

Town & Country he smokes

GREGG WILHELM

spliffs

bitter sips

not a fucking

tooth in his

head

me on a drunk

high

how high

ledge wondering

a fall from the grace

of God could

B

my electric body sings for a push from a person

saint nowhere here now some of it is true

of good use elsewhere

after all i hold the memory & after all this

pit a mob a glam dance

breast to shoulder to ass

he asks he pleas

give me a smile

so loud it spirals

in chorus unison

in stalk rows lifted

by a gale shouted

above washes over head he has me

i think he says down

Т

i mishear words quoted through bourbon & brogue

to a

frontlines but i'm not you're everywhere

who's the pogue here

if you're on the

i'm not

i'm not

spits through the first set collapses backstage during intermission's eerie calm

like the center of a story

all this lost in the translator

lost while a hammered spirit

Sorted & plotted then broken by six plucked

punches

B slide E GEG

drum on my jeans our backs beaten by his strum mummers

C

his forehead against mine an earful of feedback

i see & feel the bass's rhythm

this is the turn this tune he says it's the best ever

this riff i think he says

his breath a skunky

masked & mimed

fluid first lyric

sweat ignites lighter

drag

our breath rises & swirls

in silence now

outside after all this

another one extends jostled from the pack his hands

cracked lips pinch a fag

cup lighter flame beneath my chin

in his orange palms i see

everything everywhere

from every point & angle i saw my own face

i saw your face

wound tight in standard

i weep over myself

him a drop

CityLit Project in Baltimore, where he lives.

D

tuning

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BLOG

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Five Poems by Gregg Wilhelm

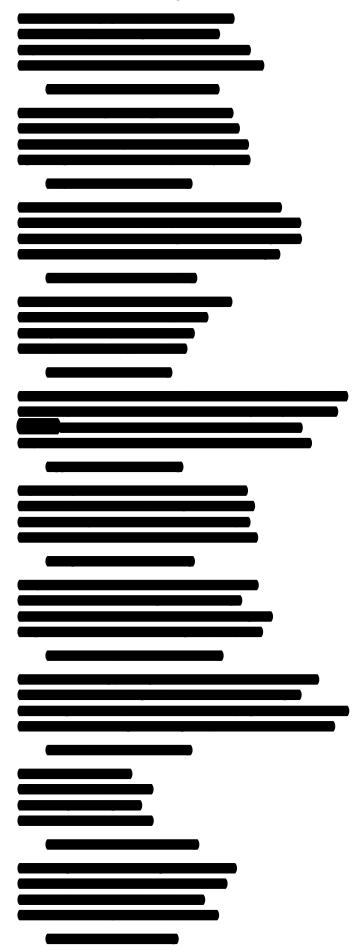
Leaning into Purple Lines

Beltway Poetry
Quarterly is an
award-winning
online literary
journal and resource bank that
showcases the literary
community in Washington, DC
and the surrounding MidAtlantic region.

Washington has certainly an air of more magnificence than any other American town. It is mean in detail, but the outline has a certain grandeur about it. The women dress a good deal, and many a village belle, who is not even receivable in her own county, passes here, for a prodigy, on consequence of political rank.

— James Fennimore Cooper

dale drive / doors are closing





Sakura

Cherry blossoms umbrella'd the view from Adele's fourth-floor condo Where she had moved after integrating Horizon House downtown Twenty-five years earlier when tenants on the elevator asked for whom She worked and Adele said Morgan College then corrected their English Not whom but where

Before the book published Adele traded in her cherry butterscotch Lincoln For a model-year jet black Infiniti I-30 with power windows and a screen That lowered and raised in the rear window depending on whether you Wanted to see the light while melting into leather seats that smelled slick like Payback if not reparations

If the two of us were going to drive around the state to promote her book We were going to do it in style and she joked about which Hollywood stars Would play my Morgan Freeman to her Jessica Tandy seen in the rearview Mirror in reverse a negative to the positive like opposite ends of a battery That charges me to change

Born in 1919 on Maryland's Eastern Shore she saw life in Pocomoke As dark as the namesake river that snaked through that bivalved town Where school ended for Negroes at the ninth grade so that boys could go Sow and reap on farms while girls washed dresses and hallways clean Of dirt that clung

Last two lynchings in Maryland happened just miles away from where Adele Came of age and implored her grease monkied father to please stop Petitioning for a 10th grade at the colored school because she saw how easy It was for a rope to lasso a branch how hard it was back then to change polarities From other to brother

Adele taught English wrote poems painted pictures that hung on her walls I loved the one that captured a stand of trees in the park below titled "sakura" Japanese for "cherry blossom" one of many things she taught me on long drives Across time with a trunkful of her jacketed memoir about life as it really was Down on the shore

Today my daughter and I walk through that park near Adele's old condo Wind stirs blossoms off the trees into a whirl of pink petals that blind Us from the world that I struggle to unpack and explain for her She scoops up a handful of what has fallen blushed to the ground and Blows it toward heaven

