

COUNTERFLOW

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COUNTERFLOW

ISSUE 3

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← **On the Front Cover & Header**
symbiotic relationships
by Jordyn Dauphinee

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INTRODUCTION

My friend Jane always seemed to be at her happiest when she was digging in the garden. Dirt under her fingernails said more about who she was than any jewels she might have worn. She understood the importance of keeping connected to the earth.

Another Jane—Jane Goodall—also understood how crucial it is for humans to maintain our connection to the planet. “Terrifying” is the word she’s used when she talks about the way we’re losing touch with the natural world. As someone who sees a greater value in trees and clean water over high-rise developments and exploiting the planet’s resources, I can only agree with both Janes.

That is why it has been a pleasure to read the work submitted to this edition of Counterflow. So much thought and feeling obviously went into the pieces, so many clearly-expressed ideas are the result. If our beautiful planet could speak, these might be some of the things she’d say. As an example, one of the non-fiction entries imagines “a world beyond” the one we seem to have currently made such a mess of. This world of ours is one where we’ve begun seeing rebellions on many fronts—whether from Greta Thunberg, surely a voice of hope from a new generation, demanding “How dare” our leaders not be doing more to protect the planet and oceans, or ‘commando’ Orcas seeming to take revenge on “...man, disruptors of their environment.”

Humans haven’t always disrupted the environment the way we have in recent centuries. Beyond poking around in the soil and chopping down a few trees to clear some land for farming, our impact has mostly been what the planet could absorb, what we might now call sustainable. The biggest changes have taken place since the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution and the introduction of machines to do jobs that had always been done manually by humans. That’s when the migration from farm to town began in earnest. People left the countryside to work in factories in the cities—industrial hubs with connections to shipping and other transport. This transition from rural to urban living took yet another leap with the introduction of electricity. And to generate all that electricity, we started plundering the earth in our incessant need for fossil fuels, whether coal or bitumen or the benign-sounding ‘natural’ gas.

While I’m not suggesting we must all move back to the farm, or that we should cut the power and live in darkness, I do believe in the concept of this issue’s theme, “Restor-volution.” If each of us could change the world, even a little bit, yes: it makes a difference, even if only on the plane of cosmic consciousness. It’s all a part of needing to reconnect with the planet and, as we’ve been told, one aspect of that is taking steps to adjust our diet to be more plant-based.

Not long ago, a man told me that beans do more to feed the soil than any other plant. I checked and learned that what he told me was right. It’s a matter of nitrogen fixation and release, a process that’s pretty straightforward. The boy in the fairy tale, Jack, traded the family’s beef cow for a handful of beans. Maybe we should consider his example and start growing beans, even if they aren’t magic ones that grow up into the clouds.

There’s a window in our house with a planter where we grow lettuce year-round. We can all find a spot with light where we can grow something—even as a symbolic gesture, much like the dove, that brave bird still standing for peace. For my part in the Restor-volution, I’ve decided that I’m going to keep writing poems, and that I’m also going to start planting beans.

Heidi Greco
Guest Editor, Issue 3





IN MEMORY OF TIM LANDER

*This issue of Counterflow Magazine is dedicated to
the memory of Tim Lander (February 26, 1938 - August 20, 2023)*

Born into the chaos of World War II in Chipstead, England, Tim Lander, shared his poetry, music and wit as troubadours and bards have done over the centuries. Tim came to Canada in 1964 and studied at the University of Alberta. In 1977 Nanaimo, BC became his home base, where he lived, wrote, advocated for and helped those who found themselves without a home or shelter.

Tim referred to himself as a “street poet” and became legendary for busking his hand-made chapbooks and sheet poetry, asking a “penny for a poem.” He traveled across Canada sharing his words at readings with many other bright lights of his generation.

After suffering a stroke in 2010, Tim stayed closer to home in Nanaimo and found joy in playing his penny whistle as he was seated in front of the Harbourfront Library on Commercial Street with his little white dog. He continued to write, although his poetic performances became less frequent.

Tim’s passing has been felt deeply by so many who knew him as a fellow artist, musician, and for his kindness and community spirit. Wordstorm was fortunate to have been able to collaborate with Tim’s children, Arthur, Zeb, and Serena, in hosting a community tribute to Tim’s life and work on April 20th, 2024.

The following poem written in memory of Tim, was contributed by Sheri-D Wilson, a legendary Canadian poet, herself, and long time contemporary and friend to Tim Lander.

Tim Lander

Sheri-D Wilson

Over forty years ago, in Nanaimo
I heard there was a real live poet
who went to the Oxy, on a specific night

I can't remember the day of the week
but clearly recall the Oxy, and a dream
meeting with a poet named Tim Lander
as if it was transcendent

that meeting marked the beginning
of a long friendship with poetry song
and the noble wordsmith, Tim

stories of hitching a ride on the back
of the sky, wind whistling between toes,
where we end up, nobody knows
or cares – cause it's the moment we hold

onto hand-written tattoos
itched in snake song, ink of the heart

preferring to sleep beneath bridges
to build relationships with racoons
who steal away with teeth, and the moon
howls with laughter, as we did
and will

with magic words, that open galaxies,
Tim, hand stitched, in my life's soul



Artwork: Carla Stein, *Arbutus Branch*.

