
THE EXHIBITIONIST

JAN/FEB/MAR 2014

THEXZBT.COM



POSER-FREE SINCE 2012.

The Exhibitionist is an online literary magazine.

<http://thexbt.com>

Editor & Designer Khadija Ejaz editor@thexbt.com

Cover *Undying* Khadija Ejaz



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Fatherhood, Pending : <i>lance hawvermale {poetry}</i>	4
Big City Lights : <i>manoj bhagavatula {photography}</i>	6
Untitled : <i>amanda ball {poetry}</i>	8
the purpose of Purpose : <i>justin hill {non-fiction}</i>	9
Happily Ever After : <i>jesse adler {fiction}</i>	13
The Violin Maker : <i>robert ferrier {poetry}</i>	19



Fatherhood, Pending

lance hawvermale

Note from the poet: my wife and I are in the process of adopting a baby. We're about a third of the way through the (long, expensive) journey, and about three nights ago, it occurred to me that I might one day be someone's dad. Suddenly terrified, I imagined myself embarking on a dangerous mission, hacking my way through a jungle without a guide, facing down jaguars, getting my ropes all tangled up as I tried to rappel from a coastal cliff face. With that metaphor on my mind, I wrote this short poem, which I'm happy to share with you today!

I bought fresh saliva
in a jar; I bought gypsum
dust to dry my hands;
I bought a belt buckle
and polished it raw
to signal passing planes.

What more do I need?
This isn't Chernobyl.
This isn't a school fire
or church service where



strangers speak in tongues.
Still, I carve my canoe
with porcelain hands,
anticipating the sea.

Lance published his first two novels under the pseudonym of Erin O'Rourke. He released his third novel, a murder mystery titled *The Tongue Merchant*, under his own name - and he hasn't looked back since. His writing has won over 20 awards. His novel *Fugitive Shoes* was named to the University of Oklahoma's "Books That Inspire" exhibit. Currently an Assistant Professor of English at Ranger College in Texas, USA, Lance teaches film, poetry, and creative writing courses.



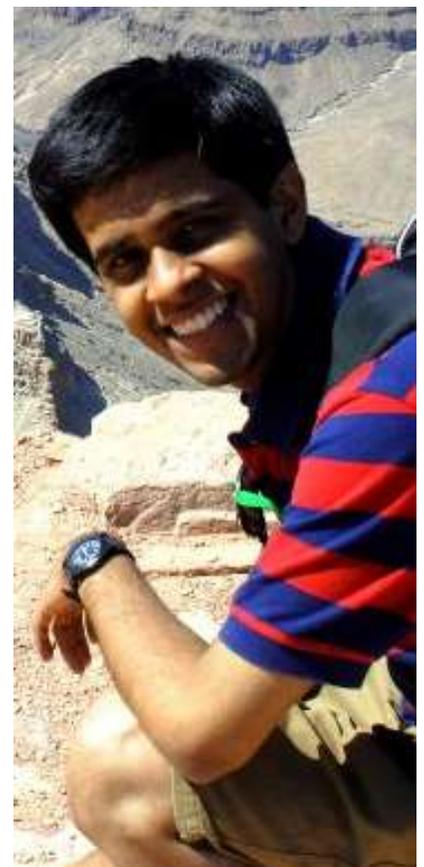
Big City Lights

manoj bhagavatula





Manoj Bhagavatula is an electronics hardware design engineer based in Pune, Maharashtra, in India. Outside of work, he loves running, playing table tennis, and catching up on his reading. He is part of a local non-profit running group that promotes running as an enjoyable form of exercise. Manoj likes to write and also enjoys travelling and photography.



Untitled

amanda ball

Amanda doesn't use photographs as part of her writing career.

love's golden casket
locked away
never to be shared

hide, hidden, hiding
words never pass lips
secret feelings - never shared

stuck in this place
cannot move, cannot breathe
sweet torture - dying pain

love's golden casket
wish it could have been
another time, another place

Amanda Ball lives for creativity. She started off as a musician, and things snowballed from there. She writes fiction, screenplays, stage plays, and poetry. Amanda is also a photographer. She had dreams of being an actor, which morphed into being involved in all aspects of filmmaking: production, direction, and editing. Amanda believes in promoting positivity and spreading entertainment that creates joy. She lives in the American state of Oklahoma.

