

THE  
GREAT  
AMERICAN  
POETRY  
SHOW

VOLUME 2

The  
Great  
American  
Poetry  
Show

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Poetry  
Show

Volume 2

edited  
by

Larry Ziman  
Madeline Sharples  
Nicky Selditz

# *The Great American Poetry Show*

**Volume 2**

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## **A Short History Of Imperialism**

Her desire to be a tyrant  
matched his need  
to be an occupied nation.

Still, the history of revolution  
teaches that even the most docile populations  
have an eventual tipping point.

“You forgot to empty the dishwasher,”  
she said, her tone impatient,  
annoyed, dismissive.

He grabbed the remote and raised  
the volume, drowning her out.  
The insurrection had begun.

**Chuck Augello**



## Que Dios le Bendiga

We meet on an empty road, in the dry season  
of my life,  
the *abuela* and I.

She reaches for me with *manos viejos*,  
gnarled by work, twisted by polio—double curses,  
neither escapable—yet hands still strong  
with the grip of life.

And when these hands grab mine (hers  
the givers of breast, bean, and tortilla  
to the mouths of *niños*),  
she speaks:

*Que Dios le bendiga,*

that God would bless thee, a prosaic greeting  
following the impress of flesh, the proper  
way for the old to yield their blessing  
to the young, to a stranger.

But though she releases my hands,  
I cannot let go of hers. As if holding  
a live wire, I grip tighter, clinging

to her on this forlorn road  
while fleeting universes  
yawn—mystery's curtain  
for a moment rent—in this sheltering  
place, in this holding of hands.

**Fred Bahnson**

## **This Is How**

At dawn I hold the lamb for him. First lulled  
by warmth, I recoil when his knife opens  
its throat, when its legs flail, slow, then pulse

against mine. The blood—  
sticky on my hands. Bleats turn to moans  
turn to silence. This is how

we kill in Zimbabwe. He shows me how  
to retract the head, baring  
the throat. This is how the Hebrews kill;

first the artery, then the spinal cord.  
He tells how the killing was done  
to his own, how one day soldiers razed his village,

forced him to watch them bind his sister, his only sister—  
lovely as a gazelle, pure as a lamb—  
before coming for him. This is how

you make the cut. He spreads his fingers  
into a V, easing the knife between, separating  
skin from abdomen, foreleg from shoulder, careful

that not one bone be broken. His voice—  
serene yet resistant. On him  
they cut tendons, then other parts. We are into this now,

slicing and pulling, forearm deep in gore, washing out  
intestines before the heat comes. I take the blade  
in haste, cut deep into the wrong flesh,

my own blood joining  
the other. I press hard until  
the bleeding stops, and we work on.

Late morning when the knives  
are cleaned, when the lamb has been  
prepared for the feast, he asks

for my hand, works in stinging  
ointment, says: This is how  
we help the wound to mend.

**Fred Bahnson**

## Yankee Lake

*Couldn't see your hand  
before your face.*

First time I heard it was  
that summer at Yankee Lake.

Jay said it. Each dawn  
as we slept in the damp  
cabin, he put on fishing clothes  
& left, pulling the oars  
of the painted boat, vanishing

into the mountain fog, metallic  
& thick as dust, yet exhilarating,  
I think, for him. If he caught  
a fish we ate it. If he didn't,  
we didn't. Catching the fish wasn't

the point. The point was taking  
his seventeen-year-old self  
out on the lake, to sit in the  
quiet morning, hear the water  
kiss the gunwales,

see the murk turn from sienna to  
yellow to gold, feel the sun, finally,  
on his cheek, below his twill hat,  
& think his thoughts, humming  
to himself. He did not will or wish

the fish to bite. If they did, fine,  
If they didn't, okay. He'd had his  
solitude, made his own way  
to start the day. I don't know.  
All I know is he took himself

away from us, to float on the  
water, to experience a kind of  
heaven he rowed himself to. The  
first of many departures from us,  
until he left, abruptly, in an

April full of gold & tulips,  
so that I still think  
he isn't vanished, just out on  
the lake, in the early morning,  
fishing.

Gay Baines

## Vanishing Point

The wind is a steady hand at my chest.  
An hour to ride my bike head-first  
into spring, that flimsy catkin teasing  
from a maple, the thing I follow  
at a lumbering, hypnotic cadence.  
I push through early-morning shadows  
and winter's left-over gloom  
as the sun winnows down the path.

Nothing distracts but the juncos  
criss-crossing like lace unraveling.  
Behind me, three miles by now,  
my child busies the dust  
in the hulking house, the place  
where all of this began.  
I long to be no longer visible, an arrow  
quivering into a grove but missing  
every tree, an exquisite passing.

Below a frost-slicked trestle,  
the creek swells its green skin  
with yesterday's pollen and rain.  
A fresh grave is being dug on the hill.  
Skunk cabbage jaws open above  
the curved rot of a lone Chinook  
in the shallows. Cottonwood resin  
coats the air, sweet and welcome.

From the mottled water, a mallard  
pads her way up the mud bank  
to a nest enfolded  
by ten hues of green. So clearly  
she slips into the tangle  
while her mate devotedly treads  
in the direction of her return.

Like the expected rioting  
of bud to flower to fruit,  
I am unable to resist the path.  
The wind, now at my back,  
chills my bare legs revolving out  
a rhythm that will carry me homeward.  
Iron-hot blood floods  
its capillarious routes. Propelled,  
I become that point  
on the horizon slowly  
coming back into view.

**Kristin Berger**

## The Professor

Once he was an academic man;  
Now he studies green flock wallpaper.  
During daylight hours he sits transfixed  
In his damp-resistant plastic chair.  
Perhaps it is the fleur-de-lys, embossed;  
French history was his speciality.

Once he wore a gown and mortarboard;  
Now he'd go naked if they let him.  
It's not 'Professor' any more  
But 'pet' and 'dear' and first-name terms  
From kids who come on work experience  
And supervise him in the lavatory.

Once he enthralled crowded lecture halls;  
Now he waits, incontinence padded,  
Receiving dosages of Coronation Street.  
He was seen to smile last Wednesday.  
They thought it was something Dierdre said  
But Matron reckoned it was flatulence.

Once he bestrode a famous campus;  
Now he needs a care assistant's help  
To find his room along the corridor.  
They used to let him go alone  
Until Miss Philpott found him in her bed.  
Fortunately she knew him long before.

Once he dreamed his name would be revered;  
Now he can't remember what it is.  
Most often he is Bonaparte or Metternich,  
Ignoble footnotes to a history man.  
But nice Mrs Blenkinsop seems to understand;  
For quite a while she's been the Virgin Mary.

Once he published learned papers;  
Now he puzzles over signs on toilet doors.  
Yet in the green room afternoons  
He silently gathers in the tricks,  
And his regular partners rejoice.  
Somewhere a candle flickers still.

**John C Bird**

## At Either End of the Web

*"Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it.  
Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."* Chief Sealth

She spins by moonlight,  
weaving wet strands  
from mailbox to brass knob,  
binding my door shut with her silk.

Each morning I claw at the web,  
unraveling her mending from the night  
before. She watches from behind  
a clapboard, waits for darkness.

What is this web to her  
that she will not surrender  
but will patiently repair my damage?  
Am I connected to its strands

like the crumpled moth trapped  
in the sticky tangle in my hand  
or like a nightmare snared  
in a dream-catcher? What is this thing

I rip apart – some kind of primitive  
survival map whose language has been lost  
to me? Just as her instinct is to claim  
this space, mine is to tear down obstacles.

Neither of us will back down. One has to go,  
be banished from this struggle over territory.  
Perhaps this is the way all wars begin –  
small battles fought in strands of gossamer.

**Regina Murray Brault**

### Process of Elimination

As he arranges his closet,  
the number of items left  
dwindles with each pass.  
The navy wool sweater that  
SHE gave him for Valentine's  
should go, along with the  
tan leather travel kit SHE picked out  
for the trip they never took,  
and the photo of them, embracing,  
after a Stones concert last winter.

Yes, these can go, he thinks,  
as can the paisley socks he bought  
because it's HER favorite pattern.  
Oh, and the Cole Haan boots  
he wore on their fifth date,  
until they were removed  
along with belt, pants, and shirt,  
in favor of a natural state where  
two bodies enmeshed, rolling  
and heaving and sweating until  
crisp white cotton sheets reduced  
to a damp, irreverent ball.  
All of this reminding him that  
the bedding, too, must go.

When everything is decided upon,  
culled down, thrown away,  
all he's left with is the skin that  
once pressed against hers,  
the lips that consumed her own,  
and other parts her body  
had so eagerly enveloped.  
What will he do with these?

Susan Breeden

## Amtrak Overnight

Whoever pinned stars against the L.A. night  
holds me captive in a window seat  
until the desert mountains show their teeth.

Joshuas raise arms  
like followers of Vodoun,  
performing sacred rites along the tracks.

Hunted creatures creep beneath the sage,  
lying low, drawing unnoticed conclusions  
about surviving time and space.

Hesitant serpents complain,  
tongues traversing the four directions,  
stalking last light  
through trailer parks.

An occasional cloud of dust  
appears at my window  
to roll unsettled eyes,  
then vanish.

A late watch of nightingale  
sings to us at a rest stop, restoring  
order in the grip of electric wires.

Sleep, an obsessed thief  
whose time is running out,  
interferes with my meditations.

Consciousness gets lost  
attempting astral flight  
at the faltering speed of a train.

An angry woman, having  
somehow soaked her only pair of socks  
in cream soda,  
rages into my sleep.

Unfamiliar men, painfully  
young and drunk on absurdity,  
play dominoes 'til dawn.

Restless children  
begin to dance with  
daylight and coloring books  
on the leading edge of New Mexico.

Outside my window, mesquite  
and mourning dove  
listen to a steel train cry at sunrise.



The scalding surface  
of a cup of coffee, at my touch,  
trembles through a long curve.

**Don Brennan**

## Oolong

In the land of honey and four kinds of milk  
a man on the sidewalk  
stares through the window  
of the House of Oolong.

Between sips of tea  
I stare back at lips discernibly mobile,  
a face roughly shaven,  
eyebrows in a knot.

Is he rehearsing a panhandle line, composing  
a prayer to an overwrought god, just as likely  
talking to himself?

On this side of the Oolong window  
half and half puddles  
at the foot of a black pot,  
honey waits to be squeezed  
from plastic bears.

I am able to discern the motion  
but not the noise of a stranger's lips;  
Not knowing from his vague eyes  
if he is even speaking to me,  
creating words by the thump of a heart  
pumping blood-borne precursors of speech  
through a capillary net deep beneath  
his shaggy hair and stocking cap  
to flow there into consonants and vowels  
and gather like the drip of honey and  
milk at the tip of a tongue.

His mental molecules become words in ways  
I can't imagine,  
but whatever he might have to say,  
perhaps brilliant or absurd or both,  
remains unheard.

The man's speech stalls in arrested flight  
against the outside glass  
of the House of Oolong.

I notice on my table a fly's futile struggle  
to escape the sticky grip of a honey bear  
as I sip my tea and ponder mysteries  
of the spoken word.

**Don Brennan**

## The Old Toad

This old toad  
spotted me  
couple nights ago  
returning  
from recycling bottles and aluminum cans  
at the curb.

He thought he could  
imitate a rock,  
but I knew  
it was him,  
shoulders  
wrinkled  
above his muscular, gold-speckled back.

Distracted, I  
swiveled my head  
briefly  
toward a  
snap of twigs  
in thick, October darkness.

But when I swiveled  
back,  
I noticed immediately  
that my dear old friend  
had quietly  
relocated himself  
entirely  
inside  
a pitch-black shadow  
just below  
the patio lattice.

Alan Britt

## Travels with Jack

Jack Benny is passing  
from the solar system  
to the outer stars,  
The Shadow right behind him,  
carried on radio waves  
that, once released to space,  
continue to drift forever.

The girl is with them,  
her hands on her chin,  
her stomach on the floor.  
She listens alone,  
pictures hovering in her head.

She is with them now  
as they were with her  
in Wyoming, in Alberta, in Calgary,  
wherever a distracted father,  
intent on building an empire  
of machine shops, temporarily  
planted her.

She laughs at Bob Hope.  
She is surprised to hear  
that Amos 'n Andy are white.  
She listens to the President  
talk about the Good War.

She travels with them past Pluto,  
heading for parts unknown  
as her family has done so often.  
She listens as her parents fight,  
as her father hits her mother again  
always, always when  
the girl is there to see it.

