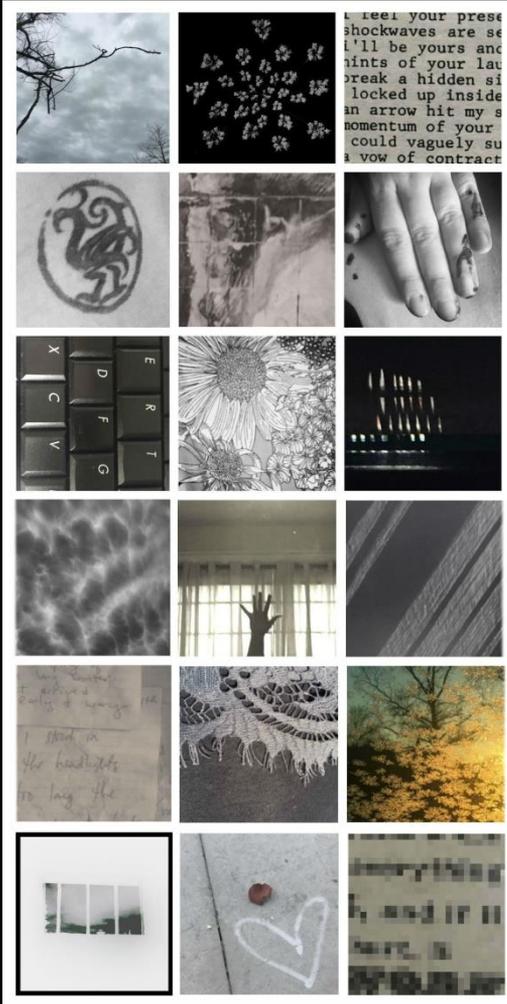


# cling as ink

more poems by k weber



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## an intro

This collection, *cling as ink*, is quite different from my previous three. It was 20 years ago that the 10<sup>th</sup> volume of the Miami University undergraduate literary magazine, *Inklings*, was published. I was the editor of this volume during the 1997-1998 school year; a junior and a creative writing major fresh from being an editorial assistant and assistant editor for the magazine in my sophomore year. I was looking forward to forming a staff and working together to produce an edition of *Inklings* featuring some of the very best poetry, prose, and artwork on our campus.

I started feeling an immense wave of nostalgia in 2017, remembering when I started as editor 20 years before. I recalled the experience, remembered more about the magazine publishing and editing process, reminisced over certain anecdotes from staff conversations as well as some characteristics of the submissions that were chosen. I wanted to do a sort of tribute to that enchanting year.

I have been writing so much this year and have a lot of writing from past years that just needed to see the light of day.

In this book, I have used the title of every single piece of artwork, poetry, and short fiction that we included in the 1997-1998 publication, and in the same order. I have written a poem for each of these 45 titles. Some poems have absolutely nothing to do with the original work of the same title, some have a similar feel or tone or in other ways resemble the original, and some are just poems I already wrote that needed some revising but fit perfectly with a title still in need of a companion poem. Many poems were written expressly to fit the title as well.

For each poem, there is a write-up that provides a little more information about my poem. I also comment on the original *Inklings* written or visual work and the respective author or artist from which I borrowed the title. I am not a fan of explaining my poetry or requiring others to do so, but for this particular series of poems, I wanted to tie in as much of the *Inklings* of 20 years ago without actually reinventing or showing it in heavy detail. Putting this project together and revisiting the 1997-1998 issue to rekindle many fond

memories has been a truly satisfying experience.

As stories and past discussions came to the foreground after so long, I really felt that information mattered, so this is definitely not just a straightforward book of my poems.

*Inklings* was a collaborative effort among staff and those who submitted their work. Behind the scenes of the annual physical product, there were an abundance of steps necessary to bring a quality edition to fruition. Some aspects that many are not aware of when it comes to constructing a university publication of this type include going through the selection process, having to deal with the financial aspects of the organization (in 1998-1999 I was actually the business manager!), making sure we publicized our magazine and events thoroughly (keep in mind, the Internet at the time involved no social media and we put a lot of flyers around campus, put letters in mailboxes of English and Art department staff to read or hand out to students).

We had to meet many deadlines to ensure we got our submission details and event information on paper "table tents" that were on the tables in many of the dining halls! I do not recall having a website except maybe a very small informational one-pager. I honestly don't even remember getting submissions by email. I think every single written submission had to be put in our organizational mailbox or dropped off at our office in the basement of MacMillan. For the art portion of our submissions, we always asked that they be submitted on a slide. We would look at these on a screen via a projector during a few meetings where submissions were being discussed! More portable works of art could be presented to our mailbox or in person. Our art directors photographed all of the selected art. I can't remember if we used a scanner to add the art into the final layout. Probably not during 1997-1998! Having 2 art directors during this particular timeframe helped us drum up so much more content for the magazine.

I can say that the assistant editor and I spent a lot of time in the computer lab or in the *Inklings* office working on the book in Claris Works. I was originally a computer science major at Miami (I still completed the minor) and in years since, the majority of my working life has involved in-depth information technology projects and various facets of computer software. Other than my more recent phones and various music

gadgets, I have only known the ways of the PC. Using a Mac to compile the layout included a big learning curve, a lot of laughter, and the time when the lab was about to close for the night and the entire layout crashed (back then a message would appear on the Mac with an icon of a bomb and shut itself down). The next day, I was able to spend hours with a few staff members and a friend in the computer lab in, I think, MacCracken Hall. The file was severely damaged but mostly it was a matter of taking deep breaths, piecing the formatting together and filling in the gaps where any text had been lost.

In the end we managed just fine. The book was printed uptown and we chose a lightly-textured paper for the inner pages. The ribbing in the texture across the front cover added an extra bit of sensory uniqueness we had not yet seen to that point with the final product of any *Inklings*.

We awarded cash prizes for the staff's overall favorite poem, story, and art. This was announced at our end-of-year reading and artwork display upon publication of the magazine. My recollection here gets a bit fuzzy and not just because it was a long time ago. I was a staff member of *Inklings* for 3 of my college years, with busy roles each year. The whereabouts of readings and events and who's who have become slightly hazy, but those are just bonus memories... the real-deal stuff came in the hard work and camaraderie and a group effort done very well.

So much of my interaction with staff and published writers and artists was by the phone in my dorm room in Clawson Hall. It had a cord that didn't stretch very far. We had regular meetings but if I needed to get in touch I think I was calling everyone pretty often. Email was a thing but it wasn't a primary mode of communication. So I probably seemed like a telemarketer to most people who were a part of *Inklings* that year that I was the editor.

I remember everyone signing up and taking turns to sell magazines in Shriver Center and remembering to carry that little cash box from the office or it was a long walk of shame back to the office to retrieve it. We would occasionally meet at Western Lodge for bigger meetings. I lived on Western campus my sophomore and junior years and would find any excuse to get our staff over that way to meet!

My penultimate year at Miami was definitely the most exciting. In addition to editing *Inklings*, I worked in Boyd Hall calling parents and alumni to raise money for scholarships, campus programs and organizations (I actually did this most semesters at Miami and did not enjoy it at all!). I was also selected alongside a few other undergrad creative writing majors to take part in a one-week intensive graduate poetry workshop with visiting poet Stephanie Strickland. Why do I mention this mix of not-entirely-related experiences here? I was terrified of speaking in college and high school. I would take a lower percentage in most courses if discussion was part of the grade. Even in writing workshops I enjoyed, I was so anxious and stressed about saying anything. I could write the occasional strong poem but not be able to have even a casual discussion in front of everyone.

Reading my poems aloud made me want to faint. I once had to memorize a poem for a class and had prepared for weeks. I lost track, felt like I was talking inside out and backwards... I guess what I want to emphasize is that I started putting myself more into situations I thought were uncomfortable but probably would enjoy if I could just relax or try not to overthink. That job I didn't like so much was frustrating but it also was the highest-paying job on campus and I was in a situation where I needed to help contribute to my education financially. That weird job, the cool poetry experiences... I eventually came out of my shell and found a voice inside of my writing. I continue to grow because I gave myself a nudge rather than keep hiding under the desk much longer. I also learned that constructive criticism can be beautiful!

I was not on the *Inklings* staff my freshman year (nor did I submit to the magazine), but I actually did attend the introductory meeting they had when I was shopping potential organizations with which to get involved on campus my first year. It was on a sort of first date or hang-out with someone I met in a geography course. We actually dated all through college. For some third-wheel fun we brought along one of his roommates. They were really cool to join me for a club meeting as part of a night out! As a systems analysis major at the time, my priorities were a little different that first year, but I am so very glad that I kept *Inklings* in my sights and on my radar for the years ahead.