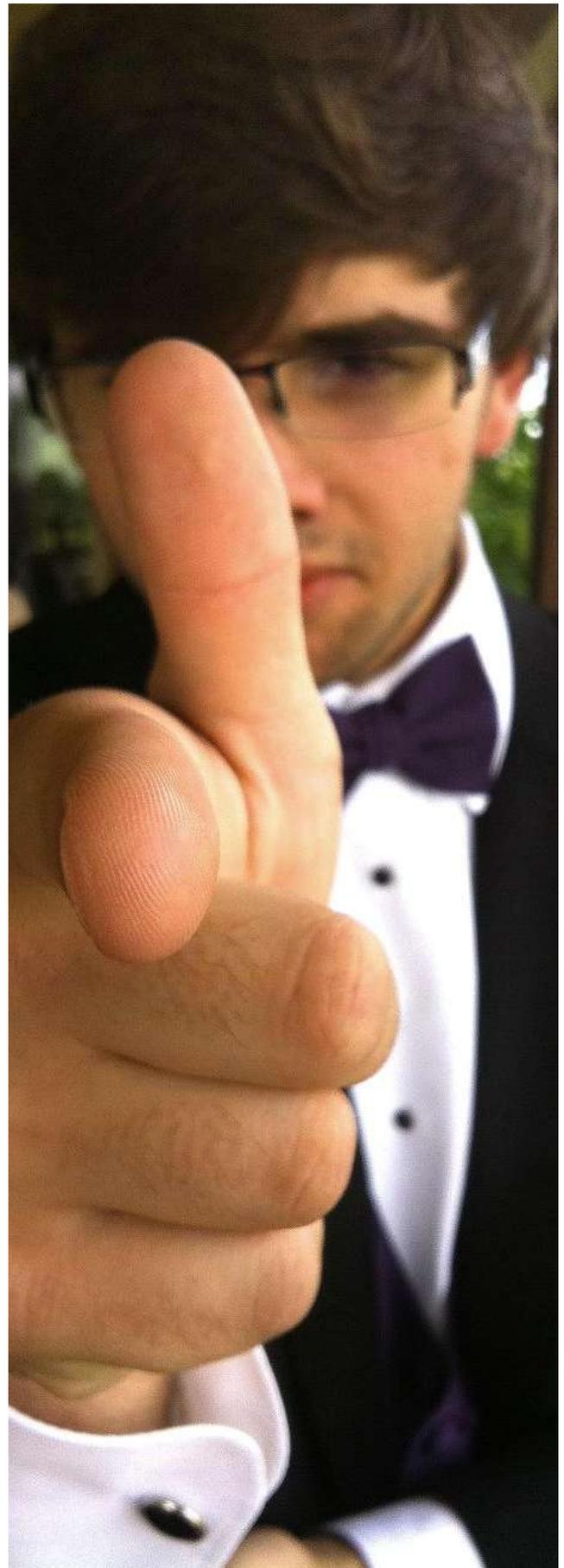


the purpose of Purpose

justin hill

I have done quite a bit of growing in the past two and a half years, or rather, I at least prefer to view the changes as instances of growth. Whether or not they truly are improvements—well, to each his own. Either way, as I underwent these changes, I started to think, earnestly think, about things—about Life. I began to notice and realize what was happening around me. I saw all the intricate beauty, yet, at the same time, I observed situations and ironies which caused me to wonder, namely, about life.

For instance, just the other day, as I sat in the school cafeteria, I engaged in a conversation about the importance of agriculture. My classmates spoke upon the topic as if it were the most important thing in life. Robert, one of my best friends, told me that he planned to major in AgriBusiness Management, which will prepare him for any self-employed and/or management position in the field of agriculture. Then, another of my companions chimed in, proclaiming that, "When everything else quits workin'—the



phones, and computers, and calculators, and all that—agriculture will be the most important thing. Us farmers and ranchers are gonna be rich, and this is what'll matter." I couldn't help but wonder if that were actually a realistic situation, or if it was something these people needed to believe. I'm not so ignorant as to believe that an apocalyptic day such as described will never arrive; at the same time, I am forced to dwell upon the purpose of Purpose.

