



This issue is dedicated to James Dowd, Ward of Ward 1, The Shire

Contributors

Craig Plaisted
Ward 5, Gloucester, MA
Joshua Scott-Fishburn
Ward 3, Gloucester, MA
Stevens Brosnihan
Ward 3, Gloucester, MA
Hugo Burnham
Ward 1, Gloucester, MA
Willa Brosnihan
Ward 3, Gloucester, MA
Joe Gallo
Ward 1, Roxbury, MA
Adam Orcutt
Ward 1, Michigan City, IN
Susan Erony
Ward 2, Gloucester, MA
Peter Murdoch
Ward 1, Salem, MA

Wards of the Wards

A monthly experiment
in writing, art, and ideas
about place.

Cover photo: Adam Orcutt

Copyright 2019 by the
contributors

Inquiries

contact@stevens-brosnihan.com

eclipse

PETER MURDOCH

Look, the moon.

Already, the moon.

I'm in a cave.

See the moon.

I don't know where to go.

See the moon.

California,
It was there,
I was trying to decide,
in that goddamn cave of sun-
shine,
whether to stay,

Whether to keep working for
vacation-timeshare telemar-
keting.

Whether to follow my love to
Bordeaux
or try to talk her out of it.
Or to just go home and save
some money.

Call it a summer

from the place in the wall
the phone rings:

We're in Scotland. We want you
to come. It's very important.
It's probably the last time the
family will be together like
this. No, nobody's dying.

The cord descended in dirty
little spirals onto the carpet.

God knows how old that shit
was.

See the moon?

Look, look, look let's see it
with me seeing it. Like me
with you seeing it with re-
membering but safer only so
surprise from Me-
aning haver.

And the other curses we ne-
glect to
register, to reframe,
as we circle,
as we wander.



Longing

CRAIG PLAISTED

In my youth the sound of the
loon
was a part of my experience.
The anxiety, the fear, the
boundless hope
of what could and might be
the hollow echo of the loon
across the lake.

These were all one thing.
The loon call was for me.
I was for the loon.

But somehow now
the loon call is out there.
It belongs to the lake.

Something Happened

STEVENS BROSNIHAN

something blue	around an eel's lanky middle.
an un-notable language of	I'm grateful to my memories
images	they're incomplete
a hospital of choices	rungless ladders
a palace of dark revelry	made from tangled scents
empty things, no things	of dune grass,
a dark, dusty corner	and creosote bushes after the
angst apparent	monsoon rains in June,
amongst the candles apparent	they're cobbled together
in here there's no death with-	from sun-torn, wooden rail-
out	ings
weeping green glass	and hot gibbous tar
bottles of wine	soft under toes
drunken seeps arranged	
inside	
circles like scales	

Untitled

JOSHUAH SCOTT-FISHBURN

On the surface,
the boat's painted
outside, oiled within.
I rope bicycles to the car ontop a rug.
Summer leaves shake.
I take her art off of the walls,
box shoes, pack boxes into closets,
whatever she desires to keep.
The bare-hearted correspondence
between the world, its surfaces,
and what in me longs to break,
does break with every day
a code. I know what the wind
speaks,
who loves me, an ocean's depths,
an exchange between what is within
and what is within what is without,
can be maintained.

With No Bloody Apologies to Walt Whitman

HUGO BURNHAM

Oh Cap'n! Our Cap'n! Your fearful trip is done,
Your ship has weather'd such dark storm, yet the prize we sought - not won.
But Oh heart of ours! Oh, Heart of Lynn
Oh, shirty stripes of orange and red,
Yet on the deck our Captain lies,
Fallen. Loved. And dead.

O Cap'n! My Cap'n! listen up and hear our yells;
Rise up in space — Whether Trek or Wars —you've beaten down the trolls,
Your rugby shirts, your manly skirts —we're at the Grows a-crowding,
For you we call, this swaying mass, our weeping eyes a-burning;
Here Cap'n! Dear Goat Herder!
We Clams, beneath your head!
Is't just some dream, we hope... that on the Holo-deck,
You've fallen - loved...but dead?

Our Cap'n does not answer, his typing fingers - still,
My friend does not feel my arm, he has no pulsebut will,
Remind us every day we read - The Clam or Iain Banks,
D-Day will forever now, mean not Dunquirk...but Dowd
So, One and All, just laugh out loud
Ring High Holy, Irish bells! And yet, with mournful tread,
We walk the deck where our Cap'n lies,
Forever in Our hearts - not dead.
Not Dead.





