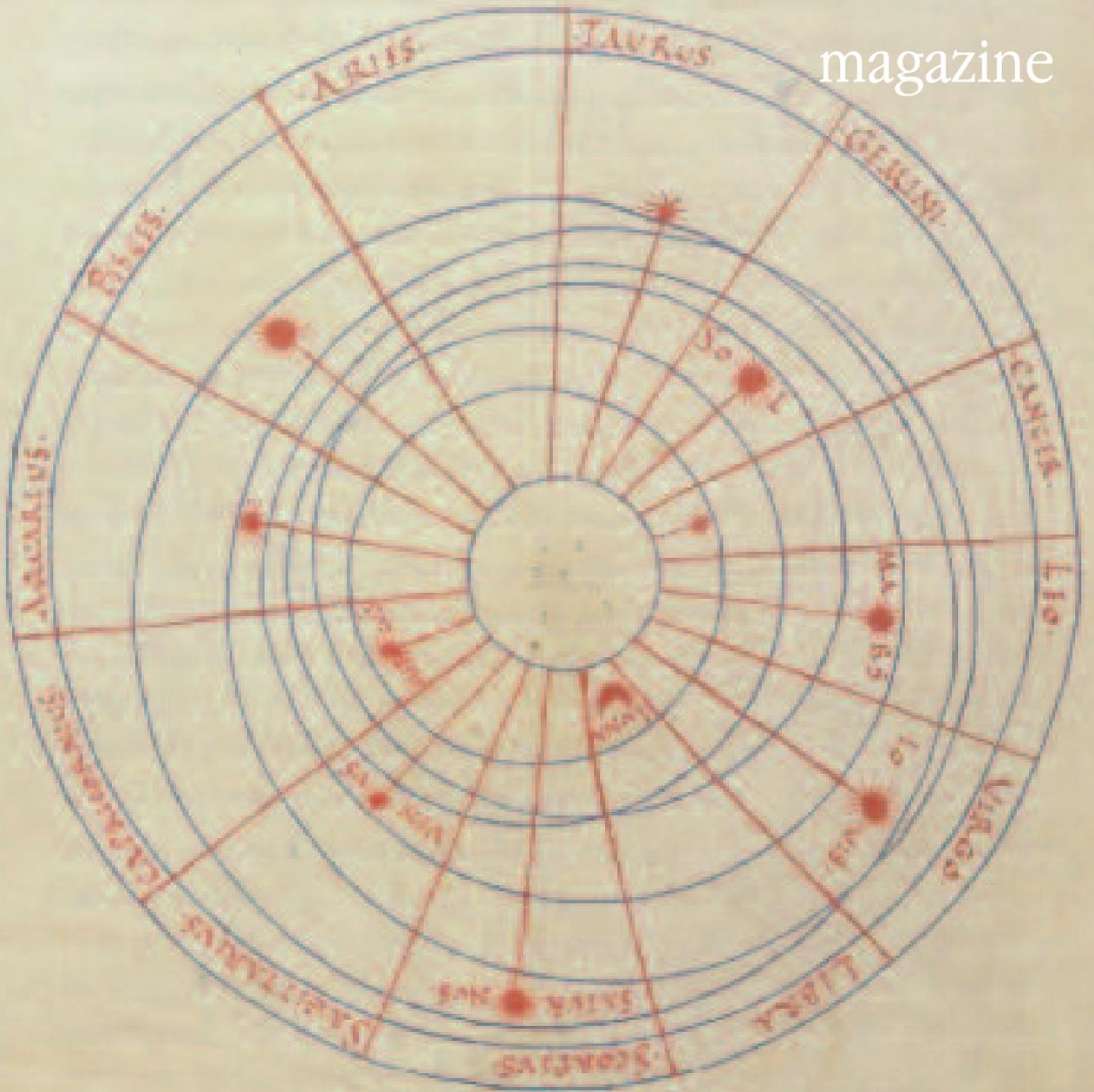


April 2019

# The Blotter

magazine



The South's Unique, FREE, International Literature and Arts Magazine

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Martin K. Smith..Publisher-at-Large, Treasurer  
Marilyn Fontenot.....Director of Development  
Laine Cunningham.....Publishing Consultant  
Brace Boone III.....Marketing Advisor  
Richard Hess.....Programs Director  
T.J. Garrett.....Staff Photographer