Postcard Fiction Contest 2023

1st, 2nd, 3rd Place Winners

2019 saw Wordstorm's first foray into short fiction writing contests. We invited submissions of flash fiction (500 words max.) and the response was terrific! You can read the winning entries of that contest on [Wordstorm's website](#).

Given that the response to our flash fiction contest was so rewarding, we thought one good contest deserves another - and so in 2023 Wordstorm decided to follow-up with a similar contest.

To keep things interesting, we shortened the admissible word count for stories to 250 words or less. Kinda the number of words you could fit on a postcard. So we called it our **2023 Postcard Fiction Contest**. Ken Rivard, author of *Canalwatch* (Mosaic Press, 2023), agreed to adjudicate the submissions, and you'll find the winning entries he chose below. Enjoy!



1ST PLACE

Plausible Deniability

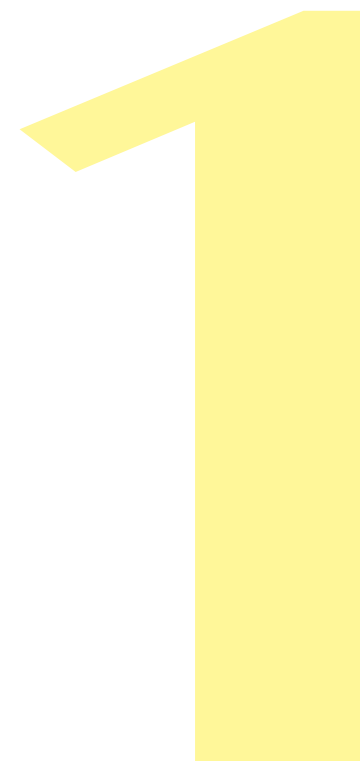
Paul Kendrick

“Thirty miles offshore now,” her husband muttered to her question. He was bending over the stern, fiddling with something. “Shouldn’t you have a safety line...or at least a life jacket on?” she asked, looking at the precarious position he was in. “I know what the hell I’m doing!” he snapped. That stung her, like a slap. Like it always did when he talked to her like that. Which he did a lot.

She swallowed that down, hard as it was. She had to try. “Can I help in some way, can I steer the boat or something?” she ventured. “The boat...is... on... auto-pilot...” he said, as if talking to a toddler. Then, he added, “Just do nothing, that’s what you’re best at!” That really hurt, the dripping sarcasm, the coldness of it. She quickly turned away, not wanting him to see her tears. She felt her way to the bow of the boat, her body shaking.

There was her blanket in the sun, her only refuge. She lay down, closed her eyes and tried to forget. She must have dozed off because she was startled awake by a yell and a splash, his voice frantic, “Donna! Donna! Help!”

She tried to act, to move but she just couldn’t. Soon the noise behind faded away. She pondered the matter, including his ongoing affair he didn’t know she knew about. In the end she had done nothing, which was the last thing he had told her to do.



2ND PLACE

Return Flight Angela Zimmerling

“Baby,” her father says, “Let’s go home.” His voice is leaden with finality.

He waits for her to smile. To nod. The girl tries to force the edges of her mouth, but fails. Feels her teeth grind down hard against each other. She falls into the silence between her heart beats. Her father’s eyes shine with something that is not quite love. Triumph?.

“Why did you run?” He doesn’t ask, but she hears the question anyway. Hears it in the exhale of his breath. An impossible question with too many answers. The airplane’s engines breathe into life. Her seat rumbles and trembles. She clicks her seat-belt buckle shut.

Running is vanishing. Re-appearing elsewhere - reinvented. When she ran she forgot that her heart felt and feels like a bruise. She is not the diamond child her parents dreamed her to be. But yet.

Behind her eyes still she sees her fingertips playing over a phone’s keypad. Hears her voice on a night that sleep wouldn’t come. “Daddy, I want to come home.”

The air tastes of sweat and impatience. She watches a woman carrying a heat -flushed toddler stumble along the aisle.

Her father nods. His hand falls. A talon over his daughter’s wrist. “Your mother will be happy.”

The girl breathes deep and deeper. Her thoughts twist into meaning that falls from her tongue.

“I was never the baby you wanted, but they gave me to you anyway,” she says, and says again, breaking the silence between them.

3RD PLACE

The Wait of Words Priscilla Dunning

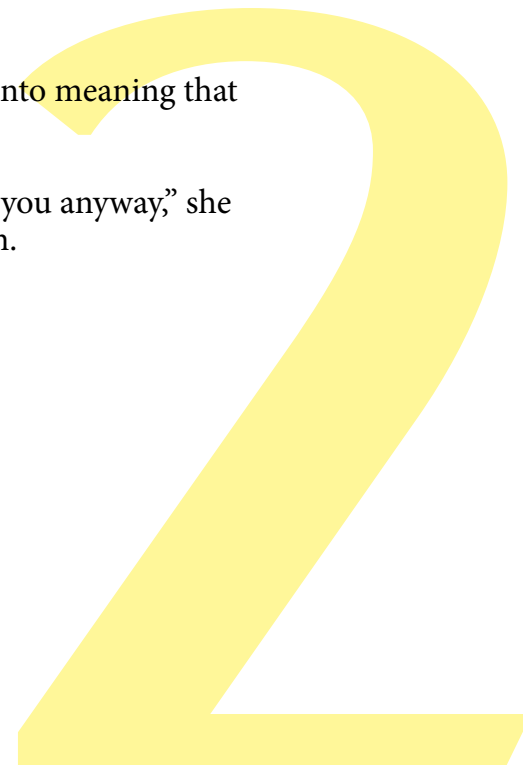
Their wedding was a destination dream. One week ago, they stood together on the Pacific shore, simply dressed and shoeless. Feeling sand between their toes, they breathed in salt-sea air, giving themselves a moment before speaking — a waiting time to cherish the words.

