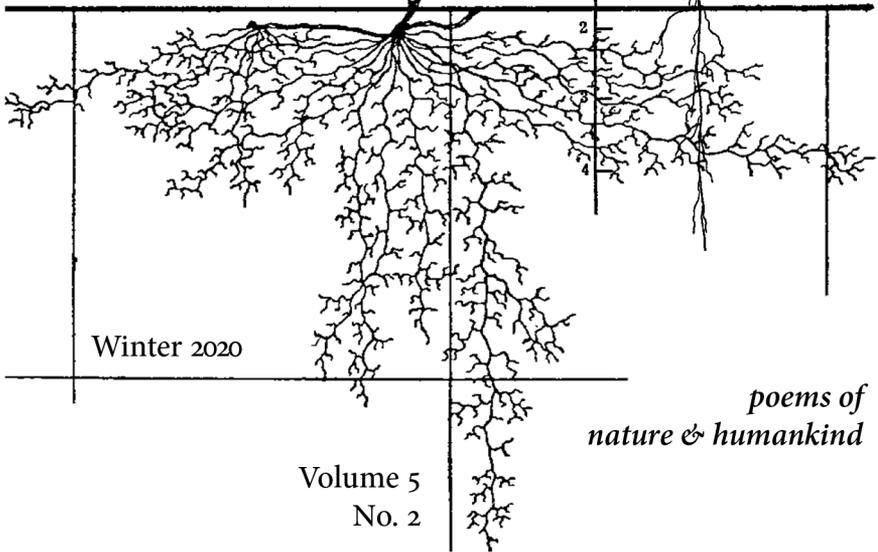
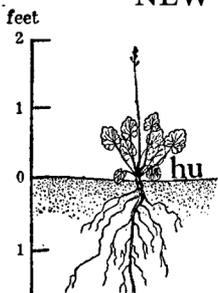
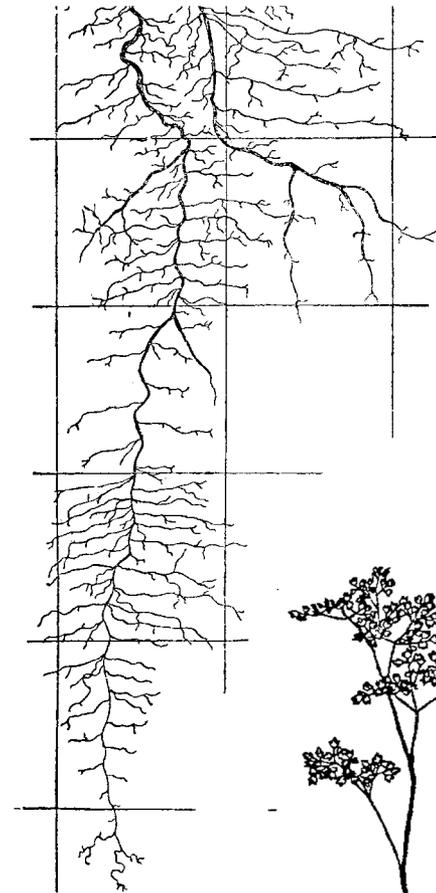


HAWK & WHIP POOR- WILL

NEW SERIES



Winter 2020

Volume 5
No. 2

*poems of
nature & humankind*

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

As the world confronts a pandemic, a sharpened awareness of racial injustice and the protests it has sparked, and irrepressibly cascading environmental anxieties, the landscapes and creatures in these pages make a small but resolute contribution. To what project? That of reminding ourselves and each other that the natural world is never separate from human life. I and my issue co-editor Cory Willingham are proud to put these reminders before you.

At numerous points in this issue, our poets gesture toward the quiet persistence of the natural world as a counterpoint to human turmoil. I'll cite a few examples... Sally Nacker's "Kindness in Winter" imagines a child feeding apples to a wary doe in the deepening snow. Erica Fletcher's "There Are So Many Things" dwells in the fleeting pleasures of urban nature: sledding children, the pendulous nest of an oriole, the first teasing warmth of a February thaw. Sean Ferrier-Watson's "Caprock Canyon" places human visitors in a stark desert landscape where towering formations of earth and clay dwarf the hikers who pass among them. A hawk overhead continues about its way with a clarity of purpose that humans rarely share. (The whippoorwill, one presumes, is occupied elsewhere.) And Jefferson Navicky's "Salamanders" finds unexpected, liquidly-slithering life beneath stacked firewood.

Other poets confront the darker edges of our ecological moment. Connie Bacchus's paired poems "grand coulee in wildfire smoke" and "before the wildfires" evoke a landscape first calm and then obscured by disorienting smoke.

