

# TWO CITIES REVIEW



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***Two Cities Review*** is a new online review featuring quality fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Our editors are:

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## *Letter from the Editors*

WE ARE BECOMING A MAGAZINE. From the initial whirlwind of Kickstarter and launching the first issue to the grind and doubt of publishing Issue 2, we felt like we were going through the process of giving life to something totally new. Would we succeed? Would we get enough great submissions to fill out issue after issue? Would anyone want to read the magazine? With Issue 3 now under our belts and Issue 4 well in the making, we are confident that our fledgling project is finally taking wing.

Fall is the season of change. It's these times of transition that the cities of New England and the East Coast truly shine; the mugginess and sweat of August fades, the school year begins, and the trees trumpet their colors. It makes us stop and think; it makes us nostalgic for falls, for Halloweens and pumpkins and school years of the past. The process of change, as you'll see in this issue's crop of outstanding poems and stories, is always a fraught one, filled with both hope and fear.

We city-dwellers are uniquely adapted for the pressures and stresses of change. Nearly every year, New Yorkers pack their things into garbage bags to do the apartment shuffle; in Boston, we're on the move as well, as the year's fresh crop of college students arrive on curbs with parents and pillows tucked under their arms, hopeful to make this city their own. Every year, we Boston regulars get older, but the students stay the same age, adding a little element of the Twilight Zone to each September.

We have been blessed with a flood of submissions, from spy thrillers to poignant memoirs, from cats to shooting stars. The stories, poems, and essays of our third issue tackle the realities of urban living and urban decay. Homeless inhabitants of traffic islands and frustrated apartment neighbors are rubbing shoulders; New Yorkers travel by rattling subway to visit the 9/11 memorial.

The other theme you'll notice bumping up against all this is that of childhood. In many of the poems of issue 3, children wonder and puzzle, love and question and grow. Childhood in particular is the constant experience of change, and we think you'll see yourself somewhere in this kaleidoscope of the season.

We hope you enjoy reading Issue 3 as much as we enjoyed putting it together. As always, please comment online and let us know what made you laugh, what made you cry and what made you keep turning the pages.

Happy reading!

Blair Hurley & Olivia Tandon

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## *The Speaking Poem*

*Doug Bolling*

*Human beings continually record their individuality in the creases of the language....*

*Claude Hagege, The Dialogic Species*

-

What is a poem the Zen master said  
but a small breach in the blindness  
of seeing as others have seen.

What is a poem but a feather  
lifting and falling in an  
immensity.

Brothers and Sisters.

If to meet on the bridge  
that is the poem.  
If to let go the ligatures  
that bind the language  
of everyday.

I suggest to you:  
poem is the secret agent  
of our emancipation  
out of the maze  
out of ourselves.

Think the creases that lie  
in stone.  
How through them water flows



bringing life to all green things,  
even to our stories that cut  
through the dross.

Night music opening sleeping earth  
to festival even as a single cello  
can rouse the walking dead.

My comrades  
when you read this  
if you read this  
leave paper behind  
in its fiber rags,  
enter, enter.

## *the cat on the fountain*

*Christopher Mulrooney*

poised on the stone rim pink its fur shining crazily in the moonlight  
or of course the daylight now the eyes not so wide the tail curved  
slightly at the end  
lying flat on the rim of the fountain

gray eyes in daylight in moonlight two white flashes  
whiskers eyelashes markings coloration pattern quality of fur  
density saturation of dew

or warmth in noontide flood of heat

ripple of fur with a sudden thought licking a forepaw now staring  
into space the distance of the piazza

all laid out in geometry front to back and side to side  
with an off angle going into the distance like a De Chirico



*Urban Reflections, Carl Scharwath*

## *Sabotage of Innocence*

*Cathy Clay*

Sometimes, though seldom, inside this woman meanders a frightened, confused, melancholic girl struggling to reconcile that compliance is not consent, that hatred is merely a single degree of an emotional spectrum, and that some burnt offerings masquerade as men.

## *Ed Explains Momentum*

*John Grey*

Why should I stop drinking?  
Kilauea won't stop spewing lava.  
The gutted ship is sinking.  
And of course the Earth won't stop spinning and orbiting  
Truth is, there's not a lot of stopping in this world.  
Everything gets into a rhythm, a pace, a movement,  
and that's its life.