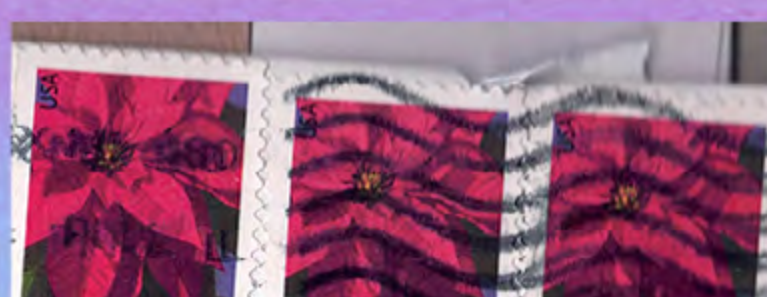
Today, they sit in their rented condo on either end of a borrowed couch. The well-wishers have finally gone home and now is the time to review plans for a honeymoon they had put off until next week.

Her eyes are closed. She dreams of their new life with two, no, three children. They’ll move to a smaller city with good jobs and the best schools. She won’t work for a while. It will take time and energy to make a home. She smiles, thinking of all the possibilities and happy to do them with her soul-mate. She feels his movement next to her and turns to face him, waiting to share these blissful thoughts.

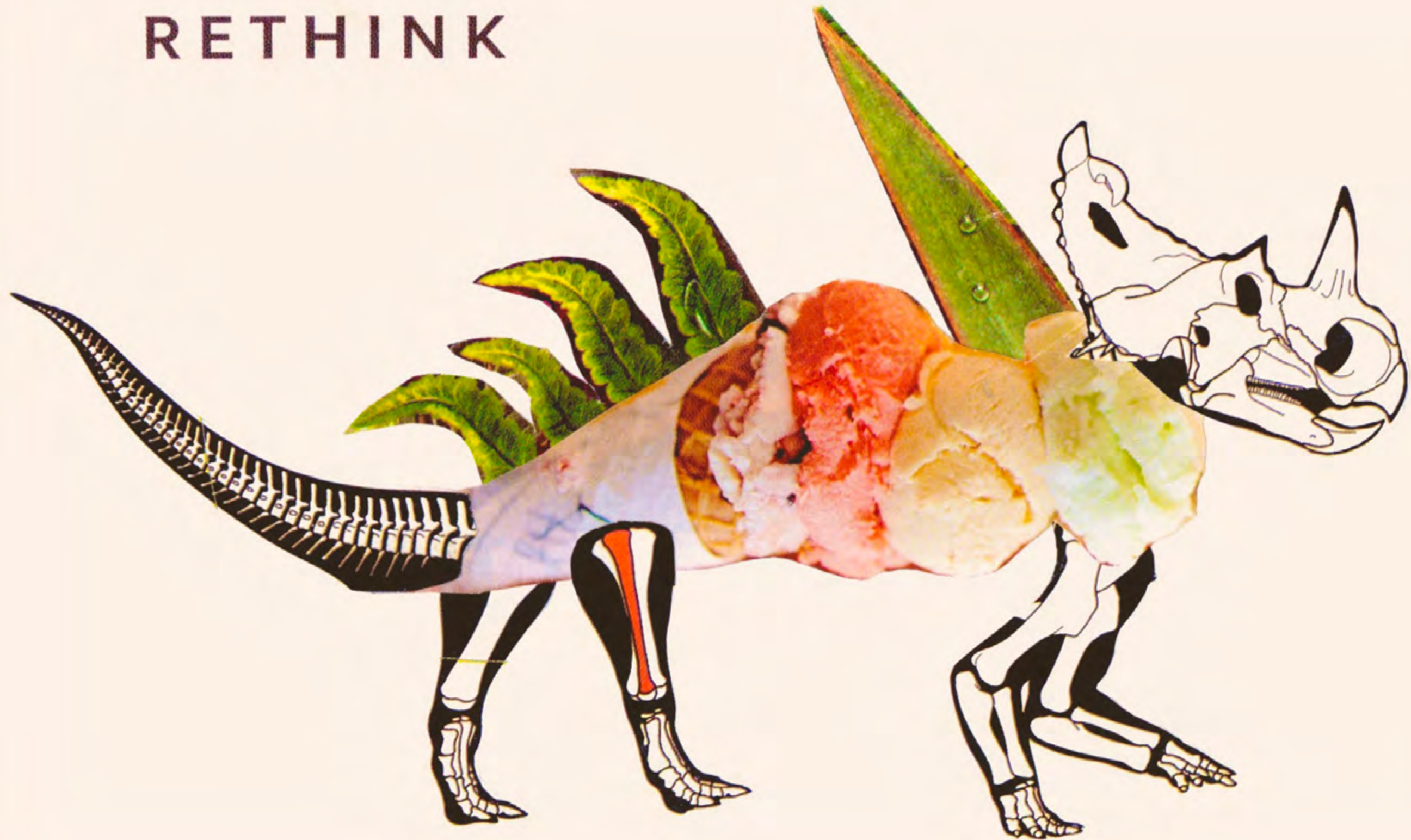
He chooses to concentrate on the fireplace, counting the flames to distract from his private thoughts and trying to imagine words he could use to tell her of his mistake. He feels the softness of her hand, but the sight of her diamond cuts him. He admits to himself that he has succumbed to the allure of another woman — the wedding guest in the yellow dress.

