



WHISTLING SHADE

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The Legend of Washington Irving

Poetry

Gwendolyn Jensen
Greg Watson
Matthew J. Spireng
Celia Meade
DS Maolalai
Cameron Morse
I. D. Brannan

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Justin Teerlinck

Fiction

Jeremy Wenisch
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Wendy BooydeGraaff
Tanya E. E. E. Schmid
Tony Rauch

Essay

L.N. Loch
Phyllis Carol Agins

Reviews

John-Ivan Palmer
John Talbird

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 Contributing Editor: Justin Teerlinck
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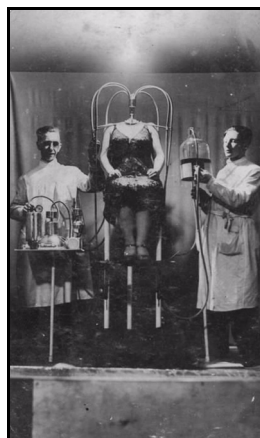
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Cover illustration by John Quidor:
 The Headless Horseman Pursuing
 Ichabod Crane, 1858. Smithsonian
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12 Washington Irving



3 Exchanging bodies

21 Crete



strengths, foibles and triumphs against the backdrop of the challenges they faced.

I felt a strange and intense sense of kinship with the author and this story. Our backgrounds are 180 degrees different. I was raised in a staid, suburban household that moved twice in eighteen years. My father was an accountant, a cog in the bowels of state bureaucracy, the least and the most mysterious person I ever knew, my step-mother, a middle-class career mental patient. Yet my family were freaks striving to look and feel normal. I can relate to the author's sense of transient displacement and his mother's craving for home and stability. Although I was raised in a structure with a roof on top of it, there was never a sense of safety or permanence. Although Palmer's family eventually obtained a house, it was bereft of comforts—either physical or emotional—and it eventually became yet another place to experience alienation and to deposit secrets.

The author bore all the expectations for conformity of mid-20th century middle class suburban America, but with only 19th century technology and the weight of necessity to meet the demands of those expectations. Even after moving into a professionally built home in the suburbs, Palmer had no running water, no electricity, no introductions at his new school. Nor did he have transportation to and from school due to awkward circumstances and the brutal demands of his father's schedule. His narrative reads less like a kid trying to fit in at a Midwestern high school, and more like a kid who might have been mistakenly left for dead after his family broke a wagon wheel somewhere between Kansas and the Nevada desert on the Oregon Trail:

With an intuition that comes from being in strange places, I found Pilgrim Road and started walking. Reckoning from the sun's position... I headed north with a sack of books that grew heavier the longer I carried them. Students on passing busses looked at me as they passed, some laughing. After a couple of miles, I came to the house where my father was sleeping in the car. I didn't ask him about his pressing matters and he didn't ask me about mine. "I have to leave for Chicago," he said. "Since you'll be at school all day you can use the bathroom there. I laid in an assortment of canned goods and a box of candles so you can have light. Somewhere I packed a can opener and some plates." "How will I cook?" I asked, staring at the box. "Pretend you're a cowboy. Make a fire in the fireplace. Be sure to open the flue or the whole house will fill up with smoke." I had no previous experience with fireplaces, so he had to show me how to do it. For writing materials, he gave me some Master of Deception stationary and a flat carpenter's pencil. Then, as he had always done, he got in his car and drove away.

I gathered enough box elder branches at the edge of a lot to start a fire... and fashioned a way to heat a couple of cans. I spread my sleeping bag on the floor and began catching up on my assignments, working into the evening by candlelight.

Even after having "made it"—barely eking out a living on his own as he was just getting his sea legs as a young performer—the concept of home and all it represents was elusive and illusory. Yet through the skills of his craft, the author was able to transmute wreckage into beauty, and fuse the hollow props of the present with the permanence of memories of the past. There is the eloquence of poetry in Palmer's description that evokes the powerful truth that home is not a place on Earth, but a place in the mind and in the soul, a truth known only to the wanderers of this world:

I endeavored to weave myself into what Henry James called "the embroidery of life's canvas." The best I could do was enhance the light at the end of my personal tunnel by replacing the overhead bulb in rented rooms with the highest wattage I could find, turning dreary hovels into a kind of stage set where every crack and flaw, every speck and stain showed in brilliant clarity with me as the center. I even kept the light on at night so in the morning I woke up to a blazing geography of crumbling ceiling and stained wallpaper, the equivalent of a comforting wasteland around a trailer park.