I was thirsty to begin with, sure.  
In 1997, it was.  
I was parked outside a bar.  
I was somewhere in a liquor store aisle.  
But since then, I've been taking the current at its word.  
It's all going this way.  
That's fine with me. Why should I complain?

Sure, the volcano takes a village in its stride,  
waves crush men and vessels equally.  
And the earth at midnight is a dangerous place.  
In January, it's a bitter one.  
I understand momentum has its dark side.  
That's what makes its path, its intentions, so very clear.

Kid's in the yard, crying why don't I come play ball.  
But when the grass is ashes? When it's taking on water?  
And no one can see a damn thing?  
And the wind is wild and the snow falling?  
Maybe when I finish up this bottle.  
Then let's hear what the next one has to say.

## *The Lone Inhabitant of the Gratiot South-Leg Traffic-Control Island*

*Edmund Zagorin*

*A traffic-control island is a defined area between traffic lanes for control of vehicle movements or for ... refuge.*

*-- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, Part IV, "Islands" Section 4A-1 "The Functions of Islands" 1961*

The form of a single body lies utterly still on a little triangle of Detroit. In between the clumps of tall grass, still green despite the summer heat, the body doesn't move even one muscle. There's a grimy baseball cap clutched to the body's head by a handful of rundown fingernails. This body still belongs to the Inhabitant, but it has become momentarily disregarded. This is the Inhabitant's habit, his eternal nature that takes him as the seasons change. Around the body waves of white noise spin out from the rush of four-lane traffic and crash over and over again upon the curbed shores of the Gratiot South-Leg Traffic Control Island. The sky is a collection of faded blues and whites, reaching down to stroke the plastic straws and cigarette butts lying out in the soupy gutter, changing them into the shape of the wind.

Years have passed unnoticed.

The Inhabitant has dreamed up many wonderful objects in his years of waiting. The Gatorade bottle kaleidoscope, the manhole cover radio receiver, the leaves of the splinted saplings as a message written in another language by a well-spoken yet indifferent Being. It was how the Inhabitant worked, using the world's bumpy edges to whittle away at the dry wood of his hangdog mind. Life on the Island reconstructed in the image of a penitent monk transcribing the intricacy of the world onto vellum. The Inhabitant has even let his body grow a long and shaggy beard to tie his intricacies directly to the head so that they don't fly away and leave him totally alone again, feeling simple.

Perhaps it was the shape a nameless father who had never once tried to get in touch, or the look of a mother who had fallen dead of Something We Don't Talk About in the Emergency Room of Mercy, or the brother (what would Amos look like now, after all those years of quiet family life and mayonnaise sandwiches?). It might look like a welding torch, the very one he used to think deeply about when he had that good-paying job and the days were luminous but also full of gloom, back when he still had something worth protecting, worth living on the inside of, and yet still he let his penitent body destroy it. The Inhabitant shuddered with the sensations of having been pulled in too many directions at once, his vertebral column creaking with the weight of the years. He'd been marooned by life's parade flotilla and he only knew to wait for the Beyond to return. Not that he ever complained. The Inhabitant was done complaining.

It's early in baseball season with the verve of Tigers tailgating loosed in wild oranges and blacks, the air crowding around the

Inhabitant's sleeping ears. His body drinks in everything, holding that balloon of a soul high above every shriek and smell and color so as to build the perfect baseball season impression. People stretch and crack their armbones and lift up children and smile. They are grilling bratwurst. They are spitting sunflower seeds. The fat sun sits up on its king-sized cerulean sofa and passes its eye over every piece of giddy tinsel and chrome; the glare of an entire family in sunglasses, the discarded hot dog tin foil, the beer bottle caps twinkling in the sidewalk cracks. People are hugging, greeting the children of friendly families, lighting the cigarettes and slapping backs of lifelong buddies. The children try to sound out names like 'Peralta' and 'Verlander', working the strange consonants over with their wandering sing-song voices. The parking lots across the street from the Island are crowded with jerseyed bodies, orange and black and dark blue, the big gothic Detroit D. The Inhabitant draws on the stores of surplus joy, bouyed up high into the golden stratosphere. They are carrying the Inhabitant with their voices, with the sound of their deep and well-nourished love. No one sees the Inhabitant's still-breathing body, smells the uric tang of his olive green Army jacket, the whiskey matting of his milkweed moustache, deep-rubbed bodysoil of his pits and hands and underclothes. The Inhabitant understands that his body might not be welcome. On such early spring day the Inhabitant convives with them in spirit and in essence alone.

