



MAKING  
ART

Red Wolf Journal

Fall 2015 Issue 7

Irene Toh and Tawnya Smith,  
editors

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Cover artwork: Jan Davidsz de Heem, *Still Life With Oysters And Lemon*

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## MAKING ART

The poet, like the painter, needs to dwell in worldly things. As poets, you are engaged with language—words that often express relationships. As a person I am terribly interested in how we interact with objects. Their role is to anchor us in a personal and collective history. Art commemorates this such as through a still life painting. Our cover of Dutch painter Jan Davidsz de Heem's painting, *Still Life with Oysters and Lemon*, was the subject of contemplation by American poet Mark Doty—how art stages a dialogue with reflexivity and represents pleasures of shapes, colors, textures and tastes, all held in “the generous light binding together the fragrant and flavorful productions of vineyard, marsh and orchard”. How does art move us? When we take in the lushness of the oysters, the transparency of the grapes, the tangy curls of lemon, Doty says we're moved into “some realm where it isn't a thing at all but something just on the edge of dissolving. Into what? Tears, gladness...Taken far inside.” Art holds us there, to be instructed, held in intimacy as it were, in an experience of tenderness, of warmth and presence.

Likewise good poems give us resonating images. The poet brings to his art a making of connections, yoking subjectivity to objects. In bringing memory and desire to the surfaces of things, language transforms objects into stories. A good poem dives into the interior. The past is often in the present. All is heightened awareness and ultimately the poem delves and then brings readers into something greater than their own consciousness. What making art does. It transcends the personal into a kind of impersonality which is Truth, which is God.

So in this issue, we invite poems that make art. You may interpret it however you wish—ekphrastic poems? Yes we love that. But not only that. Poems that have startling imagery. Poems that lay bare the process of making art. Poems that embody a certain aesthetic. Even haikus. (Coming from one who hardly writes haikus.) To me the best poems are the ones that reflect the aesthetic of your soul. To paraphrase Doty, “what stands before darkness stands close together” and is ultimately unparaphrasable.

Poems that treat objects as subjects. But are they really? Isn't the perceiver the real subject? When you describe, what you describe then is "consciousness, the mind playing over the world of matter, finding there a glass various and lustrous enough to reflect back the complexities of the self that's doing the looking" (Mark Doty, *The Art of Description: World Into Word*, 2010). How wondrous art is, and how one may find true solace in art.

*Irene Toh and Tawnya Smith, editors*  
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<http://redwolfjournal.wordpress.com/>

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We're using words in order to uncover the deep, resonating interior...  
—Li-Young Lee



## **A Tangle of Sleeping Beauties**

by Marilyn Braendeholm

There on the table is a tangle of fruit,  
a jeweller's asset of sleeping beauties.  
They lay broad across cottons and fine  
wool, set right toward void, as a crow flies.  
It's a world wrapped up in itself, moonish  
grapes and bracelets of peel, sweet citrus  
circling the sun – such a deadened world  
it must be, all for want of air to breathe.

And framed of gilt they watch but never  
hear a rush of larger worlds nearby. Nor  
even slightest hope have they for a knight  
to wake them from their deeply tangled sleep.



Jan Davidsz de Heem, *Still Life with Oysters and Lemon*



## **The Courage of Shadows**

by Marilyn Braendeholm

We shadowed clouds  
like passing thunder,  
and tucked ourselves  
under its darkest rim.  
Once so bright,  
we're now swept  
so dim, departed  
with the glow of day.  
That light that comes  
from the breaking sea,  
that light that comes  
from long hills grassy,  
pouring down from sky.  
And then you asked me,  
  
the wind stealing words  
from our lips, How can  
deserts change to lakes  
and mountains  
pour with rain, and  
are our noble-hearted  
shadows brave enough  
to always follow us?



