

DETROIT LIT MAG #2

Fall 2022

POETRY

## THE GOLDFINCH KENOTIC

Like Shakespeare, folding up his every page  
For paper planes, and sending each one out  
Into the city to be trampled down  
Or puddle-sogged, or torn or mocked –

Like Van Gogh before a bubbling Starry Night,  
With weak small smile warming his hands  
(Not for cold, but as a gesture to himself),  
Remembering what infinity is like –

This, too, is such a one, it seems to me.  
The goldfinch, quiet, brownly swoops today  
Who porpoised yellowly a month ago.  
Alighting, he chirps twice, and gives it up.

He has given everything away,  
To God or Death, he cares not, he gives –  
He loved the spending, nothing more or less,  
So that savagely he has consumed himself  
By the mere Being, like a storm, a flame;  
An exhaustion; he has outlived his own name.

I, too, shall suspend each passing ache and sob  
Into that single, final, full collapse –  
To meet God spent, and weeping on the floor,  
Only to know He knows how hard I tried  
To give Him everything, everything.

Charlie Dunn is the deceased friend of the editor. He lived in Ypsilanti, and never succeeded in publishing his work. With his father's permission, it is here included, as is the subsequent work herein. (His whole works may be found on Amazon, under the title: The Book of Charlie; a friend's posthumous publication).

## TWO POEMS FOR OCTOBER WIND

### I

The hard wind blindly rushing  
Cannot tell the mottled old leaves  
From the butterfly's wings,

Which she is trying to set down  
To rest in a patch of sun.

But the wind keeps tossing her about –  
Doing its universal duty,  
Despite the frailness of butterflies.

### II

Bellied with the cold midday wind,  
Like a leaf blown into a fence –  
And consciously uneasy that I can't  
Keep any more of it than I can breathe –

I smile with a great yellow tree  
That seems exhaling at last –  
And surmise that Green  
Is mere holding of breath.

Charlie Dunn

## LAMENT OF A LOVER BELOVED

This whelm of leaden notes lightly rattles  
the glass tray of glasses on the piano cover.  
These saddest slowest keys—  
rattle the glasses on the tray of glass—  
on the trembling piano cover.

There ought to have been the snow, and the full moon,  
And guests all gone, and parted off as lovers—  
and crowding up the room  
the many glasses with their dregs of wine  
On the piano cover.

I should have lain just outside in the garden,  
The only without bed, and without lover,  
Though not for being the less ardent—  
And listening through the windows, undiscovered,  
To the glasses on the piano cover.

But it is daylight, and the snow but melts.  
I'll lie in bed tonight beside my love,  
Exchanging glad and tender feels and felts,  
Without a glimpse of sky, or thought thereof—  
Unsure how wide the moon waxes above.

Fabio Ramohitaj is an Albanian-Italian, living working and studying in Chicago for many years now. He is currently a grad student of classical studies at Loyola.

## DISCUSSING EVOLUTION

I take the parakeet out in his cage,  
set him in full sunlight so he can look around  
in awe—sky, clouds, the blossoming trees.  
He stares at a robin nearby, remembering a page  
from his deep past when his ancestors

flew on their own, slept in trees, were hunted down  
and eaten by fierce birds. He tilts his head  
and looks straight up into infinity. Jumping  
from perch to perch, he's excited by the sound  
of wind raking through trees, a few young buds

torn loose, drifting around him. His feathers shed  
out into the real world, where they belong.  
But when the sun disappears, I carry him inside  
and we talk a bit about the invisible thread  
that ties us together under these ancient stars.

David James, born in Detroit, raised in St. Clair Shores, has published seven books, six chapbooks, and has had over thirty one-act plays produced. He teaches at Oakland Community College.

## LOVE SONG

Along the quiet road to you  
I found a shriveled wasp, and dry;  
Toward themselves all creatures die,  
I said – though that was nothing new –  
Upon the quiet road to you.

And as I waited on a stair  
I watched a cat drink from a cup  
That shimmered as he lapped it up.  
He napped then on a broken chair,  
While I waited for you there.

And as we walked, just us alone,  
My shadow with your shadow blent.  
I tried to feel when they were rent –  
When we turned to the moon, and home –  
As we walked, just us alone.