No, she's not there.  
She travels at the speed of sound  
with Jack and The Shadow  
who knows what evil  
lurks in the hearts of men.  
She, too, knows  
but keeps it secret

like her own identity  
and the way she turns aside  
a personal question with a joke  
to cloud men's minds.

She lives in the same house  
with the same husband now  
for thirty years. But she's still  
a girl, stomach on the floor,  
vibrations of the radio  
humming through her bones,

lifting her, lifting her  
past Saturn and Jupiter,  
out past Pluto where Jack Benny  
has just asked Rochester  
to bring the car around  
for another long trip  
into eternity.

**MCBruce**

## Doing Interstate 27

With the lights out,  
she's hypnotic.  
You have to catch yourself every once in a while,  
as each curve can kill a man  
and every sign is an innuendo.

But you soon see that she  
is a relentless dry-hump  
with no rest at all  
and no climax.

She leaves you sore and angry.

Interstate 27 is a bump and grind.  
It's a long stretch to nowhere  
and a futile quest for a place to let.

She is an asphalt whore  
with nothing to consider but death and dying.

At daybreak  
you feel used and sick to your stomach.  
You're just another pop  
for this moaning bitch  
who's as stupid as she is ugly.

And yet, hanging over her head (when the lights are out)  
are constellations so beautiful they take your breath away.

She may be hard on the eyes,  
but she sure knows how to decorate.

I'll give her that.

Howard Camner

### **My Mentor**

My mentor sits  
staring at a painting on his wall.  
It is a painting of a giant face.  
A giant face with no eyes, no mouth, no nose, no  
ears,  
nothing.  
It's just a blank face.  
My mentor just stares at it  
all day and all night.  
I visit him once a week for inspiration.  
He never looks at me.  
He just stares at the painting of the blank face  
and imparts his wisdom:  
"The nail that holds this painting up on the wall  
never gets a moment's rest. Don't be a nail."

**Howard Camner**

### To My Daughter on a Fine Fall Day

I stand behind you and push,  
harder and harder.  
You pump higher.  
Feet kick the air.  
You swing back,  
just miss my arms  
waiting to receive you.  
Hands fall to my sides,  
hide themselves in coat pockets.

You're over the sandbox  
filled now with maple leaves.  
Shoes skim the hedge,  
reach past this boundary line.  
You lie in your bed of air,  
no pillows for your head.

I watch you wake,  
hanging there above me,  
a sparrow in its nest.  
Your fingers clutch the chains,  
probe the links,  
let go the hold.  
You jump, splitting the noonday sun.  
I cannot stop your feet from touching ground.

Carol Carpenter



## Wicker Chair & Coreopsis

My mother left this white wicker chair  
to me who knew the intricacy of the weave,  
the way each strand overlapped  
and wrapped over and under itself,  
creating the pattern of us.

There in her private place I listened  
when she hummed like the wind rustling leaves  
in the plum tree. She whistled sparrows to the ground:  
t-weet, t-weet, t-weet. She could make me hear  
the rise and fall of butterfly wings in air.

Mother kept her sewing basket full of thread  
on the white wicker table. All colors  
moved through the eye of her needle: the deep blue  
of a jay's wing feather, the red of her blazing roses  
climbing the fence, the white of clouds shifting shape.

From pieces of fabric, she designed my clothes,  
knowing what would fit, what would bring out  
my coloring, what would move with me like skin  
when I was ten and growing faster than grass.  
She sewed me into myself, leaving seams to let out.

I watched her fingers move, the needle flash in  
and out of cloth as she turned flat flowered cotton  
into a full skirt buttoned at the waist. She was  
a magician who taught me how to sit quietly and wait  
for coreopsis buds to open into gold suns at our feet.

Every year the coreopsis bloom on the same day  
and I place the white wicker chair and table just right.  
Light weaves my mother's shape in that quiet space  
and I hum along with mother's songs, hear leaves fall  
as mother performs her magic tricks and all is an illusion.

Carol Carpenter

## Iron

After twenty-four days in County he was close to raving, climbing the walls whacked, unable to sit still, totally getting on everyone's nerves. Telling him to slow down only made him more hyper, got him marked for a beating or a shiv, maybe both at the same time, something the guards thought he was earning, always acting out in overdrive, spacey as an astronaut on nitrous. "That dude is totally out of control," his cellmate would complain. No one could actually recall seeing him at rest as in reasonably inert or asleep, occasionally stationary, maybe, when he was visiting the head. It was understood that a man like him couldn't read. Television bored the hell out of him. Movies were for droolers though he did express an interest in hardcore pornography, the kind whose subject matter usually earned you more than six months in County even knowing of its existence. Some speculated that he must have something heavy pending on the outside that cooling his heels behind bars was keeping on hold, the kind of delay that could get a man killed or worse. Once when he said, "This is just like the army, FUBAR city," he freaked his cellie totally out. "Aint no FUBAR in here," cellie said. "That's what you think." "Well, FUBAR this," cellie said, swinging an iron weight in a bath towel directly into his face.

Alan Catlin

## No-Tell-Motel Ship of Fools

They show in-house Girls-Gone-Wild pornos easily accessed for a nominal fee, no questions asked, no ID's checked, and they wonder why naked guys jump from fifth-floor windows in the general direction of the pool, clutching empty cheap champagne bottles in either hand, and end up dead, a messy floater no one wants to wake up to. They pretend amazement when an Open-Bar All-You-Can-Drink Young-Politicians Mixer turns ugly, a whole reserved floor looking like the Baghdad Hilton three years into the occupation, the pool area completely trashed after the convention officers were caught tossing flutes by the case at the pool, not caring whether the glasses missed or not. They pay an undertrained, overworked staff jack shit and then hold them responsible when anything goes wrong while they're exercising their managerial prerogative to bang the head waitress, hostess, night auditor in comp suites, wasted on the personal stock bought and paid for by the company but never invoiced, inventoried or accounted for. They crack on the wait staff for not selling enough drinks but turn a blind eye to the weekend hookers turning tables in the lounge four maybe five times a night; and are overheard saying, "They pay for the best rooms, top dollar on drinks. Who cares what they do on their own time." Don't mention the kickbacks or the pieces of pie on the side that come as some of the unstated perks of the job. They insist you'll never move up in the organization, aren't really managerial timber, if you question authority or refuse to play ball which is fine with you. The only team sport you're interested in is baseball, looking forward to the day you will burn your resume in the lobby and piss on the ashes.

**Alan Catlin**

## Fire Mare

I have driven this road twice a week  
since September, passing this field  
first on my left, then to my right,  
returning. I have glanced with half  
a mind at the acre of fading grasses,  
noticed the vague shape of a horse, grazing.

This terrain is like much of any life:  
a tangent, perimeter of thought, not wholly  
present, not my field.

Today, as I turn, heading east around the  
curve, I am shocked into vision. The rain  
has stopped and a slow sun has chosen  
this ordinary scene. A sorrel mare stands  
by the fence in halo, each hair of her  
coppery coat illuminated, a precise shining,  
an equine star.

I cannot look away. She owns this moment  
as though I have never seen a horse before,  
never acknowledged what the torched grace of winter  
can do to the soul.

But there are cars behind me and my next  
patient waits. I drive on, straining in the  
rear-view mirror for one more glimpse of brilliance

but see only silhouette: the dark horse,  
the empty shape  
of what we hope to know.

Joanne Riley Clarkson

## The Sin Not Taken

I confess that I have never had sex  
in the backseat of a car. Shy, studious  
girl in high school, only child of a widowed  
Catholic mother who taught  
at the parochial school,

I was many years past college, children,  
divorce, before I used the “F” word,  
dyed my hair and stood on the curb  
with a protest sign.

And now, between arthritis and stretch  
marks, The Backseat is honestly  
one of those things it is too late for  
doing but not imagining:

The late spring night, face of the awkward  
lover mimed with moon-, star- and distant city-  
lights. Rolling and ripping the shoplifted  
panties. Climbing over the seats  
into the back, fabric cool and stiff beneath me.  
Smells of oil and candy wrappers. Shine  
of an empty soda can

as the bra unsnaps and breasts, like small, sweet  
blushing mushrooms,  
hunger for the heat.

Loving the sin more than the man-boy’s  
tongue. Breath traveling faster than any  
road race. Windows turning to cloud  
as I kneel on air and feel inside me  
everything but shame.

And if I could live one day of my life over,  
on a Friday afternoon in mid-May,  
I would tap that boy with reddish wavy hair,  
the one who sat in front of me in math class,  
also studious and shy.

I would tap him on the shoulder and whisper:  
“Your backseat or mine?”

Joanne Riley Clarkson

## Micronauts

When I was young as my microscope  
I wanted to become the first man  
on the atom. Why go to Mars when  
you can visit the strange heavens inside  
a leaf,  
a salt grain,  
or some anonymous slide of pond water.  
Leave Andromeda and the one filling  
her ladle with meteorites  
to someone else.  
I'd be happy to become a micronaut,  
colonize star-systems I could  
carry on the tip of a pencil.

Maybe atoms are really planets, tiny earthspheres  
scattered with cities,  
electrons shining like moons in the night sky.  
And the inhabitants—  
are they as strong as any  
of the monsters I dreamed while growing up,  
or are they like us, only  
shorter and with an extra toe?

Even as I speak  
galaxies are growing inside me  
large as Mohican Road, smaller  
than the DNA I lost inside a mosquito.

And though my microscope is gone  
I still think there's a man  
like myself on one of those worlds,  
he and his life-mate wishing upon  
molecules and the lights of mitochondria  
that shiver in the blackness  
over the farside mountains.

Rob Cook

## Alphabet Stupor

A was away.  
B was barely there.  
C had simply collapsed  
into a swaybacked chair, while  
dutiful D did dishes, mumbling.  
E eyed F, who eponymously swore  
at G & H, that ghastly pair, stumbling  
over bodies on their way out the door.

Night before, I had invited the gang,  
plus DJ & his combo Special K,  
the belle known as L (at least for today)  
and the M & M twins—at shebangs  
like this, they melt in your hand.  
N swung in late, toting nips of his own.  
O, that band, they partied full-strength,  
'til at arm's length, P passed the phone—  
*QUIET!* squawked the 2-Q tenant,  
as 3-R rattled the pipes in a riot act.  
But S sang out to timid T, *U can't  
stop now, man!* Big V & W  
backed out in their belching van.  
*Kiss me*, pled X in exhausted air,  
then keeled over on the spot.  
Best not to ask Y. Elsewhere,  
Z was last seen at the zoo,  
gazing at A in a  
rendezvous.

Barbara Lydecker Crane

## Hello, Out There . . .

The phone continues to ring.

I pick up the receiver.  
It's someone I don't know  
calling from a bar. It's a wrong number.  
Loud music. Bar sounds.  
"Listen," a drunken voice says.  
"Rick done some bad shit last night.  
And we had to tie him down.  
Do you want to talk to him?"

"Sure," I say.

He came on the line. He calls me Ernie.  
"Is that you, Uncle Ernie?"

"Yeah," I lie in a slack-jawed response.

"I did some bad shit, Uncle Ernie.  
I broke a bunch of windows out.  
And I hurt some people."  
"Do me a favor," I say.  
"Okay, Uncle Ernie.  
What do you want me to do?"  
"Who called me?"  
"Cousin Jack."  
"Can you reach him?"  
"Yeah, I could . . ."

"I want you to reach over  
and slug Jack in the face."  
"Really?"  
"Absolutely right. Harder'n  
you've ever hit anyone  
in your life."  
"Why?"  
"Don't ask,  
just do it, NOW."  
"Okay."  
I hear a thud.  
A "Son of a Bitch."  
And then, the sound of  
things breaking.

Steve De France



## Ditch

I wade the inlay of stagnant rain between field and  
Jappa Road. Cattail and reeds sway, shad  
and lamb's ear startle then blanch. More exotic  
these milkweed pods at sundown than Hong Kong  
to me who has never been anywhere.

I dust the corrugated pipe for dragonflies to light on  
and toads to croak on, no lust for Prague when  
I sit in the mutter and chatter of beetles and  
ladybugs, horseflies and gnats, the foursquare  
congregation of monarch butterflies.

I want to breathe all this into my body—the potato moth's  
white panting, the waving of Queen Anne's Lace,  
golden rod spewing tiny meteorites of seed.  
Mud gives off the odor of rutting, stews the pungent meat  
of a skunk, loosens the lilies from their trumpets.

I belong to this wildness that holds back the shackled,  
cultivation, fields, weeded and pristine. Paris, Berlin,  
Tokyo, Rio, Chicxulub ripen with fewer delights  
than these thrush nests, this untrampled slather.