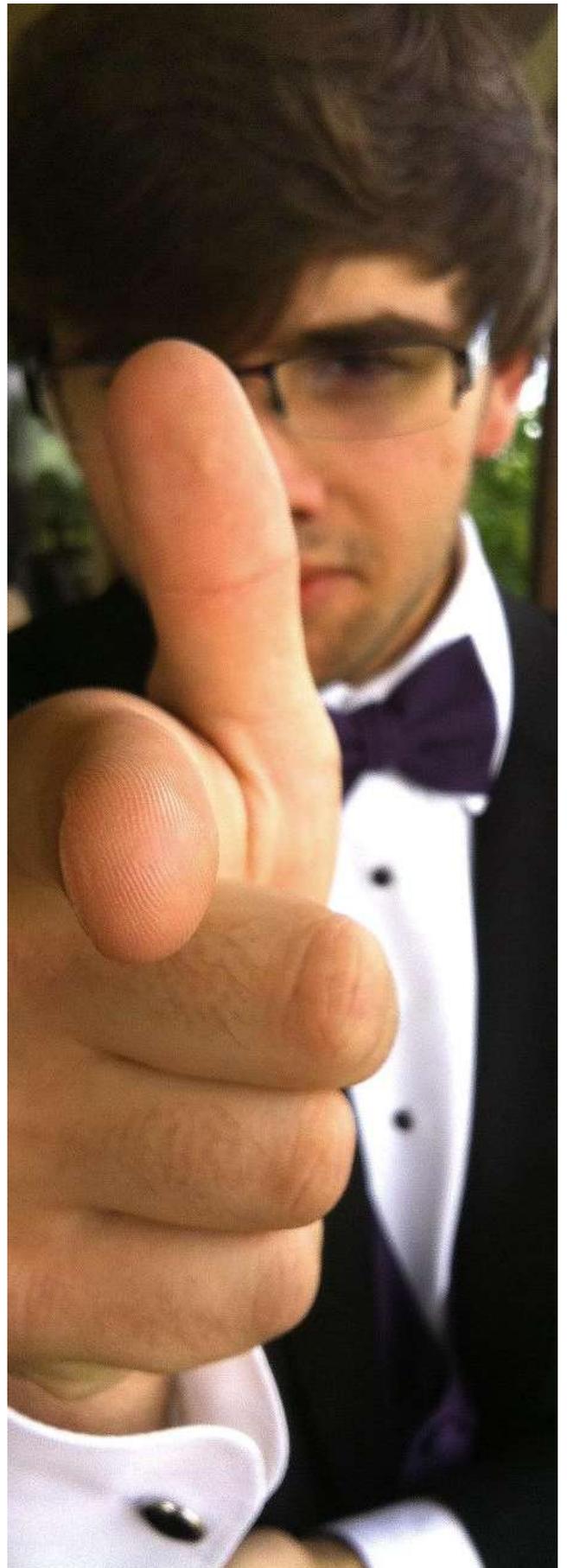
Is my friends' belief in the importance of agriculture—their lifestyle—out of truth or necessity? What if they merely believe in that because it is all they know to believe in—it is all they know to be important. Could their standing on agriculture be accredited to their conservative views, which in turn lends to narrow-mindedness? Or is it all of verity? Are they grounded in their opinions? After debating on it, I came to the conclusion that it was a mixture of both—that their necessity simply enlarged the reality.

And then, I reflect on my religion. Or rather, the religion I used to have. To say that I still have it would be far from truth, and I,



obviously, know that. Rarely have I thought about God in the past two years. I still believe in Him, I think, but sometimes I know not what to trust about Him. I own a Bible, but a version that has been changed over the centuries, by kings, and rulers, and other controlling politicians. How much of what I know about God is truly from verse, and how much is from the mouths of pastors, passing down the oral version of Christianity through the generations? Is it really about a relationship, or is that something man has determined to be true because they require it that way—because they spent seventeen centuries looking on it as “fire and brimstone”? In the end, how can I know which way is true? Are these curiosities, which are yet confusions at the same time, all part of growing?

At that, am I really even growing? How am I to know whether or not I call my changes “growths” out of necessity as well? Would I be okay with them if they did not possess a positive connotation? Then again, even if this is all pointless—even if it's all a form of Purpose—isn't that what life is about? Placed congruently with Love, and with Kindness, and with Generosity, can we not call Purpose just as necessary? What if it is



our Purpose that defines who we are? It is likely true that it determines our values. What we strive for decides our goals and ethics. With that in mind, can we be defined by our Purpose, or are we much more than that?