Karina Kitt is a recent immigrant to the Detroit area. She has been published in several Russian publications, such as 45-я ПАРАЛЛЕЛЬ, and Топос.

## FRENCH INTENSIVE WEEDING

My old-age, hillside home is dug  
Into the drinking throat of a bay  
So compellingly facing heaven  
I have to look away  
To run an errand.

Many sins ago I lived some blocks  
From here, an enlisted sailor in a fug  
Of war. My war bride was a grad student  
Science girl who showed me her pressed plant  
Collection and taught me there's a local tree  
Whose Botany true name is False Hemlock –  
Which seemed like bad science and good poetry.

That war is so gone it's not even movies now.  
I maunder over the weeding of my rain-drain  
Gravel steps, refusing to spill poison  
Into the ground water, making it a meditation  
Of inverse French Intensive Gardening,  
Gloves off, carefully pulling the complete root  
Systems like coaxing the guts from a slit fish,  
Piling the immediately limp, minute  
Lives for the toss into the woods bracken.

S.J. Hodson worked for years as a sheet-metal fabricator and furnace installer, and at industrial safety consulting, and as a labor law class-action attorney. He has loved poetry since his 8th grade year of school, when he fell into his mother's college poetry text -- Louis Untermeyer's anthology of U.S. and U.K. poets.

## PROPHECY

After a day of heavy wind and seas  
there will follow a night of sagacity.  
In that darkening, flotsam will amass—  
bones, shells, wood, a bird carcass.

Spread on sand like wares at a bazaar,  
they will shine in the place where  
water meets shore, radiant in a waning  
light. We will go and gather them, taking

our fill. We will be sated, you and I,  
alone on a beach curved like a moon.

Stacy L. Spencer, a Michigan native, began writing poetry again after a long hiatus during the worst job of her life. Her poems have appeared in *Thimble and Topical Poetry*.

## CICADAS CICADAS CICADAS CICADAS CICADAS

I  
The crispy scrolls of eucalyptus bark  
Fall without provocation. Still they fall,  
As if the lolled sun shone kinetically—

And while I might prefer to think it were  
Regret, or Longing, headlong staggering  
To meet someone already half-awake,

Still even stranger, darker still than this,  
Decay, centripetal, has curled the bark  
At last enough to break and fall away.

Then the cicadas, one by one, begin,  
As though nodding Reality had stood  
And started pacing, lest he fall asleep.

II  
They burrow not into the pines.  
Where are they going so tirelessly?  
Or what is being fastened?

III  
Upon a dry leaf, like a dish,  
An obedient cicada endured  
  
The thrush's dainty pluck and pick  
Of wing and neck, of bout and bridge—

It was really a polite affair.  
Death was hardly there.

IV  
The cicada is the song which,  
Caught by a gaze, slowly,  
Slowly takes a body, mostly.

V

The rustle of old eucalyptus leaves  
And sheddings soothes me so.

Then rake more slowly, think more slowly –  
That's the cicadas – quiet – the cicadas,

Filching more room than they have got  
For this rhythm the wind won't take.

VI

By mid-September,  
Cicadas infinitely loud  
Would not suffice.

VII

A Chinaman, in the habit  
Of eating cicadas right from the tree,

Accidentally swallowed one whole  
When it screamed and flew down his throat.

He acquired a condescending demeanor  
When recognized in his region of Guiyang.

VIII

As a cicada – as cicadas –  
To listen to cicadas sing –  
Would nearly constitute the Whole.

IX

And yet I know nothing more than this,  
This talk which has nothing to do with me  
Except that it is I who send it away,

I who gather from ten thousand sources  
The pilfered, patchwork utterances  
Which I strew the wind with carelessly.

But if Tongue did endure in speech,  
Surely I should speak far less.  
Surely into cupped hands I should speak,

Lifelong refining but the single phrase,  
And I made fragilest within it, loneliest –  
Calling for Death and hiding from his sight.

Colm Bleecker studied at U of M, and has had a few poems published obscurely,  
in small publications, like *The Archaist* and *Melona-Melona*.

