

The Watermark

UMass Boston's Literary & Arts Journal

Volume XXXIV
Spring 2022

Acknowledgements

Editor-in-Chief

Alexa Koch

Associate Editor

Pauline Galvez

Cover

“Red Line”

Elaine Happnie

Advisor

Charles Henriques

From the Editor

Dear Reader,

Hello again. This is my last issue of the Watermark as I leave UMB, four journals and one MFA richer. Thanks to everyone who continues to trust us with their work and farewell to those whose names and style I've come to know well in the last two-plus years. Thanks to the department and Mass Media for funding this project and to Chuck for the creative freedom, for taking my office drop-ins in stride, and for tolerating my use of Canva. See you on the other side.

Alexa Koch
Editor-in-Chief

The Watermark
Table of Contents

Poetry

7	Falling from the Sky	Bill Valentine
9	Comeback	Andrea Kosyrev
11	To My Donor	Kate Flaherty
12	Cyberspace	Elaine Happnie
14	Come Spring	Kate Flaherty
15	Eagles Are Assholes	Andrea Kosyrev
17	Memories	Zoya Gargova
18	Having No Voice	Bill Valentine
20	Bird Killers	Andrea Kosyrev
22	Some Linger On	Bill Valentine
24	The Ocean	Zoya Gargova
25	How I Knew Her	Miren Parkinson
27	Definition	Lynn Butler
29	Relativity	Bill Valentine
30	everyone knows what i don't	Emily Russell
31	Pardoned	Andrea Kosyrev
34	A Faceless Man	Ann Doyle
35	Childhood Memories at Nantasket Beach	Elaine Happnie

Prose

6	Don't Say I Didn't Warn You	Ann Doyle
19	1962	Hugh Stringer
23	Going to Hell	Ann Doyle
38	House of Mouse	Sophia Oliveira

Art

13	Light Beams	Elaine Happnie
21	Grand Illusions	Elaine Happnie
26	Young Woman with Mirror	Elaine Happnie
33	Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man Editorial	GeMeisha James
36	UMB parking garage	Ellen Foust
42	Four Seasons at Fox Point	Bill Valentine

Don't Say I Didn't Warn You

Ann Doyle

Aunt Ellen was 77 when she came to live with us. She was known for saying anything that popped into her head, which wasn't a good thing. She refused to enter a room with a ceiling fan because she believed that the blades might come flying down and chop her head off. So, she'd stand in the doorway with her eye on the fan and say, "Don't say I didn't warn you."

When she was a girl she had a pet pig named Spammy. We all lived in dread each time my mother served any kind of pork dish. Auntie Ellen's eyes would fill with tears as she eyed the platter of pork and sure enough she'd launch into her Spammy story. The entire family can repeat the Spammy story word for word. Eventually we stopped eating pork.

Nothing suited her. When we got a new couch for the den, she said that the old one was perfectly fine and it was sinful to waste good money on something we didn't need. She refused to sit on the new couch, claiming that she was afraid it might make her lumbago act up. Lumbago was just one of her many health conditions that managed to pop up in her daily conversations. When my father threw his back out she said, "Don't say I didn't warn you."

She placed a high value on good ears that were just the right size and sat flat against the scalp. Once when my cousin Daisy brought her newborn over to visit, Auntie Emily gave the baby a good looking over and advised Daisy to tape the baby's ears against its scalp at night so that his ears wouldn't stick out. Daisy said that she was fine with the baby's ears and Aunt Ellen said, "Don't say I didn't warn you."

She saved her wet tea bags in a little saucer so that she could reuse them. Her tea looked bluish and creepy when she added her low-fat milk. She didn't like to shower; she said it dried her skin. My mother had to coax her into the shower when she started smelling like yesterday's lunch left in the rain. After her shower she'd roll up the sleeves of her faded yellow sweater, complain about her imaginary dry skin condition and say, "Don't say I didn't warn you."

She was engaged for 41 years, but never married. She couldn't settle on a date or a venue for her wedding. Her fiancé finally passed away. When my sister got engaged, Aunt Ellen strongly advised against a long engagement. She said, Marry him now, or the next thing you know, he'll be as dead as a doorknob. And ... don't say I didn't warn you."

Falling from the Sky

Bill Valentine

In the late fall, only seagulls, cormorants,
and small black and white diving ducks,
maybe, eider or bufflehead, frequent Dorchester Bay along whose shore I walk every
day.

Last week, two swans floated along the shore

turning their tails skyward as they plunged
their long necks into the water to graze.

In the nearly two decades I've walked here,
I've only see one swan, and it was far out
from shore, floating like a buoy.

Now, two swans, dove close to shore,
their tails standing like white stalks or
maybe, even like the long white legs of
men doing handstands to impress friends,
or, maybe, like the legs in Bruegel's painting

of Icarus crashing from the sky into the sea
after Icarus's father fashioned wings
for them to flee the tyrant Minos,
the labyrinth, the Minotaur, and certain death.
Icarus, young, filled with bravado, flew too

close to the sun; the wing's wax melted.
Icarus fell from the sky. The plough man in the field,
the sailors on the ship, the shepherd with
his sheep did not notice a boy fall from the sky, drown.
Today, other walkers stop and notice

the swans foraging: their heads buried in the
water, white tails thrust into the air.
As Icarus drowned, only his father noticed.
Unable to save his son, he flew on to safety.
Last week, in Miami, a young Guatemalan man

fell from the wheel well of an American Airlines
jet just arrived from Guatemala City after it taxied
to a stop. He sat beneath the plane's wing, dazed, as the
ground crew assembled. He had survived altitude,
cold, thin air, the wheels' rising and lowering,

and sat injured but alive. He'd escaped the tumult

The Watermark

of his country, environmental disaster, political unrest, crushing poverty. The crew alerted immigration. The Feds apprehended him. His deportation will be expedited.

