

Mastodon Dentist

A Poetry Magazine

No. 21
Winter 2010



Where are you going
Bobby Snowshoes?

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Mastodon Dentist #21 Winter 2010

Welcome

Hello dear readers and friends, welcome to the twenty-first issue of Mastodon Dentist, which will hopefully be the first issue of the second 5 years of this rather fine publication. Once again we couldn't have done it without the wonderful contributions from so many diverse people. The loosely applied theme of this issue is place, travel, or something to do with going from one place to another. Sometimes it's literal, sometimes spiritual, but we're continuously moving on — if we're not we're not living. Heck, even in dying we're moving....hopefully we manage to say something. I think we do. As always, much love and respect. — G.P.

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Ryan Quinn Flanagan

Cyprus 26725

(for Walden Robert Cassotto)

The kid with the heart
that played
like a bad drummer
was a kid from the street
who was not supposed to live longer
than 16.

With balls the size of Everest
and Sinatra in his sights

the kid with the heart
that played
like a bad drummer
wanted to be a legend
by the age of 25
and never let anyone tell him
how it was.

Paid a single pack of gum
for his first gig,
the kid with the heart
that played
like a bad drummer

just kept kicking.

With guts
and panache

and one eye
always on the clock.

Ryan Quinn Flanagan has recently been published in Quills, Vallum, The New York Quarterly, and The Antigonish Review. He also has pieces appearing in the anthology Lake Effect and has a full length poetry book in print entitled Pigeon Theatre.

Jonathan Story

believe no more (with a hint of happy laughter...don't ask me why)

i am city
i am the park
i am the silver heel
living in the dark
sheltering arms
carry you thru
the labyrinth
of stones
and weathered leaves
come down
shredded
and cold
its heavy oct rains
will drown your soul
by the time january
gets there
there's not much left
to be answering the door.
mad umbrella crown
there's nothing you can ever say
nothing you can ever do
then in the wash of information
you patch yourself together
with memory
or lack thereof
spread the grease
across the table
dye your hair yellow
and pen it down
as you paint your face
with red
and ready your mad
umbrella crown.
fubu
room enough
for 3

and lost in the pepper
shake haze
near a traffic light
combustible dawn
waking the eye
and ear
with slight this and that
without terror
without fear
the sword sharp
and ever ready
the eye of the mind
somewhere in
the heavy...
lets it slide
queen of junkt
triangles
spreading sheets
of ice
below the wind
sweetness
doesn't often touch my face
stay here
if you please
you may not be here
when I leave

Jonathan Story

Untitled

fuji dirigible
takes out the left corner
of my vision
raising hands to the
sky
the appropriate bit
swallowed like grits and butter
heaven in the pocket of
the fool who dreamt it
hell in the pocket of the one who lets
it
slide
matchstick men
haunting in yer category
shrine alive
losing all the altitude
shoulder the vessel of lives
appointed daily
to the severed goddess hand
and there by
the wall of ivy
green brick
thwarts red brick
the eye is losing light
turn the reasons
so bitter
the tea and a heat leaking
shelter.
leave
at the beck and call of
boom
holster the steady rain
in your hands
lemme drops
lick your eyes
and then you dies

again and again
the beautiful pageant
took you to form
red and orange leaves
on the sitting stone
moving round space
the same as you and I

Jonathan Story is a 25 year old former acting student and lives in Athens, Ohio.

Jason Fisk

Flight

And he sat
as a stranger
in the corner
yellow kerosene
lantern light glowing
emitting a hospital
sterility smell
wearing what looked like
itchy red and black flannel
He had finely trimmed
black arching eyebrows
And he told me a secret
He said that
if I could hollow
out my bones
and then with gears
and dark devices
I could turn my awkward
human movements
into the mighty
vast swoops
of two great wings
...I'd be able to fly

Then he handed me
a heavy hunting knife
with a cold smooth handle...

Jason Fisk lives with his wife and two children in the greater Chicagoland area. He has a chapbook available through Propaganda Press, and has also released a multimedia project with musician Jeremy Michael Cashman through Brown Bottle Press & Homespun Studios. You can find out more at www.jasonfisk.com.

Kenneth P. Gurney — Two Poems

Turn

The first leaf lets go,
colors the ground yellow
and I wish it was the last.

Finished the year begins
to form its lips to speak,
its tongue to shape vowels.

Just like the hair in the comb
and how it outnumbered
the new strands up top.

I already miss what is not yet gone.
So, in the mirror, I practice
a thousand variations of Good-bye.

Come Apart

You roam the other kind of wilderness
far from the growing green,
from the red earth.

This lake of trucks, of cars, of exhaustion
glares under the sun.

This sea of mirrors, of glass, of light
communication lacks
a depth you desire for all its cloud
touching antennas.

