



THE EXTERNALIST

A JOURNAL OF PERSPECTIVES

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Annie Bien

Raina J. León

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A Note from the Editor

This issue comes amidst the kind of personal turmoil that changes you forever, so even though it wasn't intentional, it seemed particularly appropriate that so much of the work in Issue 11 deals with family, our relationship to the people around us, and the question of when the outer world of society becomes the inner world of self.

In "Please Don't Thank Me," Claire Dietrich discusses the lack of personal boundaries surrounding the issue of women at war. Our Editor's Choice feature, "The Island" by Tai Dong Huai, provides a biting commentary on death and who someone might be in the absence of authority and social restrictions. Fara Spence's poem "Mother" is a monologue layered with familial pain and societal expectations.

Gavin Tierney, Jeff Carter, and Alex Cigale all reflect on the presidency and how executive decisions affect those who have to live with those decisions. KJ Hannah Greenberg's essay "The Russians" sheds a light on cultural perceptions and reminds us that we don't always know what we think we do, and Annie Bien's poem "Native Tongue" looks at communication in a politically-aware and poetically-aware manner that leaves us wanting more.

Last month, a new President was inaugurated. Whether we agree or disagree with his politics, there can be no doubt that the United States is moving toward drastic changes. Already, many are pushing back against that sense of change. As my own life enters a new stage of metamorphosis, I ask myself if there ever comes a time when acceptance is the better road. I don't know the right answer, but I believe that discussion and diversity—including diversity within political and social ideologies—is never a bad thing. With change comes dissent. With dissent comes the truth.

Thoughtful reading,

L

Editors' Choice

Editor's Appreciation

Tai Dong Huai's flash fiction piece "The Island" contains all the elements of good flash fiction—an interesting character, a dramatic plot, and a surprise ending. The reader goes through the first few paragraphs mourning for a town's tragedy. By the last sentence, the reader is forced to rethink the situation. Tai Dong Huai skillfully provides us with an unsettling and thought-provoking commentary in just over 500 words.

The Island

by Tai Dong Huai

At Wampano Pond, a few hundred feet behind my house, Peter Carreli drowned. He was in my fifth grade class at Woodhaven Elementary School, and even came to my horse-themed eighth birthday party, the only boy among seven girls, because his mother and my adoptive mother were in the same book group.

One July morning, Peter was swimming with a bunch of other eleven-year-old boys. It was a day-camp trip, supervised by a trio of teenagers who later admitted they may not have been paying "as close attention as they should have." Swimming was allowed, but discouraged; the fact that there were no lifeguards on duty was clearly posted.

We called it 'The Island,' but it was nothing more than a large wooden raft, built most likely by someone's dad, and anchored at the pond's deepest point. It served as a resting place, a "launching-off" area, a place to pick up some really nasty splinters. The police report, later published in our weekly newspaper, stated that apparently Peter was swimming underwater, tried to surface, but didn't realize he was beneath 'The Island.' He may have run out of air, he could have hit his head, or perhaps in his panic he wasted time trying to push the immovable mass of planks and carriage bolts out of the way. The kids on the raft above, if there were any at the time, would have probably been preoccupied and unaware of a struggle below. The police report went on to say that no one at the pond even knew he was missing until later that morning when his beach bag remained unclaimed on one of the picnic tables.

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From the tree house in our yard my view of Wampano Pond, even through the leaves that conceal me, is clear and unobstructed. So I saw it all. The boys, including Peter, pairing up for 'buddy-count,' the three teenagers going behind the cinderblock bathroom to share a smoke, Peter sneaking past the blacktopped basketball court and into the water instead of returning to the picnic tables with the others. I saw him quietly dip down and never resurface. If I'd shouted as loudly as I could have, someone would have heard. If I'd lowered myself from my perch, and ran through the woods, I could have been at the pond in less than thirty seconds.

Our newspaper headline the week he was buried read: ALL OF WOODHAVEN MOURNS.

But the truth is that I never liked Peter Carreli, nor do I miss him. Not even when I see his mother, gaunt and joyless, standing in line at Blockbuster. He was loud and bossy, and called me "flat face" in front of his friends. Once, on the athletic field, he and Jeremy Reilly pinned me down in the grass. Jeremy kept my feet from kicking while Peter straddled me and held my arms. Just before Mrs. Stein came over to break it up Peter, his face not four inches from mine, grinned and said, "Do you know what 'rape-a-girl' means?"

On winter nights, after the leaves have fallen, I can see a small slice of Wampano, crusted with ice, from my bedroom window.

Like me, it keeps its voice still.

by Raina J. León

The disappearance of fireflies

We used to catch them in Mason jars
or beer bottles by the park where the junkies
hid with their works and fire spoons
when it darkened enough to sink unseen.

Juanita and I would run around the square,
gated by iron plumbing, piping screwed
to the ground, other irons slid through holes
making a gate that rusted in our hands.

One kid learned what his Daddy taught him,
how to give a good suck in the corner
by the yellow brick, how to lean against the chip
of grout, forgetting sidewalks and glass,

how to kneel, close the eyes and moan.
We used to catch fireflies together,
run with kites that never flew in the projects.
Mami would pick me up at eight o'clock.
I would watch TV and say, *Nothing happened.*

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by Zachary C. Bush

The [Related] Parts of a Family

When The Girl walked in the family living room, after nearly a year away from her home, she would have never expected to have seen her father doing anything more than eating potato chips, and masturbating in front of the space heating unit. So, The Girl must have been thoroughly shocked when she saw her father dissecting an accordion on the rug. The new living room scene had already been quite enough for her, but it did not help the matter that the accordion moaned like – it moaned like someone she thought knew at one time – every time her father sliced through its insides with his scalpel. Yes, this did not help with her anxiety in any sort of way. Surely confused and probably resentful, The Girl said to her father, “Father, why are you dirtying your gentle hands in the bowels of this whining accordion.” She paused a moment to catch her breath, shook her head, and then she asked, “And why does this accordion cry like a human...I...know...when...you...Why?”

Never looking up at her, but vaguely recognizing his daughter’s voice, the father shook his head. He grunted something inaudible. He then raised the scalpel to his prickly chin, and scratched it with the dull-side of the blade. He cleared his throat, and yelled, “for The Love of Family, I dirty my hands; for The Love of Gender Studies, I dirty my hands; for The Love of All Who Protest The Re-Production of Tennis Balls, I dirty my hands; for The Love of Infinity, I dirty my hands; for The Love of Hitler, I dirty my hands; for....I...” The father looked up and was now staring at his daughter full-on, and from his lips came a near-mute phrase. The Girl took the silent movements of his lips to mean- come closer, and so she did just that. The father scratched his head with the scalpel, and said, “This is no ordinary Bavarian accordion, this is...this was...this in fact...is your Uncle Morton, before he...well, before we...no, he...before we changed into...what he is now... all for The Love of Undiscovered Animal Anatomy!”