He looks straight ahead, the fire and his feelings heating his face. He has waited long enough for the words to come and he says, “I’m leaving you.”





RETHINK





NEW POETRY & CREATIVE WRITING

dissemination Diana Kolpak

bees dance their way to fulfillment
without counting days or years
wagging their songs
in generous circles of meaning
carried bright on thighs
heavy with sunshine
tasting each other's laughter
sharing discoveries
vibrating with truth

This One Chance

Joanna Streetly

I am growing smaller, sliding out
of my coat sleeves, feeding myself,
not with stuff, but with time, air
trees, waves — feeding myself

with the song sparrow who frequents
my windbreak, sings from the winter dregs
of my garden — feeding myself
with the ghostlike horned grebe

silver-small & delicate, diving
near the dock of my floating home,
disappearing into water so I must guess
where he'll bob up next, feeding myself

with tree bark, its springy warmth
beneath my hands, the round scales
of Sitka spruce, fibrous red cedar
subtle ridges of hemlock — feeding myself

with the sound of rain on the old cedar shakes
of this roof, hand-split by late Joe when he helped
me build this house from salvaged beach logs
an act of madness & sanity, some thirty years ago.

I feed myself as I pull on the oars of the rowboat
drink in the flooding current, the cloud-forming
sky, let myself turn circles in the eddies,
just for fun, no hurry to go forward, no hurry at all.

How lucky I am to know this world, this present
moment, its entwined wonders, this knowledge
that life is not own-able — not ours, or theirs
or yours or mine, but life itself, a force, a gift

a starburst moment, this one chance to love.

overheating

Joanna Streetly

tell me the difference between a road and a tree, I want to hear it justified, tired of the
muttered-mutterings in my head, why not in theirs? are they deaf — DEAF? not knowing
this tree counts & that one is needed, they all count, they're all needed & yes the road is
black & heating the planet, & don't you know? don't you KNOW? haven't you too escaped
from asphalt in 35 degree summer heat, miserable as salmon in too-hot water, bickering
with your lover, unsticking damp thigh skin from vinyl bike seats to flee, beg sanctuary,
kneel on hassocks of moss & breathe, breathe in the green grace, the ceasefire, the home
that is the forest.

All is Alive

Ruth Emeroe

This, I will keep saying.
The trees speak.
The flowers sing.
The stars hum.
The water breathes.
The heartbeats of the pebbles are unending.



Photographs: Margaret Lonsdale, *Balance* (top), *Fragility* (bottom).

Underground

Michael Penny

The filaments of Earth's
mycorrhizal fungi would stretch
half the width of our galaxy.

This is the distance of life,
the ocean's algae that stranded
itself into becoming us.

It's all a bargain
of life for taking care
in ramshackle symbiosis.

We never acknowledge this deal
so think we are not bound by it
as our industry shovels

its profitable way through
the polemic of fungi
and the planet they support,

dark, hidden, binding us
to work on our own darkness
as we end the light we think we are.

Plants Held Hostage in an Office Tower

Michael Penny

The palms were the first to go public
refusing the tap water
which wasn't rain.

Then the ficus, usually sybaritic,
dropped an extra leaf on the floor,
a gauntlet.

You'd expect the sansevieria to stand firm
and it did, buttressing the cactus's
prickly argument for freedom.

Even the seedling coleus, smuggled
into the empty office with afternoon sun
broke out its adolescent red banners.

The break wasn't complete —
the ivy for one
clung to what it knew —

but in the end, no cubicle could hold
them, defeating the regulations
which came with the decorating advice.

My Neighbors

George Baker

The trees around my neighbourhood keep falling. One-by-one. Down she goes. They say it's a looper moth. I say it's a tragedy. The signs are everywhere. "Tree Removal Scheduled". They hang like scarlet letters for the doomed.

I don't know when I became so emotionally tied to trees. But if I had to venture a guess it was when a lot of people were dying during the heat dome during the second year of our pandemic.

You see, at the time, I had just moved to the north shore. I came here for the trees. The two years previous, I had been living in the Downtown Eastside. And I don't know if you know this: there aren't a lot of trees in the Downtown Eastside. In fact, there is fuck all except concrete, tents and empty syringes. Now, that's not completely true. There was me and a few others trying to make a go of it. But there weren't many trees. So the things that fall there are people. Kindly, city government officials don't put signs around people living in that neighbourhood. But have you ever walked past a hollowed-out person, who looks alive-ish, but is actually slowly dying on the inside? You avert your eyes lest they see you cry.