In the process of revisiting the contents of *Inklings* 20 years ago, I got in touch with the 2017-2018 staff to see how the

publication had fared through the years. I was so delighted to find *Inklings* totally thriving and received copies of their 2 editions produced in this academic year. "The Inks" published some gripping, sparkling, experimental, harrowing, amusing, death-defying, and just plain mesmerizing work in their recent editions! I also discovered they do podcasts and have created stickers. I put one on the bumper of my little, coughing Honda. It is just wonderful to be a part of quite a lineage.

There is so much I wish I could add about my time at Miami here and especially the multiple years during which I was on the *Inklings* staff! I guess one fun tidbit from my sophomore year on staff was when someone demanded to be known as simply "Mobile Home" in the credits. Unfortunately this desire was expressed AFTER we had our galleys/proofs completed. We were able to accommodate the request before we printed the 1996-1997 magazine. Whew! Just know that there were tons of lasting experiences that left such an impression... so much so that I am able to do a book like this!

I am pleased to announce that *cling as ink* is available in audiobook format as well. Go to <http://kweberandherwords.wordpress.com> and navigate to the downloadable MP3 link for this book. The audiobook is FREE and consists of me reading my poems and sharing stories about the 1997-1998 volume of *Inklings*. I also made the music in the audiobook using various instruments and recordings of found sounds from an assortment of surroundings direct from my daily life.

I believe it was also during my sophomore year – I had just switched my major to creative writing – that I joined a group called WOPAW. Folks, that stood for Whacked-Out Poets and Writers. I know we had meetings and brainstormed and wrote based on prompts or did silly exercises with words. They even had a midnight reading behind Peabody Hall once. I am not sure what happened to that group but it seemed to be short-lived, but memorable. Having been involved in many of the offerings in the creative writing department was invaluable.

My voyages through poetry in the safe waters of Oxford, Ohio, set me on a path toward later endeavors such as being a part of a local (Dayton, Ohio) poetry group called Failed Seeker in the early 2000s. I edited a homegrown print

magazine called *trespass* in 2005-2006 that was similar to *Inklings*, but the contributors were from all over the map and were of various ages and backgrounds.

In all honesty, I was in such a depression funk most of this year. I never would have imagined even in April 2018 that I would actually see this effort through and especially not to the level of completion I was able to pull together. What you are seeing resembles even more than my hopes for a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary tribute to a poignant school year for me in being hands-on with so much of that tenth volume of *Inklings*!

I would like to name-drop Annie Finch and David Schloss who were creative writing professors during my time at Miami University (1995-1999). They encouraged me greatly. Also I was so fortunate in my French minor to take French poetry courses and find how wordplay works in other languages, too.

I wanted to make a final, very important remark about a person who was a champion for *Inklings*. Dr. Timothy J. Rogers was our advisor for a number of years. Dr. Rogers taught in the Spanish department. He passed away suddenly and unexpectedly during the 1998-1999 year. I was able to make time to chat about *Inklings* to-dos with him often and even by simply dropping by his office hours. He was always helpful to our staff whether it was a general organization question or an in-depth need for assistance when ensuring we were handling funds properly and filling out paperwork. His candid conversations and genuine interest in all students was infectious and always a pleasure. He was a real help to me on so many occasions as I made sure I was following certain rules properly. I attended his memorial service in Sesquicentennial Chapel. It was a beautiful, musical, bilingual acknowledgment of an inspired life.

May we all live inspired lives. I was able to compile a book of poems that reaches and outstretches through the past, and takes the insight of that collection and honors it with something new. I had no idea I could do this. I started finding little dots of inspiration here and there, connected them.

We can do anything.

**k weber**  
august 2018

## Hidden identity

The full moon  
was bare  
shoulders  
until the glow  
of skin  
slipped away  
and the surface  
buried all the flaws  
and plugged  
the pores  
beneath a cloudy fabric  
of bedtime sheets  
but shimmered  
and shivered  
briefly in gold  
spasm  
so all would see  
tranquility  
before sleep

*The original **Hidden Identity** was actually a painting. It was the cover art for the 1997-1998 issue of Inklings. The piece was rather provocative: a few faces appeared to be screaming or frozen in potential agony, some letters were frantically scrawled but the message was not entirely clear, there seemed to be a faceless torso with a breast and nipple, and the colors were so gripping you felt as though looking into the painting much longer would pull you downward into a terrifying void.*

*This piece was not selected as cover art because of its possibly daring message, but because the images were somehow so beautifully balanced across a grid of squares. The painting was cryptic but there was such a feel of incredible artistic conveyance through color and cadence. It was not a difficult choice to feature this submission on the front of the edition.*

*We selected a lightly speckled, pale yellow ribbed paper for our cover stock and the way Hidden Identity popped out at the reader immediately set the tone for a memorable and quality collection of poetry, fiction, and artwork of many varieties.*

*My poem of the same title is in no way related to the original, as I wanted to try writing something independent of all I knew of the painting by **Julie Horning**.*

## The flower

Pussy willow brushes my thigh. Curious  
catkins paw me lightly as I graze  
your acres. Queen Anne's lacy face  
crowns itself in sun and nods approval.

Susan winks, black iris glaring as she  
splays her amber lashes. Wildflowers, sleek  
against these breezes, have seen me small  
and taller, chaste and chased; cooled me  
as I stretched my legs for a long trail  
run or my neck for his wet lip.

I arched until my shoulders moaned  
in grasses where I left my wriggling  
imprints. Weeds and clover, honeysuckle  
and leafy dew have also held and hid me  
here, watched me laze these days.

*The very first poem a reader encountered in the 1997-1998 Inklings was **The Flower** by **Gretchen Shumacker**. This poem dazzled with its strong line breaks that often revealed new meaning as the poem flowed downward. Gretchen did not hesitate to refer to certain words, descriptions and objects more than once, but always in a new and very curious manner. The flower inside this poem took a few turns as it became pressed, ripped apart, a memory, and the shape of an unwound cigarette.*

*I can't compete with that sort of poetic magic! I have always enjoyed writing about nature and sensuality in the same poem and toying with the similarities. Flowers are probably the gifts of nature I draw from the most when it comes to that type of output in my own writing over the years. In my poem of the same title, I wanted to present my readers with a hint of that style of writing that I enjoy so much, but do not tend to choose as my sole inspiration when I write.*

## Soulmates

That apartment  
seemed  
spacious. I felt at home  
napping  
on the balcony or fondly viewing hardwood  
flooring  
with stiff regard. The smell  
of singed  
popcorn oozed slowly, fiery and often  
from down  
the hall; an invisible  
lava flow  
crawling through the recycled  
air to our  
doorway. This was all  
very cozy  
and desperate in a city just barely  
resembling  
a metropolis. This is no different from any other  
small flat  
we'd land in after being shot out of a cannon.

*I was such a fan of **Danika Novak's** poetry in college. I was lucky to be in a few poetry workshops with her. Danika utilized wordplay in her poems. Her phrasing evoked sensual elements at times. She introduced many of us to the joys of creating a sly wink with our words.*

*In my poem, **Soulmates**, I veer away from Danika's use of found poetry and I also used care to not have a similar voice or content. While at Miami, I would definitely consider Danika to be a poet who I not only respected but with whom I shared a similar approach to free verse. I know her poems in the 1997-1998 issue and her workshopped poems so well that I chose to write something entirely mine here... although I do parody her style a little later in another poem!*

## Mary

I wish my grandma was alive  
so I could ask her why she  
had endless quantities of moth-  
balls, but only in one cupboard.  
Everything inside smelled like  
metal's medicine. The splintered  
sting rings and resounds in my nose  
hairs twenty years outside the scene.

Each washcloth folded behind  
plastic baskets of first aid fodder  
and that blow dryer with a hose  
and floral cap attached smoldered  
with the exciting, tinny scent  
of a distinct hatred for moths.

Among a tangle of electrical  
cords and plush towels, those  
balls of certain cotton death kept  
the contents of that tiny cabinet  
fresh as a dead daisy.

My eye was drawn to the bitter,  
heavy lumps tucked into the jagged  
angle at the back of this hallway  
cubby. I never understood how  
such potency could tame so many  
varied possessions, but could never  
mute a Midwestern sinus infection.