In TR Poulson's Acadia Poetry Prize-winning sonnet, "Dairy Farmer's Daughter Considers Climate Change," a sad truth about the social ecology of contemporary America is encoded in the rhyme implied between "schools" and "slaughter." Imagination then leaps forward into a speculative future of altered winds and vanished ecosystems even as the speaker clings to their hope of protecting a single animal and the life it might yet bring into the world.

Nature poetry has never been merely pastoral. It is a literature of relationship: between people and place, memory and weather, grief and renewal, cloud and clod, soul and soil. In a year defined by upheaval, these poems search for caring relations and shared relatedness in the world around us. In doing so, they find temporary steadiness within a disrupted moment. — *Zachary Bos*

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The art on our front cover is adapted from illustrations of root-systems of desert plants by biologist John Ernest Weaver, as appear in his 1919 book The Ecological Relations of Roots. Annie Mogensen and F. C. Jean are also credited with work on the images. In the public domain.



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ANTHONY ETHERIN

Wildflower

(Anagrammed Lines)

Of will and wire,
allow wind, fire,
in a wildflower . . .

BLAKE EVERITT

View from Monks Bay, Bonchurch

Swathes of swan-crowning
white cloudswell folds down in
lightfurnace of fur: cornflower boat
sealed in a rainbow's shard-moat

as I trace with the seal-scythes
silt-skies of light –
the broken tree mantled with crystals of clay:
sky, sea and shardleaves unending, at play.

Cloud-chalice I watch as the cotton-clay blood
receives daily incense from the tide's ancient flood.

SALLY NACKER

Kindness in Winter

for Scarlet, age nine

Young Scarlet stands in deepening snow —
where she knows the doe
knows she has stood
before — at the edge of the wood.
The doe turns her ears toward the soft, recognizable sound
in the snow on the ground.

She listens from far in the wood —
and from a place of long-ago. Good
Scarlet feeds the gentle doe
red apples in the twinkling snow.

SEAN FERRIER-WATSON

Caprock Canyon

We climb among the caprocks, shoes sinking
in the rich red soil, the great pillars of earth and clay
 poised like toy soldiers above us,
 rifles loaded with cacti,
 little barbs that catch the flesh unexpected;
 exhausted,
 cold,
we hike the last crag
the summit unfolding to reveal the face of shattered
 landscape,
 a twisted monument to a forgotten flood;
 in the distance
the city bleeds,
the faint outline of roads carved like veins
through the earth, suburbia not far behind;
a red-tailed hawk perches near us,
oblivious, his purpose, unlike ours, is well known;
far off a horn honks in the deep,
an RV scaring deer from its path,
and we,
exhausted, cold,
make our descent.

ERICA FLETCHER

There Are So Many Things

There are so many things I have to share
with you these tiny moments of city life crackle
with whatever force makes the world
sweeter & hotter when I think of you

We pulled plastic sleds to the park
I stood around like a grownup
the children skidded down & came to rest
lay listless talking kid-talk
watching the dog walkers walk

On the hill an oriole nest hanging pendulous
from a bare sugar maple
downy soft sack cradling new life
on last year's egg-shards
a private feather-lined womb

On the way home
we met a bat-faced terrier named Herbie Hancock
his owner had a big broad Boston accent
everyone is friendly
when it's warm in February

Listen.

The crabapple tree on the corner teems with robins

The witch hazel clouding up the Fens is turned on

The willows are considering popping out their tiny green
tongues

Come home and run your fingers down my bare back

just out of the shower

there are so many things I have to share

with you

JEFFERSON NAVICKY

Rat Kings

I was just learning to leisure, whole days spread out
like retirement's slow bloom when the rats crept in.

Once brazen in their day-time snatches, I beat them
back to night missions. Surgical in their precision, they

leave hardly a trace. I hear their teeth are molds for
deep digging machines that can chew through anything,

edge upon edge so each bite multiplies its reach, such
efficiency of mouth I'd like to learn, each word to cut

itself letter by letter into some better articulation of grief,
a sharper turn toward desire hard won. One in twenty rats

can detect landmines, know enough not to set them off.
No wonder my traps sit unsprung in the woodshed, their

bit of fat not enough bait for the rest to risk the death
they saw their king suffer. Carried out by the tail, big as

a small dog, his face crushed by the kill bar, the king
looked like he was sleeping with his hands tucked beneath

his chin. At least death was a quick snap. Poison is possible
in the future, but it climbs up the food chain. And to die

from bleeding out I'll keep as a last resort. For now the rest
of them – a few? dozens? hundreds? – live like dwarf kings

of yore beneath the mountain with their hoards of treasure
piled up around them from nightly plunders sleeping bodies

nestled together like a fur version of the small intestine,
waiting for a new king to rise, bare his teeth, don his crown.