Currently in his senior year of high school, Justin Hill attends the Huckabay Independent School District, which is just outside of Stephenville, Texas, in the United States of America. After graduating as valedictorian, Justin aims to earn a Bachelor of Arts, double-majoring in English and Theatre, at the University of North Texas. He wishes to teach high school English and drama. In his spare time, he likes to write poetry, paint, and play the guitar; his favorite book is *The Count of Monte Cristo*, which he is very passionate about. Justin was also named a 2014 National Merit Commended Student.



Happily Ever After

jesse adler

"Hello?" I answer the phone on the fourth ring, feigning nonchalance even though I sit in the living room by myself in the deep of night, reading near the phone. Ostensibly waiting, but also not, just dreading.

"Hi, it's me. Did I wake you?" He sounds half asleep, his voice low and slow.

"No, I was just reading. How was your flight?" I put my book aside and take the phone next door into the kitchen, keeping the noise down, and to leave the room where the pictures of our kids stare at me from the walls and the carelessly put away toys grimace at me through the night.

"Long. Really long." He yawns. "Oh guess who I just bumped into. It was Mike. He's here too. We were on the same flight. Do you remember Mike? From Purchasing?"

"No, not really." All his work friends merge into one uniform mass to me. All the Bobs, the Daves, and the Mikes. Never really part of the finance set, I was the odd piece in the



life jigsaw puzzle. Never quite hitting my groove and fitting in. I can't ski, I don't like champagne and the cruel pate that is *fois gras*.

"Tall, blond?" He persists. I don't know why it matters. Why he clings to all the little joins and threads that bind, expecting that I care or that it changes anything. "His wife had *those* shoes at *that* Christmas party. Remember?" This actually hits a familiar chord.

"Oh *that* Mike. Sure, yes, I remember now." To my own ears my voice sounds false and placating. I wonder what he can hear.

"God, it seems like a lifetime ago doesn't it?" His voice is light and I can hear the smirk in it. I imagine him lying on the big hotel room bed looking out at the busy foreign streets.

"I know. I guess it was." I regret saying it instantly. It's the wrong thing to say in this game we play. An uncomfortable silence engulfs us. I can hear his faint breathing and from outside the usual traffic hum of inner London that never really stops.



"How is Mike?" I finally have to speak because the silence fills the void with unspoken worry and words that cannot be said. Words that cannot be unsaid.

"Oh, he's great. Doing really well. He just got the Pendle River contract actually, so he is basically loaded." He laughs, no envy there, just mirth at all the stupid things Mike will buy and do with this new cash. "How are the kids?"

"They're great. Maisey did really well in her SATs last week."

"Oh I'm glad, I know she was worried. And Thomas?"

"He's ok." I'm not sure if I should continue or if this will take us too close to bad territory but I persist and try to keep my tone light. "He has a crush on a girl in his class. It's quite touching really."

I stare out the kitchen door into the dark garden. The bushes at the bottom suddenly sway and I wonder if I have disturbed a fox or a badger with my midnight chat. I hope the kids can't hear me.



"Good grief! He's only twelve. Isn't it a bit early?"

"Don't panic. They're just kids. I don't think he's even spoken to her. He just keeps coming home with little Ruth stories."

"Ruth? Wow. That's biblical."

I roll my eyes at his attempt at humor. Its familiarity is relaxing and suddenly my chest constricts and my vision blurs as tears swell. I miss him.

"What stories?"

I pretend to cough to get myself back together. "Oh you know - Ruth had a red coat on today. Ruth is friends with Amy and Jason. Ruth's dad is a doctor and he has a big bag. Just a Ruth Daily Report. "

"That's so funny. Bless him."

"It's not funny, it's normal. Promise me you won't tease him about it? Promise?"

"I promise. Don't worry I won't say anything about Ruth. Though I must say he's chosen well. A doctor. Did you know statistically,



kids of doctors are more likely to become doctors?"

"Is that right?" I look up at the clock and feel the edge of the conversation coming.

"I'd better go." He says.

I can feel something else unsaid. It takes him a couple of seconds to get the courage up.

"How is he?" The directness is unexpected and not the course these talks ever take.

"He has a name. David is fine thanks. Sleeping I think. I'd better go too."

"Do you think it will ever get easier?"