I took pictures of the swans with my phone, continued my walk, and when I returned, the swans were gone. The Guatemalan stowaway's story is gone from the news as we placidly walk on ignoring the plight of migrants who are fleeing

across deserts, through jungles, drowning in seas and oceans and channels, locked in camps and prisons, kidnapped and robbed, and falling from the sky seeking safety and freedom.

Comeback

Andréa Kossyrev

There aren't many happy conservation stories these days.
Here's a story of some comeback kings
with wings spanning ten feet,
eaters of carrion who are likely
to carry on, to scavenge acre upon acre—

*The species' obituary, written
in advance: forty thousand years ago,
condors prowled North American skies
soaring millions of acres per lifetime
feasting on mammoths and mastodons and downed sabertooths,
then beached whales,
then later, hunters' scraps:
the leading cause of California condor mortality — by far — is lead poisoning*
A story we all know—
*a species on the verge of extinction +
a swelling human population +
the ever-looming climate catastrophe.*
No need to spell out the ending.

In 1982 there were just twenty-two
all captive, under watchful eyes hoping to watch skies
in the future, working to help a population harmed by lead left in dead
deer, shot by hunters.

The comeback is slow:
laying eggs only once they've lived for about seven years
and even then
sometimes skipping a year
and even then
only laying one egg at a time
and even then
contending with lead poisoning and pesticides.
They can live nearly sixty years, though none
older than forty for now, nesting nearly six thousand feet up
on cliffs; a height necessary
for slow and cumbersome take off.

What else has come back from the brink of being extinct?

In May 2019, the one-thousandth condor,
warmed in sun-soaked shell,
pushed and folded, fuzzy and full, pressed

The Watermark

a beak, cracked and escaped an egg in Zion, healthy,
a significant figure of a comeback coming
from people who wanted, for once,
a new ending.

*Italicized lines direct or near quotes from The Washington Post "The largest bird in North America was nearly wiped out.
Here's how it fought its way back."*

To My Donor

Kate Flaherty

Dusk darkened into night.
A first star appeared, then hundreds,
Uncounted billions.

Somewhere in Europe, a young woman
At a concert or soccer game,
Had let them swab her cheek.
When we matched, she said “Yes”—
Not without pain.

Her marrow crossed an ocean,
Packed in ice,
Giving me a second life.
Words do not suffice.

The sun rose again this morning.

The Watermark

Cyberspace

Elaine Happpie

Oh the dollar falling fast

Now they want all our cash

Cashless society is the plan, Bitcoin coming getting strong

Money is power we have known this all along.

Use the ledger in the sky , where you can always verify

Big power drain transfer funds through blocks of chain

Warehouse mining running 24 hours consumes more power than Argentina

Pay direct, pay by phone, pay online, swipe for a coffee cup

As you consume your cappuccino the transaction for a cup
consumes 100 dollars in electricity

Don't touch your germy, messy money. We will handle that for you

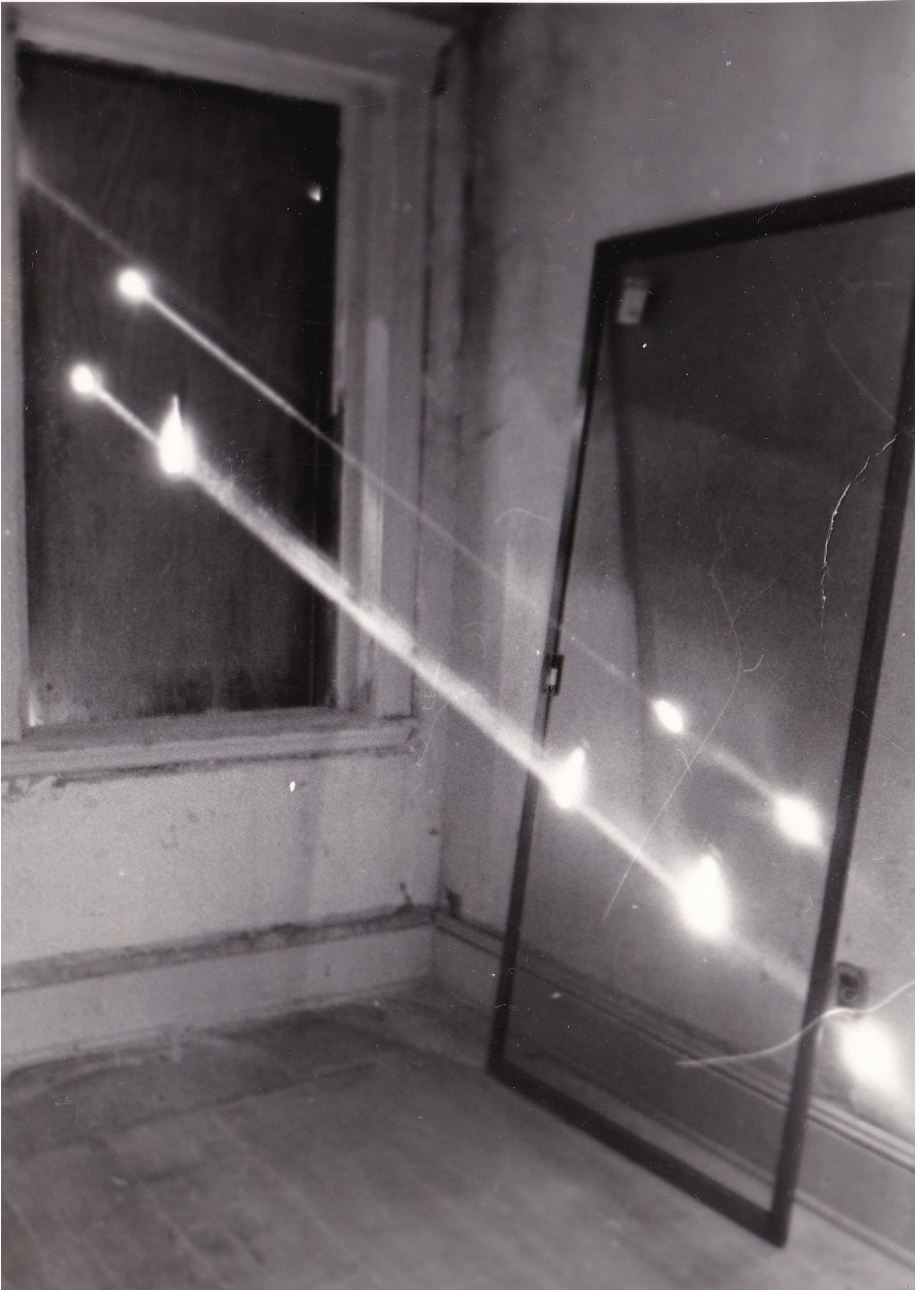
Then Bloomberg news, Bitcoin bubble burst - going in the crypto hearse