In his chromogenic ecstasy the Inhabitant leaves the Island for good, never to return, and proudly enters the crowded hallways of the new Tiger Stadium, which is named after Comerica Bank. He used to go to games in his twenties and thirties, back when the



Tigers played on the corner of Trumbull and Michigan. Back when he was still engaged to Celeste and flush with feelings of youth and luck, with money in his pocket and his future spread out in front of him. Now inside the Stadium the Inhabitant takes a seat and gazes down at home plate with an unobstructed view. His freshly washed hair gets blown by a rich wind of feelgood cheering, the air around him covered in ten thousand smiles that sparkle with immaculate dentistry. His own smile quivers, thrilling with the anticipation of a brand new baseball season. The Inhabitant leans forward, peering around at the crowd, sipping from a plastic mug of rich, foamy beer that never runs empty no matter how much he slurps, and a thick Polish sausage piled high with relish and kraut ketchup that seems to regrow to its full length after each and every bite. It fills his stomach up with spicy meat and grease and he thinks: I have never known such ecstasy and what else, what else could I ask for?

Next to the Inhabitant sits Celeste, incarnated in full bloom who laughs and blushes and stubbornly covers the Inhabitant's cheeks with her shy kisses. Wow, thinks the Inhabitant, what an entirely perfect day for a baseball game! It's as if some obscure force is pumping this dream directly through the roots of the Island grasses. Amidst the clamor and excited shrieks of the baseball crowds, up and down the sidewalks, the Inhabitant dreams on, the ripped olive green of his jacket rustling with the barest hint of breeze. The lustrous azure sky practically screams out with blueness, the furiously green grass cut with machine precision around the diamond and now the loudspeakers spring to life with that rumbling chorus PUH-LAY BALL!

The pitcher rubs a little dirt between his thumb and forefinger and gazes a code at the catcher before throwing a blistering fastball. **STRIKE ONE!** The crowd cheers and the Inhabitant takes another swig of his perfect beer, savoring its coldness and the effervescence of its carbonation. **STRIKE TWO! STRIKE THREE!** The crowd is deafening, peppered with whooping and chants of **LET'S GO TIGERS!** (clap, clap) and two rows in front of the Inhabitant two Army veterans fist-bump with enormous satisfaction. Celeste grabs the Inhabitant's wrist and holds on tensely, chewing her glossy lower lip as Peralta comes up to bat, and loads the count before knocking another home run clean out of the park.

The entire stadium bursts into furious applause, yelling and pumping their arms and screaming and high-fiving strangers on every row. It is the most impossibly super brilliant baseball game that anyone has ever imagined. The air is filled with a Technicolor exultation, each strand oversaturated like the moments in old movies where the hero has just overcome some terrible obstacle and victory pours out of everyone's eyes and mouths and swirls overhead in paradisaal splendor. The buxom Celeste wraps her tanned arms around the strong girth of the Inhabitant's neck and buries her marzipan face in his collarbone, whispering "I love you, Jerry."

It is almost 7:00pm when the Inhabitant's body finally stirs, the flutter of his eyelids interrupting a solitary ant's blind traverse across his face. He's disoriented and immediately finds the grass a confused mess, pushing himself up to look around and discovering where he is. The thistles by the curb sway with a tumid lode, their bright purple blossoms grasping at the horizon. The Inhabitant first

perceives his impression of the blossoms as the fading fireworks of his beautiful dream, the bleary phantograms pierced by the sudden dull pain of a full day's whiskey-soaked sleep. He can now feel the weight of his sweat-encrusted body, and taste the sour sting of his rancid breath spilling out over dry, cracked lips.

The magic of the Island is gone. Waves of afternoon traffic have now left the road empty and in the distance the Inhabitant hears a muffled roar from the I-75 expressway; people going home. He raises his face from the grass into a sitting position, pulling off the straws that have printed themselves into his leathery forehead. It'll soon be time to get some change from the stragglers as they leave the Downtown bars, and maybe go to St. Joe's afterwards to see about a hot meal. The dizziness of hunger hits him like a spasm, and he almost sits down before stumbling off across the road.

