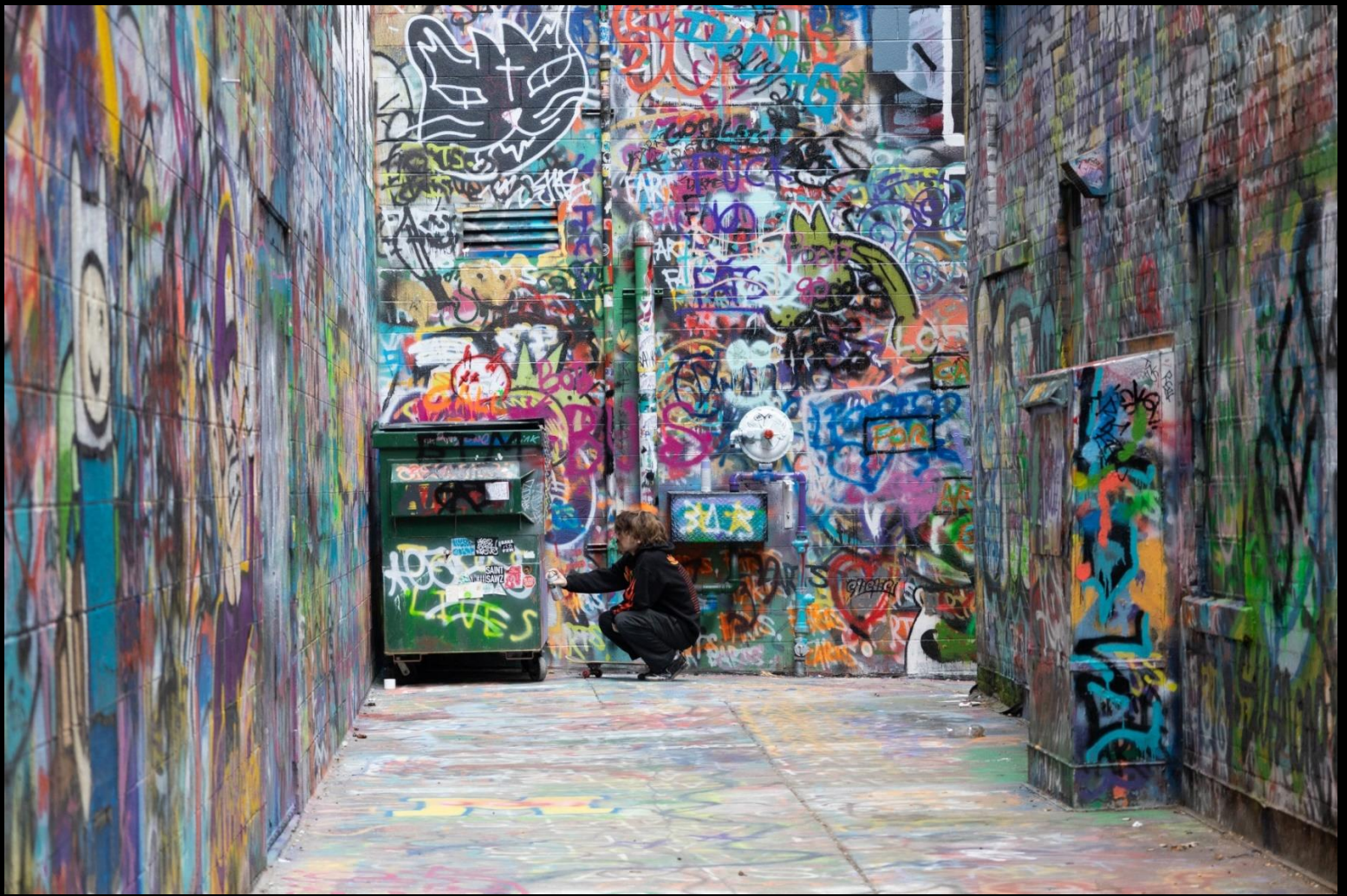




STRANGE AND FULFILLING

A WCC Anthology Edited by Tom Zimmerman



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This *Strange and Fulfilling* anthology is a production of the WCC Poetry Club, at Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

It features work written by WCC students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends that was posted on the WCC Poetry Club website May through early October 2023.