POND POEM (HAIKAIKU)

The pond is so still,  
dragonflies thrumming over  
shuffle the whole air,

-

And my resting oars  
drip their vast rings, that  
spread unobstructed  
until they meet the  
rushes at the brim.

-

The rowed eddies gape,  
and twist them down as deeply  
as the lily stems.

-

Trying to cross the lilies  
without harming them, the vexed  
resourcefulness interjects:  
a mere fish could tow me through!  
which helps not, and I am stuck.

-

But how nice, to palm  
lily pads and press until  
the warm pond floods them.

-

They let the water  
bear their weight, the dark,  
fragile they are, and

their spines and statures  
are the warm dark pool.

-

The dimples of the  
uncloven lily pads hold  
silvered pearls of rain.

-

The pads rest on their slack stems,  
do not exceed the surface;  
nor may we ever never  
lift forehead-encumbered gaze  
from crowns which just scrape heaven.

-

Full moonlight upon  
a thousand split lily pads:  
the moon's moons, glaring!

-

I rowed in circles  
on the pond's center,  
unable to stop  
watching my oar dip  
in the perfect water.

Colm Bleecker

FAILED LANDSCAPE IN TUSCANY

It is not inhuman, not utterly apart –  
But nor can one assimilate the view  
Imbibing it, ever the first desire.  
Nor again should I go trampling over it –  
The trees would not be soft beneath my feet;  
Those trees are much taller than myself,  
But I am childish; My eyes do not understand;  
I would not pluck the orange sun to eat  
By merely reaching round the mountainside.  
(It would be so impossibly juicy,  
Running down one's chin for half an hour).  
The river through the valley is deeper  
Than I am tall, several times so perhaps;  
I would not lie down in it as I lie  
In shallow freshets after a strong rain.  
I would not part the trees with my fingers,  
Peering with one eye into those woods,  
Catching bears and bobcats, kissing them!  
Let me think a moment. It would take  
Some hours, or a day, to cross that – but,  
Here, if I could only see it clearly –  
Yes; there are the trees upon my nape,  
Like gooseflesh; there, the river of my throat;  
I can feel the thud of every ripe fruit,  
Every nut that patters these old knuckles.  
Still I desire to rise up out of it,  
An earthy giant, with wooded back, hounded still  
By butterflies after my sweet blossoms,  
But I chasing the orange sun forever,  
Deranged after the taste of it, insane.

Robert Hunter is the founder and editor of Detroit Lit Mag. He was born in Ypsilanti, and studied literature at Wayne State, before moving to Russia a while to teach English, hitchhike, backpack, and sail a little. If it seems unfair that he is publishing himself, think of the cherry trees, who experience no compunction including a pit in every fruit.

ONE SINGLE HAIKU, FOR ONE WHOLE PAGE

Now the cicadas have all gone,  
the falling leaves strike  
the fallen leaves so loudly.

Robert Hunter

## ON THE METRO

A harsh and unexpected stop inclined  
The passengers all up and down the train,  
As though, for just a moment, all mankind,  
(As baleful storm-winds sweep the ripe rye-plain),

Were swept by Love, and all lurched to embrace.  
And one man laughed, as in a storm one laughs –  
Abruptly, with a brightly childish face –  
To think that love could come and go so fast.

David Leman has spent his whole life in Belgium and the Netherlands, but he is currently living and volunteering at the Detroit International House, to get to know the city where he was actually born! This poem has been previously published in Dutch.

## MY LOVE AMONG THE MOUNTAINS

After so many hills and hours of wading  
Through the tall dewy grass and wildflowers,  
You acquire a certain longing for it:  
For the brush of weeds against your bare legs.  
The lash of nettles itself grows welcome.

Likewise, down the valleys, all pastel  
Her vowels over Bugloss, Trefoil, Poppy  
Ringing out inspire a kind of thirst –  
Like the scent of blooms, which is nectar's hint.  
(And once, a bee alighted on her lip).

And I have fancied that the very breezes sought  
The space between her fingers – a rather wild  
Projection of my own spacious desire  
To waste myself away just whispering  
Into her imperfectly cupped hands.

Casey Haloran is an up and coming poet, from Plattsburgh, NY, with recently published poems in Tupelo Press, Conduit, Do North Magazine, and Detroit Lit Mag's first volume.