"I don't know." I say, but I do know. It will get easier but only if we cut the final chord, this last tenuous link.

These calls are self-harm, its self-inflicted cruelty. Yet it hurts more to try and stop these stolen chats. We can't say goodbye to this other life just yet.



It feels like I have two husbands. One who sleeps upstairs and loves my children as if they were his own. And another, far away soul mate, who pretends that it didn't all fail. That it didn't all end. Another life where the father of my children is just working away. Far away.

"Enjoy your trip. I hope it all goes well. And say hello to Mike from me."

"Will do. Give the kids a kiss from me."
There is a pause. Neither is willing to put the phone down but knowing we must.

"Bye." He says and it means I love you.

"Bye." I say and it means I miss you.

Jesse Adler is from London and now lives in Sheffield in the United Kingdom. Jesse has worked in all aspects of Information Technology over the past 10 years. Her passion lies in understanding how things and people work. In her spare time, she writes tales with a twist, travels and bakes a mean Victoria Sponge.



The Violin Maker

robert ferrier

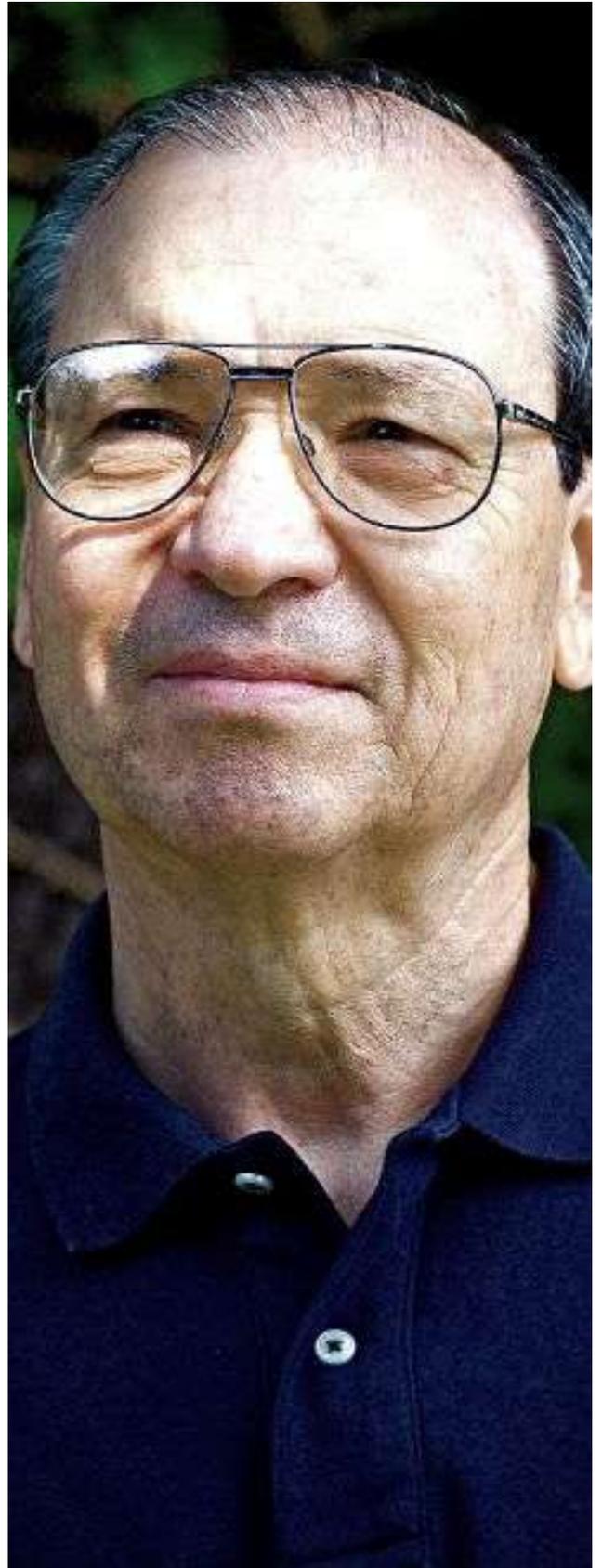
awakes and heats his glue
in a coffee can rigged on a hotplate.
He is aged and stiff like his wood
piles of it stacked and waiting

spruce special ordered from Ohio
oak pieces from a broken table
salvaged while fishing in Alaska.
He smells the glue and sawdust

scattered on the breakfast table
fine dust on a Stradivarius book
next to a bridge and sound post.
Perched in the kitchen's high places

yet unsafe from his Siamese cat
violin pieces, his children
wait their turn at his hands
now mottled, knobbed and hurting.