Salamanders

My mother declared she will no longer remember how to be a nice person once the pandemic is over. My father is losing his mind faster in quarantine, slipping down some slope greased with his favorite memories. Who would've know that trip to Sante Fe when I was twenty-two made such a deep groove? In the lodge he dreamt a knock on the door. Up to answer it, he found his own father. They laughed, wrestled in joy on the carpet. My father once tried to teach me to wrestle, but I gave him a rug burn on his eyebrow when his face didn't slide well across carpet. I swear it was an accident. I thought my hands would control his head better than they could. I forget I'm not always a nice person in memory, that slippery surface, wet with misunderstood purpose. Yesterday stacking the sprawling pile of firewood, I uncovered salamander after salamander hiding beneath dark logs, copper purple twists with a slight shine. I took my gloves off to pick them up in cupped hands to bring them to the safety of shade's leaves, their bodies like a stream of water through the cracks of my fingers.

CONNIE BACCHUS

grand coulee in wildfire smoke

no walls no walls
we are all in clouds

no deer today
no turkeys

quail dispersed

& townspeople talk

& lakes can't be seen
hide under clouds of thick grey

CONNIE BACCHUS

before the wildfires

the heat
is dry not humid
like seattle

boats putter in
the wakeless

she swings
the sky
is coulee blue &

boats purr like
lawnmowers

families go out
for a day at
the lake bring

the dog & the
only noise here
comes from
cars passing

behind sounds like
water running

like helicopter
gliding over a
coulee wall to
wildfires past

smells like dust
& dirty water

tastes like tongue
stuck on the roof
of the mouth

feels like sweat
crawling

DAVID MILLEY

Deer Season

Eating kippers from a can, he leans on his truck. He forks fish into his mouth, a twig from today's cutting fashioned for the task. He eats big-mouthed, to keep the fish smell from his beard. Standing by his silent saw, he'll devour crackers for dessert.

From the side of his eye, he sees a deer, then two, step with care from the wood near the spot he's cleared. He lays the fish and fork, silently, down onto his truck. More shadows move, at the edge of his eye. Knowing what the shadows mean, he lifts his saw.

Still not looking up, he sees orange jackets now, and the glint that gives away the gun. He crouches, cradles his saw. He waits until the deer move into his clearing, until they're halfway across. He yanks the cord. The saw screams and growls, carving up the air.

Everywhere, deer leap for the far wood. Hurdling stumps, they miss him by inches. "Run! Hide!" he whispers under the roar. The deer become shadows again. The gunners wave in disgust. He cuts off his saw and grins. He goes back to his kippers again.

T. R. POULSON

God, in the Cretaceous

Good, but far from *very good*,
He dubs them prototypes: the triceratops
and lobsters, the pterosaurs, the devil frogs,
plesiosaurs and crazy crabs. The burrowing
lizards. It's the lizard that stops Him.
He rubs the mud from His hands, picks
the sea salt from His fingernails,
before cupping the common ancestor
of many modern lizards in his palm.
Behold. A beautiful creature. So quick,
so simple, so potentially grand.

He can't put His finger
on *why* he likes *this* prototype.
The nimble neck? The long tapering
tail? The dainty legs? *The legs must go!*
He laughs at the image of the lizard
floundering on boulders without them.
He works through the eons —
the daylight twisting through fog,
the moons waning to slivers — and more
prototypes appear, along with remains
left as fossils, before He lines the ribs
and vertebrae along a ledge, encloses
a heart, and binds them with sinews,
with skin. Behold: the prototype
for the python, the thread snake,
the saw-scaled viper. Some will return

to the sea, and some will hide
beneath rocks. Some will rattle,
and one will curl its body
around the tree.

2020 ACADIA PRIZE WINNER

Dairy Farmer's Daughter Considers Climate Change

Someday I fear it's too late, when jellyfish rule
oceans cleansed of blue-green algae. Turbines
stand unspinning, dusty, as those tradewinds
shift north and north again. Up at the Pole,
travelers tango on cruise ships. In the full
moonlight, shadows fall on bears' white hides.
Freshened water crosses Erie's sun-dried
bed in pipes. Divers glide through high schools
in Foster City. Workers build a Lagrange
Point Shade. Truckers wait at hubs of slaughter
for methane-burping milk cows, hushed and slain.
I want to take my dark-eyed Jersey heifer
to Alaska, hide with her near abandoned
fields of oil, let her raise her first calf, alone.

