

Foreword

Chris Weagle

As scholars, creators, and colleagues at ESBB, we often speak of the figurative nature of the trans-linguaging processes, which are not only linguistic, but are cultural, social, and legitimizing. Aware of how limitations can inhibit scholarship, or in this case, the scholarship of creativity, we aim to cross them, for borders are there to be traversed, boundaries stretched, oceans navigated and countries explored. The newest path we find ourselves following is the founding of the creative writing pages, here in its second edition.

Many of the contributions you will read speak of what it means to be burdened, what it means to have and to lose family, what it means to struggle, and how suffering through all of these things nonetheless requires us to get out of bed each morning and return to work. In the aftermath of life's crucibles come the stories we want to tell and the stories we want to hear. So this edition of ESBB's creative section is a tribute to perseverance and making it as best we can through a couple of the most trying years known to the history of our age. The voices speaking here come from all over the world: the United Arab Emirates, China, the United States, the Sultanate of Oman, and the Republic of South Korea. Please take a minute to welcome new voices as we also greet more familiar names. We invite you, our readers, to join us for our stories about what it means to survive, abroad or at home, in a world that suddenly hit a hairpin turn.

Pat Bizzaro opens this edition with a suite of three poems, the first of which, "Early Lunch," has a visceral, archetypal quality often found canonized in American literature and film. If "Early Lunch" were a photograph, it would be monochrome, sitting in a dusty frame on the wall over an empty barber's chair, waiting for the next person to ask about it. In "The Dance of their Lives," Bizzaro attempts "to recreate in poems my father's immigration and adjustment stories," which ends up reminding readers that crossing a geographic barrier often leads to an equally difficult language barrier: "It is no wonder my immigrant parents / danced with their hands / as they tried to sing / clearly in English / what they were thinking / in Italian." Physical gestures can support or replace language, because, as Unger (2019) asserts, "speech, the visual, and the act of pointing create meaning," and that meaning, Bizzaro demonstrates, lives on in memory as well. In conclusion, these three poems convey a quintessential quality of the American immigration experience, and in contemporary terms they whisper to us to find empathy for those who try to reach new homes, whether at a southern border, a Mediterranean passage, or trapped in a nowhere land between two south east Asian countries.

From Korea, we welcome two new voices, one of whom pens the inaugural short fiction contribution to the creative pages. John W. Gilbert's "Lightning Camp" is a stylistic journey through the beginnings of ends and ends of beginnings, as we are brought into the lives of Philip Atherton and his father Todd, whose family moves around the American landscape, growing and changing, living and dying, or getting ready to do either. Each page

builds towards this gnawing question that if everything is supposed to be normal, then why doesn't it feel that way? Perhaps a partial answer to that can be found in Busanite Kenneth May's poems, "The Bartender Pours One on the House" and "Return to the Chatterbox." The lilac threads within these two poems weave them together with the brutal honesty of a punch to the gut. Taken together, Gilbert and May risk leaving readers feeling a bit off-guard with their own recollections of family and home, of the things that are fixed in our hearts, yet which remain ever-fluid and often at odds with living and dying, or of being and becoming, caught up as they are in the business of being remembered.

Speaking of remembering, John Unger contributes two very different poems in the vein of remembrance, both of which are set against stark military backdrops. The at-times wistful lines of "Trying to Change the Cadence" march to shifting moods and imagery, as the speaker and his lover move from "high up in the mountains / taking long walks through terraced fields, / castaways ... / healing in a sky of green rice" to "a thick sea / of drunken sailors everywhere / They stuffed money into / hungry, outstretched hands with harsh drunken smiles / welded to their cheeks." Then with a heavy contrast, the sharp edges of "Rohingya Truth and Facebook," cut much deeper, accounting for the genocidal complicity of a weaponized social media platform. Once again, we might be left thinking of that nowhere land mentioned earlier, and those who suffer, displaced, between borders they cannot cross. Remember to hit that "like" button.

We welcome back Shi Wenjie from Beijing, whose work embodies his vision of providing a tour of places rooted in Chinese history, culture, and landscape. In this edition, he takes us to Beijing's Summer Palace, *Yihéyuán*, with rich, controlled imagery and form -- but not overly-so -- much like the reflections of Xiuyi Bridge rippling against the waters of Kunming Lake. Shi Wenjie's poetry is an invitation to come to Beijing and see for yourself how "Brilliant sunset moments present / a show of lights dimming and shifting / as the sun goes down over the west mountains / with softened shines." Mr. Shi's work is complemented by equally vivid photo images of the sites he describes in verse.

In a fitting end to the journey taken here, Vijay Singh Thakur offers a deceptively light-hearted exegesis on the Chicken and the Egg. His concrete poem, "dual in one and one in duality," is grounded in ecological-existential contemplations of the cycles of creation and destruction which take root in the shape of the poem on the page as it stretches into the reader's imagination. With that, read on, knowing that when all has been said and all has been done, no matter what happened yesterday or even today, tomorrow the sun will rise and all our works will begin anew. I extend a grateful thank you to those of you who answered the call to make this edition come together.

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