winter to carouse,
We banked the little building with a heap of hemlock boughs.

But when the crust was on the snow and sullen skies were gray,
In sooth, the building was no place where one could wish to stay.
We did our duties promptly there, one purpose swayed the mind;
We tarried not, nor lingered long, on what we left behind.
The torture of the icy seat would make a Spartan sob,
For needs must scrape the goose-flesh with a lacerating cob,
That from a frost-encrusted nail hung pendant by a string.
My father was a frugal man and wasted not a thing.

When grandpa had to "go out back" and make his morning call,
We'd bundle up the dear old man with muffler and a shawl.
I knew the hole on which he sat--'twas padded all around,
And once I dared to sit there-'twas all too wide I found;
My loins were all too little and I jack-knifed there to stay.
They had to come and get me out or I'd have passed away.
Then father said ambition was a thing boys should shun,
And I must use the children's hole 'till childhood's days were done.

But still I marvel at the craft that cut those holes so true;
The baby hole, and the slender hole that fitted Sister Sue,
That dear old country landmark; I've tramped around a bit,
And in the lap of luxury my lot has been sit;
But e'er I die I'll eat the fruit of trees I robbed of yore,
Then seek the shanty where my name is carved upon the door.
I ween the old familiar smell will soothe my jaded soul;
I'm now a man, but none the less, I'll try the children's hole.

Susan Gundlach on ***"A Winter Morning" by Ted Kooser***

For many reasons this short little poem has stuck in my mind ever since I first read it years ago. As he does in many of his poems, here Kooser creates a picture with ordinary objects in an ordinary setting, while also managing to evoke the wide flat land of Nebraska as well as a small moment in a distant farmhouse. The picture of that remote farmhouse is like a snapshot that suggests a story. Who lives in that house? Who is going to drink the tea? Is the farmer, or maybe his wife or son, waking at the usual time to start the workday? Is someone ill in a bedroom off the kitchen? And why is the kitchen so dark in the pre-dawn that the stove's flame shines out all the way across the highway? Is this household a lonely place, or perhaps unlit but cozy? Kooser creates similar scenes and possible stories in others of his short poems, like one about rusty ladders "sleeping by haystacks and barns," and one in which the narrator lies awake listening to a dripping faucet.

Kooser's choice of everyday things and experiences reminds me to find the poetry in the seemingly mundane (like an assemblage of huge cardboard boxes containing a dismantled bed leaning against the wall of my neighbor's porch). Kooser's poetry reminds me that plain language can be lyrical. And he reminds me that when engaged in the messy process of writing, or living, and flooded by ideas, emotions, sensory images, I need to sort through it all and get to the core – to listen for the teakettle and notice the quiet blue flame. Occasionally, I achieve that goal.

A Winter Morning

Ted Kooser

A farmhouse window far back from the highway
speaks to the darkness in a small, sure voice.
Against this stillness, only a kettle's whisper,
and against the starry cold, one small blue ring of flame.

Emily Mitamura on ***"Often I am Permitted to Return to the Meadow" by Robert Duncan***

I've been raised to believe deep in my bones that to travel is to travel light. If you're going to be an adventurer, as I've hoped to be since it seems like birth, you can't carry too much with you. According to mother, you must always be both empty-handed and completely prepared for anything. There's nothing very secret or solely mine about this well-loved poem but what Robert Duncan gives me here, constantly and repeatedly since a favorite poetry professor showed me this poem, is a space of secret reserve, a hoarding/hiding space of writing, somewhere to return to. *A field folded*, he says, and a gifted, pocket-sized field from which creation rolls is apparent in the momentum of his words. He collapses space and grassy distance into the palm of his hand – into a pen, the fastest way to travel. And every time I read it it's still a kind of balm to the diurnal frenzy. It's always sending me to my notebooks – inciting me to archive. And I'm grateful, to say very the least.

Often I am Permitted to Return to a Meadow
Robert Duncan

as if it were a scene made-up by the mind,
that is not mine, but is a made place,

that is mine, it is so near to the heart,
an eternal pasture folded in all thought
so that there is a hall therein

that is a made place, created by light
wherefrom the shadows that are forms fall.