Furrows press against the fence, waiting to be plowed  
to the road, but I will not let greed come.  
I stand firm in the oozing rushes and tadpoles  
as the moon floats up. I name this holy ground.

Stephanie Dickinson

## Iowa

Farm girls undress, swim in the pond like nymphs, float on the brown shimmering water where cows drink. Diving into the muck, they imagine themselves the huntress Artemis, or Aphrodite, born of castrated genitals and the froth of the sea, though they've never seen an ocean or mountain. They've been dropped from the thigh of Zeus, these two with chore buckets, pulling their overalls back on, girls hoping to bloom in one sultry corn-weather afternoon. I remember my best friend. Wild, never praised, brazen, Linda had a father who worked her like a son, and even after our swims, she smelled of the hog wallows. We walked barefoot into the sweetness of dusk that had been forever coming. Bangs hanging in our eyes, we were three miles south of anywhere, daubing our farmer-tanned wrists with Ben Hur. No escape from the hayfields ripening on every side, from the orange trumpets of ditch lilies following us. My cousin, bespectacled and freckled, trotted his pony alongside. *I could never love you*, she shooed him. She wanted red Mustangs, Harley Davidsons, anything fast to take her away. Crickets whirled as we cut into the cemetery. We wandered over the graves, talked to the blue-eyed upper classman, Jack Holub, killed in a tractor accident. We sat on my father's cracked headstone. *I wish we could trade*, she'd say, already breasty, milkiness pushing out the bib of her coveralls. No town boy would find us though we were goddesses. Splitting a can of warm Falstaff, we were frantic for forbidden fruit. But this was Iowa, black-soil country, and dangerousness came slower than the glaciers. Her father, wearing waders and hard looks, was quicker. Already looking for us.

Stephanie Dickinson

## Second Base on the Banana Boat

So hard to make a double play  
in this humidity. The air is soft  
and wobbly. At the height of the pivot,

the Amazon with all its piranhas  
slides under me, tries to take me out.  
A tarantula from the banana pile

waits in the on-deck circle, spitting  
on his feelers and rubbing them briskly  
together before picking up a bat.

Foul balls bounce off the jungle  
canopy, unravel into the air  
like a flutter of albino parrots.

*A tour de force* is slithering on first,  
staring me down with a crocodile smile.  
The hit-and-run is on. The anaconda

in the box seats is growing larger  
and larger as the entire front row  
disappears one at a time. I cheat

a step or two towards first to cover  
the hole. The sky lobs a quick  
monsoon at us. The infield draws

the twitching tarpaulin over itself.  
We outrun typhoid to the dugout and relax,  
drenching our sweaty faces in mosquitoes.

James Doyle

**Watching you sleep . . .**

is like snorkeling  
in tropical waters.

I am entranced by the shifts  
in the light and form of your face.

Bold and weightless, I explore  
the translucence that surrounds:

soft coral fingers  
peek out from a cave,

elongated ribbon reefs  
pile and fall around your head,

angel fish flash softly  
in your dark eye spaces,

a sponge swells and shrinks  
in the shape of your nose,

an open clam, giant, red-lined,  
has taken the place of your mouth,

sea grass at your temples  
drifts and hides small creatures,

sea urchins cluster  
around your cheeks and chin.

Your belly on the seabed,  
your face chin-down on the pillow –

you are a green turtle in repose;  
an outstanding example

representing the major stages  
in Earth's evolutionary history,

the ongoing ecological process  
of a superlative natural  
phenomenon.

I am careful how I touch.  
I must remember how to breathe.

**Nicola Easthope**

## Lay the Sod o'er Me

We made his coffin out of soft, white pine,  
long boards for the sides scored to bend  
into wide-shouldered contours of the old shape.  
Lines of grain accented  
knots of deep-earth brown  
like eyes of the old pine looking out to its utility.  
It had holes in the bottom for the ground  
to join him when the snows melt to run-off.

We burned, on the top, the horizon silhouette  
of the mountain he could see from his bed,  
and sheep on the range,  
and an old sheep wagon with off-center door  
like the one he called home as a boy.

On the end board we burned a leaping trout  
about to grab at the hand-tied fly on his line;  
on the sides, rough designs  
of all the wildlife of his wild life.

For handles we picked six horseshoes  
from an old oil bucket behind the barn—  
rusted, worn, encrusted in the grooves  
with manure and mountain mud.  
We screwed them into strips of cowhide  
marked with his brand—*lazy M, inverted T, bar*—  
fastened to the coffin, three on a side.

And for planting him down  
like a seed into new-ploughed ground,  
we used lassos,  
three of them, each at least fifteen feet.  
Six ranch-hands  
at the sides of the hole  
slowly unwound the ropes.

Maureen Tolman Flannery

## Two Step

Hartford, '43. The big-band clubs swing  
with doomed youths, sucking nightlife  
into their wartime daze.

He is another soldier on furlough who  
cuts in, out, as always, for a good time.  
She is a key punch operator at the Aetna.

She wears high platforms that pump  
music into the curve of her calves.  
She will confess to me, positioning

Dr. Scholls' squashed donut pads  
over her corns, that her youthful vanity,  
via those shoes, ruined her dancing feet.

He is a handsome cowboy who can dance.  
What chance does she have?  
He has two-stepped her out of the canteen

and onto her porch cot. She is not,  
nor will she ever be, the only thing  
on his mind, as he is hers.

The couch, white wicker with the weave  
frayed, sends reed shoots in odd directions  
like vine tendrils feeling for something rooted

to grab onto. The chenille spread,  
draped across the back, covers them  
from the night's chill as my mother,

with dark wavy hair and large coquettish eyes  
that contradict her prudish piety, trades  
the ruby of her wholeness for a pirate's chest

of longing buried in wet sand of her aspirations.  
She has invited the future in, and it is hard  
and unresponsive as this cot,

and yet, expectant as she soon will be.  
They have not yet learned that charm  
does not discriminate among recipients.

They do not know where the clarity  
of her flashing eyes will go when  
disappointment drops a dark scrim before them.

They are four years and half a continent  
away from my birth. She carries my potency  
in a pouch at her side like a gold doubloon.

My sister will join them soon. I am  
waiting until they are surrounded by wood—  
log cabin walls with pine forest outside.

I cannot be enticed into city matter  
even by his charm  
or the dark, flirty flash of her Irish eyes.

**Maureen Tolman Flannery**

## Mittens

we wear mittens to protect our hands from each other there are no fingers entwined in this relationship. we wear big jackets like puffed up penguins struggling to walk struggling to keep the cold out but it's not just the air that is frozen solid our breath visible spreading before our faces in the dark night with the stars drowning disappearing in all that sky when we should be alone and safe and apart. there's no one on these streets we walk alone and jagged to find your house your kitchen your fridge with the photo of your ex still on it buried under magnets but it's still there. we've moved on from beer to tequila to gin and tonic to watered scotch burning our throats to create some artificial warmth swaying tearing coughing through what's left of the night. your cat peppered black white purring or is it growling I can't tell it doesn't seem to know either. I know you but I don't and you don't and you know me but we don't know each other like this. not like this with the lamp still burning even though it's now daytime and the sun has no heat but the lamp burns my fingers when I touch it it's been on all night and you finish the scotch no grimace no burning no pain. no pain for me either this isn't the movies there's no love story here. there's not any kind of story here now that the night has filtered out and spread through. there's no love story here. I promise.

Christine Fotis



## Insatiable

I once dreamt that in one night I called up  
the assorted sausages of my past, heartily humped  
them all in a row. First, I visited Gorilla Face, the man  
with the Cro-Magnon size jaw who did sit ups before  
bed. As he snored in the sheets, I ran to a pay phone,  
got Ultra-Religious Jewish Boy to pick me up for some  
thigh-quivering pleasing, then had private cum parties  
with Ex Fat Guy, Farm Boy and Valentine's Day Killer.

You trailed me in a Buick Skylark, made the pay phone  
cackle like a rooster. I ran away before you caught me  
slamming down on a stranger, tracing the socket of his lips,  
clutching the granite slab of his shoulder. I was a bad  
woman feeling good, following the savage beats of my hips  
from bedroom to brick wall to bathroom tile. I ran  
and ran, before you could witness me pound our love  
into a pulp with the steady rock of my rear.

It had been going too well between us. I'd woken up  
too many mornings in the crook of your arm  
feeling delicious. My unconscious wanted to sledgehammer  
our glass coffee table with every pelvic thrust, every squeeze  
of bun, every fevered lick of tongue. I wasn't a nice, Jewish girl  
living with you in sin, forwarding my phone so mother  
didn't discover I wasn't roommates anymore  
with pigtailed Lana, her bed piled with stuffed animal kitties.

I woke up crying and confessed. *Come back to bed.*  
*It's OK*, you said. You laughed, admitted that last night  
your unconscious had fucked your German ex-girlfriend  
in a place called Buttock, Malaysia. *Come back to bed,*  
you said, embracing my undeserving inner whore.  
You spooned all of me into your warm flesh,  
even the part determined to desecrate  
before someone stole you away from me first.

Marilyn Friedman

### Even the Nails in the Sheet Rock Missed Her

When she entered a room, the room paid attention.  
When she entered his house,  
the leather couches plumped up and shone,  
the hardwood floors were giddy with tapping  
against the soles of her small black shoes,  
the books on the shelves jostled each other  
for a better view of the waves of her hair.

When she didn't come, the walls held their breath,  
straining to hear her voice, her laugh.  
When she still didn't come, that crying noise wasn't him.  
The white gauze curtains hung keening,  
as they remembered the stroke of her fingers.  
And at night, when he turned and turned,  
it was only because the bed prodded him continually,  
as the pillows pleaded in his ear, "Bring her back."  
And when he sat up, his hand on his chest,  
how could he breathe,  
when all the air had gone out into the street  
calling her name?

Cheryl Gatling

**For the Woman Who Walked out During My Reading**

To what should I attribute it,  
an upsurge in sunspot activity

or the general decay of manners?  
Please don't say it was me,

the dull sincerity of my words,  
their untreated depression,

that sent you rushing off.  
Let me think there was a man

(with a ponytail, perhaps),  
a vase of dried wildflowers,

a bedroom wall on which  
you put a hand for balance

as you stepped out of your skirt,  
your micro panties, and then yourself

and delicately into a love poem.

**Howard Good**

## Visit from My Mother on My Birthday

*June 27, Andros Island, Greece*

My mother sits on the ledge  
of my balcony  
overlooking the pool  
and the Aegean Sea.

She blocks my view of  
the island's geraniums,  
bougainvillea and  
beach umbrellas.  
She says she bleached  
the sheets on my hotel bed  
and scoured the sink  
with Borax and Bon Ami.

My friend Barbara,  
the psychoanalyst,  
says it takes more than  
a breath to get over  
a mother's death.  
My daughter Liz  
says I have a vivid  
imagination.

But I swear, there is my mother  
in a Swirl housedress, 40's wedgies,  
her rimless glasses perched  
on her nose like mine.

"Why are you here?" I ask  
as the ferry to Tinos  
sticks its nose out  
of the rocky cliffs  
and sails silently across  
my page.

"It's your birthday, right?" She winks.  
"Birthing you was like God  
building Andros Island,  
pushing it up and  
out of the sea. No small thing!"  
"Go back to Brooklyn," I beg.  
"You don't belong here among  
Greek ruins and broiled octopus."

My mother is indifferent  
to ferry schedules or  
broken ancient pottery.  
She doesn't want to climb  
the steps to the Acropolis,  
or say the names  
Dionysus, Aphrodite or Apollo.

Instead she gazes at  
a boy in an orange  
bathing suit climbing  
out of the hotel pool.

I write the words:  
*boy in an orange bathing suit,*

and she is gone.

**June S. Gould**

### A Frat Guy on a Motorcycle

Regardless of what I thought  
of his baseball hat turned backwards  
and the hundred-dollar Ray-Ban shades;

or the severed sleeves of his T-shirt  
and the tribal band tattoo winding his bicep;

or the girl—Good Lord, that beautiful girl  
strapped tail-up behind him on the Kawasaki—  
in tiny denim shorts, two long gulps  
of golden leg straddling the hot engine.

Regardless of my opinions,  
my simple and stubborn stereotyping,  
I envied the look on this man's tanned face  
when he stopped at a red light beside me.

It was a look that said, in no uncertain terms,  
*My life is good right now. Yes. Damn good.*

**Nathan Graziano**

### Two Girls in a Tub Together

Maybe you're hoping for a supermodel  
to slip out of a slinky red dress,  
kick off a pair of stiletto pumps,  
and step lightly onto a cold, tiled floor.  
A few feet away another woman  
will wait with parted lips in a Roman tub,  
steam rising from the still water.  
The two beauties will then embrace,  
their breasts lathered with bubbles,  
their smooth, shaved legs entangled  
as their pink tongues flicker like moths.