With the flip of a switch and no paper trail, money gone who knows where

The banksters plan, steal your money while they can.

Go to the dark web they have pills if you're depressed

But it won't get you out of the mess



Light Beams
Elaine Happnie

The Watermark

Come Spring

Kate Flaherty

Imagine forsythia bursting through the fence in February,
Fooled by errant soaring temperatures.

Even the snowdrops blush
At the hedges' rush to bloom.
Less exuberant, they huddle near the ground.

Watch the squirrels, not so fat now,
Poking their heads out seeking a few more
Acorns to replenish their dwindling supply.

Think of the Zoombies* cocooned with laptops,
Masked against a hundred-year virus,
They dream of outdoor dining
And patios of people in Adirondack chairs.

Hear the birds calling each other by name
As they flit across wintry yards
On their brown and grey wings.

Picture the grill covered in April snow,
The birds and squirrels and Zoombies
Hunker down wondering "Which spring?"

**With thanks to Sheila Heldenbrand in Aram Saroyan's Fireflies: One Letter and One Word poems*

Eagles Are Assholes

Andréa Kossyrev

At the Meat Counter A Found Poem

It's obvious when an eagle
has killed your bird:
The chicken is laid out

on her back, wings spread,
legs intact, breast and organs
devoured.

(Like many of its fellow Americans,
the bald eagle apparently
prefers white meat.)

The bald eagles learned
to fly down, land on the ground
and walk

beneath the tarp. Once there,
the eagle was free
to select the most

appetizing chicken,
like a discerning customer
at a meat counter.

The American Way

Symbol of America: wings spread, brow
furrowed, talons clenching—
*It turns out bald eagles are a real pain in the neck
around trash dumps.*

*They can grip all manner of waste, some of it
rather vile.*

In Seattle suburbs, residents find chewed
food mashed, dumped

by a careless eagle too lazy to hold onto
whatever he grabbed,
too lazy even to hunt, preferring instead
the stash-dump

pile of garbage. It's full of tasty treats—
diapers, needles,
and food, glorious food waste. There's
nothing quite like the clash dumps

provide in eagle stomachs, either. But
doesn't that feel like a typical
response: serves you right for crashing
dumps.

For dropping shit on our sidewalks, we're
happy to watch
you vomit, suffer, and die. An eye for an
eye, we're brash, dump-

truck style retailators. A boot in the ass is
the American way—Like eagles,
our electeds get rich off the labor of
others, supporting the gash dumped

on (or really accepted by) the rest, the
haves and have nots, with the haves
taking, then dropping scraps, keeping
everybody unhappy, especially by trash
dumps.

The Watermark

Ben Franklin Knew Eagles Were Assholes, Too

*I wish the Bald Eagle had not been chosen the Representative of our Country.
A perfect representative, looking out for himself alone. He is a Bird of bad
moral Character. Meaning he has a bad reputation, openly— He does not
get his Living honestly— meaning the bank won't take his money because he stole
it, like everything else. You may have seen him perched on some dead Tree
near the River, where, (we might mistake him for majestic) too lazy
to fish for himself, he watches so sure of his might, so large and looming
the Labour —meaning the work, meaning the sweat— of the Fishing Hawk;
and when that diligent Bird —meaning the working man, the blue-collar man— has at
length
taken a Fish, (earned that bread) and is bearing it (honest money earned
honestly) to his Nest for the Support of his Mate and young Ones,
the Bald Eagle a True American Politician pursues him and takes it from him.*

“When the National Bird Is a Burden” is quoted directly for this poem. I found this particular article to be a jumping off point for my other work around eagles and especially eagles as a symbol or equivalent of the American people.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/02/us/bald-eagles-trash-seattle.html>

In my research around bald eagles, I came across the myth that Benjamin Franklin had nominated the turkey as the national bird. While he did write about it, he didn't make the proposal, and the letter he wrote to his daughter made for interesting conversation about eagles for this project.