Wherefrom fall all architectures I am
I say are likenesses of the First Beloved
whose flowers are flames lit to the Lady.

She it is Queen Under the Hill
whose hosts are a disturbance of words within words
that is a field folded.

It is only a dream of the grass blowing
east against the source of the sun
in an hour before the sun's going down

whose secret we see in a children's game
of ring a round of roses told.

Often I am permitted to return to a meadow
as if it were a given property of the mind
that certain bounds hold against chaos,

that is a place of first permission,
everlasting omen of what is.

Darren Morris on ***"Coming Down Cleveland Avenue" by James Tate***

The following poem was written by James Tate and is from his first book, "The Lost Pilot," (1967) which won him the Yale Series of Younger Poets Award. I was in my junior year at Missouri, an undergrad in a graduate poetry workshop led by Sherod Santos, who read the poem aloud at the beginning of our first session. That was 25 years ago, but, immediately, I remember having a physical reaction to the poem. I wanted to explode. It presented me with a new awareness of what was now possible with language and expression. While it has sexual overtones, the revelatory analogy is really one of entering into poetry itself. You could say it caught me at the right time, and I realize now that I probably did explode in the classroom that day. All I knew was that I had a thing that was finally my own and that I could go to it through reading and writing, slipping beneath the regular world, whether anyone else knew about it or not. It only required my unsullied relationship to it to feel it again, and that was all, and everything.

Coming Down Cleveland Avenue

James Tate

The fumes from all kinds
of machines have dirtied
the snow. You propose
to polish it, the miles
between home and wherever
you and your lily
of a woman might go. You
go, pail, brush, and
suds, scrubbing down
Cleveland Avenue
toward the Hartford Life
Insurance Company. No
one appreciates your
effort and one important
character calls you
a baboon. But pretty
soon your darling jumps
out of an elevator
and kisses you and you
sing and tell her to
walk the white plains
proudly. At one point
you even lay down
your coat, and she, in
turn, puts hers down for
you. And you put your
shirt down, and she, her
blouse, and your pants,
and her skirt, shoes—
removes her lavender
underwear and you slip
into her proud, white skin.

Coveting

Contributor Bios

Darren C. Demaree is the author of four poetry collections. He is the Managing Editor of the Best of the Net Anthology. He is currently living in Columbus, OH with his wife and children.

Brad Garber lives, writes and runs around naked in the Great Northwest. He fills his home with art, music, photography, plants, rocks, bones, books, good cookin' and love. He has published poetry, essays and articles in many quality publications. 2013 Pushcart Prize nominee.

Susan Gundlach's poems have appeared in such journals as *Dark Matter, Vine Leaves, The Middle Gray, Lingerpost, *82 Review, Referential Magazine, After Hours*, and in the walkway of the Evanston Public Library -- etched in stone, or cement, actually! Some of her poems for children can be seen in *Cricket* magazine. Currently, she is working on collaborations with artist and musician colleagues. She lives in Evanston, Illinois, with her family, human and canine.

Emily Marielle Mitamura is a rising senior at Vassar College hoping to go to school, in one form or another, for a long long time. She studies political science, Jewish studies, the secret things people hide in archives, and what might make someone a genius. Her work has recently appeared in 'The Million-Line Poem' from Tupelo Press, but she's new to this game.

Darren Morris' publications can be found at *The Missouri Review* and others. New poems are forthcoming from Sewanee Review, Blackbird, Mud Season Review, and Clementine. Originally from St. Louis, he now lives in Richmond, Virginia and works for an Atlanta-based outfit, performing tasks that are difficult to describe.

Alina Stefanescu was born in Romania, raised in Alabama, and reared by the love-ghost of Tom Waits and Hannah Arendt. Her homeland is a speculative fiction where nation-states have not yet acquired the capacity for mass-murder. You can decry her forthcoming work in Lockjaw, PoemMemoirStory, and Kindred, among others. More froth online at www.alinastefanescu.com.

The End