So it might come as a disappointment  
when I tell you that the two girls in the tub  
are my wife and eighteen-month-old daughter.  
They're splashing and laughing,  
having fun as clean as a yellow rubber duck.

I'm in the other room listening to them,  
a bit choked up by my love for both.  
I fold my hands over my stomach and smile,  
as astounded as you by my own caprices.

**Nathan Graziano**

## Thanksgiving at Jill's House

It was a different kind of law  
and he, an atypical judge.  
But the dining room table  
was unquestionably a court  
and, sat before knives, forks  
and spoons, was a wide range  
of defendants.

But it was a church too.  
It wasn't God exactly  
who sat at table's head  
but an errant cough would set  
those heavy eyes to rolling heavenward  
in hopes the trinity could stand to be a foursome.

It was an army as well.  
Brothers on either side  
were foot soldiers  
though it were hands  
that nervously reached across the  
table's grim frontier.

And it was an office of the severest kind,  
where the only humor  
stems from boss's bon mots,  
and no woman yet  
had breached that  
thick glass ceiling  
of having an opinion.

It was family but not  
the kind that I was used to.  
He said Grace.  
He sliced the fowl.  
But not the tough charred atmosphere.

And it was a prison camp.  
Jill risked the commandant's wrath  
by occasionally escaping to my glance.  
But how much tunnel can you dig  
with half a smile.

**John Grey**



### **The Last Photograph of My Father**

My daughter is in his lap  
like a bouquet of flowers.  
Like the bouquet that would  
come to the door from a friend  
three days later.  
But that is not the miracle.  
The miracle is my mother  
who appeared uninvited,  
who walked across the room,  
and stood by his chair, though no one  
would have asked her to do this.  
Not because she did not belong,  
but my mother refuses to be in pictures,  
turns her head, covers her face, scowls.  
Even on a wedding photograph she waves  
an angry arm at the photographer.  
In a teenage photo she tries to strangle  
her kid brother with the camera.  
So no one asks my mother to be in pictures.  
This photo was to be of my daughter and father,  
but my mother got up  
and crossed the room unbidden,  
positioned herself in the center behind him  
and though unpracticed, she smiled,  
as if she knew she belonged there,  
as if she heard his heart  
counting down.

**Rasma Haidri**

## White Hole

The elderly poet, famous for prizes and privacy,  
walked quickly and quietly into the bookstore  
straight up to the shelf of New Titles.  
He looked first to his left, then to his right,  
and, sure he hadn't been recognized,  
he took down a heavy anthology.  
The pages fell open on his very chapter.  
There was his name and his picture too –  
the one which his late wife had taken  
and which he had made the publisher use  
despite its being decades too young.  
There was the blurb of his bio and titles  
which had been written by his agent's intern.  
And there, of course, were six of his poems.  
Two he could recite by heart  
from God-knows-how-many readings,  
and one which he thought he'd lost years ago  
and which he insisted be included.  
For the other three he still had doubts  
about their selection and order.  
He followed each line of verse with his finger,  
silently mouthing the words. But, as he read,  
he found himself glancing up the page at his name  
and at the parentheses beneath it.  
It gave a year, a dash, and a space  
(like a little hole, he thought) waiting to be filled.  
Again and again it drew his attention  
until it fixed both his finger and eye.  
Then, as he stared, it seemed to him  
that his bio blurb began to melt, dissolving into  
a puddle of ink. And, pulled by some strange gravity,  
it flowed up the page and poured itself  
into the little white hole. His picture was next,  
crumbling like a sheet of spring ice making  
a creek of colored water tumbling into the hole.  
The little white hole seemed to be growing.  
His poems began to yield to its pull, till line by line  
like an anchor chain with its hawser cut,  
they rattled into the bottomless thing.  
And still the white hole grew larger and stronger.  
His hat was next, and then his cane,  
his tie and shirt, his pants and shoes.  
At the loss of his socks he was nearly upended.  
His left hand clutched at the band of his shorts  
while his right hand tried to close the book.  
But the strain was too much for the cheap cotton cloth.  
With a rip they flew off and into the hole.  
All of the bookstore's customers and clerks  
were looking at him. The elderly poet, so famous  
for prizing his privacy, was public now as never before.

He knew there was only one place to hide. One snatch  
in vain for his glasses, and he gave his body to gravity.  
He disappeared down the waiting hole.  
The big gleaming book fell to the floor.  
And the cover slammed shut behind him.

**Joseph Hart**

## Loons

One rainy late-summer afternoon in Maine  
my father and I took a sauna together  
in the woods, by ourselves;  
then we swam in the cold lake,  
too far out for me; my father just kept on  
swimming. I followed. There was mist across the lake,  
and I worried that he might disappear, that I might forget  
the direction to shore. And then, just as I called out  
that I couldn't keep up, that I was turning back,  
we swam up against a huge rock, almost  
an island, submerged just beneath the surface.  
We pulled ourselves out and surveyed the mist  
over the water: We couldn't see the shore  
or hear anything but our own bodies. The rain  
had stopped. We stood there breathing, naked,  
when my father started talking, hesitantly  
at first, about loons, about their mournful songs,  
about how rare they are, how rarely they allow  
any human to see them. They mate for life,  
he said. Then he told me other things I wish  
I could remember, and then he kissed me  
between my shoulder blades, sat down on the edge  
of that rock so only his shoulders and head  
were above the water—while I stood, a skinny boy,  
beside him—and then he pushed off from that sitting  
position, slipped into the water, and swam  
back with his sure stroke, stopping only once  
to gesture to me to follow.  
That night I slept on the screened porch, inside  
the exuberant, billion-throated calls of just-born  
frogs, inside the scribble of fireflies,  
the echo of owl-hoot, silence, and the mournful  
calls—way out in the mist—of loons,  
which kept me awake, though I tried not to listen.

Michael Hettich

## **This Love**

My love is not that of mythical motorbike trips  
to fragile Florence  
at eighteen years of age.  
Of hot hotel bedrooms  
covered with petals peeled  
from the safe summer rose.  
Not that which Bronte bore on the moors.  
Nor that of doomed Paris  
watching his bold brother die.  
A simple sacrifice  
to the patchwork passion of his love.

But not equally of Theseus,  
I have no ship to sail away.  
Not that of shining silver words  
rusting in the rain  
that wild winter brings.  
Of love pledged forever  
on the polished bathroom floor,  
snatched savage back  
in the passenger seat of a small second-hand car  
parked by the shore  
overlooking the river  
as it flows to Cobh.  
I won't cross the moors,  
one house for another.

They will call me a child,  
lovesick prepubescent,  
for these honey words,  
but fuck them.  
Mine is a small love  
of ham-salad sandwiches,  
dinners made and cups of tea.  
The kind you never find in odes and elegies.  
Of children playing  
when I am old.  
I'll look into your eyes then  
and show you all.  
This is the love I have for you.  
Take it,  
if it is enough.

**Kenneth Hickey**

## The Day Everybody Went on Strike

Maybe it started when the garbage grew mountain high  
and the pilots left their planes and  
clerks refused to sell. Maybe it started  
when one baby refused to take its bottle  
or a child boycotted its bath.

Maybe it began that way, but it spread  
from people to things. Refrigerators  
refused to keep things cold; cars  
locked their wheels and would not move;  
doors bickered with their hinges  
and would not open; matches could be hit  
with hammers and still not light.

Maybe flies from the mountain ranges  
of garbage carried the virus. By noon  
no machines would move even if you bribed  
them with vintage oil. Then it got worse.  
The tide solidified in mid retreat; wind  
took a rest. No bird flew; no fish swam.

Then it really got bad: hearts not pumping,  
lungs not breathing. The sun welded itself  
to a spot in the sky. Everywhere nothing  
was doing what it was meant to do.  
Ears refused to hear all that silence;  
eyes refused to report all that lack of motion.  
The last clock stopped swinging its hands  
at 2:15, and it was 2:15 forever.

**Robert Hoelt**

## The Departure

“What are you doing?”

He stood slouched in the doorway.  
She finished folding her skirt,  
put it in her suitcase, snicked  
the latches shut—click—click.  
It was an hour before dinner;  
nothing roasted in the oven.  
She checked her watch.  
In five minutes, if it was on time,  
the space ship would arrive.

She looked at him and smiled,  
looked around the bedroom  
as if it were an exhibit  
in a museum she hadn't wanted to visit,  
looked out the window  
to the garden she wouldn't harvest,  
looked back at him and smiled.

He followed her to the front door,  
blinked stupidly when the cab horn beeped,  
didn't even try to stop her as she brushed past.  
His mouth was open like a fruit jar  
as she pulled away not even waving.  
She would call later, ask, “What are you doing?”  
then hang up. She would do it every day  
maybe for years. Until she was even.

Robert Hoelt

## Chromolinguistics

*Language to ashes  
Text to dust  
Our land's first artist  
is laid to rest.*

from *Elegy* (c. 5000 BCE)

The ghost is in the ground,  
the ghost is in the cave,  
the ghost has dots & lines,  
the ghost vibrates in humid cave-wall paintings,  
the ghost is the paintings,  
the ghost is cubist & ancient,  
& I am the ancient cubist painting's final patron,  
a viewer misplaced (detached temporally), an idea, a body,  
an *e pluribus unum* of ideas,  
but I, Lucius Fibonacci, a separate mind, a line drawer, will be cubist,  
& I will hear the cosmic background radiation's pre-luminescence,  
& I will anticipate enlightenment's melodic spheres,  
& I will paint on the eternal backdrop of cave walls  
an entrance & an egress.

•

At the cave's infinitesimal end:  
a pre-Luminescent, with one vision & one song, paints—  
the pre-Luminescent is a being who, with paintbrushes, sticks, moss lamps, & thighs,  
alchemizes this cave  
by painting with hemoglobin drawn from my thigh,  
is a being with sagging breasts & a cosmology on its ass,  
is a being that is an uncelebrated ghost who is unable to celebrate.

I turn & cave moisture reflects my facial capillaries.  
I strum a stalactite  
& sing my sixteenth-note understanding of pre-neo-cubism & my paintbrush cognizance  
of the cave.  
I attempt to see through my monochromaticism.  
I see zigzags & dots, I scream,  
I'm hypnotized, my flesh trembles, my heart beats 5/4 time, I salivate.

I am in a theatre with stiff-muscled patron-viewers in raincoats & no popcorn.  
Am I a projector?  
I laugh out, "Where am I cast on the screen?" to the dead guy next to me, anyone near,  
you, reader, "Are you a Neo-Luminescent? a projection?"  
"Quiet, unless you paint me to be."  
"Are you the dots & lines?"  
"Are dimensions necessary," you reply through the page,  
& if I say, "No," will I become a pointillist.

•



I crave a cubist perspective to investigate  
all the cave's hollows, all the stalactites of resonance,  
the stalagmite of now, the perspective, the now-angle, a neo-now angle.  
& a Thing & a Self, & a Thing-in-a-Self that is nothing.  
Thing that stands, that is cast; Self that speaks, that has chromatic grammar: that is  
    myriad Thing-in-Self,  
but that is not my projection,  
that is not my drawing,  
that is not my vowels, nor consonants,  
but, nonetheless, heeds my vowels!

The Thing is a cage cast by reverends of the Iron.  
Horizontal & vertical monochrome bars welded, a cosmic lattice  
between me & the prism of perspectives—  
polychromatic blasts from cosmic background radiation.  
The iron bars' intersections alchemize radiation to sounds & colors.  
The cage is the Idea—  
the awakened cubist cave element,  
lines spiraled thru time to the viewer,  
its own idea revealed in detail, at last,  
again & again, into quantum levels with constant chaos continually calculated,  
& the concept of its own detail.

The Idea recreates the cave from pre-caved times. Thus,  
it might be a hydrogen atom or an Aleph dragging permuted ions created from  
    vowels bouncing around the cave in exact echo of initial announcement—  
voicing a grander idea of the cave  
& expanding perspectives thru a universe & immense cosmologies.  
It might be a golden rectangle drawn on one ghost mind  
or a reflection of the uncelebrated ghost mind.  
It might be poems from a Neo-Luminescent,  
or a reflection of my mind, perhaps in my mind,  
perhaps in the mind that wrote this poem,  
or the poem's own mind that thinks the Thing that is the beginning & the end.

& perhaps the mind will die.

The ghost, the songless, the prayerless, the secret-from-us, the unhypothesized limitless,  
    the being who creates being,  
who exhilarates in quantum detail, perceives thru all dimensions in multiple-  
    perspectives simultaneously—multiple & single act uniquely,  
& am I unable to appreciate?