Subscriptions Contact:  
Martin K. Smith  
M\_K\_Smith@yahoo.com  
919.286.7760

Advertisers Contact:  
Martin K. Smith  
M\_K\_Smith@yahoo.com  
919.286.7760

Submissions and Editorial Business to:  
Jenny Haniver  
mermaid@blotterrag.com

Garrison Somers, Editor-in-Chief  
chief@blotterrag.com

919.869.7110 (business hours only! you may  
call for information about snail-mail submissions)

Marketing & Public Relations Contact:  
Marilyn Fontenot  
marilyng\_fontenot@gmail.com  
919.904.7442

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## “National Poetry Month”

It’s a thing and I’m not cynical about it, nor snide, nor dismissive, nor judgmental. I do wonder why it’s national. If there is anything not bound by the rules of law or markings on a map, it’s poetry. Poetry bends its knees to a higher authority - form and image and rhythm and beauty. It knows no boss or dictator or critic that it consistently respects - despite what you learned with your Norton open to page 277. Poetry only knows the love that you have for that piece that breaks your heart every time, or makes you laugh when you didn’t think you would again, or because she wrote it and that means everything. Poetry is only personal, it is only what you like, and doesn’t actually care why. You don’t have to explain yourself to poetry. All else is commentary, as Dad used to say. Just noise.

But, as a friend said, how do we ensure that poetry goes on and that it is still...good?

Good like how? I asked.

Good like...Gerard Manley Hopkins. Like Emily Dickinson. Like Maya Angelou. Like William Butler Yeats. Like Pablo Neruda.

Good? Oh, you mean popular?

No, he bristled I mean good.

Good for you? I pressed. What makes them good?

And he proceeded to explain form and beauty and meter and other things and when he took a breath, I asked him how he liked his steak cooked. He frowned and said “medium-well, with a sprinkle of gorgonzola atop. I told him that this sounded good, but I prefer mine rare with mustard-butter. One man’s steak....

How will poetry go on? You. And you. Reading, writing, sharing, crafting, editing, reciting, submitting, publishing. Any or all of those. Scribbling in composition books, shouting on the streetcorners, picking up the dropped mic and whispering into the ether. Telling second graders to write a poem about...something. Anything.

And National Poetry Month? Yeah, well. I must admit that it has enough gravitas and receives sufficient notice that only good can come from it. I made my first attempts at poetry when I was thirteen. Many would say that I’m still making my first attempts. I have no aspirations nor misconceptions that I am a poet, and have very little respect for the proprieties of gentlefolk, but I like to mess with words, and when you find something you like to mess with, well, who’s hurt by that? Anyhow, here you go....

### “Freezer Burn”

Some state our world will end in great white balls of pointless fire.  
Still others, idiots mostly, claim that it will merely fizzle.  
And if the curtain falls tonight, 'twas I, in righteous ire,  
that gobbled up the Breyers, with a Hershey's syrup drizzle.

I pushed great gobs of happiness into my gaping maw  
not thinking a New York minute on a lactose-intolerant gut,  
for this evening's news led me to believe they play “win, lose or draw,”  
and no one cares a future whit about emanations from my butt.

I imagined that you wouldn't mind, being already fast asleep,  
while I stealthily loaded the dishwasher, and started  
on up to bed, sans my usual thud-and-peep,  
when, teeth brushed and fresh pajama'd, under the covers... I farted.

In truth, I launched a crepitation so obtrusive that it woke  
you, and you looked at me with a drowsy smile and sniffed and so did I,  
and oh my god – I kid you not – this was no simple methane joke.  
I most heinously blamed the dog with a rolling of my eye.

I'm sorry about that my darling, no harm intended; this time tomorrow  
we and the pooch will be splats of charcoal, our lives an ether-dream.  
One must be around to feel the nostalgic pang of regret, or sorrow,  
so never mind I licked the last sweet spoon of Rocky Road ice cream.

They say that blame is for fools and little children, ah, well...  
So if by happenstance the madmen's work remains undone,  
I paved with good intentions my own slippery road to hell  
with a coupon I left on the counter, two-fer the price of one.