The Girl stood, as if she cemented to the rug, still in shock. She stared, in dead-pan silence at her father who, had since, re-buried his head into the metal-belly of the instrument. She thought...her uncle: hated, a life expired, now transformed and still moaning like the bastard that he is...was...And with this a red-water relief rushed over The Girl’s forehead. She probably instinctually knew that she needed some air, and so she went into the front yard. Once between the mailbox and the garden that hugged the jaw of the house, she collapsed backwards onto the grass. She started shrieking; laughing like her schizophrenic accordion of an Uncle. Her face contorted like

ocean waves. She began tearing up the grass from the ground, stuffing handfuls of it down her pants, and even deeper into her panties. The Girl screamed, "For The Love of Microcosms, indeed; for The Love of Solar Eclipses, indeed; for The Love of Cats, indeed; for The Love of Underground Robotics!"

In the living room, The Girl's father could hear his daughter screaming in the front yard. He found that he was heavily torn between continuing with what he knew was the best course of action (for all that he praised) – the dissembling and dissecting of Morton – and reassembling his brother back to life. Yet, he didn't falter. He said, "For The Love of Suppressing Morton's Madness for Mathematics, I dirty my goddamn hands!"

by Fara Spence

Mother

How long you think the devil's been in me?
Andrea Yates said to visitors
after she'd drowned her five children.

We are reluctant to speak of her
No one asks what song played in her head.

We can't blame her for being
black
poor
without a man
she is none of these.

Her sins scream
otherwise they may go unheard
the way we pretend
all is well
when you own a fridge with an ice maker,
a basketball hoop in a driveway
at the end of the cul-de-sac where
they cut down trees and name the
streets after them.

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How long you think the devil's been in me?

Oh, Andrea.

Maybe before you were born,
before the first collection plate,
the first 'Thou shall not.'

Give us your shiny dishwasher
and we'll cleanse you
with saliva
sweat
you'll smell like a woman
not a helpmate.

we'll block windows from light
feed you chocolate
a hundred dollar bottle of wine

we'll sing

hire a choir to listen
the way you listen to
the sound of your child's breathing
praying it will never stop

you'll come to remember it, too.

we'll toast the bread maker
chase each other through the house
laughing and crying
crying and laughing

it may take decades

by then there may be a new kind of
bath tub
that casts
back flowers when you fill it
too full.

The Nuclear Winter of Scout Troop 534

by Gavin Tierney

Everything you heard is true. The newspapers and news reports are correct. I, Ronald Jefferson, was there last week when the President made the critical decision, and I had the opportunity to stop the nuclear war. I had the chance to save us all, but I just sat with the other members of Scout Troop 534, in the big comfy couches of the oval office, and stared googly-eyed at the President of the United States of America.

It all started when the young woman who had been giving the tour of the White House announced that we were now going to enter the oval office to meet the President. "The President is the busiest man in the entire world," she said in a bubbly voice and then put a finger to her lips. She quietly knocked and peeked into the room before swinging the large presidential door wide and gesturing for us to behold the "leader of our fair country."

The President was sitting behind his desk. An American flag hung loosely behind him. Our entire troop crammed into the doorway, each of us wanting to be able to tell our parents that we were the first to see him, the first to shake his hand. The President held up a finger and thoughtfully wrote a few final words. He then looked at us and smiled and

I remember thinking that he looked very official.

"Come in," he said, standing up and stepping from behind his desk. He was a tall man and he rounded the desk in a few brief steps. I rubbed my sweaty hand on my pant leg, readying myself for the handshake. The President scanned our troop, eventually locking eyes with me, probably because, even though I was only thirteen, I looked the oldest. However, before I could reach up and shake the President's hand, Danny Rutherford and I were shoved to the side.

A man I would later learn was the Secretary of Defense waded through our troop and stood in attention in front of the President. "Sir, a nuclear missile has been fired at the United States. It is headed towards Orlando." There was a collective gasp amongst our troop and I wished that it had been another group of Boy Scouts that had been chosen to meet the President.

The newspapers that have come out in the week since the war began seem to tell it as if we were special consultants called in to assess the situation and give the most honest of advice, the type only Boy Scouts are able to give. The truth of the matter is that

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every year, through a competitive application process, one Scout troop is chosen to receive a tour of the White House and to meet the President. It is a tradition that goes all the way back to Franklin D. Roosevelt and Scout Troop 132.

"We believe that the missile has come from Russia, sir," the Defense Secretary continued, "possibly from a terrorist group." The President sat down in a brown armchair and motioned for the Defense Secretary to sit across from him. And, just like that, we were forgotten. "Sir, the missile will land in four minutes," the Defense Secretary continued. "We have alerted the National Guard but there is no way to evacuate the city in that time."

"The Pentagon has detected no other missiles then," the President stated, his voice dropping an octave lower than when he had greeted us.

"No, sir, not for the time being," the secretary then paused, "Sir, we are waiting for your orders."

It was then, with the potential of World War III looming, that Jim Weatherby fainted and Malcolm Ames peed in his pants. A few of the other Scouts mumbled to each other, trying to understand the situation. With the thud of Jim Weatherby, the President again turned to us and, with a short motion of his hand, informed the tour guide that we were to leave.

"It was then, with the potential of World War III looming, that Jim Weatherby fainted and Malcolm Ames peed in his pants."

"Please follow me this way," the tour guide said to Mr. Hibbard, our Scout master. The guide touched Mr. Hibbard on the arm and repeated herself, snapping Mr. Hibbard out of the zombie gaze he had been in since the door to the oval office had first been opened.

Poor Mr. Hibbard; all he wanted was to take his Scout troop to Washington D.C., get a photo with the President, and buy some souvenirs of the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. You see, Mr. Hibbard had been sending in applications to meet the President for nearly three decades, about as long as he had been leading troop 534 in Greencastle, Indiana. Every year, Mr. Hibbard would fill out the lengthy application and then ask each of us to write a letter to the President explaining all of the things we had done that year with the troop. The trip to the White House had been Mr. Hibbard's dream and I think that he had even picked out a spot on his mantle where he would set the framed picture of him shaking the President's hand. Therefore, it is not surprising that, when we were told to leave, it was simply asking too much and Mr. Hibbard snapped.

"Now wait just a minute!" Mr. Hibbard shouted, pushing both the tour guide and the troop out of the way and stepping into the oval office. Mr. Hibbard only took a few steps before he was pinned to the ground by two secret service men. "We were chosen fair and square," Mr. Hibbard said into the Presidential rug. "I've applied for twenty-eight years... these Scouts deserve..." Mr. Hibbard then said something else which was drowned out by the sound of Billy Thornton screaming in my ear.

"Move into the hallway!" the service man yelled, promptly shutting up Billy Thornton, and then turned towards the President, "I apologize, Mr. President, we'll have them out of here in just a moment." The service man picked up Mr. Hibbard and pushed him towards the door.

"Wait," the President commanded. He stood up and took a step towards Mr. Hibbard. "Let him go. He's right. Let him go." He then turned to us. "I apologize, please, come in."

"But, Mr. President," the Secretary of Defense said and then whispered, "the missile." All of us were frozen, not yet daring to step into the room. There was a long silence as the President turned back to the general. I began to imagine the missile flying through the air as we stood politely in the doorway to the oval office. I then tried to remember if anyone from my school had plans to visit Disneyland.