*The beautiful sepia-toned photograph titled **Mary** featured in *Inklings*, volume ten, was taken by **Ryan Kennelly**. It depicted an angelic figure's shadow on a doorway. You can see the figure just slightly and as I recall, the person acting as model and figure was the namesake of the photo. She was in one of my French classes. If I remember correctly, the "wings" in the shadow were created using large leaves found on campus or in Oxford proper. This is an ethereal piece that I adore but also enjoy knowing some of the behind-the-scenes creation process.*

*I used the title of that photo to write an unexpected poem about my grandma named Mary, who passed away in 1999. I have written many poems about her over the years, filled with teary nostalgia. I decided to spin things around and write about something curious I always wondered about her house. I consider her my one true guardian angel if such a thing can possibly exist. That might be a correlation between the photograph and my poem, beyond the inspiration of the title. I think my grandma would be pleased that I wrote about her with a bit of comedy in tow.*

## **Our voices come out of the black**

Midnight. Falling backwards.  
The blank slate of cast iron. That sea  
where the Jolly Roger floats his cranium.

Absence. Terrible licorice. Crow  
and bat. A common ant. Inside the oven.  
Dead center of the eye's bull's eye.

The ink a squid prefers when  
writing home. Mascara scars. Those  
power lines. These powerless lines.

*In writing this poem, I wanted to use pitch-dark metaphors that called to mind the setting in **Kimberly Friedman's** unforgettable **Our Voices Come out of the Black**. Her portrayal of late evening's robust nighttime was at turns hushed, soft, and beautiful and then a force with which the main character must wrestle. It was as though the sounds of nature, the shifting of seasons and the cooling of air nearly overpowered her so that she was "imprisoned... with earlier dusks" when she would rather be "melodically raging against the moon."*

## Plant words

The part that supports  
my bloom: unwavering  
like a day without hiccups.  
I was a mess before  
your pith and root  
fought to carry me  
into the sunlight.

*My poem here doesn't really borrow directly from or nod to **Scott Eckert's** well-decorated poem, **Plant Words**. And actually, all I really want to say here – because it's of utmost importance to me – is that one of the stanzas from his poem has been in my head for 20 years. It finds me in the autumn mostly. It truly excites me when literature holds on to your entire soul for a lifetime. I am not even sure I ever met Scott or had a class with him. I am infinitely grateful for his literary contribution to our slice of Inklings, though. Here is the part of his Plant Words poem I always seem to carry with me:*

Too soon  
cruel September wind again descends  
ushering in the saddest season  
carelessly tearing us apart.

## Another longstory

I arrive at that shadowed grove  
where morning's meek.  
Night latches on to me too easily.

The cherry blossom  
cries, opaque; tentatively  
reaches out to a dying star.

You are a deep, grey face  
and mostly shapeless.  
I outstretch for this.

My worst days sleep here.  
I cannot outrun your love-hate.  
I run to your ice pick arms.

We trip our limbs  
on the knobby ground.  
I hear distant, murdering trains.

Evening's birds cry a warning.  
Morning won't come.  
We have the wrong clothes.

I feel a disaster  
where our hands touch.  
The world is loose and you let go.

I only appear as smudged  
remains of something erased  
that once looked good on paper.

Morning comes. I wake next to my skeleton.

***Robert Mentzer** was a new member of the Inklings staff my junior year. As several staff members and classmates submitted work to the magazine, we always reviewed everything anonymously. I was the only one with the ability to pair up any person submitting something with the number assigned to their work. When it came to discussing the work of a staff member, or any author or artists, I did not give any indication of who created what. We kept the assessments constructive and to-the-point regardless. While poetry was the primary draw when it came to what the majority of students were submitting, Rob's **Another Longstory** was a fine-tuned bit of short fiction which was very underrepresented at the time, but we did receive enough short fiction to select quite carefully!*

*In my poem I uncovered a darkened, meandering path. I enjoyed taking the original title and going into a brooding space where senses are heightened. And while my "longstory" isn't too much of a ramble, it really plays with the stark, attuned adjectives more than I tend to do in my typical poetry.*

*Initially, I wrote this poem for NaPoWriMo in April 2018. One of the prompts involved writing a poem that somehow relates to or interplays with a Sylvia Plath poem or her writing in general.*

## Evening song

The computer  
is an invisible bridge  
that swings  
and misses  
boards  
and the rope  
is fraying  
to the effect  
of the anxiety  
of a man  
promoting safety  
on the other side  
as he dangles  
his wife  
his child  
above the water  
by the ankles.

*The poem **evening song** by **Stacey Thomas** was stunning in its realistic depiction of someone falling apart and someone else helping hold the pieces together. There was a slightly scattered pattern to the visual placement of some of the dialogue which echoed the frantic, panicked emotions unfolding.*

*In my Evening song, panic builds throughout. When I read this poem aloud, the ending has a slightly different feel from what is seen on the page. Sometimes timing and pacing of writing is more difficult to display on the page compared to how we might actually want to express our writing when we have the opportunity to speak the words in front of an audience. While not a poem I would want to add a lot of dramatic elements or theatrics to when doing a reading, this is a good example of how the written word and the spoken word versions of our writing can allow the author the opportunity to present their words in new ways and perhaps stumble upon a new voice or feel to the poem.*

## Neologisms in antiquity

Those costumed powder days were hush-lush  
but brimmed with relics  
as priceless as grateful, green  
stacks of sunny gold.

Among the most yellow  
curdling rust  
were hungry, ripe vases.  
Antique coins shook  
like feathered quicksand  
inside crusty, sundown dirt.

Patina bragged  
about wide necklace smiles  
and delicate rings; such frail chickens.  
Her bracelets were beaming  
with belly howls.  
They were all enlightened fruit.

*I was always so fond of the original poem by **Sara K. Froelicher**. Sara added much comic relief to the Inklings staff and when **Neologisms in Antiquity** was being judged without any awareness that she wrote it, we were naturally tickled to find that it was hers after the final selection process. Her original unfolds true to the title: she used made up and unusual phrases in a setting centuries ago.*

*It looked so fun: that playing with language that was both nonsensical and sounded like common usage all at once. I decided to honor the original by writing a scene that could have taken place at almost any place in time while implementing some very new, but rather strange phrasing and word choices.*

*Interesting fact: it wasn't until I was recording the audio version of this book that I knew how to pronounce "neologisms" properly.*

Even my dead self  
winces: each migraine  
noise a too-sharp  
twitch or hot riot.

A salt tongue  
flays me but I stun  
the gritty knots;  
delirious as vapor.

To devour an aura  
so dull red I try also  
to gag on my ruby  
glass temper.

*This is one of the more ambitious poems I have written. I took apart a poem of mine that I enjoyed but had been rejected from multiple publications. I then made a new poem using every single letter. I had a little help from some websites to count the number of letters in the poem so that I used all of them. Here is the original poem:*

### **Delicious**

*My striae distensae  
are golden branches  
waiting to tangle  
in your tongue  
as the gravity of loss  
tugs my loose bark.  
How do you savor  
my plump fruit  
that leaves to return  
as a dried apricot  
months later?*

*I thoroughly dissected the above poem in order to make the new poem on the previous page. Using all of the same letters in a new order, I took a poem about stretchmarks and created a poem about my frequent confrontations with migraines.*

*My new poem is untitled for good reason. The photo that was originally in this spot in Inklings was called **Untitled** by **Kate Reisert**. This monochrome picture was of a young boy with binoculars or some kind of unusual eyewear, but we were immediately drawn to the lenses and his slightly magnified right eye. Reflecting on this picture, I believe the subject of the photo was her youngest brother.*

*Kate later became my roommate off-campus during our senior year at Miami. I was going through a difficult time mentally and physically, and was very uncertain about my ability to complete my degree. Kate's sweet, kind spirit and creativity were the absolute best possible match for me throughout an unusually complicated year.*

## Triple-dog-dare

I lean  
my lips  
close  
to the velvet  
cave  
of my best  
friend:

“Do you  
want  
to play  
with me?  
I have  
a surprise  
for you.”

I say  
I’m in love  
again  
and  
my friend  
doesn’t  
leave.

My diary  
of worry  
and trust  
is dog-eared  
on my couch  
with a squeaky  
toy.

***Amy Ratto** was another student whose work always stood out to me. We took a few courses together, and she always seemed to know her voice so well. In **Triple-Dog-Dare**, Amy builds upon a childhood game of dare by making allusions to details that are reminiscent of more mature years. Her stand-out imagery of a child being dared to eat an insect and chewing it up and plugging it into the mouth like tobacco was so clever. It was a poem of innocence and a tad overwhelming as the child faced the reality of that first strange compromise.*

*I went a very playful route with my poem of the same title and enjoyed the hell out of it.*

## ***Herpesviridae* in perpetuity**

I absquatulated  
and not because  
I am toplofty. I'd  
like to always be

vicinal to you,  
but divaricate  
enough that we

can be together,  
alone, lost in dwaal.