Craig Plaisted

Go Lightly

STEVENS BROSNIHAN

and although this thing we call a life
makes no sense,
the emptiness of our future death
might awaken us
might grant us a solitary moment of mourning
that we can twist to birds call
to mourning doves moan
to humming bird's droll movements

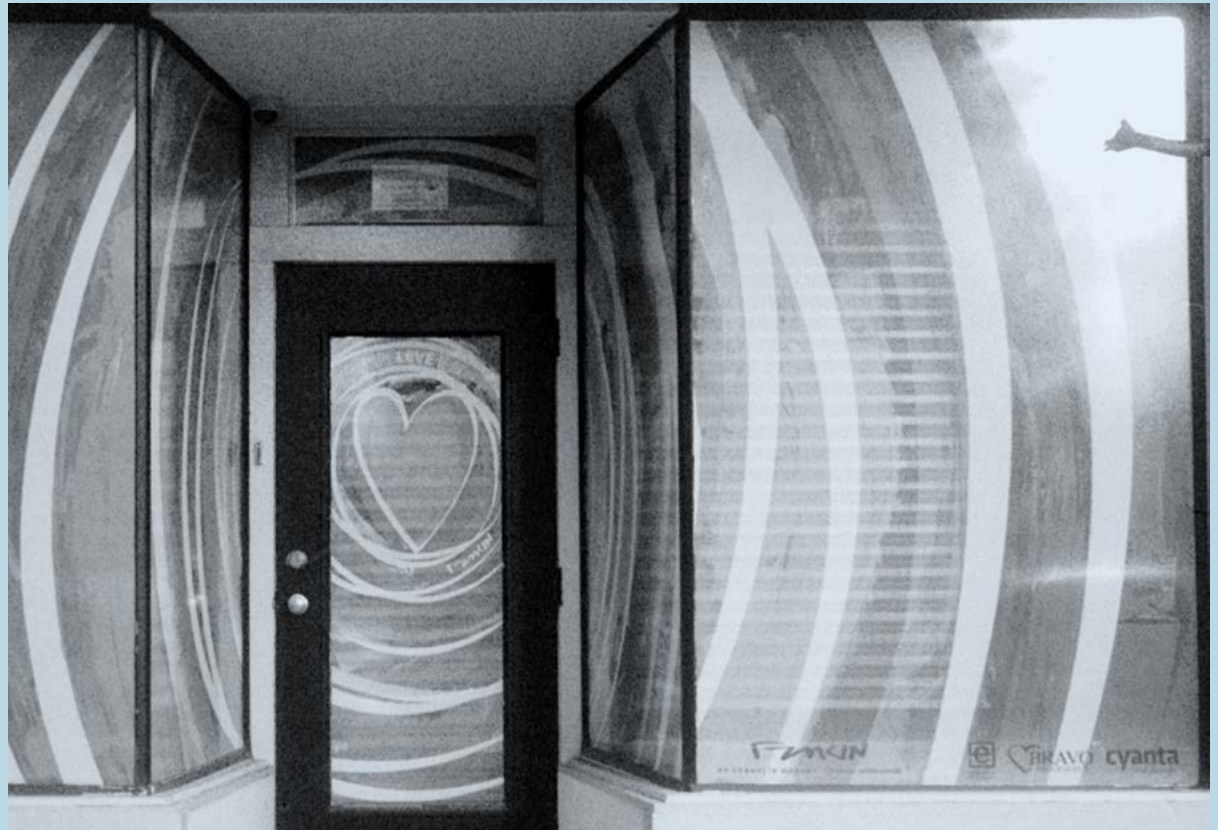


Susan Erony

what I wish I Could Read

JOSHUAH SCOTT-FISHBURN

A whole moon rises above Gloucester,
some kind of immanence rises up,
to meet the darkness in the sky.
New leaves fret like restless fingers.
From an open window a husband,
bereft, yearns towards the light,
some kind of homing. The town,
encircles like the crown of lights around
the statue of Mary carried in St Peter's parade,
winks and blinks down Prospect Street,
passed from shoulder to shoulder by working
families who hum in unison a song like the anxious
summer leaves. The town meanders
through neighborhoods, people exit
from houses to join voices, jovial,
people carry drinks and shout to the homing-husband,
distinct and distant friends.
Trickling down side streets all arrive
at the ocean's edge, then hush.
Waves lap sand. Wind from far off water
salts their skins. The town listens.
Hours pass. Silent, every citizen
returns home resolved to love
each other and the sea.