"Tommy," the President finally said to the secretary, "the Air Force is tracking the missile and, for now, all we can do is wait." He then turned, took two long steps towards us, and held his hand out in front of me. "Hello," he said, "welcome to the White House. I'm the President of the United States."

I, very consciously, extended my hand. I felt sweaty and my Scout uniform itched. "Hello, Mr. President," my voice cracked, "my name is Ronald Jefferson." The President nodded and shook my hand.

"Jefferson," the President replied, "he was a great President; an idol of mine. Are you a fan of Thomas Jefferson, Ronald?" I nodded. "Did you know that Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were the only two presidents to have signed the Declaration of Independence?" I told the President that no, I had not known that. He then patted me on the shoulder and moved on to the next member of the Scout troop. One by one, the President worked his way through our entire troop, shaking hands with each of us, except for Malcolm Ames, who had been escorted to the bathroom. Finally, the President turned to Mr. Hibbard.

"It is an honor," Mr. Hibbard said when the President reached out his hand.

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"So, how long have you been a Scout master?" the President asked as he guided Mr. Hibbard and our troop into the oval office to sit down.

Danny Rutherford and I sat on the red couch, squeezing in next to the Secretary of Defense. He was a large man, dressed in full military attire, and one could tell, even with a jacket on, that he was quite strong. He turned his head and peered down at the two of us and I could tell immediately that he had never been a Boy Scout. The President, however, had and began to tell all of us about his Scout troop.

"I was in Troop 212," the President said and smiled. "Similar to your troop, we were lucky enough to be invited to the White House. It was March of 1963 and we got to meet President Kennedy. It was quite an honor." The President then laughed. "I think that my Scout master, Mr. Clampton, had applied only thirteen years in a row before we were chosen." Mr. Hibbard smiled and seemed to regain some of the pride he had lost from being pinned to the floor.

"I will never forget what President Kennedy said to me." The President leaned in like he was telling a story that was saved for special occasions. "It was probably those words that convinced me to get into politics in the first place." The President paused and, in that

"The President leaned in like he was telling a story that was saved for special occasions."

moment, we were almost able to forget about Orlando.

However, nuclear missiles were not going

to wait for the President's story and, just as he was about to tell us the exact advice President Kennedy had given him, the presidential phone rang.

The President looked coolly over to the Secretary of Defense and then back to us. "I apologize, but I should get that." He walked over to his desk and picked up the phone. "This is the President," he spoke into it. He nodded.

"Mmmm, hmmm. Yes, I understand. Well, thank you very much." He calmly hung up the receiver. He then walked back over to where we were sitting, lowered himself into the chair, and looked over to the Secretary of Defense and nodded. The secretary quickly rose and left the room.

Once the secretary was gone the President sighed and looked down at his hands. "The missile hit Orlando," he said. "The entire city is destroyed." He then looked up and scanned our faces. "I'm sorry that you kids have to be a part of this. This isn't the way you should have to grow up." He then reached up and rubbed his eyes with the tips of his fingers and sighed again. "In just a few minutes here the

General will return. He'll then ask me to decide what we're going to do next, what the United States is going to do next."

It was then that I realized that Danny and I were still crammed into the far corner of the couch while the large space where the secretary had been remained empty next to me. I scooted over a few inches but froze when the couch began to creak. The President looked up.

"You know, not too long from now you are going to be the ones running this country. One of you might even be the president." We all nodded and Danny smiled at the idea of leading the country. I wondered if the President would have time to finish his story about meeting President Kennedy before we were asked to leave. I figured we had a minute, maybe two until the Defense Secretary interrupted us. A clock hung on the wall behind the President. It read 3:13. Below it was a large photograph of the Declaration of Independence.

Everyone was really quiet, waiting for the President to continue. I squinted, trying to find Thomas Jefferson's name at the bottom of the declaration. Then the President asked what will probably be the most important question of my life.

"What do you think we should do?"

The words hung there and, for a moment, the President looked scared. He leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees, and he looked intently from one face to another. "You are the ones who will inherit all of this from us," he motioned with his hands, indicating everything in the room, but I knew that he meant a lot more than that. "You are the ones who will have to clean up whatever messes we make, to right any mistakes..." his voice trailed off and he looked out the window. "What do you think we should do?"

When none of us replied he looked back at us. "The nation will cry out for retaliation. They'll want us to go to war. They'll want us to respond in kind." He then paused. "Do you think we should? Is that best for this country?" Then the President looked directly at me. "Ronald, what do you think Thomas Jefferson would say? What do you think he would do?"

I stared at the President and tried to remember exactly what Thomas Jefferson looked like and if he was the third or the fifth president. I continued to look at the President, unable to turn away. I opened my mouth but nothing came out. I didn't know what to say.

The President finally nodded and smiled. The moment had passed and the man sitting in front of me was the confident leader of our country once more.

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"It is when I have to make important decisions that I always ask myself that. What would the great men that have come before me do in this situation? I think about Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln. I also think about John F. Kennedy and what he said to me." The door then opened and the Secretary of Defense stuck his head in.

"Sir, we're ready for you."

"Well," the President said, "I guess it will have to wait for another time." He slowly rose from his chair and went, one-by-one, shaking hands with each of us before turning and walking out of the room, a parade of secret service men in tow. Just as the President left, our tour guide appeared in the doorway.

"Was that fun?" she asked in a cheery voice and tipped her head to one side. "Why don't you all follow me and we can make our way to the press room. They are setting up right now and, if we're quick we can peek in before they get started." She then tapped her watch. "It's always busy, busy, busy around here."

By that night the United States was at war. By midnight we had bombed three countries and by the next morning we had declared war with three others. The President remained very calm and official throughout it all and at one point

he even quoted Thomas Jefferson. It has been a week now since the war began and, as you know, most of the U.S. cities have been deserted. We lost Cleveland this morning. It was the seventh city to be bombed since Orlando.

Still, everyone is watching the news. That's all there is now. Tomorrow, Danny Rutherford and I are appearing on Oprah. We might be on The Tonight Show next week. Mr. Hibbard was on a few days ago. I wanted to watch it, but my parents said I had to get to bed.

Anyways, I'm not sure about Danny, but tomorrow on Oprah I'm not going to talk about when the President asked us what to do, people have already heard about that. The media keeps asking us how the President acted. What was he wearing? Did he decide on the nuclear strike before or after the missile hit? I think the people of the U.S. should hear something new, something uplifting. I've decided that instead, from now on, I'm going to tell the story that the President told us; the one about when he was a Boy Scout and how he met President Kennedy. That way people will remember better times, times before the war and they'll be reminded that anyone can become President, they'll remember what it is to dream and they'll remember what being an American is all about. Though, I have to admit, even though the President's story is really great, I do wish I knew how it ended.

by JBMulligan

another damned news flash

This just in: The World Didn't end
this time either. Prophets are puzzled,
believers unfazed. Sooner or later
it all will stop, then they'll be right.
Meanwhile the books and shows go on
selling like happiness. Doom and disaster
spice up our lives. There, but for
the grace of God, we'd willingly go
this little while, in Vivicolor
and SuperSound -- then nuke the meat
and curse the bread for being stale,
then thermostat a summer night
and swallow sleep in a bitter pill,
a grave we charge with a golden card.

by Jeff Carter

When I Remember Reagan

When I remember Reagan it's not with
hushed voice and sober gratitude, though
to be clear, I harbor no animosity towards
his memory; let him sleep in peace if he can.
When I remember Reagan I think of the
evil Soviet empire always lurking around the
corner, ready to launch a surprise nuclear attack.
When I remember Reagan I remember
(and say this hissing through your teeth)
the Russians!