Memories

Zoya Gargova

Memories inhabit the emptiness of old age.
Memories are tricky.

The memories of loved ones
are embellished
as are the ones of nice first things
—first kiss, first dance,
first snowdrops on the cold stiffed ground.

Colors are dark, speckled with regrets
for the memories we want to forget.

And yet—
memories are all we get for free,
a last reward,
and our last resort.

The Watermark

Having No Voice

Bill Valentine

She recalls Dali's "Persistence of Memory" as her niece's un-lived thirteenth birthday arrives. She recalls a silent baby on her mother's hip, a baby discovering her hands, wide-open eyes, and how her face looked.

He remembers Orpheus singing his way into Hades. He visualizes himself with his cousin: their walks along Dorchester Bay; sipping Dewar's as they sit in their green wingback chairs, and a shared lobster dinner. Neither recalls a voice.

For unless, captured on tape, a video, a saved voice message, the only voices that can be heard, like Orpheus's, are the voices of the living, the sound that lives in each of our heads. We can see pictures of our dead. We can visualize them

in our mind's eye, but the voices of the dead are as quiet as grains of sand on a warm, still beach. No matter how hard we press our ear to the sand; no matter how strong our desire; the dead remain mute. Dead voices.

1962

Hugh Stringer

I was assigned to drive the Tuesday evening 10:00 shuttle and checked the clock in the common room. It's 9:30. It's just a ten-minute drive from the Brothers' house in Bethesda, Maryland, to Catholic University in Washington. When I get to the university, I park in the circular driveway. In a few minutes, the Brothers I'm to take home have boarded. In as loud a voice as I dare use, I ask, "Is everyone here?"

It's well past sunset, another beautiful evening in Washington, and as usual I take Michigan Avenue back the way I came. Driving the same route during daylight hours is a piece of cake. However, during the Tuesday evening trips, in the dark, I feel lost.

This September evening is pretty much like any other. Traffic is light and the sky is clear; when it rains, in the dark, I am doubly alert. Last year, on one rainy Tuesday evening, when changing gears, my sweaty hand slid off the shift knob and, pressing the accelerator, with the motor in neutral, the engine revved up something awful. I covered up by double clutching and shifting to third gear. When I released the clutch in third, the motor settled down. No one applauded or was even aware of my cool competence, but I was sweating. I didn't relax until I got back to my dorm cell.

Ordinarily, after 9:00, we were supposed to be in our cells and maintaining the rule of silence. This year, on the first Tuesday of chemistry labs, in mid-September, the same as last year, I had the 10:00 shuttle. On the way back to the Brothers' house, I noticed a more animated chatting than usual. Almost everyone was talking, albeit quietly. At South Dakota Ave., I stopped for the light and heard why. I heard there was a woman in the chem lab. I couldn't make out the details, but it seemed one of the Brothers had been paired up with her.

Every year there's the possibility that one of the Brothers in advanced chemistry might be assigned a woman as lab partner. Every September, Brother Director would mention this possibility at least once in his weekly conference. We all must be vigilant, he would say. Catholic University is open to all people, regardless of sex, race, or religion. You may have young women in your classes. You should treat them with courtesy. "Speak when spoken to is a good, simple rule to follow."

Over the course of the semester, I heard that the chem lab co-ed was not a nun— her name was Tina Klaire. In lab, she was paired up with Brother Kevin. I learned that Brother Kevin was majoring in political science and minoring in chemistry and that Tina Klaire was taking advanced chemistry because she wanted to become a nurse. The advanced chemistry would help her in her career. It didn't take long before everyone knew Tina or knew of her.

That Tina wanted to become a nurse left me wondering: what did I want to become? Of course, the Brothers would tell me what I was to become and where I was going to work. Meanwhile, I was in the dark, but it wasn't raining, yet.

The Watermark

Bird Killers

Andréa Kossyrev

Here are some things that take birds out of flight,
in groups: collisions, poisons, predation, disease—
most preventable if we get it right.

A strike against windows too clean for bird sight,
spilled oil at drill sites keeps soaked feathers in seas—
here are some things that take birds out of flight.

High tension lines, windshields, wind turbines all might
catch wings and beaks, deadly for those at high speeds
and preventable if we get it right.

Hunters, and fishing nets, cats out at night,
pathogens, infections, and other disease—
here are some things that take birds out of flight.

Pesticides marketed as “safe” for things that bite,
neonicotinoids, d-CON, DDT—
deaths preventable if we get it right.

I believe that we aren't killing out of spite,
and we have science, studies, and theories.
This is a list of what takes birds out of flight,
of what's preventable if we get it right.

<https://abcbirds.org/threat/pesticides/>

Some other sources that were consulted for this poem:

<https://www.sibleyguides.com/conservation/causes-of-bird-mortality/>

<https://abcbirds.org/program/pesticides/>



Grand Illusions
Elaine Happpie

The Watermark

Some Linger On

Bill Valentine

Billy wrote, “The name of the author is the first to go,” but I find that all names, words, events, circumstances, embarrassments, triumphs, celebrations, second languages drift off unnoticed, glacial memory melt, drip-by-daily-drip, to pool in a deep crevice of the brain only to re-appear like a mouse scurrying across the living room rug.