•

I, Lucius Fibonacci, hypothesize a ghost-idea,  
& I hypothesize the ghost:  
the ghost dwells in the underground,  
the ghost is humid like the cave,  
the ghost dwells in the cave walls,  
the ghost invades the unawake,

the ghost will fade into the wall with the paint,  
the ghost will appear from the wall,  
the ghost paints itself,  
the ghost is poly-rhythmic,  
the ghost flies like desire made song,  
the ghost screams of death in ghost-consonants,  
the cry of birth is ghost-vowels,  
the ghost is in the tomb,  
& the ghost is in the womb,  
the ghost is unique to itself uniquely,  
I need the ghost to inspire me to be lyric, polychromatic,  
the ghost thinks like the alphabet,  
the ghost speaks from all times,  
the ghost always hears itself,  
the ghost needs to sleep,  
the ghost needs to rest from multi-perspectives,  
the ghost needs to be repainted by a neo-now-painter,  
the ghost needs me,  
the ghost invites me with colors,  
the ghost invites me with brush,  
the ghost gives me endless canvas  
& the awakesness to be apart from awakesness, to perceive.  
The ghost calls me to wake & sleep, to sing,  
I sleep, I wake, again & again simultaneously.  
The ghost can't exist independent of me.  
The ghost vibrates in the humid cave-wall paintings.  
The ghost whispers a consonant  
& sounds a round vowel.

•

Dots & zigzags vortex into the walls,  
painted ghosts leap from the walls,  
stalactites resonate bass tones,  
new colors are alchemized,  
eyes envision, perceive,  
& one idea in one drawn line on one cave wall becomes multi-idea, multi-color  
perspectives in multi-dimensions painted into the wall,  
& becomes energy, becomes consciousness, becomes Idea, becomes vision, &  
becomes  
the cubism of a Neo-Omnipresent-Luminescent, Lucius Fibonacci—  
an awakened ghost-viewer-patron-painter for the eternal palimpsest, the eternal cave  
wall.

**Tom Holmes**

**How You'll Know You've Met Your Future Wife**  
*for my sons*

One day, a girlfriend will throw you a party. "Surprise!" All your exes will spring up, like Jills-in-the-boxes, from behind your furniture. Your girlfriend will explain that she is leaving you, that she's had it, that she wasn't sure how to tell you why, so she tracked down all these others, all your former lovers, to help articulate just what it is about you that's so irredeemably wrong. "You didn't change your shirts or the sheets enough," one will shout. "You remembered the batting averages of all the Red Sox, but not my birthday," another will say, throwing a lit candle at you like a fastball. You'll hear about how you were too gassy, too cheap. One will say you freaked her out when you whispered in her ear, and another will recall how she pointed to page 84 in *The Joy of Sex*, how you turned red, how you turned the page, said no, but maybe page 16, after some more white wine, and then passed out. When they finally finish, you'll be torn in pieces that your exes will fling around the room and stomp on with high heels, and the better part of you will pool at the feet of your newest ex-girlfriend. Just when you're giving up on yourself and on love, one of your eyes will see someone new, a party crasher just there to get out of the rain, and to get some cake. Her eyes will be glassy with tears. She will flick a smile at you and this will make you strong enough to pull yourself together. You will notice a large smudge of icing on her nose, but that won't bother you at all, and you won't dream of telling her.

**Tom C. Hunley**

## **Robinson Crusoe**

(the abridged novel as an MP3)

“The Wanderer” (Dion and The Belmonts)  
“I’m Moving On” (Rascal Flatts)  
“Into the Great Wide Open” (Tom Petty)  
“Can’t Nobody Hold Me Down” (Puff Daddy)  
“Goodbye to You” (Scandal)  
“Sailing” (Christopher Cross)  
“Stormy Weather” (Billie Holiday)  
“I Get Lost” (Eric Clapton)  
“Beyond the Sea” (Bobby Darin)  
“A Thousand Miles from Nowhere” (Dwight Yoakam)  
“Welcome to the Jungle” (Guns ‘N’ Roses)  
“Walk on the Wild Side” (Lou Reed)  
“Hot Hot Hot” (Buster Poindexter)  
“Sand in My Shoes” (Dido)  
“Help!” (The Beatles)  
“Rescue Me” (Aretha Franklin)  
“Gimme Shelter” (Rolling Stones)  
“Hungry Like the Wolf” (Duran Duran)  
“I Drink Alone” (George Thorogood)  
“Dirty White Boy” (Foreigner)  
“I Will Survive” (Gloria Gaynor)  
“Through the Years” (Kenny Rogers)  
“Christmas in the Caribbean” (Jimmy Buffett)  
“So Lonely” (The Police)  
“Sometimes You Can’t Make It on Your Own” (U2)  
“Footprints in the Sand” (George Benson)  
“Who Can It Be Now?” (Men at Work)  
“Thank God It’s Friday” (R. Kelly)  
“Hey, Good Looking” (Hank Williams)  
“Just What the Doctor Ordered” (Ted Nugent)  
“Lonely No More” (Rob Thomas)  
“Sharing the Night Together” (Dr. Hook)  
“Land of 1000 Dances” (Cannibal and The Headhunters)  
“20 Years” (Placebo)  
“Homesick” (The Cure)  
“Somewhere I Belong” (Linkin Park)  
“So Far Away” (Carole King)  
“London Calling” (The Clash)  
“Let Me Be There” (Olivia Newton John)  
“Come Sail Away” (Styx)  
“Green Green Grass of Home” (Tom Jones)  
“My Happy Ending” (Avril Lavigne)  
“Diary” (Bread)

## **Lockie Hunter**

## Some Things My Sister Left Behind

One doll with a painted white face and a delicate purple fan that our father brought back from Chinatown (Exxon station bathroom, just outside of Memphis)

One yellow plaid hair ribbon with her name, Aimee, embroidered in purple script (Samuel Jackson playground, Memphis)

Two tonsils (Doctor Simmons office, Memphis)

Three Judy Bloom books (under bunk number seven, cheerleading camp, Nashville)

One trophy, "Best Poem 1976: Samuel Jackson Junior High" (bedside table, bedroom, Memphis)

One retainer (boyfriend's house, Memphis)

One 1980 Toyota Corolla, white with beige interior: totaled (Peabody Service and Towing, Memphis)

One letter from dad encouraging her to "excel in her studies and drive carefully dammit now that you are up there in Yankeeland;" signed "I love you so much, baby." (shoebox under bed, Boston)

Twenty-five assorted love letters from seven different boys dated 1982-2006 (shoebox under bed, Boston)

Five little black dresses (hanging in closet, bedroom, Boston)

Three unpaid speeding tickets (sitting on desk under three-day-old Starbucks mocha latte, home office, Boston)

Two "respectable" business suits, both heather gray (hanging in bedroom closet, Boston)

Two unfed cats sitting on the windowsill, waiting (kitchen, Boston)

Three pairs of blue jeans: two faded Levi's, boot-cut size 7M with butt and knees missing, one Guess slim-fit size-four never worn (bureau, bedroom, Boston)

One unfinished memoir titled "My Life in Words" (C: drive, Dell computer, home office, Boston)

Four pints of blood (Massachusetts Turnpike between Boston and Cambridge)

One recipe for asparagus with pecan brown butter (recipe box, kitchen, Boston)

One 1987 VW bug, sunflower-yellow with cloud-white interior; totaled (Commonwealth Service and Towing, off the Massachusetts Turnpike between Cambridge and Boston)

Nineteen detailed photo albums recording her unfinished life (knotty pine bookshelf, living room, Boston)

One antique wedding gown, circa 1948, found at garage sale (HOPE chest, foot of bed, Boston)

One mother, forty-nine-years-old, deciding between five little black dresses and two “respectable” suits to bring to funeral parlor (bedroom closet, Boston)

One detailed “incident resulting in loss of life” form 192B filed in triplicate (Cambridge Police station, District Six Station, Cambridge)

One sister, twenty-two-years-old, on computer, writing (Memphis)

**Lockie Hunter**

## To What Habit Do You Attribute the Longevity of Your Marriage?

So we're having an argument  
about politics—most of our thirty  
years of marriage we belonged to  
different parties—and our car's off  
the road, off the crumbling cliff  
and into the cumulus and robin's egg  
half a mile before we notice  
and only then do we plummet.  
The parachute of my pink sunbonnet  
slows us—down we rock like that tree-top  
cradle until an Acme rocket  
shoots a hole like a heart and shatters  
our target: a bridge over a mad river  
complete with whirlpools to hell (see  
those red-tailed devils, pitchforks poised  
to pop our tires?) when Daffy Duck  
lands on our hood. Despite our warnings  
with dingbats aplenty, he dons  
a top hat, does a tap dance  
(with spats, cane, full orchestration)  
which shifts the trajectory  
of our Chevy to the six lanes  
of mayhem and we try to recall  
whose turn it was to pay the car  
insurance, the life insurance, and  
boing! here we are on a shiny  
Acme mattress truck. We have a big  
face-sucking kiss so we don't notice  
the dark tunnel—oh, suffering  
succotash, heavens to murgatroid—  
that sloughs us off to a desert  
where we hang on matching arms  
of a cactus and vultures discuss  
the proper spices for such aged  
specimens when, as you expected,  
the Roadrunner beeps and Coyote's  
pinwheel legs spin up enough  
turbulence to blow the birds off  
screen and us back to this couch,  
watching Saturday morning TV.

**Marcia L. Hurlow**

## Big Daddy

Called me Hot Stuff. Called me Ragtop,  
Lugnut, your Deere-in-the-Driveway Duchess.

Called forth Bad Company from the pickup's stereo  
and, lo, I appeared with a buck knife

and a hundred-proof smile, my battered hunter's manual  
tucked in the waistband of my cutoffs.

What were we at first but two necks of the same guitar,  
high on the blister of our power riff? Each night

was a stadium tour, each day an album cover  
fit for collecting. How precious,

how practiced we looked those weekends at the lake,  
posing in our matching hipwaders and stabbing

at the world's swamp-stink with the gig of our love.  
But forever is a black fish hiding in cattails, a fat plop

always sounding out of range. Soon, the lake iced over.  
The far-off smoke of forest fires stole your attention.

While I dreamt pyrotechnics for our stage duets,  
you and your matchbox slid out the window.

No note. No final mix tape. No rose left thorny  
on the nightstand. I searched for you in parking lots

until a passing trucker said he'd caught your show  
in Denver, that you wore a silk shirt and played everything

acoustic, and the news rocked me like a last-track ballad.  
Oh Big Daddy, Daddy with the Long Legs,

father of a stillborn promise and my liveliest rage,  
for weeks I choked on your name, stuck so deep

in my craw it took a crowbar and two months  
of keg stands in Assumption, Illinois, to dislodge it.

Now, I drink sweet tea in a Southern state. Now,  
I am patient. Here, small likenesses of you croak to me

from their lilypadded thrones. I'd like to mistake  
their bellows for green apologies, but I know better.

At night, I hunt them with a three prong. I fry them  
in batter and grease. We both know what they taste like.

Carrie Jerrell



### Plainsong

If you saw my footprints around the barn loft's ladder,  
you would know I tie each bale with sisal twine and secrets.

If you saw me kneel among cut sweetcorn stalks,  
you would know I hear vespers in the auger's rush.

If Red-tails scouted the warren's edge, or murders called  
from their barbed-wire roosts, you would hide me in rows  
of ruby snapdragons, mend my briar-lashed hands;

like the dobbin, you would carry me where jack-in-the-pulpits grow  
beneath cathedraling white oak and hickory.

If sunset turned ripe wheatfields honey-gold,  
and the combine hummed as it cleared the hundredth acre;  
if, after dark, haze hung like a new heaven above the furrows,

you would know the harvest moon is near,  
that sheets left on the line will smell of blazing stars in the morning,

and that I wait upstairs for you, barefoot on the pine floor,  
unplaiting the amber linens of my hair.