Sometimes, even people in the Downtown Eastside dream. I would look across the Inlet at all of those trees and think to myself and dream of a life where my face isn't constantly peeling, where I am not constantly dehydrated, where I might sit under a tree's precious shade. There are lots of trees here on the north shore: Arbutus, Garry Oak, Oregon Ash, Pacific Yew, Western White Pine, Yellow-cedar. You name it, all sorts hang out here.

So there I was, living the dream in the second year of our pandemic when the whole southern-half of B.C. turned into a furnace and we cooked all day and all night. And like I said, many of us died. A lot in the Downtown Eastside. But here on the north shore, it was the trees that were dying. But we didn't know any better.

The city has chopped down a couple already. Still some remain standing with those goddamn white signs. And a great emotional toll is taken upon my soul. I felt for the first time ever like I was a tree hugger. I actually want to hug these trees, the ones in the park, the ones on the street and the one in front of my apartment building that bangs across my bedroom window at night. I want them to know I am sorry.

But instead I just walk past the trees. I avert my eyes. I don't think trees have eyes, but I can't risk it. I can't allow them to see me cry.

Hope

Janis La Couvée

Hope is the thing with feathers - Emily Dickinson

Hope is—Tom, at the estuary of Willow Creek,
planting red osier dogwood, alder and willow,
cutting back blackberry,
mulching and watering tender native species,
here on the site of an old garage and dump,
before that—
village of the Liḡwítłax̣w people,
who fished and gathered,
cultivated an orchard,
lived for generations in abundance

Hope is—school children, reverent in the forest,
listening to woodpecker, blue jay and chickadee
the soft rustle and sigh of branches,
today they learned to dig a hole,
plant bushes and shrubs,
trees that will grow tall and bushy,
one day they'll return to show their families—
you can make a difference

Hope is—streamkeepers at Simms Creek,
clearing debris, releasing salmon fry,
waiting in anticipation of a fall return,
counting spawning fish,
joyful—it's the best year in ages

Hope is—Indigenous Guardians
reviving cultural knowledge
weaving fences to keep out Canada geese,
protecting eel grass and sedges,
caretaking the land and water

Hope is—a legion of volunteers and staff
working on restoration projects
big and small
confident their efforts
will change the lands and waters

Hope is—a revolution made of
repeated collective actions

By My Silence

Bill Engleson

As time winds down,
my wristwatch occasionally stops,
often in the evening.
I place it on a bureau,
in another room.
It does not sense my heartbeat.

Perhaps it feels abandoned,
a machine with a need
to embrace humans,
my robot watch,
a simple mechanism
as am I.

As time winds down,
I expedite my creativity,
my urge to leave a semblance
of my being on this earth.
Childless,
I will only exist
for as long as the memory of me
pulses.

By my silence, I acquiesce.
The world is as it is because of me.

By my silence, I comply.
The world weeps so often because of me.

By my silence, I consent.
I hover in shadowy belief because of me.



R. Michael Fisher

Artwork: R. Michael Fisher, *IS*.

Nuclear Boomer

Bill Engleson

I came into the world with a bang. Two bangs. Two big bangs, actually. Truth be told, my arrival happened two years after those explosions. I swear we could still hear them.

Years later.
Even today.
And to just call them explosions doesn't do them justice.
The last thing they were was justice.
But they did the job.

Afterwards, it was a time of recovery and abundance. As I wailed away in my bassinet, I was unaware of how great a time it was to be born in. The 'War to End all Wars, Part Two', guaranteed a world of peace. The nations of the world were uniting. We baby boomers would never have to go to war. Then again, maybe the prognosticators were a tad over enthusiastic.

In the mid-fifties, however, times were glorious. Every third house had a television. It was a golden era. The glow even carried over into the early sixties. If you didn't count the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Danny and his family visited us several times over the years. His folks and mine had fished up the coast together in the first couple of years after the war. We'd never visited their home on Cortes. I remember my mother saying, "You need a rowboat to get there. I'm not that anxious to see them." My family liked being homebodies. Our own backyard was sufficient. Ultimately though, I moved away. All of those hometown friendships, like Danny, mostly evaporated.

The sixties blossomed for me. University! The hippie dippy days! I reveled in it. With a few provisos. I was always watching, like Christopher Isherwood's narrator says in 'The Berlin Stories': "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking."

That was me.
Then I wrote a book.
Two.

One Christmas, I signed up at a small holiday faire down Island. I hoped to sell a few books, maybe get discovered. At that point, I was invisible. The crowd was sizable. Books, however, hardly compared to Christmas baking, jewellery, and other crafted baubles. At one point, I noticed an older fellow giving me what I assumed was the evil eye. Or, perhaps, he was just near-sighted. He came closer, picked up a book, looked at me, and said. "It's been decades. I'm Danny."

Instantly, I stepped out from my booth, and we embraced. We went into the cafeteria, had insipid Christmas Faire coffee and very tart lemon squares, shared decades of births, deaths, careers, marriages. We got caught up.

"You know," he said as we concluded our impromptu reunion, "I loved coming to your parent's home."

I nodded. I knew that he did.

"For two reasons. One, I had a crush on your sister."

I nodded.

"And two, you had an indoor toilet."

I smiled, confused.