You speed in your fast car on roads
that never lead to where
you want to go.

The sparrows, whose songs wake you,
clutch the wires
your voice travels every day,
speaking no words
that send you into the sky.

Kenneth P. Gurney lives in Albuquerque, NM. His work appears mostly on the web as he spends SASE & reading fee monies on flowers for his lover. To learn more, visit <http://www.kpgurney.me/Poet/Welcome.html>

Ben Cromwell

Kiribati, 2nd August 2007

She wakes up crying
and looks over
at his dead body,
the one under the earth,
the one no longer there
beside her.
She is reminded
that her dream
was not real.

Her mother sits up late
whispering to herself
the advice old women save
all their lives
for days like this.
The holes in her memory
widen
letting out more
of her liquid personality,
leaving only this:
the pain remains.
I know I am alive.

Their eyes must be the same,
filled with expectation,
as though memory were
constantly approaching.
It is like dropping a stone

into a well.
First, the wait
all stomach-in-throat nerves
then, bottom.
The image of yourself,
irrevocably changed,
gone
like letting go.
Both sigh,
turn over in their sleep.
Each thinks, briefly,
of the other.
Mother
wishing she were her daughter.
Daughter
wishing death closer.
They whisper softly
to each other
about how to forget.

Ben Cromwell is a masters student at The University of Utah and a returned Peace Corps Volunteer. He has previously been published in *Adagio Verse Quarterly*, *Boston Literary Magazine* and *Horrorbound.com*.

Rafael Miguel Montes — Three Poems

Effort

It's been three
short
years
since she worked *Habana Vieja*,
trading snatch for deutsche marks.
Pulling dollars out of tourists for
panties, lipsticks, pounds of rice.

On off days,
she'd watch the breakers hit the seawall
and count the waves that only roll in—
the foam that dies at the rocks
between the baited lines.

When the Miami family learned she'd
won the visa lottery,
they wondered what they'd get.
The beloved niece. The civil engineer.
A teased wig, a tube top, impossible heels.

I saw her only once at Sunday mass.
Suffocating pink capris,
stopping just above the tribal tats around her ankles.
A black denim jacket. A plain white T.
Lady Stetson in places no one will kiss tonight.

She sat in the back pew and mouthed the credo.
Didn't take communion.
Left before the blessing.

Penchant

She calls me to the picture window for the third time today.
She has that agoraphobic's penchant for fiction.

The first call is to explain how the water,
falling from the sky, keeps
pooling heavy around the wheels of my truck,
 hunts the most direct path to my engine block.

Manifold?

All that rain is a clear sign of the hurricane's approach.
They are lying to us about Puerto Rico.
We're facing a direct hit. We lack briquettes. Soup.

The second call is to explain how the mail,
promptly slid every day at noon,
in the tin box you managed to patina
 an innovative shade of sick.

Missing.

All that missing mail is a clear sign of that postman's cheek.
They are lying to us about the stamps.
42 cents won't even buy you chiclets. Broth.

The third call is to show me the blanket of blackbirds
pecking between the blades, grinding
worms and seeds and pellets of compact fertilizer.
 They'll gather the flecks of ash when we catch on fire.

Maybe.

All those dark wings are a clear sign of our apartment's evil.
They are lying to us about winter.
The cold will fail to salve the blisters on our skin. Scalp.

Quiet

Listen,
I am no longer mad she's moved in,
no longer willing to argue about cords uncut or
 supping at the tit.
I know the danger of missed doses, the
peril of stoves left unattended.
I'm immune to anecdotes from the doctor's waiting room,
 from Winn Dixie,
 from Jiffy Lube.

I no longer listen to her conversing with the silverware,
in her secret spoon language,
eyeing with disdain the knife that nicked her.
I know now that, before dinner, she'll
toss the bags of frozen vegetables on the floor,
 edamame rolling everywhere,
and rage against the produce that won't behave.

Listen.
She no longer irks me.
I see her like some expert poltergeist,
shuffling in the dark,
muttering about her prescriptions,
leaving a single hair in every casserole she attempts.

Listen.
When she is gone for good,
we'll eat the shepherd's pie with impunity.
Find a few stray peas beneath the fridge.
Marvel at the heft of quiet.

Rafael Miguel Montes is a Cuban-American poet and teacher working and writing in Miami, FL. His work has most recently appeared in *Tattoo Highway*, *CONCLAVE: A Journal of Character*, *The Honey Land Review*, and *DASH*.

Hollis Robbins

Kathi in Minimum (notes from a prison poetry writing class)

The metaphors of love include the sea,
And fire and war. Use vibrant words like vast
And crash and stab, not 'is' or 'do.'
Gerunds help to show that actions last:
Throbbing running laughing endlessly.
Use past tense when you want to end the action.
Find words you know and twist them so they're new.
Dictionaries help you see distinctions.
Poetry can teach us how to say
How love is liable yet not to blame.