Carrie Jerrell

## **Mall of America**

To get here by one, leave by 12:30.  
Take Washington past the Mobil station, the public library,  
Kinko's, Gold's Gym, Target, and on the corner  
of State and Washington you'll see Dunkin' Donuts,  
Office Max and TGI Friday's.  
Turn left at the light.  
Drive about a half-mile.  
On your left'll be Lowe's, Wendy's, Best Buy,  
Pep Boys, and Pet Supermarket.  
On your right'll be Burger King, Radio Shack, Home Depot,  
Petco, and Auto Nation.  
The next light is Main.  
Make a left.  
You'll pass Starbucks, McDonald's, Subway, Wal-Mart,  
Sports Authority, Bank of America, Einstein Bagels,  
Blockbuster Video, a Shell station, and the first Fifth Third Bank.  
Make another left at the intersection of Main and Church.  
You'll pass the massive AMC movie theatre, Arby's,  
Balley's Total Fitness, Denny's, and the UPS Store.  
The mall will be on your left: Benningan's, Macy's, Lord and Taylor,  
Sears, Sears Auto, Nordstrom, Cheesecake Factory, Citibank.  
Go over the highway and make the third left onto Second Ave.  
If you get out to the dealerships  
—Honda, Toyota, Saab, Volvo, Volkswagon—you've gone too far.  
On Second, make a U-turn at the first stop sign,  
cut through the BP parking lot  
and make a left back onto Church.  
Borders Books will be on your right,  
Barnes & Noble across the street.  
Past Borders is Oak Street,  
which looks like an alley and will take you behind  
the Marriot, past the K-Mart, Comp USA, Papa John's,  
another Shell, Starbucks, McDonald's, Blockbuster Video,  
and the second Fifth Third Bank.  
Turn left onto Maple Ave.  
The third stop sign is Hill Street.  
Make a right.  
My house is the eleventh house on the left.  
Don't worry about bringing anything.  
We've got plenty of fireworks  
and I found a place selling flags three for a dollar.

**Brad Johnson**

## Married Saturday Mornings

I don't want to let you out of bed this Saturday morning.  
While a storm lifts the curtains of the open windows  
and whiffs of rain sweep through the sliding glass door,  
I don't want to roll over, don't want you to sit up,  
don't want the telephone to ring or you to dial  
because then I will have lost you to your friend  
in Happy Valley who's getting married to a Methodist  
archeologist from Missouri, or to your other friend  
who's getting married outside of New Haven one  
week from yesterday and the dresses don't  
fit. The best man's threatening to not show. The last  
wedding we attended, in Michigan two weeks ago,  
was my Irish-Scottish friend's and I wore a kilt and long  
wool stockings and no underwear and a little satchel  
around my waist where I kept a flask filled  
with whiskey. We've been married one month  
and I don't want to let you out of bed this Saturday  
morning. I've heard if you put a marble in a jar  
for every time you have sex during the first year  
of marriage and remove one marble for each  
time you have sex anytime after, you'll never empty  
the jar. I want to fill that jar and empty that jar, construct  
new jars, and smooth virgin marbles all weekend.  
The storm's raising the curtains higher now, bringing  
with it the feeling of trying to grip greased marbles  
and other moods I can't yet express about married Saturdays.

Brad Johnson

## The Wake

The buffet table is piled  
with salads—tuna salad,  
macaroni salad, chicken salad,  
garden salad, fruit salad.  
Melon ballers, olive pickers,  
and lemon zesters lay about  
the table like forgotten relatives  
waiting for rides. The cold  
cuts and antipasto are rolled  
like logs waiting to burn  
beneath the fire of color of the late-  
to-arrive bouquet. Purple-printed  
vines wind round on the napkins;  
overcoats stack upon each other  
like a gang tackle on the corner  
chair. Cousin Al leaves lettuce,  
cherry tomatoes, cream cheese  
chunks, bagel crumbs, and sesame  
seeds scattered on the tablecloth  
like a Sunday boater whose waves  
uproot the reeds and slap the shoal.

It's not that I feel like I don't  
belong here: my suit's just as clean  
as everyone else's; my genealogy  
and connection to the deceased  
is as apparent as my nose.  
It's just the air in the dining room  
is as stiff as in that coffin,  
and we all stand in line—  
waiting—behind cousin Al—  
waiting—with our paper plates  
and plastic forks,  
waiting our turn to dig holes  
in Jell-O molds—waiting—  
too apprehensive to cry out  
or lift the lid.

**Brad Johnson**

## Our Gas Has Been Shut Off

Our gas has been shut off again, but this time  
it's 38 degrees out and you can only ask so much

from a space heater. Next week will be the water  
and the phone but I'll write two bad checks

and hope to beat them to the bank by Friday.  
If only I had the nerve to rob that bank or sleep with men

for money. If only I could gain the courage  
to steal a couple of antiques from Aunt June, sell them

on eBay. As a waitress I should've taken money  
from the till, overcharged customers and pocketed

the difference. Maybe I could start selling cocaine  
or create a meth lab in my basement.

Outside the rain  
pummels the rising riverbeds, forming ponds by the roadsides  
and in the fields, giving temporary homes to ducks  
whose white beaks disappear as they dive into the murky water.

And I'm on this couch, curled up in my favorite blanket,  
two pair of socks on my feet, and on my third cup of hot tea,

re-reading a copy of *Wind in the Willows*, waiting for Mole  
to come home and snuggle up by his fireplace.

Amy Kitchell-Leighty

## This Is Not My Stop

If a change is what you want,  
we can tear up the floor.

Each night  
while you sleep I can rearrange furniture,  
put a couch in place of the TV  
so we can watch each other until boredom.

If it's change, then we can wear wigs,  
paint every other fingernail black and white,  
get tattoos removed and your beauty mark.

You can spend the day without saying a word.

Newspaper the windows.  
Chain the door handle.  
Dig deep holes in the backyard  
and fill them with salt water.

If you want a change, we can believe in miracles,  
shred up rose gardens,  
perform deep betrayals,  
and refuse forgiveness.

Or I could learn the piano,  
write you sad love themes.  
I could break dishes  
and wash each little piece.  
You could dry.

We can go back to the beginning. This time  
you don't have to approach me. I'll come  
up to you. I'll pay for everything  
and be reckless at all the right moments.

We'll go back to  
the beginning, thrift through  
moments we want to keep.

When we take the boat out,  
you can row, my hand feminine  
cutting the water.

We'll give into firearms, the way they feel  
and flash like heavy words.  
We'll buy mace  
and you can try it out on me.  
We can stack everything  
that has ever gone wrong between us  
and name it one thing.

We can find a river  
and name the river this word.

We can crunch it all together, feel it  
stark  
on our skin,  
never knowing the size of impossible.

If a change is what you want,  
we won't have to.

We'll change everything else.

**Jim Kober**

## Old Bean Hill Road

“Let’s walk.” It’s midnight,  
a mile and a half to our hotel.  
“You’re sure?” I ask.  
“It’s the country.  
We’ve walked here before.”

“What about the bridge?  
No guard rails, you know.  
If you fall in, I won’t pull you out.”  
“The moon will reflect off  
the old grey boards.  
We’ll be all right,” he says.

Darkness except for  
two parallel yellow curves.  
He’s in a tux.  
I’m in heels.  
Pebbles prick the soft leather.  
“We’ll be all right.”  
He’s sure.

In a swamp frogs  
croak next to tombstones  
we saw that afternoon  
askew in the cemetery  
barely visible from the road  
under orange yellow russet trees.  
The heavy leaves clutch the night.

Halloween in Massachusetts.  
Neighbors burned witches here.  
Colonists and Indians were  
hatcheted, shot,  
bayoneted, raped,  
pillaged, slaughtered,  
left for dead here.  
What corpses lie in  
Old Bean Hill’s fields?

A second cloud cloaks the moon.  
“Walk in the rut,” he says.  
“It’ll clear soon.”  
The bracken by the road  
whisper about  
psychopaths with knives,  
Crazy Marys gone berserk,  
the cold grasp of the unmourned hand.



Our footfalls on the bridge planks  
give away our presence beneath  
a mottled purple moon through greenish clouds.  
“Ominous,” he says.  
Night presses on our skin  
to keep strange fears in hand.  
I speak of friends, our daughters,  
the wedding dinner.  
To hide his questions of the country night  
he asks me to identify the sounds.

A car approaches—then another—  
halogen lights. They slow.  
We stop and wait for the dark.  
Free of the glare  
the gravel road reflects  
the moon above forbidding pines  
in mist too thick for starlight.

We walk toward the light we know  
through scarves of mist that curl around the trees  
and breathe.

**L. Leaf**

## Sheltering Henry

Don't tell me not to do  
what I need to do for Henry  
who's been sleeping in a cemetery  
for forty nights  
even when rain pounds down  
like small angry fists into the mud.  
Henry is wet and cold.

Henry has a dent in his head  
from a car crash in his youth,  
the corner of his mouth sags down  
when he says words starting with the letter "y."  
Henry has trouble saying "yes."

The county welfare office also  
has trouble saying yes  
but for different reasons.  
Henry's case worker has a supervisor  
who speaks very slowly  
and tells me Henry can't get shelter  
because he caused his own dilemma.  
She is wrong  
and I can make her change her mind.  
It's what I do.

I am a blizzard for two days  
getting letters from doctors  
dialing disconnected numbers  
writing emails to the state.  
I call the welfare director three times,  
file for a hearing  
shout and shake my fists without actually  
doing either, the only way I know how  
with regulations, threats of litigation.

Two days pass, and Henry sleeps among the graves  
while I lie in my bed at night, warm  
but without rest.  
At the end of the third day  
they give Henry shelter  
in a boarding house.

The welfare director  
complains to my colleague  
that I am judgmental  
and badgering.  
Henry sleeps atop clean sheets,  
the dent in his head  
cradled in the cupped palm of his pillow.

Michelle Lerner

## Rowdy and Bleating

2 am, we'd put away  
more than a few,  
four of us crowded  
into a small dented  
blue Chevy, only two  
whole legs between us,  
McGuire hitting away  
with his metal  
crutch, our hair  
messed up. We  
were bleeding and  
we'd run this red  
light. Next there's  
a siren and a cop  
sticking his head in.  
I think of belting  
him with my new leg.  
Instead I kind of  
sink into my  
coat, look sort of  
shell-shocked, goofy,  
and as he's about to  
write out a summons,  
I say, "Officer, I  
don't know how, I mean  
there's only two whole legs  
between us all, sir."  
And he flinches. It's as  
if he's seen a kind  
of freak. He twitches  
and steps back with  
"Oh my God," all flustered,  
can't stumble back  
fast enough, tells  
us to take it slow  
as we skid thru the  
next light, fall  
apart laughing, and  
for a second there'd  
never been Iraq.

Lyn Lifshin

## An Act of Kindness

She is one of the women  
who travels daily from her township  
Singing in the back of a pick-up truck  
with a chorus of others  
Come to clean the rooms  
in my B & B bordering Kruger Park

She sees me walking a path  
parallel to the Crocodile River  
I see her running toward me  
Watch her fall to her knees before me  
Close the lowest five button holes  
that fashion the front of my  
ankle-length straight skirt

She says something in Swati  
Looks up at me as a lilac-blue blossom  
drops from a jacaranda tree  
And under the kindness of shade  
she pats my calves

I can't interpret the words  
but I can read her body language  
*There my dear*  
*I've closed the open invitation*  
*The accident that wrote itself*  
*across your womanhood*  
*I know this because here*  
*no woman would walk*  
*aware of bare thighs winking*  
*between the weave of khaki*

I help her up  
Hold her hardened hands  
Thank her by returning  
the sunshine of her smile  
And waddle like a knobbellied duck  
back to my room where I segregate  
the unbecoming skirt to a suitcase

Ellaraine Lockie

## Bipolar

Five days deep into Alaska oceans  
floating the eastern seaboard  
in a city-block-sized boat  
That bolsters four times the inhabitants  
as my prairie hometown

I've quelled the queasiness  
of motion sickness  
Pardoned obnoxious bridge players  
Cold-shouldered champagne shopping  
And abstained from twenty-four hour  
temptations of free-for-all food

Excepting the daily double doses  
of Death by Chocolate Decadence  
Whose just deserts demand  
my walk on deck eight

Where passengers surpass  
the saturation of a Singapore sidewalk  
Shuffleboard discs slide between feet  
And official photographers  
enforce stops and fake smiles

My spasmodic steps synchronize  
with squeeze breathing  
from corset cruise compression  
The wild animal in me captured and caged

One of three thousand passenger pets  
confined to a bobbing zoo with railed bars  
Claustrophobic even before I feel life's fragility  
suspended in titanic augur  
from overhung back-up boats

Followed by flash floods of foreboding  
Cold sweat of fear washing me  
to the side railing for support  
A sardonic resolution  
for halting breath and racing heart

Until a bald eagle  
elevates me to 300-story heights  
To the tops of blue white glaciers  
Where tranquility is interrupted  
only by calving clamor of ice  
And where my fear is freeze dried

Then thawed fluid in frigid waters  
Harborage for a humpback whale  
breaching forty feet in front of me  
His blowhole breathing never  
hyperventilated by vacationing fish phobias

His vapor fountain frees compulsion  
in my pressure cooker chest  
And rhythmic repetition  
of the ocean's respiration  
is infectious in force  
Pacemaker and pacific in effect  
A prairie-like experience

Ellaraine Lockie

### **Sitcom in a Café**

We take her from The Facility  
for a family drive and dinner

My ninety-one year old mother  
Mostly deaf and nearly blind

Grabs paper cups of Catsup  
partially-eaten hamburgers

and French fries from our plates  
Says we paid for it all

As she deposits everything  
into what she sees as her handbag

sitting on the floor  
and slouching by her side

But we see it as my niece's  
Guide Dog for the Blind in training

Gladly accepting the distinction  
of the season's most fashionable fur purse

**Ellaraine Lockie**

## Graves

When my father turned to me, I didn't expect to hear about their cemetery lots. "*Hill top . . . with a view.*" He spoke as if he described prime real estate, the building lot a dreamer buys for his bride while planning picture windows and numbers of bathrooms and nurseries.