Today he hollows fitches of wood
thumping and shaping thin strips
dissimilar split personalities
even when cut from one tree.



He strikes them with his fist and listens
some pieces resonate tone
others sound dull and die.
He cleaves them with just dispensation.

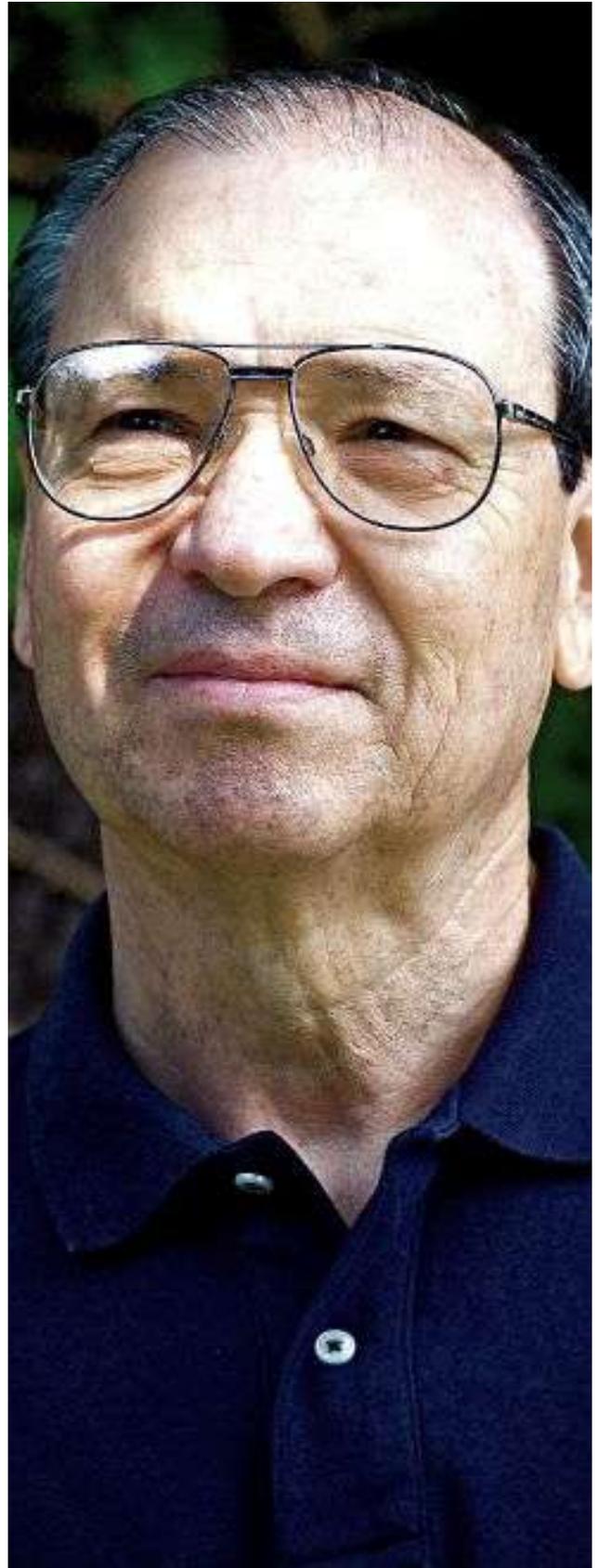
Over lunch with the squirrels and jays
he uses fine light to carve scrolls
the blade as one with his fingers
shaping the spiral of Vignola.

He varnishes in late afternoon
when the wind dies down and blesses
the marriage of wood and spirits
amber cast up by the Baltic Sea

gathered in nets at ebb tide
the scarlet of cochineal
dragon's blood from Amazon trees
colors shouting cherry and rose.