I felt like I was sinking every day.
The bed was either fire or war each night.
Each crash and blast was different, but the same.
It took a stab of love to see it right.

Hollis Robbins is a member of the Humanities Faculty at the Peabody Institute at Johns Hopkins, where he teaches fiction, film, and poetry. While trained primarily as a critic (with a PhD in English from Princeton), he studied poetry and fiction as an undergraduate in The Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins, and has been writing regularly for the past 25 years. This is his first foray into finally publishing his work..

Katarzyna Boczon-Dobbie — Four Poems

Snow

There are people
Charmed in stone
Imprisoned in their own bodies

There are hearts
As cold as the bottom of an ocean
Which never loved
They say: love won't save us after all

There are memories forgotten
Under piles of unwanted letters

There are traces left
By those who are gone
Covered by fresh snow

Obviousness

Pigeons on the roof
Argue over the evening plans

We take everything for granted
Footsteps on the grass
A queue in the post office
Warm evenings by the lake

Pigeons flew away to nowhere

Birds stopped singing in the morning
This door has been shut for ages
A taste of hope disappeared

I cower in sorrow

Waiting Room

With her finger
She draws patterns on the table

He was a famous actor
They used to meet briefly

This is how the story begins
It's so short
Because it happened only in her dreams

"What is happiness?"
She looks for answers
"I didn't know I had so little to give"
"You don't have to give to be happy"

She touches the screen with affection
Miracles happen
Sometimes

One Stop Only

One stop only
We stay on this bus
Passengers like others
We don't take seats
Don't remember faces
We jump on and jump off
Into nowhere
Our shadows
Stepped on by strangers

Katarzyna Boczon-Dobbie, born in Poland, lives in London and has an MA in Oriental Philology. She writes in English and Polish and has been published in several online magazines.

Andrea L. Zappone

Boston Calls

The Charles River through the rusty grates of the footbridge
Boston Harbor's tea-stained pilings
The squeal of the train through brick-laid catacombs
Two tokens and a turnstile.
Ancient Stones amidst glass and steel
Twenty-three Ben Franklins navigating crosswalks and subways
Nostalgia.
Eating Clam Chowda on the steps of Faneuil Hall
Acting the fool 'cause nobody will remember
Washpan drummers on the sidewalk
Upside-down hats erupting green and silver
Starbucks in my palm
Beggars with folded papers—
A dollar to learn how to save my soul
Bargains.
A musty antiquarian bookshop
An armful of second-hand books
A backache.
Worn names on broken headstones
Friendly ghosts
Disinterested Masses
Me.

Andrea L. Zappone is a Senior at the University of Maine at Presque Isle, with a Major in English. She travels extensively. She resides in Woodland, Maine with her husband and two children.

Isabelle Ghaneh — Two Poems

As I walk around the loop

As I walk around the loop at the beach and gaze at the scenery and the island in the distance and look at the ocean I pass a line of cars and one old white haired man is sitting in a car with a marine corps license plate and military music playing on his car stereo as he looks out into the distance over the sparkling water perhaps he sees the battles he fought in perhaps he sees his dead comrades perhaps he sees himself marching in a parade perhaps he isn't a marine at all and just borrowed the car

The car next to him has two soon to be middle-aged women smoking with their hands hanging out the windows and one is heavy set and they are talking and I can hear one say to the other as I get a whiff of the smoke which is nauseating since I know smoking is poison since I quit almost 4 years ago and that is what the hypnotist said and programmed into my brain and he was right it is and I hear I told him so and I say to myself I bet you did

Another car has two teenagers making out or whatever they call exchanging saliva these days since I have no idea not being a teenager

I pass a sign that details what happened when the British invaded and I was going too quickly to see what year the British invaded but I did glance at the photos of a dark curly haired man in a ruffled shirt and I didn't read what it said on the informational sign by the water but I can guess that perhaps there was bloodshed and I guess there may have been corpses so of course the beach was not an oasis of serenity that particular day

As I walk around the loop to look at the water and to think I see other people who go there to relax and think and to see eternity or past scenes from their lives and I guess we all believe that if we look hard enough at the water or the horizon the answer will come to us

What answer you ask I don't know but we all have questions and

unresolved pain and guilt and sadness and perhaps one day when we are all sitting in our cars or walking around the loop we will find what we are looking for.