"Yeah. All we had for years was an outhouse. Like most of the world back then."

In that moment, I viewed the world differently.

Toilets!
Indoor plumbing!
Outdoor biffies!
There was so much I didn't know.



Photograph: Jordyn Dauphinee, *salt of the earth*.

Alert Bay

Robert Bowerman

A crow caws, a seagull shrieks,
seals swim. An old boat house,
faded and decrepit, crumbles
back into the sea.

Along the boardwalk, clan carvings
speak of a mystical time when man
and nature were joined and walked together.

On a grassy knoll, freshly painted totems
honour ancestors. Their spirit animals
guide them to the great beyond
and bear witness to their lives.

In the cultural centre, U'mista,
the return of what was lost
celebrates a nation's survival
and the rebirth of the old ways.

Perched atop a cedar,
the white crown of an eagle
stands out against the green.

A sudden swoop and a gull chick
is scooped and seized
between fierce talons.

Nearby, a plain plaque tells
the story of the children taken
by a savage school too certain
of its own righteousness.

Underneath the now bare field
sleep the dead children

waiting to be found.

Sentenced

Pamela Medland

The earth movers, the sprayed-on green
drive wildlife into the neighbourhood.
Last week it was a coyote on the chase
crashing into my patio door.

This morning a five-point buck walks down Patterson Gate.
Flushed out by Ring Road construction
he looks ahead calmly
as if my three-story walk-up doesn't exist.

One hoof in the spirit world
this buck links past and present
walks into a manicured, uncertain future
more dignified than any martyr ever mounted the gallows.

Northern Spring

Pamela Medland

Fine particulates cloud the air, pass through
masked lips to crisp bronchial sponge:
its only May and the forests are burning.

Trees candle,
ash settles on my tongue—a last late snowfall.
The town evacuates but we all smell,
all taste,
High Level burning.

~ ~ ~

Cherry blossoms float in the tailings pond;
a tired merganser's chest turns orange,
he rises, a small auburn moon in the midday sky.

This year smoke blooms early.

Tadpoles turn to frog, throats red and itchy,
skin sored a viscous green,
slick and shimmering.

A biologist twirls a test tube,
coats glass in oil, marbles the surface of his small world,
searching.

*In spring, my mother lured slugs with beer,
dropped soft drunken bodies down the garburator.*

Last night I burnt poems in the fire pit,
words spitting through the smoke hole.
I remembered blue skies thin and shy,
the times I walked eviscerated while
'round me others crackled and burned.

*Did your skin speak, too, when they burnt you,
fat dripping to the catch pan?*

Today I stand on a bluff, watch for you in clouds—
a sign.
Smoke hangs heavy, a thick flood.
Stains spread on your photograph,
silver slime trail on ash.

the wound

Dan Lundine

the wound is closed over now
that clear-cut slash bled silt
and boulders of shattered granite
hurled them into creek beds during hard November rains
they clog river mouths
fill bays
death traps for salmon runs

the wound is closed over now
planters ferried up the lake those summers
seeded a million saplings
it may never again be a forest
but the critters have a place to hide from the quads and 4 x 4's
that ripped through the seedlings those first years
after the pillage, what grouse and deer survived
crouched behind blasted stumps
for hunters, the game was too easy

the wound is closed over now
there's new growth on the slopes
after all, the 4 x 4's couldn't tear out all the seedlings
the grouse and deer have returned
tentative
and the loggers have moved on
after a hundred years of industry
old growth survives only on mountain crowns now
safe
heavy above the new green
beyond the reach of trucks, dynamite, spar poles

whup
whup
whup

demented blades chew the air

a Sikorsky, preying mantis of the sky
thunders over the mountain's crest
a massive fir sways from its belly cord

undaunted, we have found a way



Photograph: Leah Murray, *November Sunrise*.

Sometimes The Sun

c.nicol

it feels a little miraculous
that every day the sun
rises
then sets

how would it be if
the sun decided to take
a break, just chill
for a bit
in the sky

The chariot pulled over
to take in the scenery
check a loose wheel perhaps

Maybe that's why the sun
never stops moving
the wheels might fall right off

Maybe it would explode
Maybe that's what happened
to the folks on Mars

The sun just gave out one big sigh
and everything and everyone
was blasted out into space

Jane

c.nicol

See Jane
See Jane Run
See Jane run fast
See Jane run around
See Jane run back and forth
See Jane run home
See Jane run away
See Jane run
See Jane



Photograph: Amber ♥, *Untitled*.

A World Beyond

Joanna Streetly

The pause between winter and spring seems endless. The north-east wind peels down from the glacier on Mount Mariner, strips the green from the rainforest. It pierces the handmade walls of my floathouse, darts into my bones. Outside, the shivering garden is criss-crossed with death: small spent seed pods, their branches brown and hollow; lavender heads unharvested because I keep them for the bees. Opening my door, I freeze mid-step. Somewhere on the dock, something is looking at me. My eyes roam until I find the light of a single eye, a shining drop of obsidian amid the basketry of a leafless maple.

My visitor is a male song sparrow, a small-bodied soul who offers me his gaze, a primal connection that has bonded me to him over the last year. I can't account for my body's awareness of him, but, always, it stops me. We see one another, cock our heads and let our eyes meet. Some days he lands with wide-legged stance and upright tail; other days he crouches low, wings held tight. Today he hops toward the outer twigs of a potted maple, rubs his beak against the springy wood. Winter has rendered him songless and he's not the plump bird of six months ago.