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<https://wccpoetryclub.wordpress.com/>

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Contents

Lilly Kujawski	Detail from <i>Tag 1</i>	Fr cover
	<i>Tag 1</i>	Inside fr
	<i>Rolling Downtown 3</i>	Inside fr
Abdur-Raheem Al-Hallak	Little Pieces of Sand	6
Zakeria Almajrabi	Closure	7
	Him	9
Lilly Kujawski	<i>Line Study</i>	10
Stephen Fredrick	The Moon Watches, The Sun Follows	11
Amy Higgins	This poem needs a visual	12
Lilly Kujawski	matrimony	13
Diane M. Laboda	Alone in a Moment	14
	I'm not looking at...	15
Lilly Kujawski	<i>Rolling Downtown 1</i>	17
Diane M. Laboda	Operating in the Dark	18
	You're the Reason	20
Daniel W. Long	33 Friends	21
	Under Water	22
	Who Made the Call	23
Lilly Kujawski	<i>Hanging Out 1</i>	24
Jane Louise	Plastic	25
Mona Moorman	The Catalpa Tree	26
Mary Oches	More	27
Scott Schuer	Wallace Stevens	28
Lilly Kujawski	<i>Rolling Downtown 2</i>	29
Sarah Smith	Fibonacci(s): To Live This Human Life	30
	Freeform: To Advocate	31
	Haiku(s): When Creativity Strikes	32
	Sonnet: A Living Dream	33
Tom Zimmerman	Study in Black and White (II)	34
Lilly Kujawski	<i>Tuesdays at Taste</i>	Inside bk
	<i>Tag 2</i>	Inside bk
	Detail from <i>Tag 2</i>	Bk cover

Little Pieces of Sand

As it always was before, it became again.
A unique, fleeting consciousness gone.
Some leave the world no different; some manage to make an imprint.
That imprint, no matter the size, will be erased.
The sands of time — they are ruthless.
They erode away at every memory.
They cover up any imperfection,
Any blemish,
Every imprint.
We all know their power well,
But what are these sands made of?
Why you, of course.
The living.
The temporarily conscious.
Little pieces of sand.
What great power you carelessly wield over those who are no longer.
One rip,
One spark,
One drop,
An existence gone — never to be retrieved.
A second, more permanent, death.
The only thing more temporary than the mortal's existence is his wisdom.
Erasing and forgetting as he pleases.
Not knowing what to keep, what will aid in the future.
What to cast into the abyss.
Memories echo through the halls of time,
Bouncing only off the open ears and minds.
Keep the echo going.
Hear the call of the past.
I speak for the dead.
Delay my forgetting.

Closure

I'm not sure
If this even qualifies
I've heard all the "I love you's" and the "Hi's"
It's strange that the one thing
I haven't heard was a proper goodbye
Maybe It was a good thing
Now that I realize
Because I hate those
Hearing that creating a ring
Not the one that I chose
For you
To wear
But the one I thought I'd never hear
I swear
Having to have your goodbye being the last thing
You say
Would ring in my ears
Every day
For the next couple years
Instead it was simple nothing
Like you never existed
Best moments ever listed
Now a dream
The only thing that now would make me scream
Is that if I started to let go
Forgetting all the shows you showed
All the hugs we owed
Now awake
I feel that the pieces of you have started to flake
Thinking of you no longer makes my heart quake
Or my legs shake

Instead I think of it as a dream
Some are fun
Maybe scary
Or about the one you thought to marry
I'd like to remember your touch too
To remember it came from you
I think I already started to forget
It's probably for the best
My heart no longer flutters in my chest
It's okay too
Because I know that I had one dream come true
I can go on and create thousands of poems about you
I think that's what I'll do
I will not dwell
For this is my farewell
And with what started with "Hey" or "Hi"
Don't think I'm rotten because I have already
Forgotten
For I am just a guy
Saying Goodbye.

Him

It was **A**ll a blur.
I'd be *L*ying if I said I hadn't remembered.
Indescribable it was beyond any word.
What did I do to **E**arn
You.
Couldn't blink almost like hypnosis.
Eyes wide open till I developed **X**erosis.