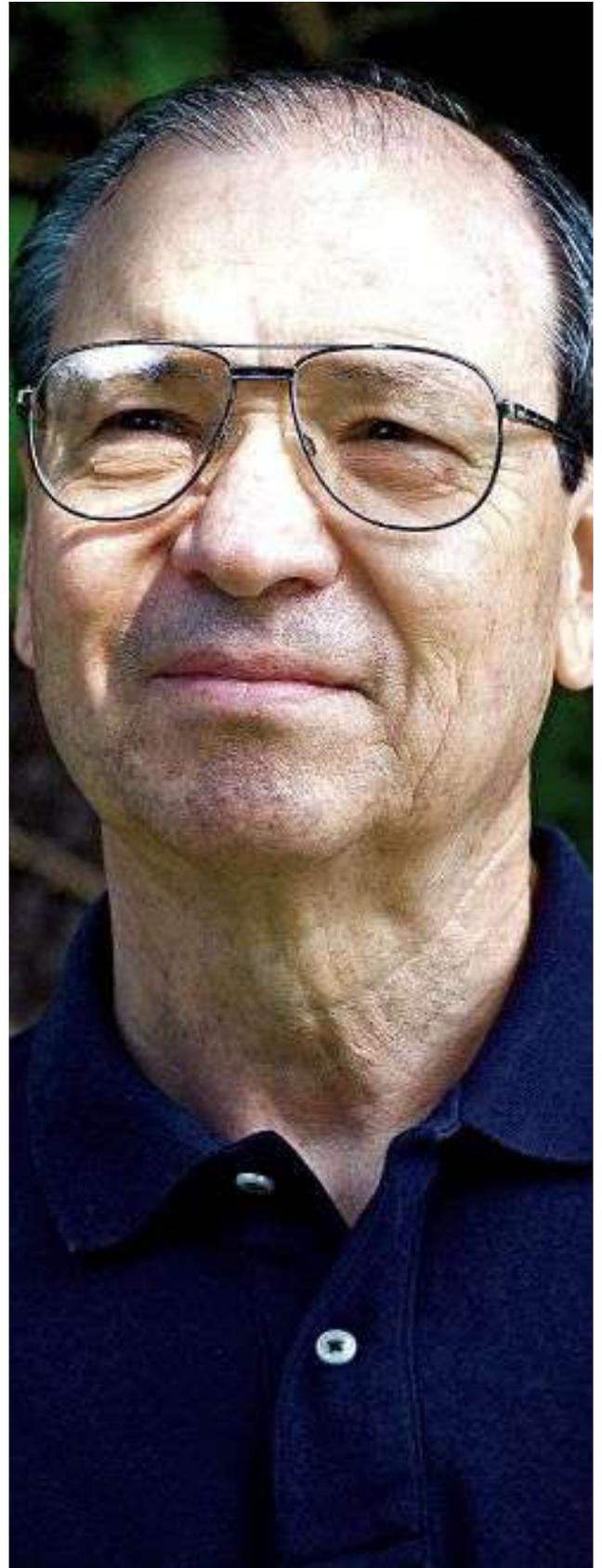
The aroma awakens the cat
weaving and binding his feet
figure eights of curiosity and jealousy
her rhythms like songs from his children

performing in operas across the world
Turandot at the Berlin Symphony
Tosca at the London Philharmonic
and in his presence a week from Sunday



in the hands of a concertmaster
Aida at the Boston Pops.

Robert Ferrier is the author of four published novels available at SynergEbooks, Amazon, and other E-Book publishers. His poetry has appeared in *Oklahoma Today*, *Möbius*, *The Mid-America Poetry Review*, *Blood and Thunder*, *Broomweed Journal*, *Crosstimbers*, *Westview* and *Metro Library Magazine*. His books, *Rhythms* and *Ambient Light*, each won the Oklahoma Writer's Federation Inc. award for Best Published Book of Poetry. He was a 2007 nominee for Poet Laureate of Oklahoma in the US.



What did you think?

Let us know through:

Email: editor@thexzbt.com

Facebook: <http://facebook.com/thexzbt>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/thexzbt>

(#thexzbt)

Submissions are now open for the April/May/June 2014 issue! Send us your work by **March 25, 2014**, at editor@thexzbt.com. See our guidelines for details <http://thexzbt.com/submissions/>

Partner up with us. Teachers, do you want to use XZBT as part of your curriculum? Are you a magazine that wants to increase its readership? Or does your business want to reach XZBT's readers? Send us an email at editor@thexzbt.com to talk about how we can help each other!