By the time the Inhabitant leaves the Island, he has forgotten the dream entirely. The past hours of slumber appear in his memory as simply blank, drained of any activity. No one will ever remember the best baseball game ever imagined, the best game the Tigers never played. This is a largely unexamined conundrum for those interested in the dreamery of the Gratiot South-Leg Traffic Control Island. The Inhabitants invariably leave their perfect dreams behind.

## *Stargazing*

*Brian Fanelli*

Summer nights we pitched a pup tent  
in grandma's yard, pinched our noses  
against the stink of skunks,  
while we stretched out on the lawn,  
gazed at the sky and hoped  
for a flash of something unidentified,  
a streak of colors unexplained.

We grew up on prime time X-files episodes,  
wanted to be Mulder and Scully,  
clenching flashlights, chasing the unknown down alleys.

Some nights we pondered the universe,  
infinite, filled with other life, we said,  
maybe dimension-hopping beings,  
or time-traveling creatures.

We never saw triangle objects or bright lights,  
just planes flying low,  
a few shooting stars.

We passed out in sleeping bags as the sun  
climbed over mountains and blue dawn  
shined on the familiar and known.

## *Riding The Rails*

*Thaddeus Rutkowski*

I'm waiting to take the subway. Before the train arrives, a musician on the platform tells me a story about where he used to live. I don't know where that was— which borough of the city—but he had a wife then, he says.

Robbers lived upstairs from their apartment. The robbers stole everything they could get their hands on. Once, he saw them rolling a safe on a dolly along the street. Another time, they robbed the Big Apple Circus and brought home a small monkey. They couldn't sell the animal, so they gave it to the musician's wife.

The monkey wore a red hat, and whenever anyone approached, it would hold out the hat and look at the person with wide eyes, as if asking for money. "The monkey would make a few coins that way," the musician says, "enough to get food for its owner."

The musician's own hat is on the platform, brim up, open for donations. I drop 30 cents into it. It's not much, but the musician seems to appreciate it.

"What color was the monkey?" I ask.

"It was an old monkey," the musician says. "It was turning gray."

The musician's own hair is totally gray. It's curly and falls past his shoulders. He could have been a hippie once.

"That was the only thing the monkey could do," the musician

says. He holds his hand out and looks upward with hopeful eyes. “Just like that,” he adds. “People would give him money.”

\*

I take the subway uptown. The ride lasts a long time, more than half an hour, so I take a seat and read a book. My reading is interrupted by a man delivering a rant. “Sorry for bothering you,” he says to the train riders. “I’m not a criminal. I love Jesus. Can you spare a dollar or a sandwich?”

I avoid eye contact with the man, but as he moves through the car, a larger man says something to him.

The smaller man says, “I love Jesus” and “I’m not a violent man,” but it is clear he is a violent man—he has violent emotions—and all he needs is a push to go over the edge. The larger man shoves the man and wraps his fingers around his throat, then releases him.

“Are you laying hands on me?” the smaller man asks. “Are you mentally ill?”

“Just get out of my face,” the larger man says.

“Move on!” a woman yells.

The smaller man walks away, then comes back. “Are you a violent man?” he asks the larger man.

“Back off, or I will lay hands on you.”

I get off the train. I walk to the middle car and say to the conductor through his window, “There are two men fighting on the train.”

I look into the car where I’ve been riding, just to make sure,

and see they aren't there anymore.

Suddenly, the smaller man appears next to me. "Are you saying there's a fight on the train?" he asks. "Are you saying there's a violent man on the train?"

As I leave the station, I see that the violent man has gotten into a fight with another man. They are in a clinch, scuffling next to the bars that separate the token area from the platform. A woman is reaching through the bars and grabbing at them. She is screaming, "Stop it," but they are ignoring her. How can she stop them, I wonder, when she is on the other side of the bars? And if there were no bars separating her from the fighters, what would she do then? Would she take hold of the men and try to overpower them?

\*

Later, I see the musician whose wife owned the monkey. "Does your wife still have the monkey?" I ask.