**Garry - [chief@blotterrag.com](mailto:chief@blotterrag.com)**

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in the Great State of Georgia!



The Blotter Magazine, Inc. (again, a 501(c)3 non-profit) is an education concern. Our primary interest is the furthering of creative writing and fine arts, with the magazine being a means to that end. We publish in the first half of each month and enjoy a free circulation throughout the Southeast and some other places, too. Submissions are always welcome, as are ad inquiries.

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CAUTION

*Get on your feet!!*

## “Ode to a Rising Sun”

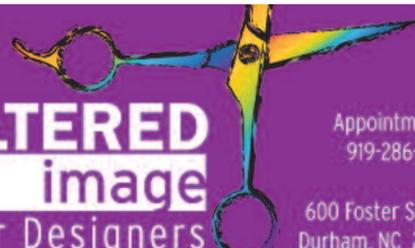
by Tom Sheehan

Out of the edge of earth,  
out of choice darkness mixed with silt  
and angry acids that form of fire,  
out of secret caverns rocking in the deep,  
out of stone moving liquefied  
which is but a sea we float on,  
out of distance,  
out of death-wracking night,  
out of fear of childhood,  
out of nightmares and terror shrieks,  
out of ignorance, out of shame of thoughts  
sitting like pebbles on the soul,  
dark black pebbles,  
out of the songs of frenzied air,  
out of the mouth of monster bird  
cast from an angry god’s hands,  
freed from the moon at endless wait,  
escaping from a debtor’s prison  
partly in rags and partly in pain,  
heaved upward like a mason’s block  
to the next tier of gray waiting,  
on the hilltop comes the sun.

Before it, pell-mell fleeing,  
scudding down alleyways,  
across corners, stoops, half granite  
walls where houses used to be,  
through windows and mirrors  
and the wiliest of laces



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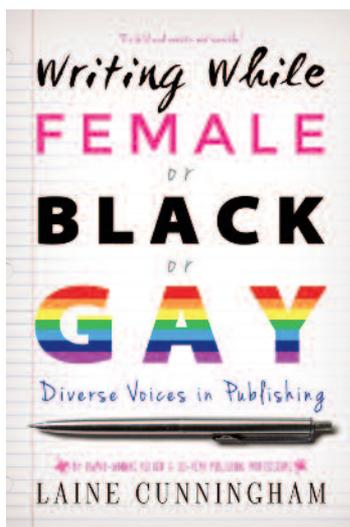
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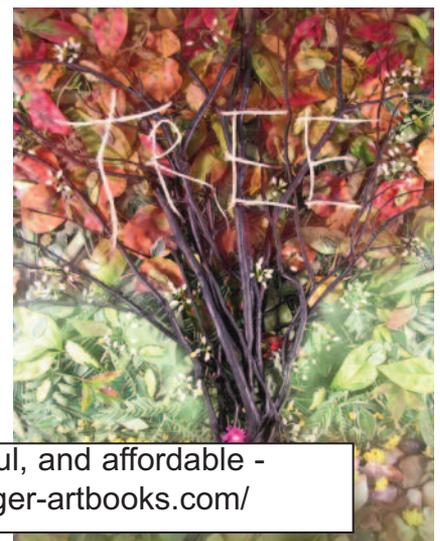
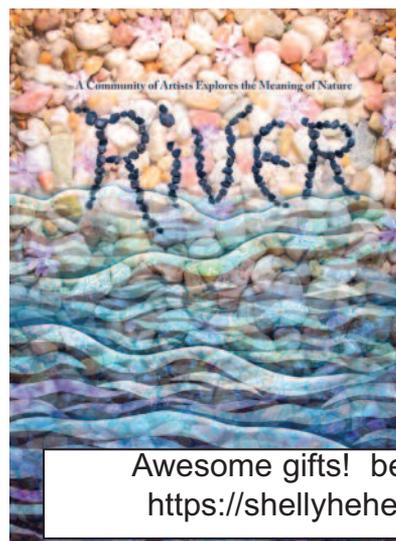
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where night collects itself  
 in a host of aromas, the shadows  
 go quickly before the miracle  
 hunting them down, at chase,  
 at wild pursuit, leaping one wall  
 to the next, one huge lunge  
 across barriers, time, as if breath  
 will expire too quickly again.