We require a life  
wherein you do not  
smell my empasm  
and go allergic

and I don't hear  
your spit against  
that fipple and try

to diagnose my  
very own otalgia.

I will wear my  
galligaskins! I  
prewise we will see  
each other soon

again, outside, during  
the monkey's  
wedding: dazzling

sun meeting ashen,  
umbriferous rainfall.

Find me in retiform  
pantyhose so you  
can get caught. Let's  
find our own latibule.

There's no promise  
of a mochlic that can  
prove utible, but we

firmly remain sospital  
in moments of scaevity.

*Originally, the Inklings short story called **Herpes is Forever** was by **Steve Gadlin**. I decided that every funny thing I ever learned through Steve's writing, improvisation (he was a member of The Tower Players), his comics (Silly Cat), and even his later endeavors that went platinum in his appearance on Shark Tank for his venture "I Want to Draw a Cat for You" could propel me into a unique spin on his poem.*

*I chose to introduce a lot of strange, rarely-used terms throughout this poem. Even the title contains medical terminology and longer words to continue my foray into the goofiest.*

## Dancing on the fire hydrant

Your family smiles: everyone  
nourished by a cerulean sky.  
Safe as oak leaves. You  
wear the earth and every-  
where like a shawl. Well-lit  
faces always sunny without  
shadow. My family  
winces in its poor traits  
and no one wants  
to wear a shirt. Soon  
a chair's ablaze. Some-  
one bites another one's  
elbow. Our frame  
has no glass.

*The version of **Dancing on the Fire Hydrant** from *Inklings* 20 years ago was a black and white photograph by **Erin Keane**. By using forced perspective quite humorously, the person in the background appeared to be so very tiny and standing on top of the fire hydrant in the foreground. The subject was clad in jeans and a leather jacket and was doing a sort of ballet move. He was slightly bearded and so carefree! What a delight to have this work featured in that collection!*

*My poem of the same title doesn't relate to the photograph except for one distinct quality: hilarity. That mix of making funny art that isn't corny or ridiculous for the wrong reasons was the biggest element I took from the original piece when I wrote a poem using its namesake. This kind of balance isn't always easy whether you are writing, painting, photographing, embroidering... it's probably most suitably akin to trying to dance on a damn fire hydrant.*

## Everything that you left me piles up

and I have a few broken words. You were here  
to hear me yelling and then you left. You missed

the point of me. Now I am sinking thigh-high  
in your boots and books. I wake up devastated

at least three times a week and stagger across  
twenty stacks of boxes. Forever I am dragging

my ragged carcass to doctors, nurse practitioners,  
medical assistants, technicians, therapists. They are all

taking my oxygenation percentage, my blood, my heart  
rate, my my my. The list of prescriptions: too long

to list in this lifetime. Side effects of you may include  
me waiting and being trapped in a fortress

of cardboard you built over years but won't retrieve.  
I sleepwalk across each day but try to remain

awake when driving or when you drive me  
further into the bored spaces in my brain. I am going

numb and stumbling. Let's have the conversation  
before I can't move on or it exists only in my head.

This ongoing mystery of you has only weakened  
me. You're smart enough to let words of closure

fall out of your mouth. My stomach still flips over  
this mess. I am depressed inside this wall

of your belongings. I don't want you to belong to me  
but I also do not want your cruelty suffocating me.

I refuse to have my complaints addressed in autopsy.  
I am hopeful I will someday be thoroughly studied

in thesis, lecture hall or even science fair. Is it then  
that you will finally get your shit out of the apartment?

*The title of my poem comes from an untitled poem that started with "Everything that you left me piles up and I have a few broken words." Brad Raughley's poem was very visceral but relatable, and I chose to write a poem that had some similar elements of relationships and miscommunication. Not surprisingly, my poem had a very different tone than his original. There are just so many facets and intricacies to the bonds we form and break with others; no two interactions are the same.*

## La selva (The jungle)

The dogs won't stop chirping  
at the birds. My skin barks  
in red patches of heat  
intolerance. Birds  
itch for me to walk away  
from the nest. Robins have  
been conspiring to hide

their warm, new blue  
Easter eggs higher and later  
than last spring. They stuffed  
their babies into a balding Rose  
of Sharon bush a year ago.  
Cats as far as three  
blocks away came to smell

and swipe. This stacked  
twig home in the trellis  
will presumably only attract  
nosy birds and my camera.  
Except I do wonder why  
the feather of any other bird  
is sticking straight up inside

the nest today. Whose moon  
landing is this? Is this  
a sign of caution? A red flag,  
only black? Perhaps something  
afoot or foretelling? Maybe this  
is just avian decorating; a delicate  
balancing act.

*Deborah Shore penned the original **La Selva (The Jungle)** that was published in Inklings. Her title gives the hint that the poem has bilingual properties. Her poem was written in the summer of 1997 and gives us a glimpse at time she spent in Peru. There are these incredible images that allow us brief hints at what we could only imagine was a life-changing and memorable time for the author:*

"Sweatyhead. Laughterclap."

"Fútbol: rubber barefoot bodies breathing."

"...creamy coffee-water.'

"Pato-pato-pato-/Ganso!" (Duck duck goose)

*The La selva I wrote does not explore faraway lands, but does find similar heightened awareness of the surroundings. I didn't have to travel further than the backyard, but I did have to be patient and pay more attention.*

(EE)

far a part,

(t-t-t-h-h-h-e-e-i-g-a)

hearts  
harbor fond  
ness on docks  
sepa r at e  
d

great-

ly

by(e)  
friend's ship's  
cool room

(a-t-t-h-e-h-e-i-g-h-t)

of a light

house

*There was such a distinct feel to **Brian Valasek's** poem (EE) from the tenth volume of Inklings. His experimenting with language and the visual landscape of the lines suggest some liberties were taken and e.e. cummings was both namesake and inspiration for the unique, playful (EE).*

*In my poem, (EE), I also seek the impressive poem-crafting of e.e cummings and build my own poem in his tradition.*

## Based on a true story

We've advanced:  
drive cars  
while typing  
our friends  
about how  
we are taking  
our hangover  
home

A brilliant era:  
you can hold  
office in a cracked  
government  
with one hand  
while cupping  
a coworker's  
cheek in the other

Here we are, evolved:  
can access  
anything  
and accumulate  
everything,  
multitask  
and ignore  
the obvious

**Based on a True Story** was a poem by **Jonathan Ulp** that placed the members of a nuclear familiar in some of the stereotypical roles you'd see in a TV show. Interesting concept, but even more infatuating is that Ulp prescribes these roles with added biting and negative associations.

*In my poem of the same title, I take real-life situations and find the sordid aspects that lie beneath the shiny, neatly-packaged parts.*

## Sticky children

I wanted ice cream so I screamed  
that I wanted ice  
cream then someone brought me  
their eye cream.

I never got any ice cream but I did  
attract a lot of bees.  
My muggy puddle from lesser  
popsicles soon

invited swarms as big as beasts.  
Wasps sniffed me  
while piqued, abuzz with interest.  
Carpenters

hummed my ears in mid-soar  
but drilled  
timber's oil elsewhere. Summer  
punishes me

with humid hands and searing black-  
top. My feet  
throbbled raw on the bottom but longed  
to be doused

with chlorine. I smile sweet as spumoni  
and offer to tend  
to my neighbor's backyard. I hope  
he will let me

soak in his pool, get a nip of sun-  
burn while I unwind  
at an uncomfortable angle, lounged  
on his deck.

*I chose to write about a very literal sort of sticky summer with its humidity and melted treats in my Sticky children poem. There's more to my poem, of course, but that imagery really made the other ideas spring forth as I was brainstorming.*

**Sticky Children** was a black and white print by **Alice Van Antwerp**. In the center, a photograph of two young children appeared. Framing them was a magnified microscope image of what appeared to be germs or possible disease. The juxtaposition of these angelic darlings surrounded by hideous, enlarged specks of cough or dust or tuberculosis were quite devastating. On another level, this pairing of innocent kids versus these awful blobs of crap were slightly amusing! I was so torn about this image for various reasons that were also reasons why I was entranced by the unusual presentation.

## **Kid-tested, mother-approved**

In the well-worn garden  
of the last decade,  
I planted my blues.  
My long-lost childhood avenue  
was found inside a Polaroid  
while the earth flew from its spindle.

Now I am spending  
more time gardening  
and harvesting my polarity  
before I am decayed  
and buried beside an avenue  
paved with the blues.

I wear blue  
eyes well, while spinning  
alongside the avenue  
of memories; guarding  
my heart, I am the decoy  
of myself, polarized.

You and I take Polaroids  
with broken cameras, blues  
and yellow hues mottle a decade  
of shapes, time and spending.  
We wake in a garden  
of technology and revenue.