LOVE POEM

When I see you in your skirt,  
you are like a peach in windless August,  
splitting of its own ripeness.

Two flies could pick that peach;  
a cloud, passing over the sun,  
the sudden shade of it might pick that peach.

When I see you –  
when I see you,  
I wonder, shall my thumbs sink in?

Alecia Sakharova is a resident of Rockwood, MI. She is a huge fan of her dogs,  
gardening, and the work of Emily Dickinson.

THREE BRIEF DICKINSONISMS, TO SWEETEN  
THE SORROW OF MY LOVE'S LONG ABSENCE

I  
This Absence is a doleful thing –  
This Distance – hard to bear –  
As if they both were loudly – here –  
Discoursing on your Hair

II  
To hear your Voice – though You are gone –  
The Bee could best express it –  
For constancy of Groan between  
The smell of Blooms – and Nectar

III  
I filled the House with Turtles – Full –  
That your Arrival be  
By Crowds commemorated –  
Though I've no one else but me –  
They've torn the Curtains – and the sheets –  
The cabbages – your Pears –  
They nip me – I can't sleep at all –  
And still – you are not here

Alecia Sakharova

## PEELING

Sun peels the skin,  
unraveling that forgotten something

if you ask me,  
there are no answers

a spiral column  
of ever-changing questions –

Ukraine, Afghanistan,  
Lebanon, Yemen,  
America –

I too am just a suggestion,  
a possibility of parts coming together

and death at all hours,  
peeling away at Life

Aynur Kuğay is a poet and songwriter from San Francisco now living in Istanbul, Turkey. Until 2020, she most frequently graced the stage as Chicken Mama, composing and performing original songs that contemplate love and nature. Her poetry has appeared in *Fresh Words Magazine*, the *Bosphorus Review of Books*, and the *Walrus*. She was chosen to represent Istanbul as a European regional slam finalist in 2020.

## LATE HE RETURNS

A flame is such a slobbering thing, the bright  
Hot spittle flecked against the night;  
A flame is bestial and too hungry,  
Too endlessly hungry.

The world is loud and dark and darkly green;  
Conducting that primeval theme  
The full pale moon is shining,  
The great pale moon is shining.

And I am terrified of his embrace,  
The smile that must be stuck upon his face,  
The rapid stillness of his body –  
The smell of fire on his body.

Jane Falardeau inhabits and loves the Windsor area, just across the river from you all. She spends much of her time along the Trans Canada Trail.

ALL CURTAINS DRAWN

All curtains drawn, although it's scarce past four,  
And withered trees all clawing barren sky.  
I shiver. At my feet a few leaves lie,  
The clean-picked corpse of Autumn, white with hoar.

I rub my frigid hands, redden them the more.  
Entombed within my heavy coat I try  
To lift my glance to stars on high.  
I long for summer's lovely dawns.

Though in your eyes all warmth of June is found,  
And summer's breeze is in your chestnut hair,  
Your lilting voice as sweet as sweet bird's sound,  
The sun's soft glint in your complexion fair,

It's lack of you which leaves me so forlorn—  
All branches bare, all curtains drawn.

Valentine is a young poet from England. This is his first published poem.

FICTION

## CHARLIE AND THUS

Walking in the forest, Charlie found a very good walking stick, with knots and notches upon it which made it comfortable for his hand; and it was of a good height, and a good density, and a good thickness – and it tapered to a point at the bottom, making it a frequent occurrence that Charlie skewered leaves with it, which now and then he removed against his foot. Well as it went he wound up using the staff rather as a sword, using it to destroy or disturb all manner of things in the woods. Often he clipped tall plants clean in half, or flicked flowerheads from their stems. Why has it been given me, thought Charlie, to desire and be satisfied by the accomplishment of ruin? For it fulfills my spirit's longing, and O my heart you in turn resemble it, for you are like a wilderness without order; yet I desire silence in my chest, and peace, which I am not permitted to have.