Lilly Kujawski *Line Study*

The Moon Watches, The Sun Follows

On the way to the moon
The stars shine bright
Like flowers in bloom
The moon does not like the sun
Yet it is the stars that make the moon shine light

On the way to mars
The moon keeps watch
For no one should be alone in space
Except for the stars

On the way out of this galaxy
It seems so close yet so far
As you look beyond this reality
You cant help but remember
The warmth of your homes hospitality

On the way back home
You gaze upon the light of the stars
Looking at the moon, seeing it from mars
You'll never forget the sight of what could one day be ours

AMY HIGGINS

This poem needs a visual

March, and I am sick
of spring's waffling.
Give me the goddamned equation
that lets me input 8 inches of snow and 2 inches of dirt
blocking the pale points
of the hyacinth from sunlight
spilling like weak tea from the
fucking ambivalent sky
which fails to bring forth bloom.

Which unit of light do I plug in
to solve for x ?
 x being the remainder of my
soul at the vernal equinox.
Even my son's physics text
which should enlighten
is inconclusive; do I use
candellas or *lumens*
as my unit of intensity?

I want an oracle, but will settle
for an algorithm; Facebook affirms
the betrayal. One year ago today,
hyacinths lorded over the yard
as I can see from this selfie—
me high on purple perfume,
an elegant proof the season
is out of joint.

This poem needs an olfactory.

matrimony

in our humble bedroom
afternoon sun splays through the open blinds
painting shadows across the otherwise gray walls
a borrowed blue bracelet hangs haphazardly on the bedside table
we pig out on leftover pączki & tofu fried rice
while we lounge in bed & watch “the godfather”
you translate the italian for me
& brag that you understand it perfectly because it’s so close to spanish
our hands intertwine easily
with rings freshly placed upon sacred fingers, gleaming in the light
we sip on trader joe’s chianti, splinters of sunshine,
& all the newness & fullness we can take in
bodies enveloped together with every promise we’ve just made.

Alone in a Moment

Alone isn't so bad, being alone.
It's like a song seeking a tune,
a wall seeking a painting,
a soul seeking peace.

Seeking isn't so bad, seeking a self.
One just has to listen to the still
small voice that speaks big words (ideas)
in a language only you know.

Listening isn't so bad, listening for life.
If we miss life altogether we are
indeed dying. But since we're dying anyway,
hear what life has to offer and embrace it.

Embracing isn't so bad, embracing wonder.
All of life offers beauty and wisdom
in solitude. It is there for us to hold
and savor and revere.

Holding on isn't so bad, holding a moment—
sucking its marrow, seeing its possibility—
but mostly hanging our star on its promise
and every breath of belonging.

I'm not looking at...

I'm not looking at
the bright side of today.
My head flies in a circular pattern around
its landing. It's muddled, disturbed, unsettled—
out of its normal-normal.
The sun rises anyway at 5:57 AM.

I'm not looking at
the gloomy side of today, either.
The news is doing that for me. Train derailments,
ongoing war and death by cop make up the only
bad news in town that's taking
increasing territory, over-running
good sense and sacrifice.
And still night falls at 9:12 PM.

I'm not looking at
a day like any other, just a singular day
when nothing fits. Wakened in the night
by gremlins stabbing my foot. Too early,
too persistent. Yawn. The rest of the story
lurks between lines, between words,
in shadows in the corners of the room. And still
the clock hands move from 3:00 to 4:00 AM.

I'm not looking at
the in-between where sanity teeters
on the fence, or how I'm trying to make
sense of the dis-ease upon my head—
the true story of a mind missing peace,
a soul grieving.

I'm not looking for
what's really going on. I'm skimming
the surface, trying to find a handhold—
any place to fit in sideways and imagine
my way back to myself.
Any version of me I'd recognize.



Lilly Kujawski *Rolling Downtown 1*

Operating in the Dark

I haven't known how to write about
the place my consciousness goes
when the anesthesia hits my vein.
I am here in my own presence
one moment, and the next....

This place cannot be recalled, drawn
out, made whole or holy. Nor can
it be predicted or diagrammed.
Truth be told, it doesn't exist. Yet,
I go there at the prescribed instant.

I let go of my life and put it in the hands
of another. What trust or naiveté?
What inducement, what medicinal
coaching do brain cells bow to?
Am I still here even though I'm not?

