

Haiku - Travis Blount-Elliott

be as a strong hand
on thin paper, for you are
god's napkin ramblings

In Praise of English Cider - Maggie Beyer

Oh, Strongbow, you are best
gone native, pulled in a dark pub
built before my homeland's founding.
You are twenty ounces of brass and bubble,
a misbegotten child of the orchard.
Shun the wheat, the hops!
I have no desire for your dirt-bound cousins—
only the branch-born apple will do.

Strongbow, you are a golden arrow
lodged in the rolling green recesses of my heart,
your tip scraping against white cliffs and lead-tiled roofs,
soaring Gothic clerestories and squat Saxon keeps,
short-blooming wisteria and long-falling rain.
You are balm and reminder both,
a pang against forgetting and the keen edge of grief,
the sweet scent of times that will not come again.

Oh, Strongbow, we are alone here so far from your island,
so let us pour and remember together.

Early February - Taelor Skinner

The world unraveled, meridian by meridian.
Morning bled hummingbird feathers
across the frosty, faint horizon.

I was hungry,
my hair dripped icicles
and my wet toes threatened to snap like carrot sticks.

Tracts of snow stepped one by one from the shadows
like ermine gods lounging low and long between snapped stalks in the
field,
in each revealed a hunger for sacrificial meat and virgins.

My nose dripped
and swiping at it
my prickly scarf slipped down my chin.
It was unraveling,
my body heat was boxed in
and I huddled,

a puny silhouette beside
glowing gashes in a flesh-gray sky.

Carnivorous gods leered at me heartlessly.
Morning trickled over me, heatlessly.

This is how I must accept dawn in the winter
because the days are brief, but the sun not brighter.

On the Water - Curtis Hancock

The boat slides from our trailer, trundling awkwardly
through the water at first, like a child learning to walk.
Ancient bronze relics rise from the depths,
coated in the sick brown crust of ages
until a pole's tip disturbs them—
the too-dark green of pond grass is revealed.

Above our heads, low hanging branches are stained brown-red,
the leavings of a recent flood;
fish must feel like tourists as they swim about their transient
domain

Each time I cast the line reaches out, a supple arc;
perfect circles blossom outward as the lure breaks
the gently undulating, wind-blown surface.

Sometimes two of our casts land close, forming countless,
overlapping rings of differing size.

A turtle sunbather basks on a jutting rock
then drops into the water as
unwelcome guests pass by.

Four times I feel the viscous coating of a bass,
kind of like butter, if it could be liquid and cold at the same time.
Many fruitless casts later, I pause and think—
it's a richer enjoyment just to watch the heartbeat of the lake.

I lay my rod in boat bottom, and open my eyes.

A Divine Comedy - Stephen Marowitz

At my aunt's funeral we were all issued
flowers—roses, I think, but I think all flowers
are roses. They told us, *Keep them or put them
atop the deceased* and I thought
Who would keep them?

No one did. We dropped them,
shyly, atop the mahogany and I cried

because my brother cried and bright
green umbrellas were offered
to shield us from the drizzle that discredited
our tears. In the hotel, I read Dante without
cracking a smile and ordered room service
because I never had before.