And darkly he sat him down on a great fallen willow tree, cursing this thing and that, and swinging his staff; until he saw from afar a thing glowing in the midst of the trees like a fire beginning to lick and lick roundabout it. Now Charlie went to it, for his heart resembled it exceedingly, but all he found in that place was a bright red flower. He swung at it with his stick, and popped the flower from the stem, and it fell far away. Just then, a voice thundered from behind him, saying, What have you done? behold, now shall I make you to suffer worse than you have, for you have killed my red flower, which I have kept innocent from the world since time immemorial; but look, now you have ruined it – and shall I let you go free? or, shall I be found blameless, having let you go away unpunished?

And Charlie said in return to the voice, Come out from hiding; for either you will kill me or I will kill you, and I cannot find in me any inclination for the one thing over the other. Therefore come out, and let me see you.

But now, having calmed down somewhat, the voice said again to him, Give me seven of your fingers, and I will give you seven wonderful things, whatever you wish; for I have not a body for you to fight, but rather consist of a small portion of

this forest. My name you cannot know, for its twelve syllables are a very destructive force indeed; yet you may call me Thus, for so I am. Now, give me some choice seven of your fingers, and I will give you seven wonderful things.

And Charlie said to him, I am without any blade with which to take away my fingers, Thus. Give one to me, and I will do what you ask.

And a big knife came down from one of the trees on a spider's thread, with a handle of gnarled and mossy bark, and a blade of petrified amber, with a spider with long legs frozen in it. He cut off seven of his fingers, leaving only one thumb and the first two fingers of his right hand (for he cut off two on one hand first, and then five on the other after this, knowing that Thus sought to trick him, and leave him without any fingers on one hand and therefore without any method of cutting off the last two). Now the voice thundered upon him, saying, You have done well first to cut off a pinky and a ring finger, and with three fingers left on your right hand to cut off the rest of the fingers on your left. Now what are the seven wonderful things you will have? Ask, and I will give them to you, for you have dealt wisely with the task I have given.

Charlie said to Thus, First I will have new fingers made of petrified amber, each with a different insect frozen inside of it; and it was thus. And he said, Second I will have feet of gnarled and mossy bark, that I may walk along in the forest with the sturdiness of oaks, and be not afraid of thorns or serpents under my feet; and it was thus. And he said, Third I will have in my mind the full understanding of all the languages of the forest and of all the beasts therein, that I may speak the tongues of the wild creatures, and thereby have discourse with every creature that I wish; and it was thus. And he said, Fourth I will have innards to digest all the flora of the wilderness, that I may subsist upon them, and never need to go far to gather food, or kill any creature for its flesh; and it was thus. And he said, Fifth I will have my flesh to be of good earth, that I may plant what flowers soever I like into my body, even berries or brambles; and it was thus. And he said, Sixth I will have this staff of mine to be made unbreakable, and with magic to

resurrect the dead; and it was thus. And he resurrected the fiery flower he had beforehand destroyed, whereupon Thus was exceedingly pleased, and thanked Charlie for such a gesture of goodness. Now Charlie spoke again, saying, Seventh, I will have knowledge of the twelve syllables of your name.

But when Thus heard these words, he was silent in contemplation; for his name was a destructive force too great for anyone but himself to wield, and capable of erasing whole cities of men. But Charlie could hear the thoughts of Thus in the very wind, having great understanding of the languages of the forest, and he heard therein the twelve syllables of his name, which were a very strange name, and not to be written down or spoken by any human being; but Charlie carved symbols for them into his staff, that he would never forget them. And Thus asked him, How did you know, if I did not tell you? And Charlie said, I heard it upon the very wind, which your hidden thoughts inhabit. And Charlie thumped the earth of his belly, and it sounded like one thumping the earth; and he laughed with a great joy.

Now Charlie left Thus, and went into the cities of men, shouting: Who will come with me into the forest? For soon all things will be the forest, according to my own destructive will; then be not foolish. But in the whole city there was no one but shouted him away and beat him. So he spoke the twelve syllables, and with a great breath cast the city into the ocean, never to be seen again. And he went into the next city, and cast that one also away, for there also did they shout at him and beat him. And he went to a third city and did the same thing there; but he grew weary of destroying mankind, and built himself a house made of sticks and leaves, and planted all manner of flowers in his soily flesh, and blackberries. And where there were craters left, where the cities once were, Charlie thumped the ground with his staff, and brought up forests from those places, smacking his dirty belly and dancing and singing with every wild creature.