ROBERT WATSON

The Museum of Farming Life

There's no direct bus to the Museum of Farming Life.
You change. It takes time, and a downhill trudge in the mud.
And even then you aren't there, reports my wife,

whom I sent off alone with some misgiving.
Nobody at the gate, so she walked right in,
and quickly found herself among the living:

Phenomenal Ben the Quantum Horse, who appears
in the field, here and there, but you never see him moving:
a work of many hands, and twitching ears.

Angus the Eponymous Cow, who is, alas,
fully meat for death, and doesn't mind –
a body tending to rest in springy grass.

Passivity Pam, black-stockings grandma lamb,
staring boredom up into your face
as if she really couldn't give a damn.

Pigs devoid of names or conscious troubles.
Socket-nosed and overfed, they sleep
like a pulsing vat of greasy pinkish bubbles.

Such a disappointment to my wife!
Patronizing tombstones of a farm,
a festival of rot and rust, not life.

These animals were only sown to reap.
The livestock-auction sign next door read “Gentle-
men.” Did she belong where life’s so cheap?

She could have bought a cow with the coins in her purse,
the bus-fare that was meant to take her home
to where the Derry road turns for the worse,

where history gives way to compost, yields
to broken synclines of an ancient age.
She could have walked it through untended fields,

these days when the light stays good so late. It would give
assent by nodding in the harness to
a promised place they might begin to live.

ANN CHANDONNET

Borning Room

A low chamber one stoops to enter
built over a boulder protruding through one wall —
a horse-size granite chunk,
a New England upwelling of obdurate ledge.

One steps up into this chamber
off the main room with its big fireplace.
No heat of its own but the flicker of pain, the gush of blood.
A damp cave, that grotto in the skull eyes turn to in prayer.

How many wives wore out on this rope bed
and joined their predecessors on the knoll
beyond the orchard?

Recent and Forthcoming – column by Z.B.

Allow us to recommend the following works concerned, as we are, with nature and humanity's place in it. 🐾 *Writing the Land: Northeast*, edited by Lis McLoughlin, pairs poets with land trust preserves across New England and tasks each writer to respond to a specific protected landscape. Offers readers literary reflection as well as an introduction to the people and organizations working to conserve these places. Human Error, 2021: \$20. 🐾 Christopher Leahy's *Birdpedia* compiles centuries of bird lore into a compact alphabetical treasury running from Abundance (an estimated one hundred billion bird species worldwide!) to the migratory restlessness known as Zugunruhe. Topics as varied as mobbing, Shakespeare's birds, and the mechanics of avian reproduction are illuminated with clarity and wit. Princeton Univ. Press, 2021: \$19.95. 🐾 In Ben Okri's novel *Every Leaf a Hallelujah*, the Booker Prize-winner turns to ecological fable. A young girl ventures to the forest in search of a mysterious woman rumored to possess the power to heal damaged landscapes. Equal parts myth, environmental warning, and lyrical prose. Apollo (UK), 2021: \$17.99. 🐾 In her nature memoir *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit*, Lyanda Lynn Haupt invites readers to view their relationship with the living world as embedded participants rather than not as distant observers. Written with the authority of a naturalist and the warmth of a storyteller. Little, Brown Spark, 2021: \$28. 🐾 Craig Santos Perez's *Habitat Threshold* meditates on climate change, colonial history, and Indigenous stewardship through poems rooted in his homeland of Guam. Melissa Tuckey: "interweaves parental tenderness with knowledge of environmental crisis." Omnidawn, 2020: \$17.95 🐾 *Dehesa: El bosque del lince ibérico* explores the distinctive *dehesa* ecosystem of the Iberian Peninsula. Sweeping cinematography makes close observation of both the endangered titular felid and of the centuries-old agricultural practices that help sustain this mosaic of pasture, woodland, and farmland. Directed by Joaquín Gutiérrez Acha, 2020. Streaming online, Spanish, 94 minutes. 🐾

In this issue:

CONNIE BACCHUS
ANN CHANDONNET
ANTHONY ETHERIN
BLAKE EVERITT
SEAN FERRIER-WATSON
ERICA FLETCHER
DAVID MILLEY
SALLY NACKER
JEFFERSON NAVICKY
TR POULSON
ROBERT WATSON

*“We are
changed by
beauty, too.
Never did I know
what beauty could
mean to me until
I stood one day in
a field of blowing
thistledown . . . If
I could have prayed
then, I should have
besought Apollo to
make me like the
seed of the thistle.”*

*// from The Dingbat of
Arcady by Marguerite
Ogden Bigelow
Wilkinson, 1922.*



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