

prose poems

Issue 3



Natalie Tomlin

Jason Heroux

Cassandra Atherton
and Paul Hetherington

Rupert Fike

John Levy

Speech Bubbles

She thought of ways she could cryovac her early memories of him. If she could fit them into little squares of plastic and suck the air out, they might keep fresh for years. There was the first moment she'd seen him at the theatre mouthing the protagonist's lines; the time he'd put his arm around her, warming a long strip of her green silk shirt; how he'd squeeze her so hard her ribs would ache; the way the scarlet shell of toffee apples cracked against their teeth; their favourite fried rice with pineapple and snow peas; and the time he told her she was thrillingly beautiful. Now, as he walked ahead pointing at the "architectural marvels", his voice sounded like a tour guide's and the subtle inflections she used to dwell on were stretched by the wind. "This is living history," he said, gesturing at ancient public baths and a small fifteenth-century tower. She wanted him to take her to their modern hotel and sit in the marble bath, pushing his feet against hers. She imagined their thoughts rising in helium speech bubbles above their heads, and her holding them down to suck out the air.

Cassandra Atherton and Paul Hetherington

Frozen Moment

Not wanting you to leave, I freeze the escaping moment. It's a spray-on foam that holds this chosen instant—when your toes slide out from under satin sheets. I send your cab away and return to the bedroom. There we are, still mouthing our goodbyes, like a freeze-frame from a poorly-acted movie—though stains appear where the foam has brushed your face. I pour champagne and tidy you again. Another can enables "scene re-entry", so I disperse it like fly-spray about the room and we watch ice skating, just as we did before, the coupe glass brimming in your hand. In the early hours I tuck the sheets, remembering to pull the doona from its cover. Instructions say, "No less than twenty separate frozen moments". This is number twelve. I ask your name.

Cassandra Atherton and Paul Hetherington

Natalie Tomlin's writing has appeared in *Belt*, *Dunes Review*, *Essay Daily*, *The Hopper*, *Split Rock Review*, and elsewhere. Her work has been nominated for Best of Net, the Pushcart Prize, and was selected as notable in *The Best American Essays*. She is the author of a chapbook of prose poems, *The Sound a Car Door Makes* (Michigan Writers Cooperative Press 2023).

Jason Heroux was the Poet Laureate for the City of Kingston from 2019 to 2022. He is the author of four books of poetry: *Memoirs of an Alias* (2004); *Emergency Hallelujah* (2008); *Natural Capital* (2012) and *Hard Work Cheering Up Sad Machines* (2016). His recent books include the short fiction collection *Survivors of the Hive* (Radiant Press, 2023) and an upcoming book of prose poems *Like a Trophy From the Sun* (Guernica Editions, 2024). He lives in Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

Cassandra Atherton is a widely anthologised, award-winning Australian prose poet and Professor of Writing and Literature at Deakin University. She is a commissioning editor of *Westerly* magazine, series editor for Spineless Wonders Microlit anthologies and associate editor at MadHat Press (USA). **Paul**

Hetherington is Emeritus Professor of Writing at the University of Canberra. He has written or edited 44 creative and critical books and numerous academic chapters and articles. He is co-founding editor of the international online journal *Axon: Creative Explorations*. He founded International Poetry Studies at his university in 2013, and also founded the international Prose Poetry Project in 2014. They co-authored *Prose Poetry: An Introduction* (Princeton University Press, 2020) and co-edited the *Anthology of Australian Prose Poetry* (Melbourne University Press, 2020). Cassandra and Paul are co-writing a book, *Ekphrastic Poetry: An Introduction* for Princeton UP.

Rupert Fike's second collection of poems, *Hello the House*, won the Haas Poetry Prize and was listed as one of the "Books All Georgians Should Read, 2018" by The Georgia Center for the Book. His poems have appeared in *The Sun*, *The Southern Poetry Review*, *A&U America's AIDS Magazine*, *The Flannery O'Connor Review*, *Scalawag*, *2RiverView*, *The Buddhist Poetry Review* and others. He is the author/editor of *Voices from The Farm*, an account of life on a spiritual community in the 1970s, and he also has a poem inscribed in a downtown Atlanta plaza.

John Levy lives in Tucson. His most recent book is 54 poems: selected & new (Shearsman Books, 2023).



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