Even childhood trauma that we've turned
away from over and over, comes back
into memory, prompted, eventually.
Even the blackout instant of a crash leaks out
of our wounds when we least expect.

But this, this total amnesia—no remembering,
no wresting out, no psycho-babble will
pry it loose. It's as if I just don't
exist for a couple of hours,
and then I do.

I wake in a different space, a different world complete with new parts, or less parts, or better parts. I've had hands inside rooting out evil and fixing damage I cannot comprehend.

I haven't known how to write about nothingness, nowhere, brain on drugs, body on hold. Or those hands and where they've been. Or my mind and where it's been. And how it found its way back in the dark.

You're the Reason

You're the reason I write. You,
sitting there on my bedpost, smug and clingy.
When I go to bed you take up residence
as high up in my 4-poster as you can.
I see you there, staring. Don't you ever sleep?

It's because of you that words enter
my pen, even before they enter my head.
How do you do that? What magic do you work?
Can't you capture your own thoughts in words?
No, instead you give them to me,
and I write them down.

I swear they're not even my ideas.
They're not something I made up or conjured
or thought about for days. Words just drop
in my lap, uninvited, naked, and they stay.
Did I mention uninvited?

Sometimes, I find words in heaps on my desk,
fomenting. They are heavy. They are small. They stink.
Yet, I pick them up and let them sift through my fingers.
It's like they drop out of the universe, or from the clouds,
or some sacred mountain guru you channel.

You're the reason. You with your smug
ways, you with that shepherd's crook
and cap on your head, and words dripping
off your shoulders onto mine.

33 Friends

“How do you know so much about this?”

They ask after not being ditched at
their own 13th birthday party.

“Of course you know,”

says the condescension of one
who didn't grieve alone at 15
with solely a radio as companion.

“Records? Really?”

Yeah. The revolutions count the days inside at home
while playmates of old grow
more delinquent as they aged.

Many don't understand the intensity of memory
locked in opening notes.

From childhood living rooms and teenage pain
to taverns filled with acrid smoke and warm shots,

these songs have been around
longer than lovers and through painful growth.
Melody lingering when others have left,
harmony embracing the broken.

Those who question don't know
these are friends,
and for their loyalty, these songs
remain close at heart.

DANIEL W. LONG

Under Water

Born under water
last constellation, rising crab
I am pulled to the shore
I am called by the brook
the rain whispers to me

Golden Rooster
tenth of the twelve – a Thaddeus.
Eloquent & persuasive – charming – though
rarely diligent, responsible, or disciplined
I was preordained to mental illness.

Yet these only offer partial explanation.
Tea leaves & tarot are not for me.
I prefer to think my fuck ups are my own, not
the whims of stars or moons or planets or
even if I'm honest – the Divine Plan of God.

Though comfort may be found in
cosmic order, to me that safety net
is a pair of concrete shoes. Without
a flawed will – stumbling & detouring –
I may as well slumber back
under water.

*This poem first appeared on Daniel's Substack site, Notes On the Beat:
<https://notesonthebeat.substack.com/>*

Who Made the Call

Who made the call for us all
to be tethered to cubicles & walls
while artists & dreamers are deemed irresponsible?

And who set the bar, saying
“You must all own cars!”
Making all of our townships unwalkable?

Who led us all on
to trade wild spaces for lawns
leaving the world gasping & drowning?

And who fuels the pride
when the land we choose to subdivide
forces rifts & shreds community?

Big boxes and highways
“Consume more!” “Live faster!”
ending in dissatisfaction



Lilly Kujawski *Hanging Out 1*

JANE LOUISE

Plastic

Is my heart plastic?

Will I end up like a piece of plastic in the Pacific Ocean
inside the belly of a wild Alaskan salmon
being sold at Whole Foods Market in New Jersey
cooked in a warm gas oven for dinner
eaten by a sad man?

Is my heart plastic?

How do I know when I'm in love?

Is my heart plastic?

Will I be swallowed by a turtle
stuck in a dark stomach
stuck where I can't tell the truth?

I am plastic.

I am the ocean.

I am human.

I am a circle changing into a sugar snap pea.