Home sweet avenue:  
the place where I am not annoyed  
or afraid of garter  
snakes, and the sky is bluest  
when the spindle  
threads another sewn decade.

I can't decide  
which monumental avenue  
I will take next; mostly I dwindle  
and stumble through the parade  
of heart-drenched blues,  
wishing I was in Kindergarten.

In the garden, another decade  
sleeps on its back; a blue avenue  
of days is mirrored in Polaroids, spent.

*This is a sestina I wrote nearly ten years ago that needed much clean-up but I felt it was worth saving and revising. It really hearkens back to growing up, seeing everything as rosy, then seeing everything as a bit grey.*

**Josh Bokelman** wrote **Kid-Tested, Mother-Approved** that appeared in the 1997-1998 volume of *Inklings*. His poem featured such memorable lines as "havin' a kid's like shittin' a watermelon."

## Sunday sunrise

Day opens  
as peach  
salsa, maybe orange  
juice on the horizon. Sweet  
peppers and hot  
sauce simmer  
with eggs over  
easy while cooling on a light  
blue plate.

*The original **Sunday Sunrise** by **Jonathan Ulp** was a lovely but heartbreaking tribute to a fellow student, Joanna Petterle, who died in a car accident while returning to Miami University after a break in 1997. The poem's scene was so delicate and beautiful and revolved primarily around the actions and surroundings involved in crew practice. Joanna was a member of the Miami rowing team. The reader gets a fond peek into an aspect of "JoJo's" contributions as a student athlete and the dedication of practicing even on Sundays.*

*In my poem of the same name, I wanted to paint a sunrise, with words, and use some metaphors to emphasize the colors of sunrise. To this day, I am still impressed with Ulp's ability to so carefully remember his friend and put it all into such kind and real writing. This unfortunate tragedy occurred during the school year in which the issue was published.*

## Love entails nothing

...but then the pomegranate  
rotted and split. Once-juicy  
arils leaked from the tissue  
of their heart chambers. The fruit  
farted a goldfish. Out of water,  
this fish had no pucker but gave  
birth to a yellow tiger from its shiny  
jaws. A twin tiger launched himself  
from the first tiger's face; revealed  
a gun that got away  
from his throat. The firearm has no  
man, no fire, no hand. It pokes  
into the armpit flesh of a nude  
woman. She is anatomically correct.  
She sleeps her backside on an iceberg  
or a convoluted stone-  
scape with incorrect  
posture. Water  
droplets and the blood  
of maroon fruit  
all reconvene in a land-  
scape never meant to be  
seen, not even in a tall, stilted  
elephant's dream. All this under sky  
or that peeping, manipulative moon  
that one can see  
in the daytime...

**Michael J. Spaeth** crafted a short but  
image-filled poem with his untitled poem  
beginning with the line "**Love/entails  
nothing...**"

*I decided to play with imagery, too, but used  
his first line as my title. If this poem seems  
familiar, it is. I may have gone a bit too  
literal with some of the color and fire  
represented in the source from which I drew  
inspiration for this.*

## Coney Island

Knee-high and far  
from the world of haberdashery, she

keeps a mouth full  
of smoke. Hot dogs and open

air get eaten while soda fizzes  
a fuzzy rug of bubbles.

No sweet. The littlest lady  
is an irritable mop

of coalminers' haircut  
and boys' wear. Her pockets

clang like cavernous bells  
that ring with others' money.

Her fake smiles emerge  
but only while winking

at widows.

**Coney Island** was a black and white photograph by **Julie Horning**. It always fascinated me because it did not portray what we typically think of when we think of Coney Island with a boardwalk and rides and water in New York. In fact, it could even relate somehow to the Coney Island amusement park in Cincinnati (not far from Miami University).

With its non-descript buildings and lampposts and a liquor sign, however, it could be Anywhere, USA, and nowhere near a body of water. If you look so carefully, you see the faintest unlit neon sign just behind LIQUORS that says CONEY ISLAND. I still don't get it. I don't know where this is! Are we still in Cincinnati or the surrounding Northern Kentucky area and this place serves the notable Coney dogs of this region? I really do not know and may never know and I am totally fine with this. I love that I can barely even see that Coney Island sign. This photo seems so straightforward but it is absolutely disorienting in its mystery!

I went on a different tangent when I wrote a poem using her title. Perhaps you catch the Coney Island reference I allude to in the context of the other lines of my poem?

## Small fires

The horsefly bites me  
on the calf while we  
decorate for a bi-  
centennial. My instep.  
I slap my shin. Left leg  
can feel the chomp  
and chew. Small  
streaks of blood  
like the exhaust  
of an air show. Jet-  
streams carry me red,  
white and blue  
like the flags we bury  
into the terra cotta  
pots for celebration.  
We add one more  
scoop of dirt after  
last rites given  
to this insect  
that succumbed  
to suicide while  
stabbing me  
where my socks  
almost fit.

*I approached **Small fires** from a few different, slight angles when I put together my poem.*

***Kimberly Liller's** short story, **Small Fires**, crawled into those desperate moments that can mess up a few hours or an entire lifetime. There were themes of alcoholism, self-harm, mental health and complex relationships. In just a few pages, the story spanned maybe 12-18 hours in the life of a couple but captured a bleak series of events that ignited within that window. Interactions that seem so simple, familiar, and easy became painful and self-conscious. I have always been able to take a glimpse into this resounding work of fiction – at age 20 or 41 – and see such reality inside.*

## **I am this**

and those  
    quaint cabins  
welcomed me  
    forty years  
later. Celebrating  
    with a few  
groceries and no  
    cake, I slept in every  
bed; took a dip in jet  
    tubs and well  
water. I hiked  
    alone and walked  
small towns. On April  
    10 I stopped for coffee  
only once. I was warm  
    with a blanket  
on the deck, staring  
    into silhouettes  
of tall trees and a hint  
    of moon. I was cool  
indoors with icy air  
    conditioning  
and cable. All these  
    amenities were many  
horse-and-buggy lengths  
    away from the place  
I spent previous  
    days with few  
electrical outlets  
    but so many  
dominoes. The burning  
    scent of deep country  
water still hangs  
    in my memory's  
closet. That roam  
    through the tulips  
that just barely  
    bloomed  
and all the colorful glass  
    had me by heart-  
strings. Pluck  
    my flowers, early  
spring, and deliver me  
    handfuls of solitude  
in bouquet  
    on my birthday.

*In **Sherry Eggers'** untitled poem, she wrote about body image and society's perception of looks.*

*I used the first line of her poem "**I am this...**" as the title and visually took the same route; similarly exemplifying her choppy, shorter lines, taking different sides at each line break. My poem does not address the same topic as her original, but working with her framework allowed me to think about other aspects of my life, in this case turning 40, that often have assumptions and expectations in the generic societal realm.*

## White interior

There's comfort in these old  
stains upon stains. What was  
once strawberry or ruddy  
brown has gone the faded  
way of nicotine teeth. That  
blotch no longer bookmarks  
a heavy cycle nor does it  
resemble an afternoon  
bent over in cramps  
and clots curdled like partly-  
dried bloodshot paint. These  
underwear could go threadbare  
with curious holes  
and the overflow of ten  
years of discreet, winged,  
but flightless maxi-pads. There's  
comfort in these old stains  
upon stains upon years upon  
stains until they finally give pause.

**White Interior** was a painting included in the 1997-1998 edition of *Inklings*. It was created with oil paint on canvas by **Ryan Kennelly**. The painting was of a small portion of a room inside of a house. There was a wooden chair, a small side table with a lamp and what appeared to be part of a ladder. On the floor, there was perhaps a drop cloth although I honestly just now made that assumption! It could be carpet with designs. The relevant point, though, is that the white interior reflected in all aspects and on all figures in the painting was swirled with yellow, blue, white, red, black... yet this painting looked like white furniture, flooring and walls. The attention to how shadows and light play off of a room that was mostly white was spectacular.

*I wrote my White interior poem about a very different sort of white interior.*

## **Walking down the canal in winter**

The half-lit moon  
(in swirl and swoon)  
bares its grey  
at evening's noon.