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After

After fasting, after days of self-reflection
after prayer comes feasting,
comes celebration.

Music plays and children laugh
as the dates are passed;
the *iftar* meal begins.
And father is home now.
He hugs those children
he so dearly missed.

After detention, after prison-camp interrogation
after captivity comes release,
comes freedom.

Unnoticed comes the bomber
with explosives strapped
to her breasts.
She exploded - ignoring the prophet's words:
*and take not life which Allah has made sacred
except by way of justice and law.*

After detonation, after smoke and burning rubble
after the blast comes blood,
comes death.

Iftar is the meal that is celebrated at the end of the days fasting during the month of Ramadan celebrated by Muslims. On September 16 a female suicide bomber blew herself up among police officers who were celebrating the release of a friend from a U.S. detention camp. At least 20 were killed (including the man who'd been released, his parents, and his two children) and 30 were wounded.

<http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/meast/09/15/iraq.main/index.html?iref=newssearch>

The quotation from the Quran is found at Al-Anam 6: 151.

The Russians

by KJ Hannah Greenberg

When I was a little girl, my parents explained to me that our family had not lived in North America for generations. Like many Jews living in the New World, we harked "from points East." In my family, specifically, those points included Belarus and Romania (the latter being neither part of nor adjacent to Russia, but historically under Russia's sphere of influence. In Romania, for instance, "Rusyn," not "Russian," is among the languages spoken).

As a child, the names of Eastern European sovereignties conjured, for me, images of snowy forests and of quiet villages. I had no concept of international intrigue, of genocide or of the other factors that had impacted the lives of my "Russian" forbearers. At the time, also, I had no more heard of Minsk or of Bucharest than I had of The Jewish Autonomous Oblast, a political oddity situated in the Far Eastern federal district of Russia.

Years passed. My association, in the 1960s, with "things Russian" became a Cold War association. Russians were those people on the other side of the world who wanted to blow up us North Americans, or at least to influence nations, such as Cuba, on our side of the globe. I couldn't see the strata of society in that "classless" system. I couldn't

"At the time, also, I had no more heard of Minsk or of Bucharest than I had of The Jewish Autonomous Oblast, a political oddity situated in the Far Eastern federal district of Russia."

see the regular comrades suffering for want of most goods and moreso for want of most religious practices.

All I understood was that the "Russians" were polluters of ideologies as well as were menaces to my cherished freedoms. *They* had necessitated the Berlin Airlift and *they* had missiles pointed at my country. *Their* spies infiltrated my government and *their* scientists one-upped my intellects in the "space race." I believed it was okay not to like any of *them*.

Another decade rolled by. Russia became a history, among the many histories of people that I had to learn about when studying world cultures in high school.

Historic Russia, unlike the Russia of the 1970s, which I "knew," was a place of champions and of conquest. Historic Russia was rich not only in lumber and in fish, but also in dialects and in customs. Historic Russia was to be admired rather than feared.

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In the 1980s, I lost interest in Russia, not so much because of world events but because I lost interest in most things not related to my specialized studies. I became increasingly insulated in a fabric knit from rhetorical theory and from the history of communication. I wrote papers, I taught courses, and I published research findings. Russia, per say, if it entered my vocabulary at all, entered as a flickering thought, as a sound bite of conversation made with nonacademics. At that point, my Russia, in its guise as the USSR, was a place of international stratagem and of danger. Its society, from my vantage point, looked unstable. Its people seemed unable to critically assess the most fundamental of concepts about freedom, about justice, and about kindred values.

By the 1990s, I had begun to move back into the real world. Russia, too, was returning to her rudimentary nature. I was Blessed to become a parent. Similarly, the USSR deconstructed into Mother Russia and into her many children, into a powerful realm and into those states whose identities were unique, but whose relationship to their motherland endured in the form of language, of commerce, of politics, and of martial powers.

As I shifted my internal focus from axioms and theories to diapers and herbal remedies, I also shifted my

external perspective. Russia evolved, in my mind, into a place of fine arts, especially ballet, of scientific achievement, and of athleticism. Nonetheless, that nation remained a destination to which I had no desire to travel.

In the interim, also in the 1990s, many formerly Soviet Jews immigrated not just to the New World and to other, closer, points, such as Western Europe, but also to Israel. This shuffling of populations would later impact my family and me.

During the cusp that was the beginning of the new (secular) millennium, Russia, and by derivation, Russians, remained largely suspect to me. People who hailed from "beyond the pale" were bright and hardworking, were related to my grandparents and great-grandparents and to the near ancestors of many other New World denizens, but the decades of international unease, to which I was one witness, prevented me from comfortably rubricing Russians alongside of other world citizens.

It is of no surprise, consequently, that when Yours Truly and family made aliyah, one of the first cracks in my idealism was my discovery that approximately ten per cent of the current Israeli population is Russian. Suddenly, "the enemy" was the authority. The "Russians" were my family's doctors, dentists,

To survive in Israel, it was necessary to communicate with "the enemy."

landlord and tax collector. Russian tastes were among the influences on the wares available at the local kosher supermarket and the Russian values of hard work, of patience with ineptitude, and of the preeminence of self-preservation at any cost, began to factor among the hues that colored my life in the Old World.

I was both frightened and dismayed. "Those Russians" were everywhere. The people of distant rivers and evergreen mountains drove my bus, checked my mezuzot, and hemmed my clothes. They owned bookstores, governed synagogues, ran daycare centers and spawned art shops. They were the Israeli government. They were the ulpan teachers. To survive in Israel, it was necessary to communicate with "the enemy."

My Israeli girlfriend, who made disparaging remarks about my Hebrew, at a simcha, in order to encourage me to visit her weekly, for free, personal, tutoring in Hebrew verbs, is Russian. One of my favorite shiurim is given by a rabbi from Russia. One of my most beloved B'not Bayit is Russian.

Some of the Russians who populate Israel arrived during the Second Aliyah, establishing those communist collectives known as kibbutzim, taming the swamps and

living lives of literal hardship in order to better this state for all of us. The Russians who immigrated during the Third Aliyah brought with them additional agricultural know-how and enough wit and courage to help the Haganah succeed. The Russians, who arrived during the post-Soviet aliyah, enhanced Israel's arts and sciences.

There will always be, unfortunately, distracters who regard misguided, socially articulated, attitudes toward select groups of people as proper. There will remain, as well, individuals, indoctrinated in prejudice, who refuse to see realities when those realities smack them across the face. Fortunately, there will forever exist, too, a population of folk willing to grow and change and learn and amend.