Spring Equinox and I see the song sparrow puffed to roundness atop a dense hedge on the road at the top of the dock. Mouth wide and tongue a-whirr, he splatters the landscape with song. Sometimes I catch hints of Beethoven's Fifth: da-da-da-dum. I admire the vivid darkening of his feathers, the bullseye of brown in the centre of his chest, the crispness of his song. The busy work of attracting a mate means visits to my garden are less frequent. But every so often I pause and look up, and there he is, an envoy.

In summer this small town is overrun with tourists. Car horns blare on the street. I strain to hear the sparrow's song. One day I see him in his streetside hedge dwarfed by idling trucks, noise and exhaust rising up around him, an image that rises inside me — the vulnerability of birds; the ever-mounting obstacles to survival.

If this story had a happy human ending, I would tame the song sparrow with bird seed. He would read my thoughts and sing to me. I would refer to him as 'My Sparrow', give him a name. But the sparrow is an opportunity to step away from my narrow human perspective. As the world spins on its ever more volatile path, he is my chance to learn and unlearn things beyond my singular human view and consider life from other perspectives. What has he found to eat today? What other food sources does he have? How does this rain affect him? Where are his offspring? What does he like about my garden? Why? In the connection point of our mutual gaze, the sparrow offers me the chance to learn of a world beyond my own.

Peel Out

Greg Blee

Standing alone at the corner
of Jingle Pot and Island Highway
waiting to ford six lanes of traffic
having pushed the beg button
like a well-trained pedestrian,
I barely even notice
the low yellow two-seater
sidle up beside me —
one of a thousand steely beasts
prowling the road-veined city
on rubber paws
and growling

The light winks green
but before I take a step
buddy stomps the throttle
and his tawny mating accessory
springs up Jingle Pot like
jungle cat, like runaway meme
rocketing thru the intersection

And it's a quiet moment before I register
the engine howl not there
in tire hiss and electric zizz of acceleration —
that unmuffled RRRAAAARRRR
so absent it's a hole in the air

Walk sign blinks white, go-beep peeps
I take my humble step
as the waiting herd externalizes
all its internal combustions,
moan-blatt-rumbles into snarling motion —
me afoot with a sudden sense
of just how sound-sweet
this city is going to be
once we all, even
young bucks in sports cars
finally flip the switch
and go electric.

Whimbrels

Christine Lowther

I remember when the whimbrels
flew in over the receding tide.
Their approach to the mudflat:
air-skimming wings mimicking
the slope of their long decurved bills.
I recall the beauty of their landing,
their assurance in each other's company
their immediate search for food
urgent, determined, confident
—the guidebook noted
“Forages while walking.”
Now they return,
the pick-and-probe of their long bills
into the soft clean mud
rich with nourishment.

no trees were harmed

Ken Cathers

no trees were harmed
to make this poem

it lives in a few
measured breaths

stray words
wrapped in music.

a small blight
does more damage.

no animals were tested
twisted in pain

at worst they endured
a late night recital
some tedious haiku.

this poem grows green
is hormone free
untouched by pesticides

all the words refurbished
recycled

still smooth enough
to use again.

even the pages leave
a light carbon footprint

can be torn up
become paper planes, boats

an origami writer
in an empty room

the creases perfect
painful

a memory of trees
folded inside



Photograph: Hilary Green, *Waveworn*.

bees

Ken Cathers

they are complete
already perfect

fit into the world
like a key

a code to some
complex wonder.

they are part
of a sequence

invent their own intricate
design, reveal nothing.

left alone
they cover themselves
in pollen

become image
petroglyph

preserve themselves
in amber

quiver at the taste
of flowers

are workers
in an infinite garden

hum with the secret music
of paradise

Feast

Philippa Joly

The bear has been opened
her black fur set aside
so that naked, she looks human.
Organs, her inner workings
are removed
liver heart kidney
cleaned and cooked for elders
who are returning to their land
for a rare feast
after fifty years of absence.
And as for the bear
she resembles a human
resembles the land
her essentials separated from the whole
Trees removed for lumber
Trees removed to make way
for roads and pipelines
soil scraped hardened.
But her willing flesh will nourish
those who have done the work
of home.

the water
made me speak
the
poor water
THE BEST
hope
of the oceans,
the
sense of wonder.

and then
the quilts remember
we are
fabric
stitching together
the
Future

Found Text Collage: J.I. Kleinberg, *the water* (left), and *then the quilts* (right).

COUNTERFLOW

ISSUE 3: CONTRIBUTORS

Denman Island's **Bill Engleson**, a retired Child Protection Social Worker, has published two novels, 2013's *Like a Child to Home*, 2023's *The Life of Gronsky*, and 2016's collection of humorous literary essays, *Confessions of an Inadvertently Gentrifying Soul*.

He also writes flash fiction, essays, poetry, and reviews.

c.nicol currently works as a clinical counsellor in Port Moody and at two inner city elementary schools in Surrey BC. From the beginning, it became clear that reading and writing provided an opportunity to seek and find purchase within the human narrative inviting connection and catharsis.