"Not anymore," he says. "The monkey's gone, and my wife died a long time ago."

"I'm sorry to hear that," I say.

"She had a terminal illness when we were married. The doctors gave her four years, but she lasted eighteen."

I can't imagine having a spouse who is going to pass away. But I don't say anything. The musician seems happy enough. "That monkey was clever," he says. "He would look at you until you gave him money."

The musician goes on to tell me about a secret passageway between subway tracks. I know the place he's talking about, but I

never noticed a passageway. “I thought you had to get out and go across the street, then pay again if you wanted to switch trains,” I say.

“There’s a way across, on the inside,” he says. “Some guys told me about it.”

I can picture the guys he’s talking about—guys who probably lived in the passageway. I drop some coins into his upturned hat. We give each other a thumbs-up as the next train approaches.

\*

At the last stop, everyone is supposed to exit. But I don’t hear the announcement and stay on. With me are a couple of homeless men, sleeping on the seats. They have lots of room—they can stretch out.

I stand at the front of the first car and look out the window at the signal lights. I watch them change from red to yellow to green. I look for signs of life in the tunnel: old clothes, cardboard boxes, garbage. I see all of these things, and fortunately, none of the flammable items are burning. The tunnel is clear of smoke. We are passing under a building, beyond the last stop. Surprisingly, there are skylights in the tunnel, made of milky leaded glass. These windows seem to be from an earlier era. The panes form an Art Deco pattern. The train makes a U-turn, and the next platform comes into view. People are standing closer to the edge than they should.



I get out and climb to the street. I'm in the area of a former disaster. The streets were once filled with rubble—I remember seeing piles of concrete and dust here.

Instead of emerging between tall buildings, I am walking next to pools of water— ponds in vacant lots. The pools are man-made— apparently dug with backhoes.

I want to investigate these ponds. I want to go from one to another and look into the water.



*Untitled, Brian Vecci*

## *Hallway Love, Tiled Playground*

*Richard DeFino*

No memories I have are equal to the ones of those in the hallways of New York City.

It's where the night was planned out the day before and finished out that following night. Where were we going, who was coming, and who looked old enough buying drinks? Most importantly, were we ready to retreat inside the building or off the stoop? It gets cold pretty fast at night in the winter.

Hallway long, hallway short, white tile, peeling yellow paint, broken elevator.

Some of our buildings were pre-war; the ghosts of those who we share the same memories as linger in the hallways throughout the night. The kids of the better generation then us reminded you to be respectful of where you stepped.

Staircase too long, staircase too small, broken and rusted, but always crowded.

There was nothing electronic about the hallway except the flickering light bulbs over our heads. There was nothing romantic about the atmosphere except the beating hearts of young lovers. Wondering eyes and wondering hearts, two kids too nervous to speak first, but both in love.

Light a cigarette, open a beer, share a laugh, get yelled at, leave and come back. Repeat.

Tell a friend in the hallway how you feel about the girl who lives in Apartment 3B. But it's time to go home now and everyone says goodbye. Cigarettes ashed out, beers topped off and empty. But you're still too nervous to say goodbye, even though there is always tomorrow.

Make a plan for tomorrow, hold your friends to it and always hesitate to leave.

Everyone check your 'pagers' and cell phones for the time. It's definitely time to go home. Your walk home is long and cold. You wished you lived in that building, but you live on the other side of the neighborhood.

You beat yourself up in the head for not making a move on her. You got nervous again.

But the walk to and from the building was worth every minute spent out in the cold winter nights of the Bronx walking home. You just wished that you finally kissed her. Another opportunity lost, your chances are running low. Well, there's always tomorrow night.

New York City hallway, home away from home, tiled playground. Until tomorrow night.