To date, I feel excluded when I encounter people whose ways and discourse I don't understand. To date, I feel excited to realize that Jews come in lots of forms; not only are we pale and olive, Western and Eastern, but we are also peoples who might have mistaken each other as foes.

I like some of the Russians I meet and despise others, no more or less than I like or despise individuals of other ethnicities. Not only has my definition of "Israelis" changed after making aliyah, but so too has my definition of "Russians."

The Externalist: A Journal of Perspectives

by Alex Cigale

Sympathy for the President

Particularly when you have been misbehaving your sincerity is palpable. We fitfully feel how badly you wish to believe everything you say, to be a good son and to please everyone.

We see the effort and the strain, the sincere schoolboy's open gaze of earnestness that flashes fleetingly across your cartoonishly expressive face when you have stumbled or

misspoken. It is so extremely difficult if not impossible not to feel sympathetic you so bent upon being liked, playing to the crowd, practicing acting as yourself.

Looking behind for the shadow of a doubt there is no statue of limitations on murder without intent. Somebody's been walking a mile in your footsteps; we commiserate.

This is neither a rant nor a mea culpa. Not knowing any better neither you nor I have had to have any regrets. It is who and what you and I were meant to become.

Both you and I did what we were expected to do.

The Wild Returns to Reclaim the Edges

Young moose let cars pass with hardly a stir
munching on branches along the highway.
Quail, javelina, and mountain lion
strut across the cul-de-sacs in the canyons.

Brown bear with hankerings for human food
break-in and enter houses in the suburbs.
Another coyote is trapped in Central Park.
Weeds and creosote poke through the asphalt.

Trash and pets are both sources of protein;
given food, water, absence of predators –
sanctuary – the most meager niche will do.
Many species prefer human company.

Jar bursting with seed, ants in a sand pile,
tracts of wilderness, equal mysteries.
The wild recognizes no boundaries.
A pest is what proliferates out of control.

Please, Don't Thank Me

by Claire Dietrich

Disclaimer: these views are my own, and do not reflect in any way those of the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Military, or the U. S. Government. Or for that matter, anyone or anything or any institution other than myself.

Try this: be a hot chick. It's not hard. Just run a few times a week and slap on some mascara. Nice boobs also help.

Now, take that hot chick-ness and put it in full military uniform. Flight suit. The kind with the zipper that goes all the way down the front, so you look like an uber-super uniform-powered sex-bot.

Got it? Great. Now try stopping by Wal-Mart after work to pick up a few things. Or go to lunch. Or buy groceries. Or pump gas. Or get your mail.

And try to do it in peace. Because you've worked a long day. And you're tired. And you really just want to be left alone. And you really just want to make it home

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and take a hot bath not engage in a conversation with a total stranger who somehow feels that he has the right to inquire about your job, your work schedule, your background, your training, and whether or not they let a lady "Fly them big airplanes."

And remember to smile and be polite, because, in uniform, you don't just represent yourself. You represent the U.S. Air Force.

Welcome to my world. A world where a woman next to me on an airplane says with the most sincere concern, "Don't you worry about your soul? How can you do what you do?" Or a fellow Christian at church says with the best of intentions, "I could never do your job. I just couldn't kill people." A world where total strangers ask if it's harder to do my job "Because you're a woman?" (The very fact that the question is asked provides the answer). A world where random neighbors stop me and say "Thanks for defending my freedom," before they drive off in their SUVs.

Don't get me wrong. It's great that there is public support for the military. I enjoy going out to lunch and having the waiter tell me that someone has picked up the tab. I'd like to think the reason was because of the uniform, and not because of the uber-super uniform-powered sex-

bot-ness. And I get a little thrill when someone says "Thank you."

But there's a difference between showing support for the troops by thanking them, and asking personal questions, that are, well, personal. Sometimes, though, not everyone gets that. And intrusive questions take the place of a simple, "Hey, thanks for doing what you do."

I don't know you, so please don't feel like you have the right to ask me how my family feels about me serving in the military. We've never met, so please don't ask me what I studied in college that got me the job I have. I have no idea of your security clearance, so please don't try to get information about deployment rotation schedules, or where we are based out of. You are not my college professor, so by all means, keep conversations about changing gender roles and the particular personal challenges that a woman faces in the armed forces, to an academic setting. Chances are we will never see each other again, so please don't ask me if I know you're cousin Henry, from Arkansas, who's serving in the Marines at Camp Pendleton.

But above all, the thing that really, really bugs me (more than the "They let a girl fly airplanes," one) is when people ask about deployments (to overseas locations that rhyme with Iyak or Afmanistan). They ask if I've deployed, ("Yes, four times"), and if/when I'll go again.

I always try to respond upbeat – “Yup, hopefully sometime soon.” Without fail, the reaction is a universal look of concern, as if I’ve just announced, “And I’m planning on getting my legs blown off for Christmas!”

As if it’s okay for me to be serving in the military “over here” where it’s safe, instead of “over there,” where it isn’t. As if it’s okay to thank a service member for their service, but then wince in anguish when she tells you that she is looking forward to get to do the very job that she was trained to do – the very job that the people of the country, by way of elected officials, have asked her to do.

When my father stepped off the airplane at McChord Air Force Base after serving a year in Vietnam , he was greeted with protesters throwing rotten food at him. When I flew home two deployments ago (on a commercial airline) from overseas, a random first-class passenger gave up his first-class seat, so one of the guys who deployed in our group could fly home in first-class.

By and large, the public support for the military that I’ve experienced has been overwhelmingly positive. However, support for service members does not give people the right to ask intrusive questions. Would you ask the bus driver how his parents feel about driving the bus? Do you feel it’s okay to ask

the clerk at the Quickie-Mart if they’ve faced any challenges on the job because of their gender? Do you visibly wince in concerned torment when a fire-fighter tells you that she hopes to get to fight fires?

It’s great that so many people out there want to show concern for the military. May I make a few humble suggestions: check out <http://www.anysoldier.com>. This web-site connects people back home with soldiers deployed. It encourages sending care-packages, and more importantly, letters, to deployed troops. Give money to the USO (<http://www.uso.org>). The USO provides morale, welfare, and recreation type-services for troops both deployed and at home. (I know from experience that after traveling for 37 hours straight, the coffee served at the USO is the best on the planet). I’m not trying to be a commercial here, but there are so many wonderful ways that folks can show support for service members. A quick google search of “Support Our Troops” turned up hundreds of web-sites.

If you want to show you support the troops, a quick, “Hey, thanks,” followed by sending a letter to a wounded vet shows so much more support than trying to engage a tired and cranky Captain on her way home from work in a political debate. Prying into my personal life is not support or concern: it’s prying. Show your support for the service members by sending a letter, a box of cookies, or, heck, a \$5 donation to some foundation. Otherwise, please, don’t thank me.