Past Tofino Poet Laureate **Christine Lowther** has published four poetry collections and edited two poetry anthologies. Her memoir *Born Out of This* was shortlisted for a BC Book Prize. She won the Federation of British Columbia Writers' 2015 Nonfiction Prize and was shortlisted for the 2023 CBC Nonfiction Prize.

Dan Lundine is a former member of the RCMP. After leaving the RCMP, he became a school teacher. Dan's books come from the heart and share intimate details.

Diana Kolpak is a storyteller who uses theatre, fiction, clown, poetry, photography and music as her media. She is the author of the children's book *Starfall* and is grateful to be living, creating and dreaming on the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation. www.dianakolpak.ca

George Baker is 43-year old, not so young, but no so old, person living on the B.C. coast.

Greg Blee has lived on Gabriola Island for five years, moving there from Tofino. He has published adventure travel pieces, opinions and essays, and these days writes poems both waggish and earnest, and labours over a short story collection. He is active with the Poetry Gabriola Society.

Hilary Green is an editor who sometimes writes poetry. When out for a stroll, she's sure to have her camera at her side.

Artist, poet, and freelance writer **J.I. Kleinberg** lives in Bellingham, Washington, USA, and on Instagram @jikleiberg. Her chapbooks *The Word for Standing Alone in a Field* (Bottlecap Press), *how to pronounce the wind* (Paper View Books), and *Desire's Authority* (Ravenna Press Triple Series No. 23) were published in 2023.

Janis La Couvée (she/her) is a writer and poet with a love of wild green spaces from Campbell River, home to the Liḡ'wíldaḡ'w people. Her poetry is published by Paddler Press, Van Isle Poetry Collective, Dreamers Magazine, Litmora Literary Magazine, among others.

Joanna Streetly is the published author of five books. Her work can be found in *Best Canadian Poetry 2024* and *Best Canadian Essays 2017*, as well as many literary journals and anthologies. She has lived in unceded Tla-o-qui-aht territory for over thirty years and was the inaugural Tofino Poet Laureate.

Jordyn Dauphinee is a film photographer from Vancouver Island. Shooting film teaches her to slow down, breathe and take in everything around her, which is what she loves most about photography.

Ken Cathers has been published in numerous periodicals and anthologies. He has eight books of poetry with Oolichan, Thistledown and Ekstasis Press. His most recent book, *Home Town*, was published in England by Impspired Press. His work has most recently appeared in *Zoetic Press*, *Wool Gathering Review* and *The MacGuffin*.

Leah Murray's work has exhibited at the Art Gallery of Surrey, Crescent Beach Gallery, White Rock Museum, Master Artist's Program (White Rock), and in Langley. She has been a working photographer since 2005.

Margaret Lonsdale's work is influenced by an interest in all genres of music, a fascination with human resilience, a penchant for travel, and a deep respect for the natural world. A photographer of many things and the author of five indie titles, Margaret resides on the Saanich Peninsula.

Michael Penny has published five books and is pursuing his interest in the environment and appropriate land use as the volunteer chair of Bowen Island's Advisory Planning Commission.



Pamela Medland is an award-winning poet grateful to be living on the traditional lands of the Snuneymuxw people. Medland's work has been published in numerous literary journals and poetry anthologies. Her chapbook, *Bright Blade*, was published in 2020. A full-length poetry collection, *Echo of Ash*, was released in 2021.

Philippa Joly makes her home on a small island in the Salish Sea with her wise daughter, goofy dog and grey cat. She works as an herbalist, a nature educator and a paramedic and writes about nature, colonization and all the in-between when she has time.

R. Michael Fisher is a long-time visual and performative artist, author and teacher, who explores the borderspaces between the world of collapsing deconstructions and the re-storative and potentially transformative. A self-taught artist from Calgary, AB, he continues his practice of artworking while living on the W. coast recently.

Robert Bowerman is a retired teacher. Among others, his work has appeared or will appear in *The New Quarterly*, *Portal Magazine*, *Sea and Cedar* and *White Wall Magazine*. He is the winner of the *Island Review Short Fiction Contest* (2022), the *Van Isle Poetry Collective Contest* (2023) and the *Ekphrastic Poetry Contest (NAC)* 2023

Ruth Emeroe is an emerging Canadian writer living in British Columbia. She writes stories, essays, and poetry, and has been published in *FOLKLIFE* magazine.

Sheri-D Wilson is an award-winning performer and author of fourteen books, four short films, three plays, and four poetry & music albums. Her work has received many awards and honours, including the Order of Canada, an honorary Doctor of Letters – *Honoris Causa* from Kwantlen University, Poet Laureate Emeritus of Calgary, the Stephan G. Stephansson Award for Poetry, and the Women of Vision Award. A strong advocate for social change & community building in 2003 she founded The Calgary Spoken Word Society and remains the Artistic Director today. For 11 years the society produced a very large Spoken Word Festival and sidekick School Program. In 2005 Sheri-D founded The Spoken Word Program at The Banff Centre and was Director/Head Faculty until 2012. Sheri-D splits her time between Calgary & Vancouver with her dog Willow – where she's as busy as the water-table-controlling Emblem of Canada.



Artwork: Carla Stein, *Untitled*.