## *A Love Letter to My Neighbor*

*Kara Mavros*

Dear neighbor in 3507,

It seems we have a problem. I think I love you. At least, I know I love the part of you that I can hear through these thin white walls so often. I wish I had a face, a name, or even a voice to put to the tuba I hear being played at 2 A.M., but the fact is that I don't. The tuba truly is such a sexy instrument. I'm so happy that you seem to have something you'll never give up on; your perseverance does amaze me. But you know what I really love? I really love how you always seem to be practicing when I'm trying to sleep. You have an incredible knack for knowing when I most need my eight hours of rest and then, in a fury of brass, you make your presence known and remind me of what it's like to feel. I feel angry. I feel tired. If that's not love, it sure is a lot like it. Most nights a week you are the last thought I have on my mind before I eventually drift off to sleep. And, sometimes when I'm lucky, you are also there coursing through my mountain of pillows to wake me up. You're like the sun that gently rises over my window each morning and smiles in my face. The only difference is that I can't close the blinds on you. And you don't only wake me in the morning. Also, I wouldn't describe the sour notes you so often hit as "smiling" on my face as much as slapping me in the face. But hey, the tuba takes practice; I get it.

Occasionally, I can put my hand on the wall and I can feel you; the air from your lips to one tuba sending vibrations to our shared drywall is quite a miracle when you think about it. It's amazing how hard those little notes had to work to fall upon my ungrateful ears.

There's no doubt that I feel very, very strongly for you. In fact, I even long for your happiness more than my own. Can you imagine that? Me, concerned for someone else's happiness. Surely you can't be happy playing the tuba for that long every day. Don't you ever get winded? Don't you want a real job someday? How many job openings are there for tuba players? Probably not a lot. What must your sleep schedule be like? Surely tuba players need their eight hours too. I really just want you to be successful and I don't think this is the right path for you. Trust me, 3507, because I know you like the popcorn ceiling above my bed, which I stare at so often late at night and think of you.

I also want you to be comfortable. You can't be comfortable in that tiny apartment, the one with the layout opposite of mine. Don't you want a bigger bedroom? Don't you wish you lived someplace where you didn't have to lug that tuba up 5 flights of stairs? I know you do, because I wish you did and I know you best. I know your routine by now. I can predict your actions because they are in sync with mine. Whenever I need quiet, I can always count on you to be needing the opposite, polluting our still apartment air with noise. You definitely deserve a more luxurious space to live in, too. Perhaps one with thicker walls? You know, one with more insulation for those cold nights, 3507? It can get pretty chilly here sometimes, and the last thing I would want is for you to be too cold to sleep at night. Everyone needs sleep.

I've only been in real love once, and I didn't like it. Of course, I fall in love daily. I fall in love with the boy on the bus who looks up from his book when I get on, I fall in love with the man at Publix who is buying \$50 worth of raw meat (what a man!), and today I fell in love with my waiter with the brown eyes who asked, "Are you done yet? My shift is over, but I can't leave until you do." But that one time a couple years back I knew it was real love. We've all seen enough movies to know that you know when you know. I lost sleep and I lost my former apathetic charm along with my appreciation for all things snarky and ironic. I didn't like my new self. I was dumb and happy. I was desensitized to all things but him, much like now.

Have you ever been in love, 3507? Do you fall in love with people on the street as easily as I do? Does the sound of a brassy band get your blood boiling? It probably does, but not in the same way as mine. It's a funny thing, what love does. It makes you feel so many things at once, like being pulled by your limbs in every direction. It's exhilarating at first, look how far you're stretching! Who would have thought you could let yourself go that many directions at once? Then you begin to feel too much, too fast. You are suffocating. I'm not used to feeling so strongly all of a sudden. Feeling is one of the only ways we can be sure we are alive, and for that very reason we must learn to live with it. So with that, I'm really worried I'm in love with you, neighbor, very strongly and all of a sudden. I've just got that feeling, among others.

I'm so caught up in you that I often find myself wondering what it would do to me to see your face. One thing I do know is that if I ever saw you and your tuba out in the hallway I wouldn't know

what to do. I wouldn't be able to control myself. Oh, how often I've dreamt of this rendezvous. I would get very close to your face, and put my hands on your tuba-playing arms, and I would tell you all the things I think about you late at night. I would tell you until I ran out of breath, I would even show you the parts of my body that I try so hard to hide from other people like the dark circles under my eyes. I would boldly declare my feelings for you and you would ask, "Wait, who are you?"