"*We won't be lonely.*" A litany of neighbors, familiar names, claimed nearby premium lots. And for family, who wished to join my father and mother, extra sites were purchased.

"*Morning sun . . . and trees.*" In a voice expectant and stirred by details reflecting family luck and wisdom, my father asked for my approval.

My grandfather's grave is in Brooklyn, and I remember flowers planted by his stone. One grandmother lies in Canton, and she never saw her daughter's children. I have not seen her grave, but I have imagined its small bulk and carved Chinese characters.

I remember eating roast pork buns at the Brooklyn cemetery. I watched my father fill his bucket at a wall spigot and water white lilies and peonies.

Grandmother and Mother walked grassy cemetery rows reading aloud Asian names and dates. I ran my finger in the cold crevices of tombstone words. Grief held no body, no reality then.

But today, as I watch my father's thin legs tremble, I know his coffin, without windows, cannot long remain empty.

A sparrow hovers and lands on the porch railing as I begin to speak about the beauty of wind, sun, and hill top views.

Florence McGinn



## Payment

### I

As ice forms and thickens on juniper needles,  
green branches against winter's bared sinews  
sag and bend toward wind drifts of snow.

Debts are like that. The deepest debt forms,  
soundless and transparent, around a raised spirit.  
With time's passage and the weight of seasons,

a perceptible droop develops like a small grief.  
As winds grip, a demand for payment  
swirls and thickens around feet and legs.

The shadow lifts its face from stone and stretches  
while I strain in brittle light to see if it is your form,  
the translucent, folded shape you had before dying.

Do I make payment to remembered hands, centuries of bones,  
the present moment forever quickening in the marrow of the past,  
for the first breath, the never asked for flesh of life?

Do I acknowledge all I have been bequeathed from the whetted,  
double edge of custom offered like a foothold, the first slippage  
on a path resistant to claw marks scripted across granular ice?

If debt is genuine, I can never finish paying.

### II

The shadow grows in silence like an open  
doorway, coalesces and rises against the silver  
of my sight. I begin to believe I hear the dead

speaking of ancestral sacrifices owed across generations  
while practiced payments wither in my hands. My blood  
account comes due with a cry like a young seal

cut from the herd by a white shark. Like the floundering  
pup, I lift my head once, eyes wide, heart pounding  
with understanding, and slip into sparkling flakes

of timelessness. Memory knows the spinning shape  
struggling in airless, crimson waters, rising up  
to define the surface it splinters and absorbs. I recognize

a familiar turn of head and know with icy certitude  
that the only visible shadow is my own, its dark center,  
an indentured substance pulsing with inherited flickers of light.

Florence McGinn

## Every Poem Is a Love Song to Death

The space between words, the deep caesura separating the penumbra of small letter *l* from the double ax of capital *T*, for instance, is the blank cartridge that divides a heartbeat and a heartbeat, a momentary incarnation of the void, nesting place of all silence.

Eternity also sleeps in the distance between voiced and unvoiced palatals, and between the guttural hum of the *m* reclining and the forced march of the *k*. You can almost see the letters shudder with delight as one stutters to a close, exhausted, to be answered across a universe of quiet by the opening of the next—tiny flowers of sound yielding to replacement that arrives just in time to keep the garden blooming another moment, then another.

We sing

to hold off the unassailable hush, but also to become familiar with the grave-light of the final period, the last curl of the question mark that is a ringlet, or perhaps a scar, on the forehead of God, with the silence that stretches from this chair where I decipher my own scrawl to nowhere.

Michael McIrvin

### **The Place I Dream of When I Dream of Home**

Here is the house on the corner, white with green shutters.  
These are the five steps I climbed thousands of days,  
never once imagining there would be a last time.  
Here are the purple, lavender, and white lilacs  
growing along the shed. The combination to that lock is 6-20-26.  
This is the rock garden where my mother planted tulips.  
Here is where I grew a skin that wouldn't be shed for years.  
Across the street is the park and the pond where you  
skip stones, ripples expanding into concentric circles,  
where ducks congregate, quacking for breadcrumbs.  
That's the rock fireplace ice skaters huddle around in winter.  
There. That hill is called Suicide, where the girl in  
the plaid skirt and her brother in the salt-and-pepper pants  
gave me a bloody nose and pushed my sled down to the bottom.  
Here is the tree I read in, nestled between branches.  
I watched people from that perch in the sky. This stone bridge  
was 'safe' in bike tag. Here is the softball diamond where  
mornings I pitched for the pee-wee team and afternoons  
played second base for the juniors. And this.  
This is the greenhouse. I came here to be alone.  
Here is the fountain filled with coins by those wishing for something else.  
That sound? That's the ice cream truck two streets over,  
playing an old tune, gathering the children in.

**Terry Martin**

## Around the Corner of Midnight

He's gonna' drink that ale  
and watch the action,  
see what there is to see,  
catch a dance or two if somethin'

long-legged 'n lovely catches his eye.  
He's gonna' dance real close,  
slink tight to her swivel 'n  
just about die wanting to look

to see do I notice.  
Then he'll sit with his boys,  
his fingers pushing circles of wet  
glass-sweat across the tiny table top,

while he scans the room,  
so he won't appear to be  
in a hurry to strut over here.  
Yeah, I see him over there,

hangin' out 'n lookin' cool  
in tight jeans 'n gold chains,  
but if he wants me, he's gonna'  
have to show me just what it is he's got.

I ain't walkin' around the corner  
of midnight for just any guy.  
I only got one heart 'n right now  
it still belongs to me.

**Lorraine Merrin**

**La Loba**  
(A Native-American Legend)

an old woman surviving  
on thunder and lightening

travels plains and prairies  
gathering bones

bones bleached by the sun  
bones blessed by the moon

but only one type  
the bones of the wolf

a hip bone, a rib cage, a skull  
collected and treasured until

there is enough  
to make an entire skeleton

this bone sculpture  
is a cradle of incubation,

the old woman sings her song  
la loba - la loba

a hip bone, a rib cage, a skull,  
flesh out - become furred

the creature comes into being,  
its tail curls, it breathes,

opens its eyes and leaps away  
running towards the horizon

the old woman smiles – the wolf  
shifts in the moonlight

a maiden fades into the night

**Les Merton**

## Ravaged Roses

When my roses bloom, Japanese  
beetles zoom in like kamikazes,  
gobble great holes  
until a mound of hard brown scarabs  
too gorged to fly  
hangs from the sepals  
where a flower used to be.

I struggle to contain my rage, curb  
the impulse to crack each carapace  
between my fingers or crush  
them one by one under my heel  
until digested particles of ruined rose  
ooze from their broken bodies.

I am a reasonable person,  
willing to negotiate. I disapprove  
of traps and poisons. I respect  
their right to live, would share  
my roses if they would agree  
to leave each second rose,  
or even every third, for me,  
or if they would forbear  
from gluttony at least  
until the flowers start to fade.

I want to teach them principles  
of sustainable consumption,  
persuade them that restraint  
will help the bush survive to feed  
them for another season. Yet,  
heedless of all reason, they keep  
ravaging my roses while I remain

at war with myself, as helpless  
before this huge hunger  
as any impotent god  
watching the world's splendor  
swallowed by greed.

Joyce Meyers

## The Body Reflects on the Future

On being diagnosed with  
breast cancer at 51

One day the Body will look in the mirror  
and see her image slowly turn black,  
her face erased  
as if smeared by God's thumb,  
a sign on her chest in letters of blood:  
"FOR RENT – Historic property, built 1952.  
Previous owner a little old lady.  
Many rooms never used."

One day the Body will look in the mirror  
and see a woman who is  
no longer there,  
swaddled like a mummy in crime-scene tape,  
encircled by a trio of lamprey-mouthed crones  
with scissors instead of hands.

One day the Body will look in the mirror  
and see a woman who is not herself,  
a woman made of nothing  
but clacking bones,  
outré in a Schiaparelli gown of cobwebs  
and a wig of platinum-blonde worms.

Today the Body looks in her mirror  
and glimpses a woman she has not yet met,  
her neck festooned with a garland of breasts  
plucked from women who no longer need them,  
a woman who launders rotting nightgowns  
in a bathtub filled with blood,  
who beckons with gestures vague as mist  
but fingers sharp as scythes,  
a woman who is still half a world away  
but whose dark van is cruising toward the airport.

Pamela Miller

## The Surrealist Body

With apologies to André Breton

My body with its hair of wild rice and ice storms  
Its hair that unfurls from a pirate's mast  
Its thoughts encased in amber that breathes like a membrane  
topped off with a fez of forgetfulness  
My body with its waist of secret code  
Its laughingstock waist, an hourglass gone haywire  
where time sifts dizzily backwards  
My body with its mouth full of men's names chewed to ribbons  
My body with a tongue of plague and cholera  
With its tongue a locked suitcase  
With teeth infiltrated by elderly Japanese spies  
My body with temples of sparks and götterdämmerung  
With a brain where my Muse loafes defiantly in her bathrobe  
My body with shoulders of avalanches and wingbuds  
My body with fingers of stuttering lightning  
With fingers like bridges to nowhere  
With arms of wild regattas and crumbling caryatids  
My body with legs of thunderous diminuendos  
moving like Laurel and Hardy with tarantulas in their trousers  
My body with feet of ugly stepsisters and bunioned glass slippers  
With tortoise-shell feet, with feet of broken English  
My body with its morose left breast full of sour milk and curdled blood  
My body with its Frankenstein breasts caressed by surgeons' knives  
Its breasts of subterranean secrets and unknown rendezvous  
My body with its belly like a brioche that feeds multitudes  
Its belly of neon and cymbals  
My body with its back of Roman ruins  
With its back a down escalator to the earth's chaotic core  
With its letter-bomb back  
My body with its hips of tomahawks  
Its boxing-ring hips where the palooka's trunks catch fire  
My body with its buttocks of Alaskan waterfalls  
My body with its buttocks of cruel and unusual punishment  
My body with its potentate buttocks  
My body with its sex of paper  
My body with its sex turned inside out  
My body with its recluse sex, peeking out from behind her veils  
My body with its eyes like opals in mayonnaise  
Its eyes of bat caves and collapsing stars  
My body with its eyes still too nearsighted to see  
the next world being built beyond my bones

Pamela Miller



## Address Book

Last night, cleaning out the desk,  
I found an old address book  
bent and battered, pages yellowed, curled,

the cover a mottled blue,  
stained with ink, wine, coffee,  
who knows what else?

It had been there in the corner of a drawer  
for years now. I opened it with care  
half-imagining that small, exotic birds

would fly out of it, chirp for a moment,  
and fall dead at my feet.  
I fixed on a name: "Biancamaria Tedeschini-Lalli,"

and suddenly Italy, 1972, seemed present in the room:  
faces of students, scenes in streets, the decor of pensiones,  
the clock tower in Venice, my son Stephen, then 4, in awe of it,

an Italian friend, Osvaldo Croce,  
piggy-backing my son Nick across the Piazza San Marcos,  
the nostalgia so thick now I can't see the present.

I turn the page to "Lee Saitta,"  
my sister, an X through the name,  
dead—how many years now?—in Salt Lake,

and "Ben Santoli," my old sidekick,  
dealing cards in Vegas for decades,  
out of touch with him since the '70s.

I can't flip through much more of this.  
Closing the book, I think about throwing it away,  
but put it back instead in the corner

of the drawer where it came from, carefully,  
like a rabbi returning the torah to its sacred place.  
A scripture reminding me who I am.

Fred Moramarco

## Menopause Dream

It comes every quarter like late  
menstruation, a belated full  
moon, a hollowness buried  
in the gut. I see a pod

cocooned in flesh and blood,  
layers peeling in time-lapse speed;  
then a maroon vein bursts. Still birth  
and blackness.