Home may not have been a possibility for the author, but achieving an understanding with his father was. Palmer's relationship with his father was complicated, full of secrecy and silence—but also

mutual admiration and respect. The irony is that the art and artifice surrounding stage magic is concrete—almost formulaic—if difficult to master. But the thoughts and feelings of the master himself remained more inscrutable than a 3,000-year-old cave painting. If the craft of magic requires mastery of sleight of hand and other distraction techniques, the art of magic requires mastery in perfecting the construction of one's mask. In the act of practicing his father's magic tricks Palmer came to know his father in a way that observing him—even with a view from backstage—could never permit. If John-Ivan's father is a master of deception, then the author himself is the master of lucidity. In the end, the man behind the Cheshire smile and the sleight of hand once again takes corporeal form for the reader. I know of no greater tribute a son could make his father, then to resurrect him and give him immortality.

- Justin Teerlinck

The World Out There by John Talbird

(Madville Publishing)

John Talbird's contemporary story portrays the interpersonal dynamics of three rather ordinary, complex, and confused characters. It's a clear-eyed look at how circumstances cause relationships to deepen or unravel and, in turn, create new factors that must be dealt with.

The web of interactions keeps life from being smooth, and when events from the "world outside," emphasized in the title, intrude, they can unsettle and create turmoil, upsetting the best-laid plans, the best intentions. Outside complications make the normal stew of life more interesting, and watching the principal characters dealing with them, lets them take shape as living people. Tossed about, sometimes feeling helpless, other times simply disoriented, they move toward what seems to be ways to make their lives work out. In the process, they make choices that affect their lives and those of others. And always, they have to deal with the consequences.

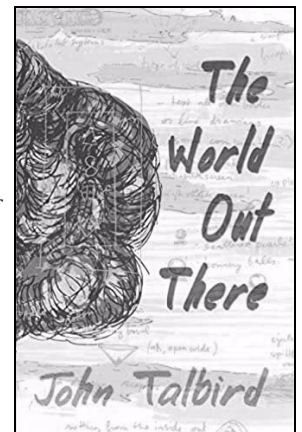
Told in the present tense, *The World Outside* traces the struggle of Jan and Ray, who are trying to redefine their relationship post marriage, while maintaining some rational order for their son, Hank. Jan, confused about her own desire to be a good mother and somehow figure out her own life, starts a casual affair with William, her boss at the bookstore where she works, which adds its own complications.

Talbird tells his tale with a delicious sense of immediacy. The characters can seem propelled through the events. Combined with a knack for making ordinary situations both vivid and interesting, this becomes a fast-paced narrative.

For Jan, things go wrong from the opening chapter, when the brakes on her car fail, plunging herself and her son into the lake. But there is a sense that we've entered in the middle of things, and that it's been some time since things actually went right for any of them:

Her father will probably buy her another car, but she is thirty-four. When will it stop? When will she not need to be taken care of? She should call Hank's father, tell him what happened, but it is late. The VCR clock reads 2:33. Actually, Ray would probably be up, but he might be out and Jan's not crazy about talking to what's-her-name. The new girlfriend is a decade younger and Jan hates when she catches her on the phone, that coldness, as if that little chick has any right, as if Jan gives a shit about Ray, as if she would consider getting back with him even if he were single and willing.

In one sense, the title is misleading. Yes, the machinations of the world out there factors into their lives, but the most



powerful, most significant (and interesting) struggles the characters face are often those of their own making. They often perpetuate those problems, sometimes through an inability to focus, rather than solve them complicates their lives:

“All right. I don’t know what I am, even what I like.” She turns away and reaches for the blinds behind the couch, puts her index and middle fingers through a slit and spreads them. That tiny slit lets in a brightness too intense to stare at in this perpetual dusk, she he just watches the light on her cheek, the dust motes drift, until she lets go, looks back at him. “I know I’ve not really talked about my childhood much. Mainly cause it’s kind of boring.” She runs her hand through her hair. “God, I must look like shit.”