I listen. The sizzle starts:  
 limbs grating each other. Horns  
 and klaxons announcing.  
 Clocks unwinding. Linens cracking  
 their sheer porcelain deposits  
 only odors can tell of.  
 Percolators, motors, engines,  
 dynamos, all huffing and puffing  
 and snorting Orion away.  
 Pulses and electricity  
 beating at the lines, the mad energies  
 of beginnings.  
 Being heard, being sound,  
 being echoes and static-filling air waves.  
 Being noise, 3 A.M. surprises,  
 movement and energy and time happening  
 to inertia and all its cached parts.  
 Being lifebelts to jet darkness.  
 Being chance. Being opportunity



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all the way into something new.

Hardness gathers in the sunlight,  
artifacts of mining and distillery,  
elements from miner's foot and glazier's  
thumb, copper tubing, greened-up brass,  
old galvanized iron tongues still wagging,  
PVC like a saint among water carriers  
hardly getting dirty like Din Din Din,  
porcelain dishes and ewers with light  
cherry trimmings faint as postage stamps,  
buckets and ladles catching at breaths  
before sudden plunges down Earth's throat,  
bring morning's water to a thousand hands.

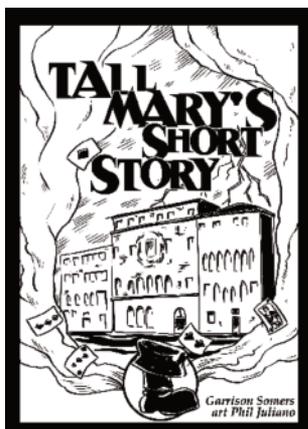
At Earth edge the worm shudders, recoils,  
goes gelatin. Earth shakes with a robin's  
sprint across a quick lawn, as if drummers'  
batons beat on. He spears the tubed, eyeless  
thing, soft telescopic escapee just now  
plowing into loam. Warning signs are warm.

Bridges, high arcs measuring new light,  
fields and fields of steel and concrete,  
I-bars and T-bars and girders and purlings  
and struts and bolts and nuts and plates  
by the high acre, and expansion joints  
as devious as grill work begin to stretch  
their backs, spread a little more to east  
or west or north and south, begin to stuff  
themselves into corners barely up for stuffing,  
cast off their chilled auras, breathe outward  
under the new caress, touch of secret places,  
mouth of morning touching where it touches best.  
Steel stretches into sunlight.  
You can hear it flex its muscles.

Windows, like incorrigible children.  
 Talk back: skyscraper faces, greenhouses.  
 Across the street a woman's room leaps  
 with the explosion. She could be nude  
 behind that glow! A car's windshield  
 becomes a moving target, throws flares  
 at the enemy. Chrome answers too,  
 tracer streaks of gunships, firefights,  
 strafing upward from an inversion of light  
 and war and outside forces and death  
 of darkness; hallway corners, dank and drear  
 and wet with blood, give up the fight.  
 Under stairs, attics, old coal bins webbed  
 and smelling of gas under a spider's  
 collection of glass and flies and moths  
 silent for eternity, throw in the sponge.

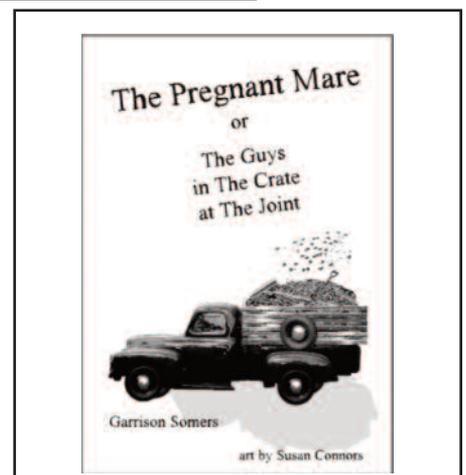
Windows answer like gunshots, bomb blasts.  
 Dawn grenadiers. Calligraphers. Signalers.  
 Corps upon corps of morning glass, cohorts  
 of the inner anvil, armies, legions of light,  
 great stationary convoys basking split seconds  
 in the arc of an eternal flame.