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by Annie Bien

Waves

The news crackles over the monastery radio. The wheels of the car face the sky, the fire an elemental outburst. A voice silenced by the rifle butt in his mouth. Blood matches the maroon of his robe. The soldier's grimace is a part of his job. The downturned hat a shield. The heap of man on the ground is not a relative in this life who will return in the next life. This soldier refuses to believe in such folklore. The sun provides a blind spot. The monks continue to march. Their lack of defense lights a fuse. They should fear the weapons. The monk on the ground sees these soldiers as breathing corpses – for the time being. The fallen monk sends a windhorse over the globe, spreading words to puncture the pretense of quiet.

Native Tongue

The surgical procedure begins with the removal of consonants. A native could cry out in a vowel but there will be no guttural aspirated end stop.

All written signs in the colonized region will have vowels removed and placed in heaps on the bottom of announcements, as nonsense.

A new native tongue will be sutured in to replace the language removed. A campaign slogan will be injected in the bloodstream

called *Modernization*. Stability of thought will arise by the removal of verbalized emotions, producing peace through numbness.

by Bill Jansen

Per Request (GMAC 1114)

The Department of Percentages
Shall Renew itself in the semi-annual budget
With a 10% increase (footnoted
And adjusted per expected anxiety
For lime juice and vodka

Concepts (wo*k) shall continue to be
An off-budget expense carried forward
From 1946 as part of general downturn
In advantageous horoscopes

In footnote 1.1 page 120000 or Index B:
Concepts shall continue to have such wheels
(or orbits) as square sponges on the Dead Sea slopes
Of Monday morning (or Tuesday afternoon) meetings;
Whereas wo*k shall be carried forward,
As necessary, or convenient and necessary
And likely, if not inconvenient,
When Mrs. Thorpe (who is dead) finishes tuning
The piano (which has been re-ordered).

Said wo*k therefore shall be the wo*k
Which we shall conveniently perform together
After we shall peel a Jamaican Orange
That we shall plant at some future meeting.

T.S. Eliot in his blank grave shall get his groove.
He shall intone with smirking worms in bowler hats:

*You didn't have to shake it
But you did
But you did
But you did
And I thank you.*

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Poem Written In a Garden Shed While History Drips Off a Geranium

I happen to belong
To the People Who Never vote Party.

Similar to The Middle Finger Party
In England and Italy.

But we consider those people soft,
And running dogs, basically.

At our next convention,
Always held in Rockaway Beach, Oregon,
I am going to offer this motion:

That our candidate for President,
During any televised debates,
Respond to any questions by taking a hit
Of Cutty Sark from a Clorox bottle,
and reminiscing about his first grade teacher.

This is the same motion
I was going to make four years ago.

But when I got there
A mermaid sitting on a piece of swirled driftwood
Informed me I was crazy.
There was no-one there,
Not even a sarcastic janitor.

There was just the beach,
Cold waves and wind sweeping the sand.

Judgment Gone Up in Smoke

by Roland Goity

"Don't worry, Dad, you might even enjoy it," Heather said,

"I was raised judiciously and have lived my life the same way."

and debilitating ordeal once the cancer reappeared

before wishing me goodbye and hanging up the phone.

and metastasized. Chemo. Nothing's worse.

An hour has passed since our conversation, and I lie in my woven-rope hammock at the far reaches of the backyard, staring up at a network of Monterey pine branches as a warm breeze rustles about. I haven't felt this way—pleasant, serene—in weeks or months. Dare I say, years?

These days I'm as clean-shaven atop of head as a prison-yard gang-banger, the kind of person I sentenced to life without parole too often to count. Before retirement I was a superior court judge, the Honorable Clayton T. Harper. Now, I'm just Clay. I was raised judiciously and have lived my life the same way. Son of a military officer, grew up in Biloxi, Mississippi; Huntsville, Alabama; Fort Bragg, North Carolina, not to mention a number of foreign countries, islands and jurisdictions. On my mother's side was a family steeped in Pentecostal religion, a grandfather who was a minister. So whenever it came to down to the unethical, the illegal and the "verboten," a clear line was drawn.

Lately, you see, I haven't felt much like living. Fact is some days I'm disappointed to wake from sleep and realize that I still have a pulse, am still breathing. I've got lung cancer and just started a second go-round of chemo treatment. Once I finished six months of such hell a couple of years ago, I swore I'd never do it again. Planned to just let the cancer run its course when it made its reappearance and let it eat me alive. Peggy had already passed away, the house had grown lonesome, and, aside from Heather and her family and a few friends and colleagues, I didn't—and don't—have much to live for. So maybe it's an inordinate *will* to live, or perhaps it's simply a cowardly fear of death, but for whatever reason I decided to endure this sickening

I realize the irony of my own beliefs and past actions now, as I sink lower in the hammock and watch squirrels bound from one branch to another fifty feet above me, as if they were trapeze artists, funambulists of the pines. I'm in awe of their grace, of their unparalleled skill and courage. All I need to complete the moment is a bag of hot-roasted peanuts like my dad used to buy for us at the circus

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when I was a kid. Seems I've developed quite an appetite this afternoon.

What's enabled me to finally quell the nausea, to inhibit the slow poison that's one way or another becoming the death of me, is just a few puffs from a doctor-prescribed marijuana cigarette—one of my "joints." I'm stoned I guess you'd say, but it's not as I'd ever expected. It's not a terrifying, jump-through-a-window experience, not at all. Really, it's quite a delight. I'm almost ready to believe that the lung cancer damage from decades of smoking Southern tobacco can be undone—or at least put on hold—by smoking a greener leaf grown here in my home state of California. If my mouth weren't so dry at this moment I might even whistle.

Soon I'll head inside, head to the kitchen. There I'll fetch myself a mineral water and fix a sandwich to make even Dagwood proud. I envision piling cold cuts and provolone within mayonnaise-soaked slices of sourdough bread, loading my creation with sprouts, tomatoes, onions and avocado, too. I might empty half my refrigerator in the process! A giggle escapes me as just the thought of eating such a meal is a happy novelty in itself. During my recent treatment I've lost nineteen pounds, which doesn't sound like much, perhaps, until you consider

that I'm down to 138 overall. And that I'm six foot one.

The marijuana has done the trick; it's relieved the nausea and given me an appetite. Not to mention, it's made me feel light of mind and body, and so relaxed I feel as if I've had my back and shoulders lovingly karate-chopped by a Swedish masseuse or spent an entire afternoon in a hot tub. I can't believe how naïve I've been about this drug (an entire lifetime!). And, at this moment, I start to recall some of my decisions based on what I only now realize were mistaken beliefs, and find the memories unsettling. My ongoing—but principled—stand against marijuana disrupted so many lives, so many families. Including my own.

I can only guess how many inmates are still behind bars thanks to the sentences I doled out relating to marijuana growing, possession and distribution. Hundreds for sure. Thousands possibly. And those sentences include ones handed to people whose lives had become debilitated and who had doctor's prescriptions for medical marijuana at the time of their arrests. People like me, today. Such judgment earned me the moniker Judge *Harsher* on the opinion pages of the local Bay Area newspapers and in the offices of every criminal defense attorney within in a five-hundred mile radius of the courthouse. The nickname, of course, was a natural.