Joe Gallo

what I wish I Could Read, Part II

JOSHUAH SCOTT-FISHBURN

My children and I don't remember any harm. We find our
heart's desires and live freely in freedom passing work and
time on earth in friendship with other people and all things.
We listen on rocks to seagulls and rest our feet in dank tide
pools, periwinkles climb our legs and over us. At first glance
we look like barnacles, then we tumble into the sea and tuck
beneath the water's top, at last mere swimming creatures.

what I Saw

JOSHUAH SCOTT-FISHBURN

In one instant of precision:
the four-lane highway
broken apart by weeds and bicycles
on which riders exert themselves
in joyful throngs accompany each other,
above

a falcon

hawks

the encroachingshadywoods and a lake
where our fresh clean water can be found...

Blood Orange for/after Jim Dowd

JAMES COOK

I wear my grief like a comic crown of yard thistle.
The animal brain knows when fruit is overripe—
heavy with sugar and smelling like compost.
I learned this while walking through a public garden in your story
and later from Saint Worm of the Guts.
At the center of it all your eyes on the ice at Ravenswood:
A solitary candle on the cover of Daydream Nation going Transmet-
ropolitan on a drip in
 that bed.
You're a spaceship. You're a friendship. You're a Freudian slip. You've
a vice-like grip. You're a triptych over and over and over.

And you're gone.

And the universe goes on abhorring a vacuum.
And the variousness of being persists for now despite our abdication
of stewardship.
And the sea rolls on as the beat goes on and the hits keep coming and
you can't stop you
 won't stop
 until it all stops.

* * *

*The poem includes words from David Bowie and Shane Macgowan
along with nods to Sonic Youth and Clarice Lispector.*



Mola mola

CRAIG PLAISTED

The mola floats along the surface
Letting the current take it where it will
Mouth agape
Body askew
Fin flitting adagissimo

Perhaps somewhere along the way
I became something with dulled senses.

So that the sunset, while floating in the harbor,
Is beautiful only because I remember being overcome by its
 beauty.

Or perhaps it is that things have changed.
The phosphorescence are not
In the cove this summer.
Illuminating each oar stroke
And coronating each footstep back to shore.

Staying Alive

JOSHUAH SCOTT-FISHBURN

Coping, my therapist says, means you are doing really well. On
the longest day, the clouds pile over, the breeze throws rain, the
sky bellies lower. I pitch at the Solstice Day softball game and
someone's line drive catches my jaw, bat crack to pain blitz less
than a second's thought. For half an inning I move to left field,
then run in to fix a freeze pack to my cheek with painter's tape
up and over my hat, like a scholar with a toothache. I've always
used just to modify coping, meaning barely, meaning less than
optimal. But, today is high summer. How's your face? The
right fielder asks. Last time I checked, I say, it was beautiful.
Two doubles and two innings later I start to shake. Pitcher's
throwing sky high junk and, suddenly scared, I swing and miss
the ball for a full count, and knock two more fouls to the seats
behind home plate. I am, as they say, staying alive.

An Excerpt from the Urban Naturalist's Notebook

JOE GALLO

I spent the morning watching a hawk disembowel a dying rat in my backyard. I wrote in my notebook: Neat, surgical execution. Although without credentials, education, or insight into the discipline, several years ago, I began thinking of myself as an urban naturalist. Inspired by Thoreau's journals and, endless other sources, I realized that every square foot of earth, if overturned, will usurp whole kingdoms reigned by newt, salamander, worm; that the sharp edge of a garden tool would slice through roots, upset shoots, and kill off weeds, grasses, and wildflower. The hawk drew its beak and carved a mortal furrow across the rat's belly – huge and distended; eyes open, mouth open showing sharp teeth, its pelt shiny, tail in a tight ring.

It was fine morning; clear skies and a cool breeze. I made some more notes, drank the last of my coffee, put a zoom on my camera and documented the hawk as it pecked at the rat's entrails, scooped the meat from its bones.

While the hawk ate the rat, I heard a low murmur from my neighbor's house. It escalated into a scream, a stream of invective. Italian, I jotted in my notebook, venomous,

shrill. I trained my camera on the window: A short fat man in his underwear leaned over an old woman in a wheelchair. I zoomed in. A fat bronze back pockmarked with acne scars, huge round shoulders, upper arms as thick as thighs... and in the wheelchair, his mother's looking up at him. Her head was dry and brown, a head that would look just as comfortable impaled on a pole as it did on top of her broken frame. She waved her limbs and shouted back at him. The wall above her head was punctuated with holes the size of a man's fist. He turned toward to the window. I swung the camera away. The hawk was gone. I studied the rat's carcass.





MARITIMES FIVE
(Daily Poems)
JAMES COOK

Tuesday before High Tide in
Saint John

At the Reversing
Falls four gulls
of the apocalypse
sit staggered
along the Crow
Island rock face
(unfazed, willfully still)
invisibly writing
prophecies in the paper smoke
of the Irving Mill
while cormorants dive silly,
hunt herring, and ride
the contradictory current
(seemingly amused)
in the fore and we,
audience, regard
the gulls (unamused)
regarding us (amused despite
our better judgment).