But then, I get warm.  
 A bird, retreated on a dark bough,  
 umbrellaed under leaf canopy,  
 glad for morning, worm sights,  
 a level of breeze he can climb on,  
 part fingers of his wings on thermals,  
 hellos me all the way inside out.



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On Amazon - of course....

He is crisp and clear and singular.  
He is unique and melodious and real,  
the torrents of his heart pounding  
on the slanted shelves of air, his notes  
as sure as rungs on a ladder of resonance  
lifting the aria to an unknown strata,  
flinging it over the slow river slowly  
filling up with silvering of day,  
cascading song and joyous light  
and energy of a mountain breeze,  
being emptied of all its goodness.

In the morning mountains, like sundaes  
piled high with sweet textures, explode.  
I catch the mouthy shrapnel they throw  
into the battle dawn wages.  
It is rare beauty on the fly, beams  
and sunshine flares and streams and colossal  
stripes of golden air coming through clouds  
hanging loose as line-hung blankets.  
Mountains are the first to get the sun,  
heaving upward white cones of snow  
as brilliant as stars, as sure and as steady  
as old men who know all answers  
and give off such illumination.

But you there, at the crossroads of this day,  
looking across the inviolate stretch  
of gray light we suddenly find between us  
yet joining us, must find ignition as spectacle  
born in the rigors of yesterday's soul.  
You, too, know the upshot of this new coming,

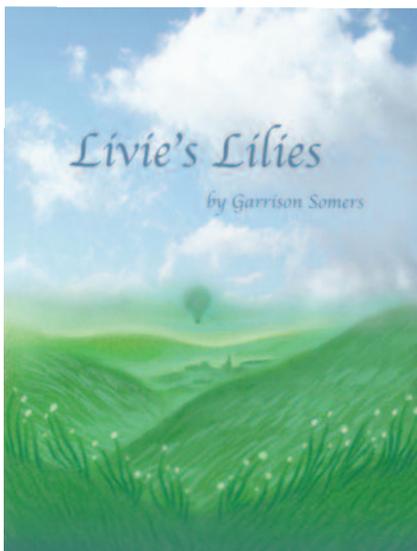


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the bird, the fire, the breath as deep as stone.  
You, too, must linger where the sun warms first,  
the first warm spot of the day, the bay window  
broad as an ax sweep, a piece of porch tilted  
under a pine, door stoop white as first thoughts,  
a path between corrupt oaks and sleek birches,  
a blanket where your hand falls to rest,  
the place in your eye reserved for sudden starts  
when you think all about your being is still dark  
and the nightmare is the bark of wild dogs  
crawling down the banners of your mind  
like spiders of light on the move.

When it all goes down, when the bet  
is paid off and all markers set straight,  
the sun comes at singular entry, warm shot,  
its two fingers of life into my glass.



Find it on Amazon.com



## "I as a Verb"

By CjF

I'd like to laugh again  
To stand upon the damage  
And not to cry  
I'd like to say I – again  
Fiercely.  
To put my being  
Back into the world  
I'd like the fear to pass  
The shame to pass  
To have the shame  
Washed  
Washed away  
To never forget that place  
Of disagreement  
Of sadness  
Of bereavement  
When confusion persists.

I in relation to you  
One being  
In relation to that which brought us

I in a world of them  
I in relation to suffering  
I as a verb  
I in relation to brutality  
I in relation to the one

Without you  
There can be no i.

I as a verb.

Then I slept last night  
Beneath tall trees  
Never culled.  
I as a verb  
Tree as a verb  
The root of our tongue  
We as a verb

We rocks appear – to, not  
Move.  
Because we  
Move too fast  
Expecting unending growth  
Within a we  
Which  
Has resources  
Encouraged slowly over billions of years.

We as a verb.  
Rocks included.  
I, I, I  
We – as – a – verb  
There are so many things  
I  
As a  
Noun  
Cannot carry  
Alone  
But the seas, now She and I  
We sing  
Of the breeze,  
Whose identity is Chosen day to day.