In the case of my son, John, I made a decision out of the court record more than thirty years ago, one made solely in our family household.

But now, as my body tingles to the comforting effects of the medically advocated THC from my “funny” cigarette, the rulings I imposed on the orange jump-suited faceless, who at one time stood before me, don’t bother me nearly as much, even when considered in-toto, as the unpardonable pain I inflicted upon members of my beloved family. Decisions that were rendered under differing ends of the emotional spectrum: one a form of tough love; the other inspired by the blind faith of compassion.

In the case of my son, John, I made a decision out of the court record more than thirty years ago, one made solely in our family household. One morning, as he underwent football instruction, bleary-eyed, during the early morning portion of one of his two-a-days for the JV football squad of his high school, Peggy cleaned his room as a special surprise; it was his fifteenth birthday. Well, the real surprise came with her discovery of a paper grocery bag filled with little plastic baggies of pot. Of course, there was anything but the planned birthday celebration that evening when John returned from practice. And his real present that year was a

belated one: I sent him along the path marked by his grandfather’s footsteps, to a military academy in the Ozarks. A better fate, I told him, than if he appeared before me in court and left himself to the strike of my gavel. John said I was a fool for being duped by the propaganda of “Reefer Madness.” I told him he was the fool. Now I realize he may have been right.

John and I rarely spoke after that. Almost never, really. He remained closer to his mother and sister; even now he phones Heather’s family or sends them a postcard. He’s been divorced twice, and has—perhaps ironically, perhaps not (in this case, I’m not fit to judge)—endured a battle with the bottle for his entire adult life. Heather tells me he’s been drifting, on and off the streets, in and out of halfway houses for the past year. She met him for coffee not that long ago. Said he’s a good soul, that’s what she thinks. But said he’s so disheveled, he looks like the sort of fellow whose appearance people try to remember “just in case.” The kind of guy one might need to describe to a police officer should pipe bombs be found by city hall, should someone’s school-age daughter go mysteriously missing.

My wife Peggy’s story is entirely different. But it too is one that has ties to my antiquated mindset concerning the drug. Because of it I came to a decision I’ve grown uncomfortable with over the years, even ashamed of, especially recently

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when I ultimately decided to obtain a prescription to purchase product from the nearby cannabis club that I long declared was disreputable, an "insidious purveyor of sin."

When the back pain from Peggy's osteoarthritis got so severe that tears would well in her eyes when she tried to move, Heather suggested medical pot as a way to help douse the worst fires in her mother's burning back. Peggy begged her off the subject for more than a year, but one day Peggy confided to me that she wasn't so sure it wasn't worth the risk. That the ongoing ordeal with her lower back was crippling her. I told her it was her decision, but first I wanted her to hear me out. Then I went on some ill-reasoned diatribe about living one's life the right way, avoiding short cuts and accepting God's will. Sanctimonious, yes, but heartfelt as well. She capitulated to my wishes and the pain lingered until her dying day, not long after, from congenital heart failure. I was proud of her for not caving in.

Now, at this moment, an amazing thing is happening. I can squint my eyes and easily flash on images of Peggy, Heather, too. It's so intense; I can picture them vividly, just as they once were. Probably an effect from the marijuana, and, if so, another feather in its cap. Good stuff. Real good.

But now I wonder: My wife ...my son ...my fellow citizens. It's overwhelming to think about my narrow-minded past in terms of what I've just learned in my immediate present, in the last hour or two. My ignorance on the matter of marijuana curses me in reflection. Yet, I'm almost euphoric thinking about the possibilities ahead. The treatment that kills me (but keeps me alive) won't be as difficult to endure if this afternoon's any indication. In fact, as long as I don't build up an immediate tolerance to the pot (the possibilities of which I'm unaware, one way or the other), then I think there may actually be some good times ahead. I can foresee puffing away on my prescription joints like a Jamaican musician before taking in the squirrels' high-wire act in the branches from the comfort of my hammock as a daily routine. Why not?

The pangs of hunger continue to arrive, so strongly now that I roll out of the hammock in a beeline for the backdoor that leads to the kitchen. The behemoth on rye I contemplated earlier might need to wait just a bit, as I've become so ravenous I can't take the time to satisfy my sandwich cravings; I need instant gratification. And I recall a quart of rocky road ice cream stored in the back of the freezer I bought some weeks ago. My famously infamous sweet tooth has abandoned me of late, because of the chemo, but as of this moment it's returned full throttle. I grab a

spoon from the sink-side utensil drawer, pivot effortlessly to the fridge, and swing open the freezer, sending my right arm to its nether reaches. Within seconds I flip off the carton lid and send it skidding onto the kitchen counter. Then I dig into the ice cream with the sophistication of a raccoon on a midnight run diving headfirst into a neighbor's beckoning garbage.

Mmm, mmm ...it tastes fantastic! Otherworldly! Once again, I'm actually able to enjoy one of life's simple pleasures. I spoon the chocolaty goodness with its walnuts and marshmallows mindlessly into my mouth, as if I'm a mechanized cog in an assembly line, my tongue a conveyer belt to move ice cream from the tip of the spoon to its final resting place in my stomach. I'm on the verge of brain freeze, but a powerful inspiration strikes before the thought process is frozen solid: I need to act, and act now! Need to let people know what I've discovered today should others be as ignorant as I've been. Let them in on some common sense. Set the record straight.

Soon I'm in my study, at my desk, my computer. *Dear Editors*, I write, and then writer's block immediately takes hold, so I jot down some simple notes further down on the page. Thoughts I'll need to express eloquently but concisely. It will take considerable time to write the letter to my

ultimate satisfaction, but I'm pleased and grateful to have such an opportunity to have my voice be heard. My name and stature carry some cachet in the legal and publishing worlds. I'll have a platform from which to speak on the subject of medical marijuana unlike any other. No one gets both sides of the issue like I do.

My letter will appeal the federal government's crackdown on medical marijuana growing and distribution based on grounds of improper bias. Bias for the antiquated laws of our nation and bias against alleviating the pain of those who suffer. Bias for whatever special interests fight to keep such laws in place (perhaps those who saw fit to sell me the products that led to my lung cancer) and bias against those of doctors, caregivers, researchers and scientists whose professions entail them to know what's best.

I will let the world know that Judge *Harsher* is a relic. He is "no more." Clay Harper has sentenced him to death, so that he himself can live.

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by Arthur Durkee

On Writing Poetry Criticism While Watching "Jeremiah Johnson"

Crow attack singly, honor
bound up in killing the singular enemy

wagons trail-stuck, mired in ice
a priest who desecrates the holy grounds
of others without irony

priesthood of grammar on the defensive
wagons of literary ideologies circling
attacked on all sides by the savage dissenters
what's a good word-slave to do

make a cabin till it burns
a good horse, fresh air
no one to bother you
occasional meetings with one's countrymen

enough for any poet in the mountains of the mind

by Grant Clauser

The Tao of Waiting for the Train to take me to Work

This time the birds are crows
chasing a blue jay across a field.
The crows scatter then recombine
looking like herring parting and merging
around a snapping tuna.
Ah tuna, and me fishing in a blue calm
on a white boat chasing crowds
of frantic baitfish
under just enough clouds
to give the sky character.
But don't get me off subject.
The morning's cold. The train is late,
and the automatic message sign is broken.
Ten thousand things in my office haunt
more than any black cemetery field full of ravens.
There should be a koan about this,
one to wake me to the mystery that is a hated occupation,
that proves there's joy and love and serenity
hidden between lines in a budget breakdown,
in a planning meeting or action item.
What would Lao Tzu say about the crows?
That they are true? That they are unkind?
Enlightened maybe, like this poem,
because it cannot be understood.