I do not recall the name of the girl
I took on my first double date.
I recall how much I disliked her
sweater, a worn white rag of a cardigan.
I have no memory of the names of the
principal, teachers, or students at the
first junior high school I taught in

except for Albertine, who set fire
to her desk. She’d be a woman
in her sixties today. I also recall
meeting Willie W. as I came out of
that school one spring day. He was
living across the now unnamed street
from the now unnamed school
with my former therapist.

I can say “hello” or “good morning” in
French, Latin, Spanish, Tagalog, Bicol,
and Haitian Creole. All the other words
have dripped away, or slumber
undisturbed waiting for a crossword
to ask, “the Spanish word for this...”
and suddenly, surprisingly “esta”
reappears.

I recall being thrilled with a ten-year old
student’s
poem about a goat-footed balloon
salesman.
I also recall another English teacher
pointing
out he had plagiarized a renowned poet.

The embarrassment as keen today as it
was when at Bread Loaf when I asked
in what century a certain famous poet
lived

and the look on the other writers’ faces,
all their names and faces forgotten, as
they
answered, and I’ve had to dig for the
poet’s name,
which unexpectedly arrived as I prepared
the
Italian wedding soup for tonight’s dinner,
Galway Kinnell.

No, not all names vanish; not all defeats
recede. For no apparent reason, I
remember that “kili kili power” means
B.O. in Manila, and once, as I showered,
Billy’s mouse gnawed its way into
memory,
and I was driving drunk, head out the
window,
on the Henry Hudson Parkway.
No, the Hutch.

Going to Hell

Ann Doyle

When I was in the third grade, Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart said that anyone who was not baptized Catholic had to burn in hell for all eternity. My best friend, Tammy, was a Protestant. I felt really bad for her and her family because I'd seen pictures of the poor souls in hell screeching in pain with flames shooting all around them. Tammy said she didn't mind going to hell because she wanted to go wherever her parents went.

I spent most of my school days staring out the window and daydreaming about being famous or saving lives. One day during third-grade religion class I was forced out of an excellent daydream when I heard Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart say the word, "Divorce." Nancy Sweet, who lived downstairs from me and was anything but sweet, raised her hand and asked if divorced people would be able to get into heaven when they died. Nancy knew that my parents were divorced. Nancy didn't have a kind bone in her body, and I know she was just trying to embarrass me. Sister answered that divorced Catholics can go to heaven unless they remarry and if they did remarry they had to go to hell and burn forever. Nancy knew that my mother was divorced and remarried! She stared at me to savor my reaction to this dreadful news. I had planned on floating around heaven and eating chocolate ice cream forever, but I'd give it up if it meant leaving my mother.

My friend Tammy was much nicer than Nancy Sweet. Tammy took tap lessons. Nancy Sweet said, "Great, now Tammy can tap dance her way into hell."

I was desperate to take dance lessons like Tammy, but my mother said I had two left feet and was ding-toed. That's how I wound up fracturing my wrist bone. I was trying to train my toes to point straight ahead, and I tripped over a clump of grass, which only gave my mother more ammunition for refusing to sign me up for dance lessons. She said I was much too clumsy and so she got me an orange cat instead.

I named the cat Edward. I truly believe that Edward was trying to kill me. When he wasn't scratching my arms until they bled, he was hiding around corners and jumping out in front of me. I should have named him Asshole because that's what he was.

The Watermark

The Ocean

Zoya Gargova

I change my mood as quickly as I change my colors:
from calm and placid to roaring and colossal wave
from azure crystal blue to mysterious emerald green.
I am the parent of all living, still crying secretly for all
that left me
to explore new life away,

You come to me just to enjoy the play of waves,
or just to use me—
It's OK.

Just remember not to abuse my power of creator and a killer
And do not interfere:
I want to keep alive all life I hold
I refuse to let some of species disappear.
So help me, Man! I am the Ocean.

How I Knew Her
Miren K. Parkinson

Pulling petals,
Running veins,
Color coding,
Paper cranes.

Hyper-focused
On her task.
Dare interrupt her,
And face her wrath.

Oh— but my grandma
Was all bark and no bite.
The mouth of a sailor,
And a mind like a kite.

She'd let the wind take her...
Thoughts led by a breeze.
Sailing on clouds,
And watercolor seas.

If you were lucky she'd take you
On a journey of wits.
Each loop was different,
Sprinkled with myths

A perfect distraction
From the hassles of life
Were these little escapes
Filled with laughter and light.

For nothing else mattered,
But that toothy smile.
Her hand in my hand,
Since I was a child.

I feel my heart breaking
As you loosen your grip.
I know that it's time,
But I'm still unequipped.

I miss hearing your stories.
I miss holding your hand.
I miss helping you garden,
In the salt and the sand.

I miss making you dinner,
And your black Irish tea,
And when you would call me,
Your little chickadee.

And though you've departed,
I'm not quite convinced,
Since I still feel your presence,
In the water and the wind.



Young Women with Mirror
Elaine Happnie

Definition

Lynn Butler

Depression.

Noun.

Defined as feelings of severe despondency and dejection.

By the book the masses who have been ejected from the land of the happy are gloomy figures.

Hallow in chest and black under eyes.

Their cheeks stained with lines from when their tears walked miles to fall off the edge of the world.

We stay stuck to our bed like a mouse on a glue trap.

We squeak and squirm, begging for a savior to remove the goop from in between scars and shaking fingertips.

Eventually, we melt into the acid touch.

Thankful to feel any touch at all.

Happy.

Adjective.

Defined as CONTENTED.