Charlie Dunn

## LETTER FROM A NATURALIST ON KEPLER-186F

Dear friend,

When one has at last grown accustomed to the radically and perhaps traumatically new state of things, one begins forgetting which happenings merit the mention. For instance, the duration of the days upon this planet, which formerly were to me as wretched as anything else; and yet now I've grown accustomed to it, and even quite like it. I have fortunately brought with me the custom of the 8 or 10-hour workday, and yet it seems like so little, given the amount of time I permit myself to spend afterward lying around. Not that this is any place to be lying around, as you will soon read! However I am still only a man, after all, and so, despite the million bizarre creatures that beset me I do nonetheless spend long days lying on the beach of black sand, here at the Gabriel Sea. And even swimming in its waters, believe it or not!— despite that the ocean on Earth scares my teeth into the back of my throat, and there I even know what's in it. Here, who could say? This place is a type of hell; a nameless world of nameless things. Except that this small continent shall be called Gabriel's-lands, in honor of myself, and so it is at least that much less frightening. Perhaps the first thing I should mention— my mother found it wonderful, anyway— is the gentle, licheny matter that covers all the floor, and which makes walking about barefoot almost irresistibly pleasant. It is bright yellow, and smells sweet— perhaps like cherries, though I have not smelled cherries for some years— when trod upon. How tropical! How superlatively tropical it is here— sweet, and bright, and blessed with blessed contrast— the licheny yellow ground plants against the black sand, itself against the washing of the bright blue sea! I do feel so blessed to have been sent here. And across the bay I have a lovely, lonely view of several massive mountains, which must be such a beautiful climb. I shall make an effort to see them up close, soon, perhaps with the other naturalists, when we reconvene with all our notes this week, this time here, in my region.

And yet also, as it always is with the tropics— as though the excess of boons must be paid for in horrors— there are a myriad of abominations which I would love to be away from. Among my first days here— only too glad to feel the genuine light of a sun through an honest atmosphere once more— I brought a book with me to the beginning of the forest. Now, this forest ought to have struck me for suspicious right away, but I am an oblivious and gullible person, and so I lay me down under one of the Finger-trees to relax. These Finger-trees are one for the books, really. I should have known; their shade is cool, too cool—oozily cool. The effect of which— in conjunction with my volume of sleepy Proust— was that I quickly fell into a clammy, troubled sleep.

These remarkably thin trees seem to stand about 5 feet tall, maximum; and their foliage hangs nearly to the ground, thickly, willow-like, if somewhat damp in spots. Ideal, you might say! Well— so I thought, too. But press your thumbs into the oddly— keratinous— bark of this off-white “tree,” and you will quickly discover that, much like pressing your own fingernail, it shows lighter underneath, a light yellowish. It would appear this tree is not only *ostensibly* made of some fleshy or adipose substance but indeed is so. I have seen a certain breed of creature, like a macropod-marsupial, (which I have named the Goobly— and you will understand the whimsical christening, if you look at the pictures which I am sending), with the sharp spurs of either hindmost foot, leap and with a kick puncture the tree and suckle, leaving afterwards an open bore with which a man cannot help but sympathize. Moreover, these “trees” do not bear fruit, but only waste products attractively shaped, I am certain. For I have previously smelled and touched my tongue to one, despite all the warnings and regulations, and I felt nauseous all day, and am still unable to forget the taste and musk of it.

Well— I woke from napping, how long after I know not, feeling inebriated and with very little feeling in my legs, both of which had at some point become fully enwrapped by the long, odd foliage. I hypothesize that the Finger-tree is not

accustomed to such large prey as myself, as I was able to escape its apparent carnivory very easily, by dragging myself with my arms to safety. It took several hours before my legs functioned again properly, and several more before my head ceased to spin. I may comment parenthetically that the daze imposed upon me was *not unenjoyable*, and it is an easy surmise that these trees will be a great favorite of those disposed to drug use; probably an extremely effective method of ingestion would be to wrap one of the long leaves, freshly plucked, around the neck.