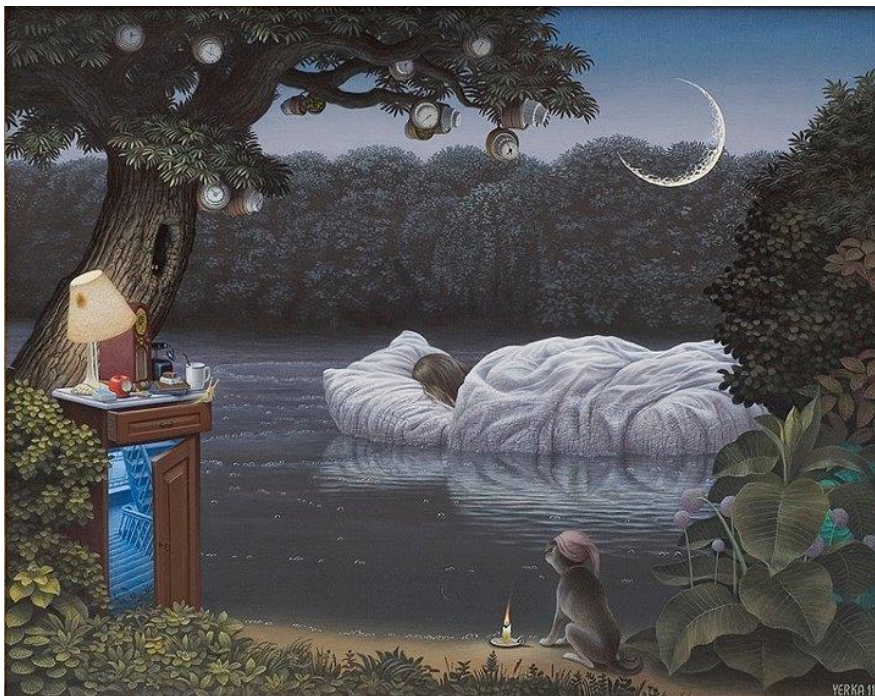
Zabani, *Persephone Awakening*

Process note: Exploring shadows based on the changeable nature of light.  
Inspired by Victor Hugo, “Les Orientales” and an image prompt, Persephone, at  
Red Wolf Poems.

## The Practical Freedom of Madness

by Marilyn Braendeholm

I remember the day that I woke,  
mad — and I thought I'd  
crackle from the heat of it all.  
It felt like every mask I'd worn,  
was removed. Like sandpaper,  
I was an irritant in my own skin.  
And I remember layers of myself,  
dissolved — such a practical way  
of dressing,  
and undressing,  
and sometimes I fancy myself  
a surreal piece of art, like a cat  
who's stealing my seven lives.



Art by Jacek Yerka

Process notes: This was prompted by an image, Prompt 46 (via Magpie Tales), Red Wolf Poems, and it occurred to me that as we sleep — we all go slightly mad.

**Marilyn 'Misky' Braendeholm** lives in the UK surrounded by flowers, grapevines, bubbling pots of sourdough starter, and always keeps dog biscuits in her pocket for her blind Springer Spaniel. She never buys clothing without pockets. Blogs at The Chalk Hills Journal.

## **Nighthawks**

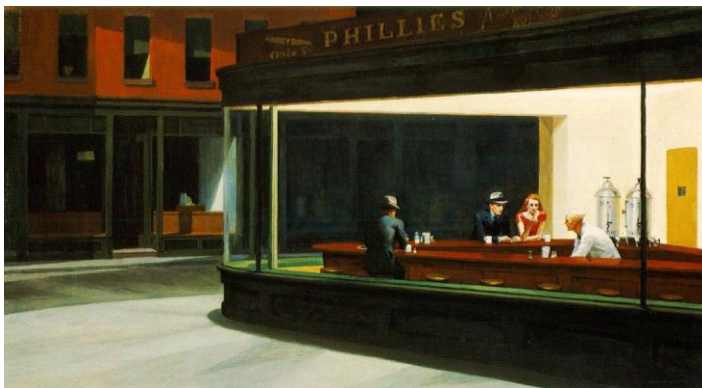
By Vivienne Blake

A strange and lonely cityscape –  
no cars, no crowds, just a young couple  
bickering quietly about nothing  
or maybe newly-met lovers  
encased in a romantic bubble.

The solitary man  
wonders about them, who they are,  
what they're doing in this dead-alive dive,  
far from the bright lights  
and the city bustle.

The weary waiter  
is eager for his shift to end.  
No tips from this lot, that's for sure.  
With business this slow  
is his job in trouble?

Around the corner a hobo gazes,  
envying the warmth within.  
He turns away, creeping  
towards his park bench home  
with shivering shuffle.



Edward Hopper, *Nighthawks*

Process Notes: I have always loved paintings by Edward Hopper since I was a small girl, sitting under the table leafing through *Saturday Evening Posts* at my Grandmother's, while the adults watched television, which I found boring. His paintings always seem to tell a story.