A story takes place in a context, and the context in this book is a troubled time, not unlike our own. As the story develops, a serial killer is on the rampage. With a shortage of leads, the city is in lockdown, both by mandate and out of fear.

This lets Talbird take a complex relationships story and stir in problems from the world “out there”— showing how events totally outside their control affect the characters’ lives, adding another layer of difficulty to the challenge of getting by. Given that mix, it’s no surprise that there is little logic to its madness and things can happen for no apparent reason. If we do create and perpetuate our own problems, the ones thrust on us are out of our control. Thus, Talbird’s construct is a prescient and almost perfect metaphor for the way our current pandemic has altered and disrupted our lives.

These are rich stories of people the author seems to understand and know. In the same way that writers like John Cheever and Joyce Carol Oates explored and portrayed the nuances and people of their own places and times, it is realistic. Such study requires examining events and reactions without ascribing meaning to them. People do what they do, and their actions mean what they mean. The characters can be proactive, helpful, and kind, or self-destructive and angry, in equal measure. They are people who act their parts or act out, who fulfill their potential, or fail to, or perhaps even choose another path.

- Ed Teja



Students Skating at Rockefeller Center

by Terence Culetton

Some sheer around, some teeter on their skates and push off to recover, others glide half-hunkering through shaky figure eights. Three hug the boards along the other side and one on this side readjusts his hat to get a tighter fit. There's music, too, some tape-looped bop tune cluttered up with scat. Waiting here means nothing else to do but watch them taxi hopefully. They seem—if not Olympics bound—still, set to veer toward some kind of glory, mouthing steam. I'd like to be like them again, career about in yellow gloves, red scarf, and all those layers on for luck were I to fall.

About Our Contributors

L. Ward Abel is the author of two full collections and eleven chapbooks of poetry, including *Jonesing For Byzantium* (UK Authors Press, 2006), *American Bruise* (Parallel Press, 2012), *Little Town Gods* (Folded Word Press, 2016), *A Jerusalem of Ponds* (erbacce-Press, 2016), *Digby Roundabout* (Kelsay Books, 2017), *The Rainflock Sings Again* (Unsolicited Press, 2019), and his latest full collection, *Floodlit* (Beakful, 2019).

Phyllis Carol Agins has long found inspiration in Philadelphia, PA. Two novels, a children's book, and an architectural study of synagogues and churches were all published during her years there. Recently more than 45 short stories have appeared in literary magazines, including *Art Times*, *Eclipse*, *Whiskey Island Magazine*, and *Women Arts Quarterly Journal*. For many years, she divided her time between Philly and Nice, France, adding the Mediterranean rhythms to her sources of inspiration. Please visit: phylliscarolagins.com.

Wendy BooydeGraaff is the author of *Salad Pie*, a children's picture book published by Ripple Grove Press. Her fiction has appeared in *Smoke-Long Quarterly*, *Jellyfish Review*, and *Bending Genes*, and is forthcoming in *Border Crossing* and *NOON*.

I. D. Brannan is a poet and freelance journalist in Lawrence, Kansas. He has written for *Mile Marker Review*, *Emporia Gazette*, *Branson Register/Branson Globe*, and *Baldwin City Living Magazine*. He won the 2020 Burford Theatre Poetry Contest and has had 3 poetry chapbooks featured on the top 10 list of the Official UK Chapbook Chart.

Cindy Buchanan has a BA in English and a teaching certificate from Gonzaga University. Her work has been published in *Mobius: The Journal of Social Change*. She an avid runner and hiker with a deep interest in Buddhist philosophy and Zen meditation practice. She has completed the Camino de Santiago in Spain, the Coast to Coast Walk in England, and the Milford Walking Track in New Zealand.

A former Bucks County (PA) Poet Laureate, a 2019 Pushcart Prize nominee, and recipient of First Honorable Mention in the 2019 Helen Schable International Traditional Sonnet Contest, **Terence Culetton** has published two collections of formally crafted narrative and lyric poems, *A Communion of Saints* (2011) and *Eternal Life* (2015), both with Anaphora Literary Press.

David Habib is a writer, photographer, and technology executive. He lives in Virginia with his wife and two children.