The gulls do not guard us.

When one leaves
a fledgling novice
appears—then
they're all gone,
leaving us to read the scene
as heresiarchian haruspex
and chat
our absurd
apocalyptic delight.

Tuesday Serendipity in Mon-
cton

This poem quotes and
answers James Joyce's "I
Hear an Army"

In Moncton the Petit-
codiac River
roared as we left
the burger place
where the Sox played
the Jays and Brazil
was up one
on Argentina.
We saw the tidal
bore, and you chased
it and each other
down the boardwalk:
"The thunder of horses
plunging, foam
about their knees..."

James, my heart
has no wisdom
except foolishly
to hope
these lovelies
never leave me.

US Independence Day in the
Shadow of the Citadel in Hali-
fax, Nova Scotia

On the corner
of Hollis
and Prince
we left the bag
with Moomin Comics
volume nine
and Lynda Barry's
What It Is
in it,
which was okay
after a pint.

Then we fought
not about the books
or the leaving—
not exactly—
but expressing hurt.
We listened (mostly)
and were grateful

yet still hurt
side by side.

Friday in the Basin of Mines
for & after Elizabeth
Bishop

Trans Flag
On the Glooscap Trail
the wetter & drier
pink clay and
blue waters and
paler sky make
with their gradients
a trans flag,
you said.

Weird flex, Canada,
but okay.

Pride Flag
"Until everything
was rainbow,
rainbow, rainbow"
Elizabeth Bishop lived
with her grandparents
in Great Village
(indeed)
near Little Dyke
and various Economies.
Later lived with Lota
in Petrópolis, Brazil:

“the pressure of so
many clouds
making mile-long
waterfallish
tearstains”
and mountains Bishop
inverted into
ships to take herself
home “wherever
that may be”
before capsizing them
into mountains again;
Elizabeth stranded
(but mobile)
evermore.

Did Alice dream you back
to narrow provinces and long
tides?
Is home lines
and color fills?

An excerpt from “The Moose”
adorns a wall at the Fundy
Geological Museum
in Parrsboro, Nova Scotia
where the dog-sized
multipede under glass
and tiny dino tracks
are uncanny as
a man-moth’s solitary tear
beneath the moon-shaped tear
at the top of the sky.
There is no one
looking in through
the hole in the drape
but no worry
we’ve invented an eye
and can’t hardly
wait to meet Them.

Saturday at the Hub of Nova
Scotia

At the Truro
market from the pride
bracelets and crocheted
rainbow papillons
you chose for yourself
“VALID” to wear
on your wrist
and bought
other emblems
for friends and allies.

July

CRAIG PLAISTED

When I write
I write about what I see in my yard.
The pear tree
Hanging heavy with fruit.
The thistles’ remaining blue iridescence
Surrounded by bees.

The blueberries piled high
In a yellow plastic cup
Picked before breakfast with
A minimum of effort.

Sitting in the grass after dinner
The quinoa spilled on the blanket
The children tiptoeing through the dusk

I do not write about how things are like
other things.

There are no other things.

Adam Orcutt

Waning Gibbous

STEVENS BROSNIHAN

As we pulled in under the waning gibbous
sheathed in an acrid yellow ring of steam
We opened the car doors
and cool Canada poured out
onto the driveway
a tiny pool of Fundy
washing against an ever-so-small red P.E.I. beach
mixing with Good Harbor and Pavilion sands
the first dilution of our vacation's joyful protuberance.

Thoughts on Karma

WILLA BROSNIHAN

We do not reap what we sow:
I have buried
so many birds.

When I am on the rug,
legs curled above me like garlic
scapes,
never has a bird come
never has a bird come shaking
itself clean
and wrapped me in toilet paper
carried me
outside through the kitchen.

Never by a bird has my neck
been checked for holes,
my chest for twitchy breathing.
Never have I been chased
around a bedroom with a cook-
ie tin,
a pitcher,
that could keep me from the
dirty tricks
of windows.
The birds have not yet laid me
out of sight under the low grow-

ing potato plants,
the herb garden,
to mend if I will mend.

Their churchyard sage comes up
singed green and featherless,
does not sing from the throat of
the chimney-
sparrows are the holy hiccups of
this house,
No the sage comes up,
comes up knowing its bitterness
like a folktale.
Barely believes our tongues.

The sage is not birds,
the birds never come,
never retrieve my legs when I
have lost them,
never leave my stains on their
rugs
immemorial,
and if I were bitten dead
they would not chastise my
killer
in a singsong voice,
a thank you voice,
for your intention.