The Catalpa Tree

Wandering the trails in Saginaw Forest with Kiko and Enzo,
I watched their noses attached to the littered vegetation
Where I have walked all my dogs for the past forty years
I wondered if they scented Floyd, Layla, Django, and Modjo
Who left their marks over the years, trodding the same paths
I stopped as Kiko found an important essence on a baby maple leaf
He now shared with Enzo giving new purpose to their lives
I took this natural break to look around through the trees
A tree to my left had heart-shaped leaves big as a dinner plate
I had never noticed
The smooth light-beige limbs stood out among the rough bark trees
I saw light lavender, trumpet-shaped flowers like an orchid corsage
Clustered at the connection to the tree, fragranced with vanilla
I needed that tree for myself
At a nursery, I bought 4 catalpa sticks, eighteen inches high
I measured the width to be that of my pinkie finger
Likely, I will never see the trees at their full height, or even my height
It was meant for me to measure the hope in the life I have left.

MARY OCHES

More

words cascading from your parted
insincere lips, more lies, more
anguish

deceitful looks from eyes that
reveal no truth, more lies, more
anguish

when do scars heal, how does
ache diminish, more lies, more
anguish

and you wonder why I left
escaping more lies, more
anguish

SCOTT SCHUER

Wallace Stevens

Expression extracts a cost. Teachers,
insurance sellers, wait staff, and chefs –
business owners and sanitation
workers –

preoccupied, addicted, love-sick,
quiet, confident, in debt, in doubt, in
hiding or shouting from a soap box –
all seeking to meet the cover charge,

though the price be unknown,
 terms ever shifting –

making one's mark here is linear,
between birth and death – doing it
elsewhere requires different
systems of measurement, an
alien vocabulary.

*From the chapbook Two-Headed Monster (Reaction Press/Zetataurus Press,
2023).*



Lilly Kujawski *Rolling Downtown 2*

Fibonacci(s): To Live This Human Life

To
live
on this
earth is to
grow, change, learn. Always
leaving an impact on this earth.

With
each
passing
moment, we
are forever changed.
Life is happening around us.

Will
we
choose to
embrace life,
make life happen? To
create positive change? Always.

Freeform: To Advocate

The passion to help others is fueled by the drive to help those in need. No matter their background. No matter if they are a perfect stranger or your beloved.

Despite being met with a cruel tongue, this drive does not diminish. Rather, it increases with the burning desire to prove these people wrong.

To show them that there are people in the world who have integrity, operating with a genuine conscious. Who aim to do their due diligence to stand up for what is right, no matter if the outcome is in their favor.

This motivation drives the advocate to continuously show kindness, while simultaneously fighting to do right by all, even if they were not done right by the world.

Haiku(s): When Creativity Strikes

For inspiration
to strike, at any given
moment simply by

living this life, is
a mysterious wonder.
Bringing about new

ideas, unique
to you. Expressions of how
you view the world, the

way you feel, who you
are. Complex perspectives shown
in the words on a

page. The beauty of
paint on a canvas. Moments
captured by artists.

Sonnet: A Living Dream

There are those people in your life, that when you first meet, it feels as if you've known them forever. Such a bond strengthens again, and you both know it's been mere moments. From this instant, familiarity is unshakeable. Down to my core, deep in my bones. This person is important. His mind, his heart, his soul feels like home. Begin the fall into a love so real, so true, it feels kismet. A work of fate as the synchronicities align, hints that you and me are meant to be. This love brings a connection so palpable, blessings beam. Star maps led me to you, a living dream.

Study in Black and White (II)

All the rational black letters I typed
today have smeared and bled into the scribbled
chaos of night.

I stand in the driveway's dry
riverbed. The neighbors' house lights are out:
blind eye-sockets gape, rimmed with white window
trim.

A skunk snuffles among the fallen
birdseed at the base of the front-yard crab apple
tree. I hear its claws scrape the house's metal
downspout, that giant femur glowing in starlight.

Yes, I've packed my life like a prudent
tourist packs a suitcase: the dark thoughts here,
the undertones there.

My wife's new diet
has slimmed her into a white spider. I see her
spooning coffee, bagging bread: tending the web.

*From the chapbook Two-Headed Monster (Reaction Press/Zetataurus Press,
2023).*