Gwendolyn Jensen began writing poems when she retired in 2001 from the presidency of Wilson College (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania). The places where her work has appeared include the *Beloit Poetry Journal*, the *Harvard Review*, *Salamander*, *Sanskrit*, and *Measure*. She has had three poetry collections (*Birthright*, *As if toward Beauty*, and *Graceful Ghost*) all published by Birch Brook Press. She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Christopher Kuhl's poetry collection *Night Travels* was published in 2017. His poetry has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *FRIIGG Magazine*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Alabama Literary Review*, *The Griffin*, and elsewhere.

L.N. Loch graduated from the University of Illinois in 2020, just after her short story “Toffeehouse” was published in *Hedge Apple* magazine. “The Nazi and the Pear Tree” is a true story from her grandmother’s childhood, much of which was spent in refugee camps.

DS Maolalai has been nominated four times for Best of the Net and three times for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry has been released in two collections, *Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden* (Encircle Press, 2016) and *Sad Havoc Among the Birds* (Turas Press, 2019).

Celia Meade was born in Rochester when her father attended the Mayo Clinic to become a surgeon. She currently attends Sarah Lawrence College in New York, doing her masters in poetry.

Cameron Morse lives with his wife Lili and two children in Independence, Missouri. His poems have been published in numerous magazines, including *New Letters*, *Bridge Eight*, *Portland Review* and *South Dakota Review*. His first collection, *Fall Risk*, won Glass Lyre Press's 2018 Best Book Award. His latest is *Baldy* (Spartan Press, 2020). He holds an MFA from the University of Kansas City—Missouri and serves as Senior Reviews editor at Harbor Review and Poetry editor at Harbor Editions.

JB Mulligan has published more than 1100 poems and stories in various magazines over the past 45 years, and has had two chapbooks: *The Stations of the Cross* and *THIS WAY TO THE EGRESS*, as well as two e-books: *The City of Now and Then*, and *A Book of Psalms* (a loose translation). He has appeared in more than a dozen anthologies.

Tony Rauch has four books of short stories published—*I'm right here* (spout press), *Laredo* (Eraserhead Press), *Eyeballs growing all over me ... again* (Eraserhead Press), and *What if I got down on my knees?* (Whistling Shade Press). He can be found at: <http://trauch.wordpress.com/>

Tanya Elizabeth Egeness Epp Schmid was a Doctor of Oriental Medicine and a teacher of Tai Chi, Qigong and Kyudo (Zen Archery) until 2014 when she and her husband started a permaculture farm to help combat climate change. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Canary Literary Magazine*, *Quail Bell Magazine*, *Adelaide Magazine*, and *The Scarlet Leaf Review*. She is the author of *Tanya's Collection of Zen Stories* (2018). www.tanyaswriting.com

Matthew J. Spireng's 2019 Sinclair Prize-winning book *Good Work* was published in 2020 by Evening Street Press. A 10-time Pushcart Prize nominee, he is the author of two other full-length poetry books, *What Focus Is* and *Out of Body*, winner of the 2004 Bluestem Poetry Award, and five chapbooks. His was the winner of The MacGuffin's 23rd Annual Poet Hunt Contest in 2018 and the 2015 Common Ground Review poetry contest.

Justin Teerlinck is an occupational therapist in the Tacoma, Washington area, where he is learning how to place his writing skills and sense of the absurd in service to people with disabilities. His response to most standardized test questions is, “Meow don’t know this theoretical construct. Meow try again please?”

Joel Van Valin is the publisher of *Whistling Shade*. His first poetry chapbook, *The White Forest*, was published in 2018 by Prolific Press. He lives with his wife, twin sons, and Naughty Cat in St. Paul. He is a confirmed Luddite who still makes mix tapes.

Greg Watson is the author of several collections of poetry, most recently *All the World at Once: New and Selected Poems*. He is also co-editor with Richard Broderick of *The Road by Heart: Poems of Fatherhood*, published by Nodin Press.

Jeremy Wenisch is a software tester who lives with his wife in Princeton, West Virginia. His life took root in Minnesota, as his fiction often does.

Orit Yeret is a writer, artist and teacher. Born and raised in Israel, she currently lives in the U.S. Her work recently appeared in *The Borfski Press*, *Ink Pantry*, *Drunk Monkeys*, and *American Writers Review* and is forthcoming in *The Magnolia Review* and *THINK*. Read and view more of her work at www.orityeret.com.