Thief River Scrap

Dark mound hides arched in wild blonde wheat A slumbering bull dead still for two decades My father-in-law abandoned the front of the combine In a corner of the family farm far angled from the '80s Until the price of scrap hit fifty cents a pound

He guesses the rusted hulk weighs a third of the 8000-pound Massey-Ferguson that his grandfather Brought down from Canada when staking the claim His plan is to haul the carcass to Thief River Falls Fifty flat miles north on the shoulders of a Ford F150

Cold cash would help with boreal months coming on And little hay put up for 120 head roaming frozen hills Where Ojibwe tilled long before mechanical buffalo Arrived to labor endlessly for miserable homesteaders With names like Jacobson Buringrud Paulsen Moen

Fifty miles on Route 59 where dust-swept land erases Moose Dung's signature on the Treaty of Old Crossing Boomtown hometown of Artic Cat Digi-Key Steiger Tractor "Stolen-land river" where Dakotas secretly camped Along the banks of Red Lake River's renegade current

Farmer-in-law walks cautiously toward the beast Grade 80 chain draped around his neck like a serpent He shimmies links under the threshing cylinder's belly Lassoes its heavy ends to the excavator's gnarled claw Hydraulics convulse as the behemoth mounts the pickup

Not wise to second-guess this ancient farmer's rhyme When for some reason he ignores the simplest physics That foreshadow effects of weight upon unequal weight Gravity a force down versus horsepower to hope forward Old truck bed buckles like knees on a rust-addled Atlas

Shoulder to shoulder in the cab as the Ford moans From dried pasture to gravel road huffing dirt clouds Eight miles an everlasting hour toward town for gas Treads shave from friction of wheel-well on rubber I watch at the pump as the pickup folds into a V

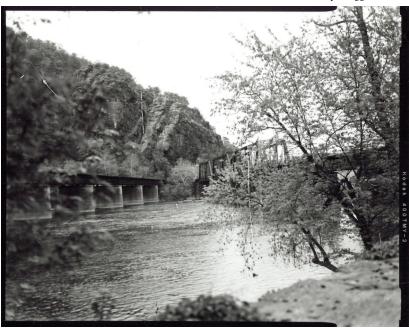
Tight with Hemingway

He preens between corkscrewed kudu antlers After pumping iron into lions on tawny savanna Far from Oak Park, Key West, and Ketchum Eyes shadowed under a comma wide brim

He fires iron into lions on tawny savanna Casts steel hooks into Walloon Lake walleye Dark eyes shaded under a wide round brim Hammered chrome flask snug against hip

Sharp steel hooks into lake trout and walleye Picador on blind mount bloodies metal lance Sips from flask pocketed by hammered hip "A man does not exist until he is drunk"

Picador punctures flesh with a bloody metal lance



Robert Revere, "Harper's Ferry, WV," gelatin silver print, 4" x 5" contact print, 2018. https://revererobert.wixsite.com/home

Sangria in Pamplona, proof whiskey on safari Some men must drink in order to exist Mojitos at Finca Vigia, sweet vermouth in Milan

Sangria in Pamplona, proof whiskey on safari Mind and liver shackled by genes and gin Mojitos in Finca Vigia, sweet vermouth in Milan Old man and he sees that his stories are terminal

His father taught him how to escape the Depression Two shells into the chamber of a twelve-gauge Silver and bronze stars burst over Sun Valley In time for a round with Gertrude and Scott

Coyotes at Dawn

He perches on the rusted tractor Like Ishmael in the crow's nest Cranky joints lubed by oil and coffee Shotgun wedged against gearshift

He navigates pasture like an ancient mariner Who knows how to cross a series of wakes Avoiding ditches through purple morning So that the old Knudson does not capsize

Or ground itself on a stubborn boulder That he has seen day after decade Until he sails five minutes of arc From pole barn to Polled Herefords

He grabs the butt of the shotgun to throw Tractor into neutral and cusses then fumbles For the gearshift and brake before disembarking To examine the sheep wreck he knew awaited

Carcass steam mingles with fog Pocked earth dances around ewe Rams and harem bleating laughter A chorus about moving on and on

12/15/21, 2:48 PM

Burnt amber eyes reflect him crouched Down to touch belly blood tacky and black He predicts the future and does the math She'd have fetched a right sum at sale

He weeds thick chain around her legs Hitches limp end to shivering tractor Sets a course toward home Spray of salt against his face

An earlier version of "Coyotes at Dawn" was published in *Broadkill Review*. "Thief River Scrap" was previously published in *Garygoyle*. Reprinted with permission of the author.

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Gregg Wilhelm has been a writer, publisher, teacher, and arts administrator in the midAtlantic area for more than 25 years. Starting at Johns Hopkins University Press, he went on to
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Development at the Maryland Institute College of Art's Open Studies unit. Wilhelm earned his
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