**Vivienne Blake** makes quilts and poems and stories in her small village home in Normandy. Her slow and wobbly rambles often appear in the poetry. Finding the sublime in the mundane is her aim. Her work has been published in *Curio Poetry*, *Mouse Tales*, *Red Wolf Journal*, *Long Story Short*, *The Book of Love and Loss* and other anthologies.

## **The Disappearance**

by Mark Danowsky

Out there  
voice is  
squirreled away

In here  
a voice  
on full display

Cold world  
it is, where  
no one stays

End times  
some say  
in our day

X search  
not enough  
leads us astray

We all search  
too much  
in the fray

We ask, we ask  
what are we  
afraid to say

**Mark Danowsky's** poetry has appeared in *Alba*, *Cordite*, *Grey Sparrow*, *Mobius*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Third Wednesday* and other journals. Mark is originally from the Philadelphia area, but currently resides in North-Central West



Virginia. He works for a private detective agency and is Managing Editor for the *Schuylkill Valley Journal*.

## Periwinkle And Paisley–Morning’s Coin Purse

by Hannah Gosselin

I’m captured by caress of waking dream  
that silent land betwixt-between  
even now with eyes wide open  
as I arrange fresh flowers  
watch sun’s early light through window  
it falls in bright streams on street...  
I can’t seem to shake the feeling  
your lips hovering above mine –  
always that anticipatory moment  
before abandon of self-control  
given to passion – you kiss me.



*Marc Chagall, Birthday*

Editor’s note: Written in response to Prompt 40, Red Wolf Poems.

Process notes: The inspiration for this poem began with the idea of a kiss that one cannot forget and it was fun finding a title in some of the details that stood out in the painting as well.

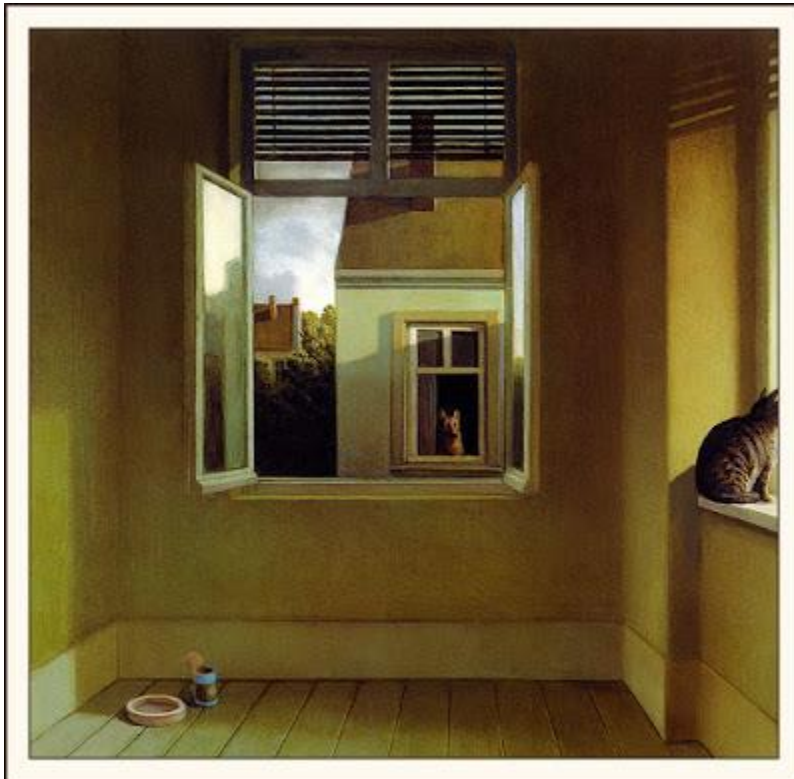
**Hannah Gosselin's** song is one inspired of the natural beauty around her. She was awarded a diploma by the Institute of Children's Literature located in West Redding, Connecticut, "Writing for Children and Teenagers," and has been published in *Prompted, An International Collection of Poems, Poetic Bloomings-The First Year*, and *Red Wolf Journal*. Hannah's happiest on a forest path of green or by the salty sea.

## Summer Love

by Christopher Hileman

It's become awkward  
and muggy besides, cobber.  
(That's Aussie for pal.)  
The dog wants a friend.  
The cat has what it wants now.  
And your painting shows  
a late afternoon  
but you have called it a night,  
a hot summer's night.

And me? I sit here  
in my basement writing you  
this aside on love.