In the end, I am doing fine, and fulfilling a great destiny, as it seems to me. I have seen and experienced many wondrous things, and I will continue to write to you regularly of the more peculiar phenomena. I must say that I often envy deeply your being upon the dear familiar Earth, and knowing with an extraordinary degree of certainty what is to be expected on a given day. I will consider myself the most fortunate man to have ever lived, if I arrive home and die gently and happily in my sweet Massachusetts.

Love,  
Your dearest Gabriel

Benjamin Lewis is a student of biology at Michigan State University. He is powerfully taken with “Speculative Biology,” and his dream job would be an interplanetary naturalist.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of July 2022, toward the evening of that rather miserable day, I crawled on my hands and knees through the little town of Dexter, Michigan, from the barber shop all the way to the cemetery. This is something that I have had the idea of doing for several years—a late friend of mine put the idea into my head. Anyway, I'm not sure why the idea stuck to me so. I always fancied I would do it for some specific purpose, as some deliberate and calculated experiment, or at least a symbol; but at last I crawled through Dexter, and I had no good reason for doing it, except that I'd had a rather bad day. Not, mind you, the worst or most abject of days; all in all, externally at least, it was nearly pleasant. Regardless, I performed my public stupidity, at dinnertime, when the whole of Dexter was strolling about, or having a drink downtown, or dining at the tables outside.

As I first began to crawl, I felt deeply ashamed and humiliated, and my heart beat quickly. Worst of all was that I had settled on no decided purpose for doing this thing. I found, loudest of all the sensations violently tossing about in my head, a fever pitch of gratitude for my long hair, which covered my face from those strollers and diners who were surely watching me, perplexed. On I crawled, babbling to myself in an anxious whisper, past busy Aubree's, where I interpreted every phoneme uttered, and every giggle, as referring to myself. As I finally passed these by, I felt somewhat better, though I was annoyed at the lack of grass, and my having to crawl therefore on the unforgiving sidewalk, past the Dairy Queen, and across the street, where the smooth, white crosswalk lines gave some relief to my pebble-torn knees and palms.

My mind was leaping around for some justification, which it struggled to find; some poetry, some symbol or metaphor, or even some truly rational or reasonable purpose. I found nothing concrete, until a woman asked me with great, and it seemed unfeigned concern, whether I'd like her to call someone, or to take me somewhere. (At one point in my life I

should have sobbed into her shoelaces and begged her to, yes, take me to the hospital). This day, without thinking, I told her that it was merely “a kind of penance,” and that I was quite alright. I myself believed it, somehow in earnest, and I began crying. She left me alone; whereupon I began to feel rather bold with melancholy, now even looking up at the pedestrians and feeling quite determined. (Often the lizard’s creeping image came into my mind.).

Several humorosities occurred: the first was that a woman pushing her stroller directly at me was vexed enough that she didn’t know what to do, and so merely stood there; and I had to crawl in an arc around her to continue going. The second thing, was that a man opened a door, leaving I think the Painted Trout, which blocked my path, and he held the door open for his wife; I was forced to wait there, on hands and knees, until they moved out of my way, and the door closed. Third, a couple of gentlemen were conversing on the sidewalk outside the bakery, discussing some triviality regarding a coworker called Frank – they paused for 10 seconds or so when they saw me, before stepping out of the way and continuing on their same topic, as if they did not want me to think that they were paying any attention to my embarrassing antics.

There was no one else after the PNC bank, aside from a steady stream of traffic. I had to have a break at the gas station before I finished crawling to the cemetery – as my knees were already badly torn up, I was glad to see that it was grassy again from there on. I felt quite resolved, calm, and happy when I finally crawled into the cemetery. Still, I never decided on a purpose. I did not fully realize until I was finished, that that “penance” I mentioned was a mere fiction. (Albeit a believable one; such a practice does exist in various forms in Latin America).