We – are – in need – of no cash  
Only the common  
We as a verb

Apex predator as noun  
Begin your withdrawal  
Now  
Sweaty you are with effort  
Hollow – no sense of hunger  
Nor of want  
Just to be high again  
To feed upon your own.  
Begin your withdrawal  
Now  
Calculate the common

Consider I is not a noun.

## “Story”

By Dr. Lisa Baron

You can write your “now” story

You are not your old story.

You can spin a piece of who you were and who you hope to be..

Choose the colors, fabric, thread, and spin away,

There is no seamless life....

## West Moss

Editor, Story Doctor, Manuscript Consultant

West is an award-winning writer. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *McSweeney's*, *Salon*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *The Blotter*, and elsewhere. She teaches writing at Gotham in NYC, and at the university level.

“West is genuinely interested in people and writing, and is willing to share her experience and dedication to the craft of writing.” — Robin Caine

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## “On Becoming A Woman”

Likes and dislikes have nothing  
to do with it.  
Puberty happens.  
The red-stained Kotex happens.  
She’s wearing some guy’s pin.  
It pricks a little  
but that’s not where she’s really bleeding.  
Her mother says  
“you’re a very lucky person”  
or something to that effect.  
But her hands smell  
no matter how long  
she washes them under the tap.  
And there’s that matter  
of disposing of the tampon,  
wrapping it in tissue,  
tossing it in the garbage.  
Through all the pain,  
she hung around the house  
remembering sad occasions,  
taking pity on herself.  
And her mother insisted  
it was proof of something.  
Like the force of nature.  
And she was in its way.

### Friendship, loyalty, nostalgia, and the joy and healing power of music...

A Southern college town and its thriving local music scene, where the music’s neither “sacred” nor “profane” so long as it’s good...

A lost tape of a beloved band’s legendary show...  
A record label, poised to break big, which certain people want to be part of - by any means necessary...

Two visitors, whose own music has been muted by regrets over long-ago bad decisions: Chuck McDonough, former grad student, who skipped town after learning things about himself he couldn’t face; and Penny Froward, whose attempt to help a friend in danger almost destroyed another woman’s life...

A mysterious will by an unknown hand; and murder...

Blotter Books presents:

### *All Tomorrow’s Parties*

by Mary Smith

*“Publishers & book reviewer, ‘The Blotter Magazine,’ contributor to the ‘Urban Hiker,’ former host of ‘New Frontiers’ and ‘Laugh Tracks’ on WXXI - FM, Duke University Radio.”*

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## “The Writer and the Apple”

The problem with comparing people to fruit  
is that apples and pears are  
either too green, just right, or overripe.  
They’re either edible or not.  
They don’t pretend otherwise.

Same with flowers.  
Lovely sure  
but behooved to cycles  
not feelings.

And don’t get me started on the weather  
or sky formations  
or gems or mountaintops  
or anything that lends itself unwittingly to metaphor.

Even comparing people to other people  
is akin to cumquats to flatirons –  
and, believe me, I’ve tried.  
I’m still trying.

Lately, I’ve taken to writing about people  
as if they were no more, no less,  
than themselves  
I just wish it didn’t make me so hungry.  
as the saying comes and goes.  
Call it a day.  
Something we’re familiar with.  
Something there’s so many more of.

## “the body and the evidence”

By John Sweet

four days of rain in  
the kingdom of nil and  
maybe you start to understand rothko

maybe you start to admire  
the convictions of arbus

every death should be  
your last one

every moment should matter,  
but it's not going to happen that way

measure out time for kay in  
small, brittle chunks

the space from yves' death to  
her first suicide attempt  
and then the emptiness until  
she finally gets it right

and will you hold the mirror up  
if she asks for proof?

will you steady her hand  
while she pulls the trigger?

this is finally an  
explanation of god i can  
understand

# The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

Please send excerpts from your own dream journals. If nothing else, we'd love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.

[mermaid@blotterrag.com](mailto:mermaid@blotterrag.com)

December 24, 2017

There are 6 levels of Hell. Hell is in a building on a really nice college campus that houses a sex club that gets progressively more depraved with each level. By Level 6, people are picking up random sex partners to put in "jars." I don't know what that means, but James Franco is there and he selects some ugly, deformed partners. I am too afraid to see the rest of Level 6.