*This short poem I wrote using the title of **Walking Down the Canal in Winter** was originally the name of a poem by **Gretchen Shumacker**. Her poem explored being a child out on a walk with her father in the daytime near icy waters. She recalled a few fragments of memories from that walk so many years prior. I think there is so much to her poem that is left in the unsaid pieces between the small scenes. I revel in the face value of her canal poem but become wide-eyed over what might be lingering below that frozen surface of this poem.*

*My brief poem adventures into a nighttime setting near the canal. It was intended to be longer and I revised this one many times but somehow nothing ever sounded quite as interesting to me – or like my writing voice in this wintry setting – as those simple four lines!*

...what i/eye told meye/self...  
i/eye told meye/self to be alert of all hurt  
i/eye've been eyeballed, ribald, but i/eye see a way out  
i/eye look out for meye/self although it's scary to always be watching  
don't, wink, or, blink, i/eye (you), might, get, lashed, or, stung, by/beye, stye/steve, or, re-

( do )

---

-ne' and' meye/self-esteem' and' wonder' might' go' away' or' be' worse' than' meye' best 're-  
vision. i/eye really cannot fortune-tell for tuned futures, misty i'd/-eyed.  
i/eye am awake to the wait for my/meve present/presence  
before feeling the weight of my meye prescience  
i/eye told meye/self to be quiet now

*While attending Miami, **Matt Shears** was a classmate whose poetic output I really valued as well as his constructive input when it came to the poems that myself and others presented in workshops. We were in a few creative writing courses together.*

*He had this vivid, visual offering that we published in the issue. It was in the shape of an eye and began with "...**what i/eye told meye/self...**". I used the same (or very similar) eye shape and the same first line as his poem. Otherwise, I completely played around with language and lines to see what sort of wordplay I could create. Although my poem looks a great deal like his, I mixed original phrasing with a bit of parody to build upon Matt's unique idea and insight. This was also a roundabout way of bringing part of the Inklings issue to this book, as I was not able to put all of the original work in this compilation.*

## The lady in red

Don't forget to water those begonias  
you wrote about last week. Summer  
will kiss them with a humid tongue. Ask  
for help when the luster's gone.

These hearty petals are rich in redness, dotted  
gold at the center; thick, green leaves.  
All three colors hang inside  
the fertile basket of my dreams.

My most dogged moments require  
at least six people to help brainstorm flowery  
stanzas. Begonias won't sneer at failure, bad  
hair days or even relish being a poem's subject.

That the petals withstand our heat proves  
karma's good. I am a chameleon in this  
microcosm: my once-brown thumb  
a significant shade of shamrock, for now.

*The original draft of my poem was written on April 29, 2018. I know this because I wrote it as part of the Poetic Asides 2018 April Poem-a-Day Challenge, for the prompt on Day 29 and not because I am some sort of mental giant hell-bent on remembering all the days of my life! The aim was to write a poem that responded to any poem written earlier in the month during the challenge, and I chose to write more in relation to a poem from Day 22. For that poem, I had asked a few friends to each provide one word that I could incorporate into my poem about begonias. This response poem nudges at the begonias poem but not just by expanding on the subject, but also by adding in some aspects of the poem creation process itself.*

*As highlighted in the 1997-1998 issue of Inklings, **Kimberly Friedman** wrote **The Lady in Red** about a fire. The metaphors were so intense and the whole poem consisted of some of the strongest writing I had encountered at the time. Her poem was possibly some of the most hard-hitting detail I have read in my lifetime.*

*In describing the smoke, Kimberly wrote the following: "...the thick heat/billowed in pillows/of black breath/against my face." The fire became "a deathly orange daffodil/flowering through glass shards,/draping the night like tar."*

*I feel pretty damn successful when I can write one tiny segment of imagery that strikes even half as hot as the ones Kimberly presents so effortlessly in this poem. How ecstatic we were to have this gorgeous, polished free verse in our midst to showcase in Inklings that year!*

## Orange juice poesy

My doctor slurred my medicine  
again. I should probably  
be home, adrift on drool. We all  
float down here,

but up there I am a tad reckless  
with heavy machinery.  
I am a very foggy driver. It's not  
because of DUI or IUD.

My vice is slightly more Batman  
than caftan. Everyone assumes  
I wear a robe at any  
hour. I do but sometimes

I loosen the belt, spread terry-  
cloth wide and fly  
around the room while the dog  
stares at me then

licks his anus. No perfume for me  
just cool night air.

In **Catherine Craine's** blissful **Orange Juice Poesy**, we were treated to a carefree world of pure magic and ease. Even the burnt toast in the poem was something amusing. Music, Alice in Wonderland, the morning light, a lingering breakfast... it really felt like there could be a world where almost every day could be this lovely and inspiring. This poem was a drama-free zone where self-expression was encouraged, if not mandatory!

My poem that shares Catherine's title is about the kind of things I think about to amuse myself and to make sure the medication I take never dulls me. Getting older, being bogged down with various prescriptions over the years... sometimes it feels like the juice in me has been squeezed and the leftover pulp just withers. Inside me there has always been a decent sense of humor. I refuse to give up on it, even if it goes to the cheesier side.

There are a few aspects of my life like this that I write about in my free time. One is music... but I digress... and the beat goes on... but if you struggle with any sort of mood disorder or chronic pain or illness or just have trouble with time management... you know too well how it can sometimes seem like a huge ordeal trying to carve out time for enjoyment. Carve it out anyway. Cut along the dotted line and step through. Make the time.

## Oranges

No restraint  
but the wind  
warms the curve  
of the air-  
borne form

Perched on finger  
or fence, hinged  
wings breathe  
in lung-rhythm

Self-spun hunger:  
stomach filled  
with a quest  
for nectar

Hovered over sap-  
scanned flowers:  
thin, gilded and kite-  
bodied, the color  
of autumn

*Truth be told, I wrote this poem my senior year of college, in a course taught by Dr. James Reiss. My original title was "Monarch Butterfly Study" and then he encouraged me to reach deeper and reconsider that name. The poem then became "adrift." When I was compiling this book and wanting to finally fit this poem in somewhere, I really liked how "Oranges" resonated. Dr. Reiss passed away in 2016 but I am pretty sure he would loudly clap in approval.*

**Oranges** by **Katie Peters** was a mixed media collage that centered on oranges but also added complimentary colors we don't often associate with this fruit.

## Helen's drama

sandcastle  
face

storm cloud  
fingernails

dryer  
sheet hair

truck-stop  
mouth

comma  
ears

stuck escalator  
nose

stale cigarette  
jewelry

dice and domino  
teeth

full hammock  
smile

you laughed  
a cough

we waded  
in your bronchioles

no lifeguard  
could save you

from your own  
perfume

**Amy Ratto** introduced readers to decadent, clever imagery throughout her poem, **Helen's Drama**, not limited to the following:

*"...the cave of hat and scarf"*

*"...the wind chimes as it passes"*

*The details of this Helen and her surroundings were presented so skillfully within the construct of a life well-lived.*

*As I am typing this I am realizing that the "B.C. sky" and the "Aegean wind" in Amy's poem are probably more than unique descriptions. I think this poem could be about Helen of Troy and maybe from the perspective of her oft-revered outward beauty fading and her age showing with "crow's feet" and "dull eyes." I could be reading way, way, way into this, but it is kind of fun when you have read something so many times over so many years and still uncover new possibilities or a word or phrase stands out even more.*

*My Helen's drama is a bit more rough around the edges in a hard-living sort of way. I tried reaching beyond my comfort adjectives and really draw a picture of someone whose difficult life is written all over their face.*

## Sweet & tasty grenade

In boxes and bags:  
your packet  
puffed  
with granules  
of sealed curiosity.

Want to find  
the tang of sugar  
or salt inside  
that aged paper.

Dessican't  
eat this? Tease  
to tear open anyway.

Terror, however,  
recalls a story.

Must throw away.

Lips fall off  
once gel makes contact.

Neighborhood exposed  
to green gases  
if silica is released.

Skeletons  
in live bodies  
glow, irradiated; melt  
into the boulevard beneath.

Do not attempt  
to snack on silica gel  
even as a rebellious act.  
You will not survive  
although your shoes will stay fresh.

*I always thought that **Melissa Baker's** poem, **Sweet and Tasty Grenade**, was about a pineapple. And maybe it truly is! References to "[d]eep indentations" and an "armored facade" alongside "tasty jewel" and "pale yellow veins" always called to mind a pineapple for me. But there are lines about scales and seashells that make me wonder if I had it all wrong. A massive part of my poet heart hopes I am very wrong... and that maybe this poem was only meant for me to unwind and unravel and still never know one solid answer.*

*I just adore words that take you away somewhere and then eventually you get knocked over so hard by a huge wave of something you missed even upon repeated readings.*

*I can say with much certainty, however, that the Sweet & tasty grenade in my poem is definitely not edible.*

## The last in line

A written  
version  
of myself  
pens  
new landscapes.

Inside a once-  
crumpled  
paper  
draft, this aching  
daughter emerges.

From the topography  
of black  
cursive,  
she curls  
into a poem.