By the book contented masses wear bright smiling grins, inner corners pinned to upper cheek bones.

Their chests glow with a pride the sun can't cloud and eyes shine like the stars above a polluted atmosphere.

They stay wandering busy streets to show off their way of life, gloating to the gloomy figures of the depressed that lay underneath the glass streets.

The happy keep their smiles wide and backs straight even when it rains for if you're found to be discontented you will be ejected.

Is that what this all is? A lack of being content?

The constant stubbling and numbed days, it all could have been solved by pinning cheeks and hiding tears, acting as the definition of content!

What is content? What is being happy besides being at your fullest.

Goddess, are we just empty vases with strainer bottoms?

To never feel full and drag ourselves through the world trying to find the material to plug our many cracks, holes: unrepairable repairs.

The discontented have a really good contented mask.

We were taught how to paint them.

How to make the clay look like skin so as to cause no worry to our loved ones.

We were taught how to talk with our hands and add expression to an expressionless husk.

We were taught how to live with forever being empty.

Living.

Adjective.

The Watermark

Defined as being alive.

We are still alive.

To fill the jars full.

To break our façade.

To be more than a stuck dying thing in a massive moving cycle of life.

To be...

To be...

one day.

happy.

Relativity

Bill Valentine

His wife says last year's
Christmas flannel, though
through multiple washings,
is soft and the fall colors—
burnt umber, tans, thin
columns of white and yellow,
crosshatchings of red and
black— looks vibrant on him.

Half-way through his
seventy-seventh year,
his step slowed, he counts
them and aims for 10,000,
but will settle for less.
He does not shuffle, yet,
and knows his life appears
as vibrant as dryer lint.

The Watermark

everyone knows what i don't

Emily Russell

why am i the last one
to recognize my
sadness,
yet it still feels like no one
knows, cares,
or understands.
i pull at my hair,
and clutch my chest,
but no one asks
unless i beg.

Pardoned

Andréa Kossyrev

Turkey holidays: Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Eve.

A turkey holiday means people eat turkey, not that turkeys get the day off
(They waddle regardless, run from cars no matter what)

*A gobbler weighing fifty-one pounds
a whopping turkey,
so fat that he can hardly hobble
is to fall before the axe
in a few days to grace
the Thanksgiving table of the biggest
(avoirdupois) president that has ever
sat at Washington.*

Horace Vose, the "Turkey King"
sent a turkey to the White House for forty years
stuffed and ready for cooking
but he didn't raise them.

*He confines his connection with the business
to wholesale dealings.*

He would pick them from the best farms
all around him, not just Rhode Island bred,
but from Virginia, Kentucky, Iowa.

*So although the turkey that goes
to Washington is bred on Rhode Island soil
or in Connecticut, it is still a true
Representative of turkey nationalism.*

"You're pardoned" says the president,
and the turkey, who has been waddling,
his wattle swaying with the motion of his too-heavy breast,
walks off the White House Lawn.

Traffic doesn't know the turkey's been pardoned,
but it stops anyway, takes photos.

*Five fat turkeys are we, we used to sing, we slept all night in a tree.
When the cook came around, we couldn't be found.*

The Watermark

I found the turkeys we don't eat when I moved to north-central Massachusetts. The other day, a turkey crossing caused laughter, the guard giggling because the traffic that he stopped was not the traffic that stopped for the turkey, and we sat there watching it bob its head in and out as it sauntered slowly past. Yesterday, a turkey couple chased after their chicks and made a minivan hit the brakes, but I, three cars back, could still see them, the male's wattle jiggling. There's plenty of pardoning here.

Quoted directly from Late News General Notes, The Savannah Tribune, November 20, 1909. The parentheses belong to the original text.

Both sets of italics in this section use the following source: Palmer, Henry Robinson. "Where the President's Turkey Comes From." The Ladies Home Journal, November 1901

Children's Song — I actually learned this as a child, and I knew when I started looking into turkeys it would make an appearance!



Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man Editorial
GeMeisha James

The Watermark

A Faceless Man

Ann Doyle

I was six years old
when Daddy ran off
with the whore next door

Ma used silver scissors
to remove his face
from family photos

She placed the tiny faces
in a pink plastic ashtray
lit a match

And the tiny faces
made a cloud of smoke
and turned to curly ashes

I wanted to save them
but she flushed them down
the toilet

And then she cracked open
some cheap red wine
and danced around the kitchen

She sang, "I will survive,"
and she did
and I keep searching
for a faceless man

Childhood Memories at Nantasket Beach

Elaine Happnie

Dreams of longing for an endless summer
As wild waves reach for the shore
I hold a precious pink shell in my hand
as blue water splashes on sand
Finding treasure in stones and magical sand that builds castles on land
The freshness of salty sea air mixed with orange Bain de Soleil.
Grape Kool-Aid and sandy sandwiches hungrily eaten.
And when the sun settles down to a soft golden glow, wrapped
In a warm blanket, blue lipped after hours in the sea.
We nap on the beach, serenaded by seagulls and the wild waves reaching for the
shore.

The Watermark



UMB Garage
Ellen Foust



The Watermark

House of Mouse

Sophia Oliveira

March 31st, at first glance, presents itself to be just as mundane as the other 364 mundane days of the year. Spring has not quite sprung yet, still lazing in bed, too tired to actually come out. The trees have yet to grow their leaves, and flowers are still hiding under their covers - scared that winter might still be around. Pollen, however, is fearless. Spring is pollen's time to shine-to let the wind sprinkle itself around and up people's noses. To most, the pollen that comes from spring is nothing more than a mild nuisance solved by an allergy pill or two.

