



## FEATURED POET: JOHN GUZLOWSKI

By Michael Meyerhofer  
March 1, 2017

This month, I'm pleased beyond words to bring you a selection of poems by John Guzowski. Longtime readers of *Atticus Review* might recall that we ran another feature of [John's poetry](#) back in 2013. Actually, it's pretty rare that we run more than one feature from the same author. While different sections of the magazine will occasionally (sometimes coincidentally) run work by the same author, this is only the second time I've revisited a particular poet for another feature (the first being Jeannine Hall Gailey in June of last year). When you see the poems, I think you'll understand why.

John Guzowski is one of those contemporary poets that you strangely hope the person you're talking to hasn't heard of, just so that you can suggest they check him out and thus earn their undying gratitude. I'm not just referring to the heartbreaking honesty of John's work. He also happens to be one of those rare poets who can maintain emotional resonance even when he's pushing the boundaries of his own style. You can see that for yourself when you compare the imaginative wildness of *An Indian Tale* to the stark, naked musings of *Why Do We Age?* And it's impossible not to smile while reading a poem like *Talking Drunk to a Drunk Woman I don't Know*.

But I think what draws me most to John's poetry is how it manages to critique the human condition without coming across as preachy and heavy-handed, and even more importantly, without losing its connection to those primal elements that make poetry worth reading in the first place. Just take a look at *A Tale of Teeth and Death*, a chilling fable that resonates with more truth than any of those countless Sunday school lessons from my youth. "Humor became the lies / We tell our mothers," John writes, and suddenly I want to fly back to my mother's grave and beg her forgiveness.

That's what John's poetry does: it breezes past your most ardent defenses; it leaves your soul blistered; it leaves you more vulnerable than when you started, but paradoxically, it

also leaves you stronger. That's certainly the case with *Refugees*, a poem made all the more relevant today for reasons that are as obvious as the craft of the poem itself.

SELECTED WORK:

[An Indian Tale](#)



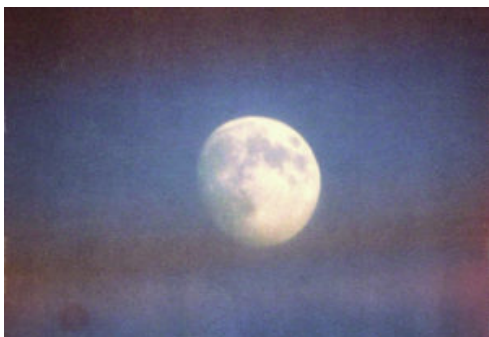
\*\*\*

[Why Do We Age?](#)



\*\*\*

[Talking Drunk to a Drunk Woman I Don't Know](#)



\*\*\*

## [A Tale About Teeth and Death](#)



\*\*\*

## [Refugees](#)



\*\*\*

### **AUTHOR BIO**

John Guzlowski's writing appears in Garrison Keillor's *Writer's Almanac*, *Rattle*, *Ontario Review*, *North American Review*, *Salon.Com*, *Atlanta Review*, and many other print and online journals here and abroad. His poems and personal essays about his parents' experiences as slave laborers in Nazi Germany and refugees making a life for themselves in Chicago appear in his prose and poetry memoir, [Echoes of Tattered Tongues](#) (Aquila Polonica Press). *Road of Bones*, his novel about two German lovers separated by war, is forthcoming from Cervena Barva Press. Of Guzlowski's writing, Nobel Laureate Czeslaw Milosz said, "He has an astonishing ability for grasping reality."



#### **About Michael Meyerhofer**

Michael Meyerhofer's third book, *Damnatio Memoriae*, won the Brick Road Poetry Book Contest. His previous books are *Blue Collar Eulogies* (Steel Toe Books) and *Leaving Iowa* (winner of the Liam Rector First Book Award). He has also won the James Wright Poetry Award, the Laureate Prize, the Annie Finch Prize for Poetry, the Marjorie J. Wilson Best Poem Contest, and five chapbook prizes. His work has appeared in

*Ploughshares*, *North American Review*, *Arts & Letters*, *River Styx*, *Quick Fiction* and other journals, and can be read online at [his website](#).

[View all posts by Michael Meyerhofer](#) →