December 28, 2017

I am by the river. I see two giant river otters playing with German Shepherds. A fish is on the ground gasping for air, so I pick it up and throw it back in the river. Before it hits the water, it spreads its fins and catches the air, flying back up (it is a flying fish) and its fin cuts my lip.

LH - cyberspace

## CONTRIBUTORS:

**Tom Sheehan**, in his 91st year, just published his 37th book, *Alone, with the Good Graces* and soon comes *Jock Poems for Proper Bostonians*, both from Pocol Press, and just received the first copy of his 38th book, *Small Victories for the Soul VII*, from *Wilderness House Literary Review*. In submission process are *Beneath My Feet* this Earth Slips into the Far-end of Another's Telescope and *Poems Found* from *Fallen Pages*. He has multiple works in *Rosebud*, *Literally Stories*, *Linnet's Wings*, *Frontier Tales*, and many sites/magazines. He served as a sergeant in the 31st Infantry in Korea 1951-52 and graduated from Boston College in 1956.

**CjF** mailed us this poem - no return address, no further information other than "Greensboro, NC - Sometime 2018." Well, we've fallen in love before with less to go on than that...

**Dr. Lisa Baron** is a writer, therapist, professor and workshop designer and facilitator with a private practice in Chapel Hill, NC. Her best training continues to be growing up in a big family, and raising three children of her own.. [www.LisaBaronLCSW.com](http://www.LisaBaronLCSW.com)

**John Grey** is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in *Midwest Quarterly*, *Poetry East* and *Columbia Review* with work upcoming in *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *Hawaii Review* and *Roanoke Review*.

**John Sweet** of Upstate NY writes, "Hello, hope all is well in these dark and troubling times. Unpublished poems in attachment for yr consideration. Nothing straight-up political, I'd say, no "I hate the fucking president" wankery, but I've always been of the mind that all decent art is political to a certain extent. What you choose to address/avoid in yr art is a statement in and of itself, you know? In any event, writing about "the times" tends to date things, I think, so it's best to keep the work more wide open.... Things here quiet, unseasonably warm, unseasonably cold, relentlessly grey and occasionally uneventful. Been limiting myself to exposure to the news, it seems to make my outlook a little brighter, and makes my head feel less like it's going to explode. Thank you for your time, best of luck, peace, strength,"



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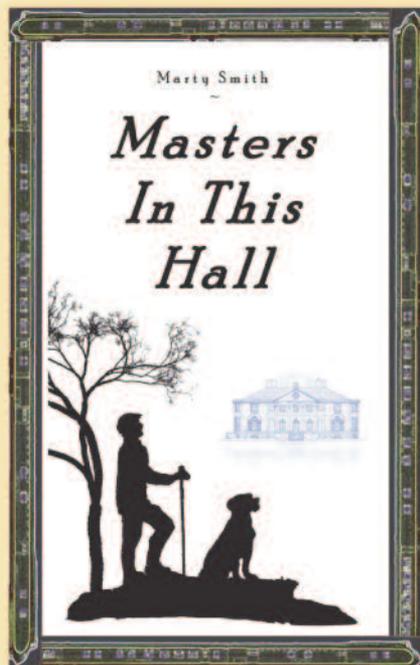
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*and the author of ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES*



Rick Kingsley's younger half-brother Aidan ran away three years ago. During those years, "ghost trains" – old long-gone streamliners – began reappearing, sometimes even rescuing people in danger. A being called "the Wizard" started entering peoples' dreams, but offering real-world psychic powers. Rick has inherited, from a mysterious recluse he's never met, a vast fortune and an estate, "Haw Court." And the world seems speeding ever closer to apocalypse, with global-warming fires, floods and tornadoes increasing both in numbers and size; along with human evils: "religious freedom" and Stand Your Ground laws, rampant bigotry online and in person, right-wing sabotages against society, topped by Trump's Presidential bid. Now, on the eve of the election, Aidan's coming home. His return may bring Rick to a possible confrontation with the Wizard himself – with the lives of Rick's family and friends, and his own, at stake.

Marty Smith's **MASTERS IN THIS HALL**

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