But to little Ethan, pollen was his mortal enemy. If even the tiniest speck were to go inside his nose, he'd be sneezing for ten minutes. Not just any type of sneeze either, but a sneeze that wouldn't stop until his eyes started watering and his nose was rubbed raw from tissue.

And Ethan hated sneezing - it wasn't cool! During one of his fits last year, he got made fun of for sneezing for two minutes straight by the kids at the local park – a moment Ethan regarded as one of the worst moments in his entire life, not because of the kids making fun of him (although that was pretty bad), but because Cameron Jones was also at the park that day. Not only had Ethan embarrassed himself in front of the neighborhood kids, but he also embarrassed himself in front of the coolest preschooler ever. So spring for Ethan meant that he was once again at war with the enemy: anything that produced pollen. Despite this, he still enjoyed March because March had the best day of the year: his birthday, March 31st. This particular March 31st happened to be his 5th birthday. And to him, that meant he was on his way to becoming one of the Big Kids.

And where did Big Kids go to celebrate their birthday? Why, Chuck E. Cheese, of course! That's what Ethan had told his mom when she had asked him what he wanted to do for

his birthday. All of the kids in his class had their birthday parties at Chuck E. Cheese. It was almost as if having a birthday party there was the Big Kid rite of passage, and Ethan did not want to be left behind in little kid land. Being a year younger than all of his classmates meant that he had to try twice as hard to show them that he was true Big Kid material.

And so, after many long moments of begging and promising Mom to eat every single piece of broccoli on his plate for the next two weeks (to which she happily agreed), Ethan finally got to have his long-awaited 5th birthday party at Chuck E. Cheese. To be honest, Ethan didn't know what to expect. He had heard his classmates talk about the awesome times they had playing games and winning the coolest prizes ever, and that the main attraction was a huge mouse, —which was a little odd; to him, all the mice he knew about were the size of his hand, but a showbiz mouse has to be built differently, he guessed – but that was about all he knew about Chuck E. He was too scared to ask his classmates. He didn't want to seem like a loser baby who'd never been to Chuck E. Cheese, so he decided to go into his birthday celebration blind. It seemed like the coolest option for him, and if there was one thing to know about Ethan, it was that coolness came above all else.

On the drive over, Ethan could not stop moving around in his car seat. What kind of games will he play? What kind of toys was he going to win? Will there be food

there? Will there be CAKE? WHAT KIND OF CAKE? He was so excited that he couldn't even answer his mom when she asked him how he was feeling. All he could do was nod aggressively in response, too excited to talk.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity to Ethan, but was really 20 minutes, they arrived at Chuck E. Cheese. No, at paradise. Ethan couldn't wait for his mom to unbuckle him,

so he did it himself, leaping out of the car when she opened the door. "Come on, let's gooo already!" he said, dragging his mom by the hand to the entrance.

When they (finally) got to the front counter, Ethan couldn't help but look and see what awaited him. And what he saw blew his mind. So many colors. So many sounds. So many games. "So many Big Kids," Ethan whispered to himself, seeing them playing and having the time of their lives. It was time to play until he couldn't play anymore; until his mom had to drag his exhausted body out of the building from having too much fun.

"All right, come with me, birthday boy!" The cashier led him towards the back of the building where all of the tables and a strange stage were. "I have a surprise for you," she said, "but you have to close your eyes first!"

Ethan closed his eyes, but just so he could get whatever this was over with and get started on his main objective: having so much fun he can't move. The cashier led Ethan by the hand to a table decorated with plates and party hats, with a cake in the middle. "Okay," she said, "you can open your eyes now, Ethan!"

Ethan opened his eyes, not sure what to expect. "Happy birthday, Ethan!" It was 20 screaming voices of Ethan's classmates. They were at his birthday party! How did they know it was today?! Even Cameron came! That's how you know your birthday party's the real deal.

"I invited them," his mom whispered into his ear, "so that you can be a Big Kid now with them." He looked up at his mom, smiling ear to ear, and gave his mom the tightest hug he could muster. Then he ran off after his friends, ready to eat some cake and get his game on.

"Is it someone's birthday, today? I think it is~!" A voice from behind the curtain. "Let's sing happy birthday to Ethan on his 5th birthday!" Out from the stage came the most terrifying thing Ethan had seen in his life. A life-sized mouse with a hat and the most disturbing facial

expression, even scarier than his mom's face when she was angry with him. This mouse kept walking closer and closer to Ethan, and to his dismay, his friends were cheering the monster on! He didn't know what to do; he wanted to run, but he was a Big Kid now- and all of the other Big Kids seemed to enjoy the scary mouse, so what could he do?

Wait. This was the same mouse his friends had talked about. This ws Chuck E., you fool! It took Ethan a few minutes to get over the initial shock, but once he realized that this was the same Chuck E. his friends loved to play with, he calmed down. "H-hi, Chuck E.," Ethan said - hoping that his friends didn't notice the stutter in his voice. Stutters were not cool, especially not when everyone else seemed to be cool with Chuck E. already.

"Hi, Ethan! Are you ready for the coolest birthday party ever?" asked Chuck E. Ethan nodded so hard he thought his neck was going to fall off. "Okay! Let's get ready to sing Happy Birthday, everyone! But first, we have a new Springtime Special

The Watermark

for you!” The mouse pointed back towards the stage, “Come on out, Sally!”