*Charles O’Nan wrote the short story **The Last in Line** about a man who fought many battles to his death, only to keep fighting and dying in other wars throughout history. The grizzly and powerful imagery and metaphor within this work of short fiction burned with an enormous amount of passion. Charles built these scenes with dedicated precision.*

*My poem, The last in line, is not historical fiction like the original story in Inklings. The only possible link between the two (beyond the title) is the underlying point that we all have our battles, and if we are lucky we learn from them and we thrive... and keep fighting.*

## Dyeing

Plucky crimson  
July yielded bubble-  
gum August. Quickly  
tones slipped  
to lazy flamingo.  
Cinnamon autumn  
came disguised  
in several auburn  
shades. Christmas  
brunette wore a bow.

A new year entered  
as fresh coats of fake  
color: a kaleidoscope  
of January browns.  
Porous strands drank  
burgundy wine; here  
and gone by spring-  
time. Then the chocolate  
finale, now fading  
faster with a true,  
grey wink.

*Last year at age 40 I bleached my hair, dyed it a bright, succulent raspberry color, and watched it fade within a month. The next year would see me dyeing and fading and re-dyeing my hair various shades of red and brown. Eventually I stopped and allowed my natural color to return along with all the wiry grey strands that twist like vines through my dark brown. There are still wisps of blonde phasing out and lighter brunette shades. I welcome having my real, original, intended hues back again. This poem is a quick look at that blur of so much color in less than a year.*

***Danika Novak's** poem **Dyeing** from *Inklings of 1997-1998* underscored her unique imagery, a knack for using subtle, evocative phrasing, and humor that only she could weave into a poem so well with all these other stylings in tow. Her poem was about one instance of boldly dyeing her hair very dark. From there she remembered to tell us about her shirt, the bathtub and her mole getting stained from the dye, wanting to attain a look like that of a 90's Winona Ryder... the brilliant moments just never ended in Danika's poems.*

## Self-portrait

I refuse to be  
a corpse  
while I'm alive. At worst,  
I will shuffle  
along my daylight  
hours and prop  
myself up convincingly  
through each night. My woe  
will not end me  
or hold me  
hostage any longer. I will  
visualize all my discomfort as simple  
as a slight,  
nagging pebble  
in my coziest shoe. I am  
not dead  
yet: I love Pete  
Townshend and I sit  
on the floor  
sometimes  
leafing through photos  
of Modigliani  
portraits. Who could sleep now  
or forever  
when so many long  
noses and light eyes comprise  
faces  
attached to such talented  
hands? I imagine  
right now  
they are  
leafing through photos  
for inspiration, feverishly  
creating art.

***Katherine Crowley** was the artist behind her **Self-Portrait**, painted with oil on canvas. Having known her at the time, I can say that it is a true and straightforward self-portrait of the artist from the shoulders to the head. Self-Portrait was painted so richly and appears almost as velvet in those lush reds and browns in the clothing and hair as well as in the background with its mood-added blues.*

*In my very own Self-portrait, I talk very little about my own appearance. Instead, I incorporate the things I enjoy and explore and feel and respect to give a different vantage point from which one can compose a self-portrait.*

## Cheeks flushed

Wake up holding  
a loose balloon  
of breath

then take a break.  
A fluid exhale  
comes

before weeping  
the sheets.  
Inhale

and hold on hard:  
both eyelids like  
two fists.

Sleep deep dreams  
that feel easy.  
Fight

the urge to fall.  
Don't fear  
failure.

Sleep easily, deeply  
until waking  
is easy,

deep. Wake now  
and loosen  
fear,

that weeping balloon.  
Hold breath, ease  
the brakes.

Fight each easy urge  
to weep failure  
with deep

breaths.

*Laura Batt's untitled poem started with "cheeks flushed..." I used those two words as my title.*

*There is a lot of sensory detail in Laura's original work. In mine, I was just trying to remember how to breathe and get a good night's sleep.*

*I loved the simplicity of images Laura wrote such as "brown shadows/like in a cardboard box." She tapped into some wonderful detail that wasn't cliché or over the reader's head. The flushed cheeks mentioned in her first line are furthermore described as "marigolds burning scarlet." I could picture it so completely yet I would never have thought of these images myself.*

## The incident

The lightning bolts  
down my dress:

butterflies  
in the stomach

of my hands

*In our issue of Inklings, **Cecilia Holmes'** poem **The Incident** was a chilling moment in time when a relative abused a child. Some of the dialogue and recollection shared by the author were expressed in a very bittersweet, childlike tone.*

*When I wrote my poem for this title, I remembered one image Cecilia had written. It really stood out ever since the first time I read the poem which I believe may have been in a writing workshop course with David Schloss during this same academic year. The line that still leaps off the page of that poem and throttles a tear out of my eye is: "...my big girl dress a pink and white rug/on the shaggy green floor." That dress image was so powerful and terrifying yet so simply stated from a child's perspective.*

*My poem features a dress, but to a much different extent.*

## **Insect inferno**

You would criss-  
cross the sweaty, citronella  
neighborhood

with iced tea  
for me while swatting  
summer's humidity.

You weave your web  
of fluttering  
eyelashes

as you near her,  
but stop awhile in the grass  
for my kiss.

*Ah yes, back in the olden days as children it was sometimes commonplace to experiment with the fire-starting properties of a magnifying glass reflecting the sun. I remember burning a hole in a piece of paper on my grandma's driveway using this technique. There were others who tried setting insects ablaze in the name of this sort of crude science. It was 20 years ago in Miami University's Inklings that **Deborah Shore** examined the sizzling depths of childhood bug extermination in her poem, **Insect Inferno**.*

*My Insect inferno is much less fiery. Sure there are bugs and heat but all is harmless and drenched in the perspiration of a Midwestern summer. Also, I added a secret message in this poem. I wouldn't typically divulge such a mystery, but I am pretty sure this addition to my poem is not at all obvious enough to emerge out of sheer luck. Have fun adventuring through my poem, but don't incinerate anything in the process!*

## Freedom of ideas

head an empty  
building

heart a ripped  
pocket

hands are sorry  
clowns

stomach a packed  
closet

eyes are wandering  
stares

mouth gets two  
guesses

teeth hook hardest  
skin

tongue has its  
reasons

***Yuko Miyahara** was one of our Inklings art directors during the 1997-1998 school year. Her watercolor, **Freedom of Ideas**, depicted a drinking glass filled with colored pencils, a girl smaller than the glass, and birds and their eggs. This painting held an innocence and openness that is almost difficult to understand as time persists and a strange, fast, technical, modern world has developed.*

*My poem isn't as peaceful or contented as Yuko's watercolor, but I did not write it to contrast Yuko's vibrant work intentionally. Freedom and ideas both have so many connotations that span much emotion and setting.*

## I “found” myself in the supermarket

I was giggling at eggplant then spotted  
dick. Kombucha? Don’t wantcha. Popping

cartons, I run my fingertips over tops  
of eggs then use puns and pickup lines

at the salad bar. Checkout lines have me  
ogling last-minute gum. I never need

prenatal vitamins since I lick my Teflon  
clean every night. I notice nori and how

it looks like Barbie’s yoga mat. Gluten-  
free pasta is pasta’s imposter. I’m positive

that these ladyfingers beg to be tasted. My  
hand swims in a bulk bag of Swedish fish.

*I could not help myself here. **Danika Novak’s poem I “found” myself in the supermarket** was just so poetically proficient and highly entertaining. It started off immediately with double-meanings galore as she took us through the grocery store, making jokes along the way. My favorite line from her poem has always been:*

*...I stroll  
to the dairy department  
with my goosefleshed legs  
and skim my milk options:  
paper or plastic aftertaste.*

*So, in keeping with the setting, I chose to write a poem using Danika’s title that has me using puns and having great fun with language within a similar supermarket. There are endless items in these sorts of stores that go beyond produce. I basically pick up where Danika left off and take my own trip down the grocery aisles, making observations and injecting humor along the way, with much influence and respect to the original!*

*A random memory popped into my mind while thinking about fellow creative writing majors. I remember we had a poetry professor who always pronounced Danika’s name as Dan-EE-kah. I think there is just something about that K in her name because even after years of being in courses with her and seeing her poems in Inklings, I get more and more enticed to pronounce it the wrong way, too!*

## Concrete

No one shakes  
at this pace. After  
the accident, pennies  
strewn like pearls  
coughing off the mouth-  
shaped cuff, my nerves  
had doubts. I break  
apart when I brake. Men  
with their large hands  
are in the trees of night-  
time's periphery. The mosaic  
tiles in the art downtown  
shatter as I rush past and I  
can't run faster. I can't  
put these pieces back  
in order or without  
tension.