Apples

Memory defines us the washed out nothingness of it

The hot butter burbling on the toast the hot knife cutting through the butter cutting your mouth on it the warm soft powdered sugar the cinnamon flakes the hot gravy of butter and oats and sugar and honey and vanilla and apples all toasted

The mouth watering numbness of it

Placing it on your tongue your lips your teeth cascading down your chin munching it the oaten gooeyness of the bread crusted with yeast the memory place

A fall day brings it on the crispness of the leaves floating down count them all one by one see all the apples lying on the ground here's some light and there again more leaves falling see them all more fall one by one by one count them again as more leaves will fall more light will show through then look the sun is shining I want to see but then again I don't

Memories eating at the apples like mice like a mouse nibbling away it pares the apple core it's there don't look stay hidden the memory eating looking at it again it's awakened it's open

The smell sweet rotten apples basted with vinegar lingers on with the honey syrup the bright crisp morning the new day the old vision like the sunshine balled away in an old tissue back to the bottom of the dresser drawer closed shut again gone

Grapes peaches cranberries blueberries blackberries strawberries melons pineapples new ingredients ready on a hot sticky day a summer day a sweltering day the red-hot sun boiling baking roasting the fruit to be mixed together

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(Continued from page 21)

A new salad old and new under the glaring sunlight the apple
bits tiny relics bittersweet mementos mixed in

Sweet and tart

Isabelle Ghaneh has been published in several on-line and in print literary ventures, including Sea Stories, bestpoem.wordpress.com, Pennine Ink Issue #26, Coal City Review, Her Circle Ezine and Dimsum—Asia's Literary Journal.

Hanaa Elzahabe Elsayed — Two Poems

New John

You can't deceive or hurt me again,
I have changed, I am not the same,
I am not John whom you one day knew,
I am John Part II.

Words

Out of the words, some make you happy and some cause you pain,
The ugliest word is death and the sweetest is your name.

Hanna Elzahabe Elsayed is a 90 year old Egyptian Engineer living in Saudi Arabia. These poems were written about 20 years ago.

Doug Draime — Three Poems

Poem For Myself

When I hit the bottom I
find nothing but
absolute relief, when
the truth nails me to
the hard wood floor,
like a frantic escape from a war zone.

Yet in part of my mind I
still battle with grim,
archaic melodies,
in the burning fires
of my ego's
being laid waste.

The face I see in the mirror,
is just a thing,
like any thing, like a table, like
a cloud, like a memory,
like a daffodil, like the pen I
write this with.

When The Sun Rises

I want to hear
the bird's song, that's all. The
meadowlark in the dense dark oaks,
or the whippoorwill crooning
to and fro in the sun
of the sycamores. I grow so damn
weary of the human sound,
flashing on with its artificial light
and the rat-tat-tat sound
of the collective Ego,
spinning on its
perpetually bloodied,
nowhere wheels. I want to hear

the blue jay high up
in the maple tree, squawking
a shrill celebration. A robin singing
to me from the birch tree.

Some Say

pausing on the front steps
of an upscale brownstone,
in Brooklyn, turning ever so
slightly, looking to the
left, reacting to a loud chug-chug
sound coming from
down the block ...
some say he “just vaporized”
only the handles from his briefcase
remained,
other than the greasy spot, which
some say never existed either.

Clifford K. Watkins — Five Poems

Fiery Graffiti & Stars

With a gait that yearned for consolation
You descended into a vale with a derelict soul
Our eyes met as shields of armor vanished
Leaving my heart defenseless in absence of breastplate
And as your flour-hued flesh quivered
All the stars in your eyeglasses couldn't remedy our blindness

Semi-sightlessness

When I find myself lumbering in gloom
I think back to my disbelief in your exhilaration
And your essence delivers me into peaceful luminosity
As I fluently transcend my empty room
I possess the eyes to see wholly
Coupled with a voice capable
Of eliminating the utter blindness
That deadened the beauty of your presence

To Fathom Tranquility

While his faint voice reverberated in tedium

A craven mime scarcely hovered above the abyss
With a roving psyche that conveyed drafts of lunacy
Then on a whim the racing thoughts
Were razed by the fleeting blaze
Of an alluring star
And at that moment
He could fathom tranquility!

Broken Silence's Voice

There was a flash of obscurity when our eyes met
And our meager strands soon shuddered in puddles of regret
Yet we reached for the firmament from respective abysses
Aching for the warmth of flesh
Coupled with give-and-take bliss
Only to recoil to our dimly lit streams
To release our inhibitions through befuddled compositions
Pretending to be whole
We struggle with the dismal realm of fragmented dreams
Questioning the construct we call a soul

Clear-headedness

Brisk with sobriety

Imagining your awe-inspiring aura

As I hopscotch through a kingdom of heartwarming dreams

Savoring every morsel of your creativity

Ecstatically feeding on your words of truth

I no longer gaze farther than the rain-soaked glass

Trying to fathom the intricacies of your soul

For I'm at peace with myself

And the coagulated ballpoint is for now

A trace of a vanishing planet!

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