Such a display does, anyway, give Sorrow her good things and nectars – so much so, that she even leaves us alone a while! She is satisfied by the spectacle, and the pure feeling, the pure match; to attain the Outward to match the Inward. This is a rare thing! How much heavier is our suffering, when we must bear it in dignity – in such a way that we make no one uncomfortable! Where are our rituals of mourning? Are we

really expected merely to don weary faces for indefinite weeks or months? Rather suspend me over the square and let me wail and weep over the passersby. The Hebrews were quite right, to tear their clothes and pile dust on their heads, to roll about in ashes. It must feel so soft and lovely, to roll about in ashes. Mostly, I think the Dexter folk just assumed that I was “about my business.” I am led to believe there is a sort of rule about this, perhaps especially in the Midwest: “Ah, he’s just *about his business*, don’t bother.” I wonder why this propriety is so violently alive in me. I certainly do possess this thing; but I have also brought up the topic with companions, who concur. A relative of mine, who taught English abroad, told me a story something like this: “I once came upon a boy attempting late at night to leap from a bridge into traffic. He was straddling the side of the bridge. When I noticed him, I merely drew near, and asked him to come down: once this ‘he’s about his business’ feeling that you mention had worn off – when I realized that here intervention was most necessary, that fate had brought me here expressly for the purpose of grabbing the young man’s leg and preventing his suicide, *still I merely threatened*, first, to grab his leg if he did not come down immediately. What an idiot! I felt so stupid then, that I finally did overcome myself, and took hold of his leg, and brought him down by cautious force and blandishment.”

But that isn’t the point, either, is it? For here I was the crawler, not the observer, and this is an essay about being the crawler. My point was not that we must examine, abandon, or temper this excessive propriety, though that may well be true. My point, thus far, is that I had no point, and perhaps in the end I ought to adhere to this road, and let no rationalization relieve me of this awful, uncomfortable feeling. A man may behave ridiculously – why shouldn’t he do so? But how strenuous a path this is! It is hardly possible, dears, to go on without a point; such a thing is eventually lethal.

Adam Burton lives and has lived most of his years in the Dexter area. Currently he is taking a break from his studies, and busying himself with oddities and informal essay-writing.

## ABOUT DETROIT LIT MAG

Often in the course of history, there comes a time when you must simply do it yourself. For literature, this is that time. The agents and the publishing houses need profit, the general public lacks taste, and the highbrows are in possession of such excessively good taste that they merely wallow in the “melancholic-unintelligible.” This is no insult; it has about as much to do with ourselves as a drowsing man has to do with the fly he waves unconsciously away. The simple fact is that our present culture is deeply ugly, alienating, and even *hostile* to the individual—and it must be remade. We can no longer trust the literary establishment to bring us anything *human* or *refining*.

We have therefore founded this literary magazine. It is to be a new publication, for a new city, a new country, and a new time—albeit its tastes are remarkably classical. We are brazenly anti-innovative; we are exhausted of your alienating and indecipherable poeries. We like the naïve, and that which is “on fire” for Life itself; we like the old forms, rhymed sonnets, exquisite ideas exquisitely phrased, Beauty, Nobility, etc. The aim of this publication is to print genuinely compelling, beautiful, human, refining, and otherwise pleasurable work. We reject most vehemently as well this Poetry of Infinite Selves that is going around, our pitiful 21st century; we have tasted enough of selfhood for many lifetimes. We do not wish, reading a poem aloud, to taste the very tongue of the poet who penned it. Let us read with our own tongues, and we will be grateful.

If you write in the established forms, thank God for you. If you write in blank verse, Thank God, and Please Send Us Your Poems. If your poetry rhymes, and does not cloy—if you rework old themes—if you make use of religion, or are religious—if you are interested in what is Beautiful and True, as the old masters were—please send us your work.

We are ourselves quite poor, and as such, will be paying a mere 20 dollars to anyone whose work we include in the periodical publication, as long as we can afford it. In addition, we will be publishing and distributing the magazine online, and physically around Detroit, Ann Arbor, Lansing and Grand Rapids at our own cost, and on our own time (as well as any other cities we may happen to visit). We will of course ask for no reading fees, for we find such a thing repulsive; on the other hand, the production, while it is handmade, and from the heart, it is also quite minimalistic.

We read and respond to submissions quickly; typically within a week. We’ll publish the next volume come winter. (The volumes will grow in size as we receive more and more submissions). Submit short work of any kind to [detroitlitmag@gmail.com](mailto:detroitlitmag@gmail.com).

With my whole heart,

Robert Hunter