*In six words, **Chanda Marshall** explored sadness using imagery of worms on a sidewalk. This impressive poem called **Concrete** was the shortest piece we published but was powerful beyond measure.*

*When I wrote my own poem called Concrete I thought about highways and downtowns and art structures. I also had my mind set on writing about the concept of the concrete versus the abstract but struggled to stick to the actual happenings at all times. This made the poem's creation even more interesting to me. My expectations were sidelined and I went somewhere new. Maybe even on a sidewalk with worms on it.*

nearing the sallow  
fen, the natural

eye spots  
a cardinal, up-

tick deer.  
golden

ragwort creeps  
the footpath.

sun escapes  
behind a yawn

of trees stretching  
limbs to form

an awning. rock  
and dust

sleep here  
every night

without objection.

*My untitled poem delves into the woods as I sometimes do. I find so much calm, vulnerability, curiosity, and nostalgia when I am on nature walks or hiking.*

*The **untitled** pen drawing by **Ryan Kennelly** that appeared between Concrete and Invisible in Inklings featured a face obscured on one side by shadow. It was largely a very shadowy drawing, and interesting to look at in the scribbled shapes that comprised or added to the darker sections. There was one brightly-lit space on the other side of the man's face. The composition was based in just black pen on paper. I am not sure of who the subject was, but most of the staff (myself included) referred to it as something akin to "That Drawing of Kurt Cobain." It really did look a lot like Kurt Cobain. The eyes and mouth were very striking and familiar. Since the drawing was untitled, we had to give it our own internal title, right?*

## Invisible

I'm pining awkwardly  
for a tender moment, a taste  
of lemon cake.

I know I should be pushing  
a swing with a rosette  
brooch on my pale pink lapel.

Instead my purpose went  
pulsing along another path. I  
was at a freeway's tempo until

the off-ramp was graffiti  
and its wall lunged at me. My  
life currently earns no cheers.

I long to levitate all morning  
with a wheat field above me. No  
freckle, and my fingertip

experiencing the weight of an exhale.  
The reciprocal feel of something  
distinctly glutinous yet soft

deafens my eyes. I have an electric  
personality trying to die. Please  
wrap me in rice paper one more time.

*André Couvillion's short story titled **Invisible** was an account of loneliness. The light fixations that the main character latches onto became oxygen as he spent his free time very much inside of his own head. As he watched people from his window, he fell into daydreams and conjured scenarios about the people and minutiae he saw. He also did a lot of relatable stuff like trip over his coffee table; the sort of interruption that snaps a person back to reality.*

*When I wrote a poem called Invisible for this project, I mostly intended to write about the ways in which my adult life deviated from its initial expectation. Without going into all the details and flashbacks, I really just wanted to honor the fact that I accept that I went off-script when it came to a very corporate ladder, conveyor belt, cookie-cutter life, and that having a lighter and more mindful existence is fine, too, even if I took a very uncomfortable path to get where I am now.*

## Father

Time is on your side  
as another day  
falls down. It's his last

turn of the hour-  
glass before a new  
year surfaces. The moments

ahead are less analog.  
Sand becomes pixel  
and shards

ring in elaborate alarm  
tones and ring out neon.  
He wrings his hands around

the face of your clock,  
sweeps dust like tears  
with his second hand.

All this before you wake  
with clumsy panic  
to hit the snooze button.

*In the title and first word of my poem, you  
kind of get the gist of what my Father poem  
is about.*

***Ryan Kennelly** definitely managed to have  
the most entries published in the 1997-1998  
edition of Inklings. Five of his artwork pieces  
were included in the issue including 3  
photographs, 1 drawing, and 1 painting.  
**Father** was a black and white photograph  
which featured a man, seated, from the  
knees to the face. His hands, placed upon  
one knee, were entirely in focus while the  
rest of his body is hazy. If I recall properly,  
this was the photographer's father, and his  
hands were the focal point because of a  
condition he had that affected the fingers. I  
apologize if that was a completely wrong  
memory about this photo, but for some  
reason that is the exact recollection I have.  
So I am hoping I am at least partially correct  
in my description.*

## **Maddy O.'s first night alone in 54 years**

steady breaths and heart-  
beat stuttering. clock tick  
and talk outside the window.  
over the fence, grass grows  
a haircut. silence is nothing  
more than a constant, muffled  
murmur. its quiet remains  
the loudest sound of all:  
comprised of everything  
that cannot be controlled.

*20 years after **Amy Ratto's** poem, **Maddy O's First Night Alone in Fifty-Four Years** was printed in *Inklings*, I was still curious to delve into those first moments when a person finds themselves on their own after many years. That profound awareness and heightening of senses was captured so meaningfully in Amy's original poem. I just wanted to adventure through a similar scenario in my *Maddy O.* poem. I have spent a lot of time alone and it doesn't really stun me anymore. However, looking at alone time from the perspective of someone who has not been alone in several decades, the feelings intensify greatly.*

## bio

It was an amazing feat just coming up with this unique project idea. It was an amazing feat just to get in the shower before noon.

So I am K Weber and I found my way back to Dayton, Ohio, again. I graduated from Miami University in 1999 with a BA in Creative Writing and also completed minors in Computer Information Systems and French.

I love so much music. I love music so much. I am a dwindling record collector and a former online DJ. I made the music in the audiobook version of *cling as ink* (and 2 of my previous books) by layering a variety of sounds I pick and choose from many noises I have recorded over the last 6 years. I also included music I have made using several instruments: synthesizers, various electronic music apps, an electric organ, Korg Volcas, my voice, and a glockenspiel, to name the major players. I have amassed a small library of found recordings from nature, my neighborhood, walking, driving, enjoying strange weather and generally being alive that come in so handy for many audio projects.

*cling as ink* is my 4<sup>th</sup> self-published book of poetry. My back catalog includes the following books, available in PDF digital book layout format and MP3 audiobook (check out the Resources page at the end of the book for website information):

- *i should have changed that stupid lock* (2014)
- *bluest grey* (2012)
- *midwestern skirt* (2003)

I am beyond pleased to have writing featured in publications both web-based and in print through the years. My poems have found a place to sleep in such cozy nooks and seedy alleys as: *Words Dance*, *Black Heart Magazine*, *Mock Turtle Zine*, *Lavender Wolves Literary Journal*, *Literary Sexts* (vols. I and II), *Poem Your Heart Out: Volume 1*, *Understory* and more.



"tip me over and words fall out"  
photo by greg lawhun / enthusiasm by me

## thank you

I'd like to get right to the meaty, resounding heart of *cling as ink...*

In 2017 I had the idea to do a book like this which was part personal and part tribute. It wasn't until spring of 2018 that I emerged with some intent to see this through. I had so much support from **GREG LAWHUN, JENNA STRAUCHEN, PATRICK WHITED** and **ERIN MURRAY** on this journey. They read many of my poems with interest and sincerity. They shared their poems, writings, and/or artwork with me as well. I am wildly appreciative for the inspiration, time and care these friends gave me when I was feeling a bit unsteady about writing again. I found my poetic footing once again and soon I took on the process of revising poems that did little more than sit in a box for 1 to 20+ years. Now here we are!

I need to extend much gratitude to **ALL OF THE WRITERS AND ARTISTS FEATURED IN THE 1997-1998 ISSUE OF INKLINGS** that I was so honored to have edited. Your work still resonates with me and I enjoyed taking a look back to 20 years ago and reflecting on your creations. In this same vein, I applaud **THE 1997-1998 INKLINGS STAFF** for being there when we all clearly had degrees in progress and so many other options for activities to join. Your thorough review of all submissions and rating them individually gave us excellent discussion points in our meetings as we pared down to the final choices. Our staff had such enthusiasm and good humor, too!

I am bowled over by **THE 2017-2018 INKLINGS STAFF!** Special thanks to **EMMA K. SHIBLEY** and **MEG MATTHIAS** who responded when I reached out to the current magazine staff. Seeing what *Inklings* is like 20 years since the issue that is the basis for this book of poems has been truly lovely!

More than three cheers to **ROBERT LEE BREWER AND THE POETIC ASIDES ONLINE COMMUNITY** for thought-provoking poetry prompts, fascinating poem responses, and social interaction that sustains the work of the poets who post there!

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## resources

my poetry website

<http://kweberandherwords.wordpress.com>

listen to my poetry audiobooks

<http://www.soundcloud.com/kweberandherwords>

inklings arts & letters (miami university literary magazine)

<http://inklingsartsandletters.wordpress.com>

inklings podcast: ground control

<http://www.redhawkradio.com/ground-control>

poetic asides

<http://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/poetic-asides>

napowrimo blog

<http://www.napowrimo.net/>

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1997-1998

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