Michael Sowa, *A Midsummer Night's Melancholy*

## **At The Beach**

by Christopher Hileman

In those days I thought  
maybe I could still keep you,  
at least for a while.  
I schemed and worked up  
snares for your soul, so I hoped.  
I thought I needed  
you so near I could  
feel your breath in my fey ear.

Then you got too hot  
and you rose up off  
the blanket, shook off the last  
of the sand, put out  
your hand to them all  
and they led you far away  
despite what I said.



Image by Bert Stern

## **The Hedge**

by Christopher Hileman

I wear a cincture  
on my craft. Should I call this  
love? I must ponder  
the old growth and ways  
the new bamboo says to me  
a gold coin safely  
can be used, stipend,  
it says, and by God coming  
straight down from heaven.  
Trying to rebuild  
my holy place takes a skill  
beyond all my days.

He said, keep the ruse  
of my life a verdant hedge  
and the art of it  
divine in my core.  
There I finish the touches,  
then give it all back.

**Christopher Hileman** moved to Oregon in 1973. He has retired to live on the volcanic bluff overlooking Willamette Falls in Oregon City, Oregon. He ascends the stairs from his basement digs to improvise on his Yamaha keyboard or the house Playel grand when the calico cat releases him from below. The part-Irish Wolfhound here likes him.

## **The Storm**

by Nancy Iannucci

We kept walking one  
warm Wednesday morning,  
woefully walking,  
conversing, traversing  
away from the city of Toulouse-  
distance was a shield from prying eyes,  
eyes and mouths attached to crowds  
who longed to separate us.  
We reached our favored  
meeting place under  
a canopy of draping trees  
miles from the road.  
Side by side we sat  
like primitive cave dwellers  
who lacked civilized restraint.

I'm the shepherd, but she tends me,  
maneuvers my soul into a swell  
of honorable indecency;  
I'm a doltish man under her touch  
as our thighs gently grazed then pulsed.

She came  
to agree to leave France  
with me  
after weeks of furtive  
meetings.

I brushed the sweat  
from her golden hair-  
Euphoric-  
under wafts



of her sweet  
lavender scent.

She took the horn from my side  
and impishly blew a farewell tune  
to Toulouse;  
dark clouds instantaneously  
rolled in like the French army.

“We should leave now!” I said  
draping her yellow cloak  
over our heads as if to  
parachute away to the gods.

Our thighs pulsed once more;  
my shepherd instincts dominated  
as I tended my luscious lamb towards safety;  
airily secure under her alabaster slip,  
my hand steered below her left breast.

And so we loped  
not from The Storm  
but from this cruel city—  
together.



Pierre Augustus Cot, *The Storm*

Process notes: I was captivated by Pierre-Auguste Cot's paintings many years ago while sitting through my first art history course in college. There was no turning back from that point on. Each painting evokes a powerful feeling of romance, mystery, and enchantment. I want to live in his paintings.

## **He Leaned**

by Nancy Iannucci

He leaned elegantly against a viscid wooden beam as all suave men did at the Post House back in 1966, flipped on the winning bait like he was flinging pizza margarita dough six feet into the air catching it dexterously with one hand. His Neapolitan accent & Sal Mineo looks reeled them in on Saturday nights, but tonight he was determined to win this one; he had been tracking her with stealth ornithologist skill through marshes of people, tables, and empty Schlitz & Lambrusco bottles. He finally made his Mediterranean move.

“You looka lika Brigitte Bardot,” he said, as he leaned against this auburn-feathered bird whose lipstick was the shade of ghost that had the death drained out of it. She laughed & sardonically lifted a penciled eyebrow to an adjacent friend. She knew he was full of shit; Bardot’s hair was blond but she gave him the benefit of the doubt induced by his Plato-Rebel-Without-a-Cause innocence, and she later learned his name was, coincidentally, Sal.

The Yardbirds rescued his broken English; “For Your Love” shook her up like an electric shock and they found themselves on the dance floor. He shadowed her groove for his gallant mannerisms ebbed as fast as a tsunami; dancing made him feel nervous.

They continued to pull each other out of their comfort zones for the next three years until one spring morning he left her for Vietnam.

Months of silent nothingness drifted like a specter until a photograph arrived addressed “To Brigitte.” She went hazy like the image and could feel the oppressive heat and perilous unknown emanating in her hands but was comforted to see his Plato smile as he leaned alongside a lone palm tree that stood rooted at the edge of Cam Ranh Bay.

“That lean, the Post House lean,” she whispered, reminiscing.

He was still leaning for her, still watching her, longing to make his move in the midst of jungle chaos.



*Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, 1969, Unknown photographer*

Process notes: I never knew this photograph of my father existed until just two weeks ago. It was taken by an unknown photographer who was documenting American soldiers stationed at Cam Ranh Bay during the Vietnam War, so naturally I was taken by this never-before-seen photo of my dad, and so started writing.

**Nancy Iannucci** is a historian who teaches history and lives poetry in Troy, NY. She has always been entranced by the mysticism of life and the fine line that exists between our world and the mystical. She feels, at times, like she inhabits some place in the middle and expresses herself through writing trying to reconcile her own existence in between these two realms; her work has been published by Performance Poets Association, *Three Line Poetry*, *Red Wolf Journal*, and *Faerie Magazine*(photography).

**In The Darkness**  
by Tom Montag

a flailing  
motion,  
the awkward  
gesture,

searching all  
night for this,  
the last word.

## **Every Poem**

by Tom Montag

Every poem worth its salt  
has in it a red-tail hawk,  
or the idea of a red-tail,  
or the memory.

                                Or the sound  
the hawk makes before it drops  
down, before something small is  
taken, is lifted into heaven.

## **Lost Among Wonders**

by Tom Montag

The storms roll through.  
One day. Another.  
Against the front  
edge of summer.

Against the trees,  
their leaves. Blossoms

of flowers. The bees,  
the noisy birds.

The poet is lost  
among wonders.

Will he ever  
find his way home?

**Tom Montag** is most recently the author of *In This Place: Selected Poems 1982-2013*. In 2015 he was the featured poet at *Atticus Review* (April) and *Contemporary American Voices* (August), with other poems at *Hamilton Stone Review*, *The Homestead Review*, *Little Patuxent Review*, *Mud Season Review*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Provo Canyon Review*, *Third Wednesday*, and elsewhere.



## **Starry Night Over The Asylum**

By Debi Swim

Is anyone in the village below awake?  
It is late, late, sleepers in houses dark and quiet.  
How can they rest when overhead there is a riot?  
Stars and worlds ringing like church bells,  
moon ablaze throbbing in hi-hat jumps  
a galaxy of milky white tambourine thumps

I cover my ears against the dissonance.  
Why aren't there people in the streets  
wailing in anger for the noise to cease?

Oh, starry night. Oh, raucous, strident, starry night,  
your beauty bellows in discordant din  
and I, I fall to my knees in your poignant orbital spin.



*Vincent Van Gogh, The Starry Night*

## **Botero's Dreamy Dance**

by Debi Swim

The lady in red, she in the chile con carne red  
and he, dapper with a neat pencil moustache  
danced with their eyes closed tight  
and the music played and they happily swayed  
long into the carefree night  
and for a short time this lady in red  
danced with a Carmen Amaya air  
and the man of the neat moustache  
and dapperly dressed  
was the dashing Fred Astaire.

*First line from Dancer by Carl Sandburg*

Editor's note: Written in response to Prompt 41, Red Wolf Poems.



*Fernando Botero, Couple Dancing*

## **Aphrodisiac**

by Debi Swim

A glass of Moscato Giallo,  
lemon slice,  
Muscat grapes,  
oysters on the half shell waits  
for my love's sweet lips.



Jan Davidsz de Heem, *Still Life with Oysters and Lemon*

## Poetry on the Menu

by Debi Swim

When my soul's a 'hungered  
for sunshine and there's only rain  
or for rain and there's only sunshine...  
when my heart is starving for bill and coo  
and you are far away  
or when I need to rant and rage  
against the wage of man's sin  
or feel ravenous for a gentler time,  
famished for tranquility  
midst this rat eat rat a tat incivility  
I sate my appetite on syllables  
sibilant, round, quiet, loud,  
that tickle, sooth, incite, unbowed,  
unashamed to ravish language  
like an alchemist turning base  
into gold, distilling the elixir of life.  
I am replete, for you see,  
"I've been eating poetry"

Editor's note: Written in response to Prompt 49, Red Wolf Poems. "In your piece, reference a line of poetry. The line, "I've been eating poetry", for instance. It is borrowed from Mark Strand's "Eating Poetry".

**Debi Swim** writes primarily to prompts. She is a wife, mother, grandmother and happy poet. She blogs at [Georgeplace Poetry by Debi Swim](#).

It's like the silence after the bell. You hit the bell so perfectly, but the air in your head and your heart afterwards is more still and quiet than it was before.

—Li-Young Lee