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Contributor Notes

Annie Bien's first playwriting commission: Soho Theatre Company in London. Poetry includes: *Autumn Sky, Centrifugal Eye, Kaleidowhirl, Mimesis, Flutter, Bumbershoot*. Fiction: *Six Little Things, The Wonderful World of Worders*. Shortlists: a Pushcart Nominee, Strokestown 2007 International Poetry Competition, Keats-Shelley Prize 2007, *Templar Poetry Anthology* 2008, 3rd Place Biscuit Poetry Competition 2008. Her love: studying Tibetan Buddhist text translation with Robert Thurman and Lozang Jampal at Columbia University.

Zachary C. Bush, 25, is a writer of poetry and prose. He is the author of six chapbooks & three full-length collections of poetry...two of them are forthcoming in 2009 through *VOX Press* [Oxford, MS] and *BlazeVOX Books* [Buffalo, NY]. He has new work appearing in *Lamination Colony, Elimae, decomP, Willows Wept Review, [out of nothing], Word Riot, Abjective, Gold Wake Press, Calliope Nerve*, and other venues. ZCB is pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing from the City College of New York. He is the editor of [K O R A](#).

Jeff Carter is a youngish pastor of a medium-sized congregation in southern Minnesota. He is a husband of one and a father of two. He writes mostly for his church and for himself, but has recently allowed himself to be persuaded that others might be interested in reading his work.

Alex Cigale's poems and translations can be found in *Colorado, Green Mountains*, and *North American reviews*, in *Stranger at Home: American Poetry with an Accent*, and in *Crossing Centuries: The New Generation in Russian Poetry*. He was born in Chernovtsy, Ukraine in 1963 and has lived in New York City since 1975 apart from six years at the University of Michigan where he won a Hopwood Award. During the 90s, he published five big issues of a well-received journal based on Found Poetry and called *Synaesthetic*.

Grant Clauser is the editorial director at a small Philadelphia-based publishing company and editor-in-chief for *E-Gear magazine* (www.e-gear.com), a consumer electronics magazine. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Hatfield, PA. Poems have appeared in various literary journals over the years including *The Literary Review, Painted Bride Quarterly, The Wisconsin Review, The Maryland Poetry Review, Birmingham Poetry Review* and others plus a TV show about bass fishing.

Claire Dietrich earned her BA and MA in Drama from San Francisco State University. She's a Captain in the Air Force and an instructor navigator on the EC-130H aircraft. When she's not out and about doing secret spy plane stuff, she oversees the writing of annual performance reports and decorations for 135 Air Force personnel. She lives in Tucson, Arizona. This is her first publication.

Arthur Durkee is an award-winning composer/performer and recording artist, photographer and digital artist, and poet. His current project incorporates his music, photography, and poems into original short non-narrative films.

This year, **KJ Hannah Greenberg's** lightly pert and somewhat exuberant writing has been published or accepted for publication by: *365 Tomorrows, AlienSkin Magazine, AntipodeanSF, Bards and Sages, Bewildering Stories, Doorknobs and Bodypaint, Fallopian Falafel Zine, Flashshot, G. Stern's Hag Samaiach Anthology, Hamodia, Joyfull!, Ken*Again, Language and Culture Magazine, Literary Mama, Mishpacha's Family First, Mom Writer's Literary Magazine, Morpheus Tales, Parenting Express, Poetica Magazine, Poetry Super Highway, Static Movement, Miriam Liebermann's the Best is Yet to Be, The Blue Jew Yorker, The Clarity of the Night, The Externalist, The Jerusalem Post, The Jewish Woman, The Mother Magazine, The New Vilna Review, Tuesday Shorts, Unfettered Verse, and Word Catalyst.* When not writing, Hannah tends to her imaginary hedgehogs and to her not-so-small children. She does takes away their marshmallow fluff, though, if they fail to clean their rooms.

Tai Dong Huai, a 2008 Pushcart Prize nominee, was born in Taizhou, China. "The Island" is from her collection in progress, *I Come From Where I've Never Been*. Other selections have appeared, or are scheduled, in *Smokelong Quarterly, elimae, Pindeldyboz, Thieves Jargon, Wigleaf, Word Riot, The Rose & Thorn*, and other terrific places.

Bill Jansen lives in Forest Grove, Oregon.

Raina J. León, Cave Canem graduate fellow (2006) and member of the Carolina African American Writers Collective, has been published in *Natural Bridge, African American Review, OCHO, Black Arts Quarterly, Poem.Memoir.Story, Boxcar Poetry Review, Salt Hill Journal, Xavier Review, MiPoesias, Gathering Ground: A Reader Celebrating Cave Canem's First Decade*, and *Growing Up Girl: An Anthology of Voices from Marginalized Spaces* among others. Her first collection of poetry, *Canticle of Idols*, was a

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finalist for both the Cave Canem First Book Poetry Prize (2005) and the Andres Montoya Poetry Prize (2006) and is now available through Wordtech Communications.

JBMulligan has had poems and stories in dozens of magazines, including recently, *Tattoo Highway*, *Argestes*, *Tonopah Review*, *Cyclamens and Swords*, *Short Story* and *Blue Unicorn*, and two chapbooks: *The Stations of the Cross* and *THIS WAY TO THE EGRESS*, and has appeared in the anthology *Inside Out: A Gathering of Poets* (<http://www.geocities.com/annejohn2003/index.htm>).

Fara Spence is a twice published novelist who lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her novel *That Hurt Thing* was nominated for a Sunburst award. She received a poetry award from Memorial University, and a collection of her poetry was recently published in *The Smoking Poet*. She is currently at work on her third novel. Her website is www.faraspence.com.

Gavin Tierney grew up in Boulder, Colorado. He has been nominated for The Pushcart Prize and The Best of the Net Anthology. His writing has been published in *The Boston Phoenix*, *The Wisconsin Review*, *WordRiot*, *Salt River Review*, *The Circle*, *Toasted Cheese*, and *SNReview*. Gavin is also founding member of *Ice Tongue*, Antarctica's only literary magazine, and has participated in postgraduate writing classes and workshops at the University of Colorado, The Richard Hugo House, and Lighthouse, being taught by individuals such as Alice Acheson, Robert McBrearty, Alexandre Philippe, and Susan Zwinger. He is a part of a small writing group that has met weekly for over seven years. Gavin currently lives in Seattle, Washington and teaches, among other things, creative writing and film studies at a small alternative high school. He can be reached at gpw_tierney@hotmail.com