Sally? Who’s Sally? His classmates had never mentioned a Sally when gushing about their adventures at the pizza parlor, so Ethan was on edge. He looked to his friends for support, but they were just as lost as him as to who this “Sally” was. Even Cameron had a puzzled look on his face at the mention of Sally. Ethan balled his hands into fists, bracing himself for whatever was to come - vowing to handle it in the coolest manner possible because now he was a Big Kid; - and Big Kids don’t get scared - they handle it. The lights near the stage began brightening up and swinging around, capturing the attention of everyone, even the adults.

“Who’s ready for some Springtime fun?” This voice was also coming from behind the curtain, but it was a girl’s voice. “~Ethannn~! Are you ready to have a special Sally Springtime celebration?” Ethan balled his fists even tighter, his fight or flight instincts kicking in. Ethan

couldn’t believe his eyes. Something even scarier than Chuck E. was coming out from behind the stage. A humanoid sunflower with a face the size of a human being emerged, and just like Chuck E., began making her way to Ethan with a bouquet of flowers in one of her hands. Unlike last time, Ethan eventually knew not to fear the mouse, but this— this was just too much for his heart to handle. His worst enemy, a pollen carrier, anthropomorphized! And coming right at him with a bunch of tiny pollen carriers ready to attack and make him sneeze! He could not have a repeat of the park incident from last year, especially since Cameron was here. Sneezing was absolutely not an option. Ethan knew what he had to do. And that was to run far, far away from the abomination known as Sally Springtime. Ethan made the ball pit and took a dive, hiding amongst the balls. “So like, what now?” Sally asked Chuck E.

“Onto the next party, I guess,” he shrugged, walking off the stage.

Back to Ethan. His mom took after him, grossed out by the idea of having to search for him in the ball pit. She knew what kids got up to in there, and she was going to take the longest bath afterward with Ethan. Bracing herself for potential pee and poop-covered balls, she stepped in and found Ethan huddled in the corner with his hands on his face. “Hi, bud,” she said, kneeling down next to him. She noticed him sniffing, and not because of pollen. She uncovered his hands from his face and saw that he was crying. “Sally was too much, huh?”

“Y-yeah, and now all my friends think I’m lame because I ran away from her! Why did I run away? I should have stayed and taken the flowers from her - and just not sneezed! That’s what a cool Big Kid would have done!” Ethan sobbed harder and harder with each word that spilled out of his mouth. The only reason his mom could understand him was that she was fluent in Ethan-speak.

“Honey, no one thinks you’re a loser for running away. I promise, okay?”

“I don’t believe you! No one else was scared of Sally! Only me! I was the only uncool one - and on my birthday, too!” Ethan wasn’t even a boy at this point, but just a puddle of pure tears and sadness.

His mom wrapped her arms around him and whispered into his ear, “Hey, look up. I think you’ll want to see this.”

Ethan looked up and saw all of his friends standing outside of the ball pit. And what was this? He saw some red splotches on their noses, while others had tissues and were using them to rub their eyes!

“Hey,” said Cameron, walking up to Ethan and his mom. “We weren’t

expecting Sally, either,” he said sniffing. “She’s scary.”

What? Cameron was scared of Sally Springtime? The coolest Big Kid he knew was scared by the same sunflower? “R-really?” Ethan asked, wiping his eyes.

“Totally!” exclaimed Cameron. “I mean, a big mouse is one thing, but a big flower? That is not natural, man!”

Ethan started to smile; the tears stopped falling down his cheeks.

“See,” said Ethan’s mom. “Cool kids get scared, too.” She jumped up from the ball pit, desperate to exit the germ cesspool. He smiled at his mom, turning his head back to Cameron. “Come on,” said Cameron. “Let’s go play! There are so many cool games we want to show you here!” He dragged Ethan out of the ball pit and back to their friends. “Let’s avoid Sally, though.” A darkness haunted his eyes. “I hope she never comes out ever again, or I’m going to need to have a little word with Chuck E.”

Ethan agreed. A flower had no place in the house of mouse.

Ethan played with his friends until it was time to cut his birthday cake. Ethan’s mom had asked the staff not to bring Sally out again for the birthday song, which Ethan seriously appreciated. He ate two big slices of chocolate birthday cake, his favorite, and was just about ready to pass out when his mom told him it was time to go home.

On the drive home, Ethan’s mom decided to divulge some critical intel about Sally and Chuck E. “You know, I’m not sure if I’m supposed to be telling you this while you’re still so young- but hey, you’re a Big Kid now, right?”

“Yeah?”

“Sally and Chuck E. aren’t real, honey, they’re just teenagers in a costume.” “WHAT?!” exclaimed Ethan from the back seat. “I WAS SCARED OF A TEENAGER?! Afterward, however, Ethan gave a little sigh of relief and fell asleep happily with the thought that there aren’t any real life-sized flowers out in the world. He would learn about very tall and very real sunflowers during his class’s spring unit the next day, but for now, he slept peacefully.

The Watermark





Four Seasons at Fox Point
Bill Valentine

Want to see your work in *The Watermark*?

We're always looking for more contributors! Have a poem you'd like to share? A story that you can't wait to see in print? Send us your poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, drawings, photographs, and whatever other written and visual art you've got.

Visit us at:

thewatermarkjournal.com

Email us at:

thewatermarkjournal@gmail.com

Follow us on:

Facebook /[thewatermarkjournal](#)
Instagram @[thewatermarkjournal](#)

We can't wait to see your work.