If you've ever paid attention to anything other than your music notes you would know that both your presence and your absence mean something to me. The mere thought of you existing near me, with nothing but one thin wall separating the places we both lay in bed drives me crazy. It puts me on edge; the closeness make me nervous. It's different from the butterflies you get when making eyes at a stranger at a bar, and it's certainly not that new and exciting first date kind of nervous that you tell all your friends about afterwards. It is a feeling both familiar and unsettling, all at once. It's the kind of quiet anxiety that creeps inside without warning, before you even have time to realize that your happiness won't last. You've made it hard to enjoy the solitude that comes along with a quiet night in because I know it's only a matter of time before my sweet silence is interrupted again. But maybe it's for the best. I've forgotten what it's like to sleep straight through the night anyways. A silent night would be nice at first, it would give me time to think, time to relax. But I'd miss you soon enough. I'd miss even your very worst song, my favorite lullaby.

Maybe you weren't the worst thing to happen to the fifth floor after all. So enjoy the little things, 3507, because it seems you never

know to appreciate a noisy neighbor until you've fallen in love and begged them to leave. That's how life goes. Just don't live your life too loudly while you're still here next to me.

Love,  
3509

P.S. Please knock back sometime.



## *Contributors*

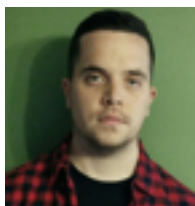


**Doug Bolling's** poetry has appeared in Georgetown review, Tribeca Poetry Review, Basalt, Redactions, Connecticut River Review, BlazeVOX, and/or, Wallace Stevens Journal and many others, recently in The Missing Slate with Poet of the Month and interview.

He has received five Pushcart nominations and holds the MA (with creative thesis) and PhD from Iowa. He is working on a collection and living in the greater Chicago area.



**Cathy Clay** is a native Houstonian. She earned a bachelor's degree in Creative Writing from the University of Houston and a master's in English from Texas Southern University. Her debut novel, *Agatta*, was published in 2010. In addition to writing, she enjoys family, animals, and the arts. Email [veritableclay@yahoo.com](mailto:veritableclay@yahoo.com)



This will be **Richard DeFino's** second publication, recently being published in Writers Digest. He was born and raised in New York City. He lived in the Bronx for 19 years and then traveled the rest of NY State for another 10 years. He now resides in Buffalo, NY actively pursuing his writing career. He is a poet and memoirist.



**Brian Fanelli's** poetry has been published in The Los Angeles Times, World Literature Today, Blue Collar Review, Portland Review, and elsewhere. He is the author of the chapbook *Front Man* and the full-length *All That Remains*. He is a Ph.D. student at SUNY Binghamton and teaches English at Lackawanna College.



**John Grey** is an Australian born poet. He was recently published in *Slant*, *Southern California Review* and *Skidrow Penthouse*, with work upcoming in *Bryant Literary Magazine*, *Natural Bridge* and *Soundings East*.



**Kara Mavros** is a student at Florida State University where she studies Editing, Writing & Media. She spends her time writing and editing for Swatch Magazine, as well as writing her first collection of short stories. This will be her first published piece of creative non-fiction.



**Christopher Mulrooney** is the author of symphony (The Moon Publishing & Printing), flotilla (Ood Press), viceroy (Kind of a Hurricane Press), and jamboree (Turf Lane Press, forthcoming).



**Thaddeus Rutkowski** is the author of the innovative novels Haywire, Tetched and Roughhouse. All three books were finalists for an Asian American Literary Award, and Haywire won the Members' Choice Award. He teaches at Medgar Evers College and the West Side YMCA in New York. He received a fiction fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts.



**Carl Scharwath's** work appears worldwide with over fifty published poems and five short stories. He recently won the National Poetry Contest award on behalf of Writers One Flight Up. The poem was selected and critiqued by Vivian Shipley, a Pulitzer Prize nominee. His first poetry book, “Journey To Become Forgotten”, was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press. His art photography were featured in the Conclave Journal and Edgar Allen Poet.



**Brian Vecci** is a writer, photographer and musician born in Seattle, WA and currently living in Brooklyn, NY. He is the creator of Clinton Hill Foodie, a Brooklyn food blog and serves as the Director of Education and Development for data security firm Varonis in New York City.



**Edmund Zagorin** was previously published in Voiceworks, Cafe Irreal and the anthology Writing That Risks (Redbridge Press, 2013). He occasionally mails paper stories to strangers via Stories By Mail, a quarterly broadsheet.



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