Only the heart flutters, skips  
a beat, then drops hollow  
point bullets in my  
stomach. Uterus mortis,

eggs shrivel into raisins baked  
in the oven of half a century.  
Grief spreads like nightshade;  
its purple-veined bellies

choke the brilliance  
from the burning brush.  
This type of loss felt only  
once before at my sister's death.

Awake at three a.m.,  
a single candle flame eclipses  
the rim of my wine glass  
just like the summer

sun halos on my daughter's  
blonde hair. Why is one  
child enough for thirty  
years, and then is not?

Carmel L. Morse

### Phone Call

I can see the River Jordan  
from where I am sitting.  
Not really a river, more like a ditch.

This morning I had a meeting  
with a teacher whose daughter  
died in a car crash nine years ago.  
Then she lost her son in the army.

I am involved in a research project,  
I work hard on projects, projects,  
and lose my temper with some students.

My students sit at their brown desks  
and dream of colours and Purim and sex  
and the weather is getting warmer.

This time last month  
we were in bed together.

Sounds like a boring grammar lesson:  
She lost her children.  
I lose my temper.  
They are losing their concentration.

I don't ever want to lose you.

Nora Nadjarian

## After You

I do the minimum to keep up  
my end of housekeeping—  
pay the bills, dry the dishes, and take out the trash  
while you do the real work. If I were alone  
this house would soon regress.  
Cobwebs would trail across the gritty floors,  
the dogs would snooze on the couch,  
the vacuum cleaner would no longer inhale  
and the garden would dry up  
though other plants would take over.  
But I'd make do driving to Safeway for toilet paper,  
kibble and frozen pizza.

It would be a new life, another regression of sorts:  
me and the dogs and my thoughts of you.  
I'd sit on the porch watching the light leave the sky  
and when the owls began to hoot  
and your face had dissolved into darkness  
I'd go inside to seek you among the photographs,  
the music in the piano bench,  
and the tarnished candle sticks  
that once held trembling flames.

I'd gradually withdraw from the future.  
There'd be nothing to look forward to—  
the smell of rice pilaf and garlic,  
watching videos side by side,  
your breathing when I wake up.  
Immersed in the eternal presence  
of clouds and morning stiffness,  
the ridge of a dog's back,  
I'd slip into the world  
that was always there  
before you.

Peter Nash

## My Work

I keep track of the comings and goings of people.  
My work is very simple. I write down and retain  
the information that others give me.

When I started here they came in every day  
with two lists of names to alphabetize.  
First I added the names of those who had just come.  
Then I crossed out the names of those who were gone.

Now the task is easier, but not as challenging.  
We have instituted a number system. Numbers  
are faster to find and take less space in the books.

I didn't agree with the change to numbers because  
I thought they would be easy to transpose. But now  
I realize that the volume of people coming and going  
makes this change to numbers essential.

I tell myself, "I go home every night to my family.  
My job isn't my whole life. If accuracy  
doesn't matter to them, why should it to me?"

I'm proud I don't bring my work home with me.  
The only time I think about work there is when  
I see and smell the smoke coming from  
the tall smokestacks on the other side of town.

—Poland, 1944

Ann Floreen Niedringhaus

## Early

I watch for you and breathe in  
thick winter fog, breathe out  
steamy aromatic memories  
I had inhaled when last with you.  
I balance the breaths, juggle  
the frosty earth and whitened plants,  
the pale smudge in the sky that is the sun,  
the paler smear that is the moon,  
the icy malingering mud,  
the dark matter between celestial bodies,  
all on the one hand, while on the other,  
your earlobe held by my lips, your  
suddenly hot cheek, your tropical sigh.  
I stare at the horizon, my eyes fixed for you,  
and I am already with you, I am open.  
Starlings and juncos mistake the fog  
frozen on my eyes for infinite sky.  
Turning, wheeling, squawking  
squadrons of black birds enter my open eyes  
and fill my entire body with their wild cries.  
They exult and sing and their flapping wings  
tickle and heat me as I stand waiting,  
watching for you to arrive  
with your beauty and sweet hot breath.

Leonard Orr

## Security

Homeland security can be grasped by assuming a defensive posture, dropping in unison and lying on our left sides, my legs bent under and against your legs, your right hand reaching around my right hip, my right arm wrapped around your ribs right and then left and comforting every soft smoothness; then the homeland will be secure for the present. The covers should be up to our necks, for warmth and privacy, and there should be enough light so that I can see the color of your hair just before my eyes. Once we are secure enough that way, we shift by an agreed upon signal, to avoid panic and maintain such well-being, encoded and decoded and transmitted through our central nervous systems, onto our right sides and repeat. As we feel the security alert change, we turn again so I am on my back and you are above me and we whisper the night's secrets, keeping lips to ears, or breathing in Morse code. If we fear surveillance, we slide undercover. Whenever we are out, thanks to these pamphlets, we can search each other *sub rosa*, quietly pat each other down, infiltrate, assess and deploy. We surge against insurgency, check every thread and layer, every button, every zipper, every earring, every fold, every hidden place, safer and calmer, better and better.

Leonard Orr

## Yiddish for Travelers

I bought the book optimistically,  
thinking to go there one day, to that lost land  
where the border guards only know Yiddish,  
where you hold out your passport and say,  
“Awt iz mein pas. Tsee muz ich alts ayfennen?”  
Must I open everything? And they let you pass,  
you are okay with them. At the Post Office  
you buy stamps engraved with fuzzy portraits  
of Jacob Glatstein and Itzik Manger,  
postcards of Mani Leib and Boris Tomashevsky.  
The villages are all picturesque shtetls; you can  
arrange for a tour by carriage and pass some nights  
in centuries-old, thick-timbered shuls.  
People gather to watch flickering black and white films  
like *Green Fields* and *Die Meshugener*, and to  
kvell whenever the lists of Nobel Prize winners  
are published, to analyze the names and hab naches from the Jews.  
Stay a long time; you can always go to a Yiddish bank and change  
your dollars into the Yiddish money, or you say,  
“Ich hab reisencheckn,” and they take the traveler’s check.  
In the capitol of the Yiddish country, there are  
shiny green, blue, and yellow trolleys, broad plazas  
with delis and patisseries, where the small tables  
are filled with people reading and arguing and joking  
over their strudel and rugelach, sipping tea in glasses.  
They place sugar cubes in their mouths; they love herring.  
They squeeze plump cheeks of nephews and grandchildren.  
The people there are all oddly reminiscent of my relatives,  
my aunts and uncles and great aunts and great uncles,  
and all of their relatives who I never met, who never  
somehow crossed over, who were isolated perhaps  
into this landlocked Yiddish land where the police  
speak Yiddish, where everyone is in terrific health,  
vigorous and sometimes portly from all the pastries,  
from the lack of stress, from having escaped  
everything so thoroughly.

Leonard Orr



## Yoga Practice

I keep trying to practice yoga,  
but I can't follow the directions.  
I can't send my spine skyward  
or sink my sitting bones into the earth.  
Only you could make me extend  
such distances, rise and sink  
simultaneously, and only you  
know just where my sitting bones are.  
I am so distracted by the lovely words,  
*Adho Mukha Svanasana, Dandasana,*  
and I chew the syllables, tossing them  
in my mouth left to right like jujubes,  
*danda danda dandasana,* and I fail  
to check that my pelvic rim is parallel to the floor  
(I need your hands to find my pelvic rim, to see  
my thighbones are grounded, *feefifofum,*  
*ramalamadandasana*), that my spine is lengthened.  
I can't even breathe properly; each inhale,  
each exhale, a word like exile, should be all.  
I am instructed to count, to think  
*only inhale, only exhale,* but my thoughts  
sink and rise and search you out  
(what do you look like when you do this?),  
or *sitting forward bend* (my, but you bend  
so beautifully I want to wrap myself  
around you and bend with you, inhale  
with you, exhale with you, like so).  
*Paschimottanasana,* feeling the heat of you  
really helps me concentrate, my back  
rolls and melts and can flow both  
skyward and earthward, my pelvic rim  
is clear to me now, syllables sweet  
and sticky, my lying-draped-around-you bones  
are in especially good order and my breath  
seeps uncounted and audible exactly  
in rhythm with yours.

Leonard Orr

## Remembrance

I remember the color of your eyes  
but not their shade.

I remember your feminine shape,  
but the terrain of your body  
has all but eroded from my memory.

Time is a thief.  
He has silently crept through the shadows of my mind,  
stealing you from me piece by piece.  
Your fragrance, your voice, your laugh –  
all plunder in Time's larceny.

But your lips . . . .

At night when I stand in the chilled desert breeze  
and feel it lightly kiss my face,  
I close my eyes and feel the phantom of your lips against mine  
  
and remember.

David Parke

## Dollmaking

The doll we have decided to make  
is called Popette. Cut from the pattern  
of all the other Popettes.

Take for your rib a slip of French Bisque  
to pour into her mold like heavy cream.  
She should pour steadily.

Breathe air in through a small hose  
to clear holes and prevent blockages.  
Leave her to set.

Break mold apart gently  
so as not to shatter the tender form.  
Soak her in sixties reruns  
to soften for sculpting.

Scrape seams to Barbie curves.  
Cut out child-like eye openings  
with your feather knife. Trim fingers  
to fit around mascara wands  
and stiff cocks. Shape toes  
to run for another twist-top.

Close your eyes and rub  
fingers over her parts  
to make sure she's flawless.  
Rinse her in clear water  
ready for vitrification.

Laid on a bed of sand,  
purified and hardened  
in the fires of Easy Bake ovens,  
roasted in locker-room jokes,  
her soft green clay transforms  
to bright, brittle porcelain.

Attach the cloth body with glue  
and tight wax cords.  
Fill her opening with soft white seed  
and stitch her up.

Dress her in the style of your choice –  
little black dress, or white ruffled apron.  
She'll wear whatever pleases you.

**Rae Pater**

**Poem for My Daughter to Read  
Ten Years Hence**

Half naked on the couch,  
screams muffled  
in a crumpled afghan,  
you ball up on knees and elbows,  
derriere where your face would be  
if you were sitting: this  
because you cannot find your leotards.

To make it better for us all  
I clown a quick story  
about leotards leaping free  
in the front yard,  
shaping themselves with snow.

Listening now,  
you unfold red-eyed  
as they come dancing in,  
melting blue on the carpet  
where they crawl slowly under the couch,  
one toe barely showing, crimped  
like a knit brow.

Still determinedly grim,  
you reach down without a word,  
bring them up and quickly slide  
your legs as deep as they will go.

Ten years hence, fifteen and smiling,  
perhaps you'll shake your head at this:  
"No, Dad, not me . . ." to which  
I'll say, "Oh yes . . ." and then,  
with a more convincing voice, quote  
your grandfather: "More truth than poetry."

**Roger Pfingston**

### **The Kiss**

You've gone off to work  
but your blotted lips  
O up at me

from the wastebasket  
where I've just tossed  
a Kleenex of my own,

neither brightly marked  
nor spread  
with such syllabic fun,

mine balled up, a purge  
of consonants  
beside your lovely vowel.

**Roger Pfingston**

Missing Man, September 11, 2006

After the Pinot Grigio,  
the mandarin chicken  
and stir-fry peas,  
the three of us  
drink in  
the Rose of Sharon scent  
on the breeze  
through the kitchen window.

Even  
with your chair empty,  
we resist  
the tug  
of memory:  
the towers falling  
in a lust  
of evil's gravity.

The three of us sit—  
husband, wife, widow—  
in a wine-blessed buzz.

The late summer night  
is sweet enough  
to half-convince us  
that the world  
is a lush  
and companionable  
place,  
and that you  
have just  
left the room  
to grab a bottle  
of Merlot.

Ronald Pies

## Apple Spider

My niece at age four  
is already tired  
of the language as we  
know it. Instead  
of orange juice she asked  
for a glass of apple  
spider and at lunch  
at a diner in town  
she wanted me to put  
a quarter in the little  
juice box next  
to the table and play  
a song.

When we got home  
I walked up into her  
bedroom in search  
of some sort of proof  
that she is what I always  
suspected: a genius.  
Perhaps there would be  
books on linguistics,  
philosophy, Shakespeare  
or essays by Pound  
who might have ignited  
her passion to "make it new."

But there was nothing  
by Plato under her purple  
hippo, no critical works  
amongst her coloring  
books or Socrates hidden  
behind her dolls. Later  
when her mother claimed  
her daughter can't even  
read and the classics  
for a four-year-old  
are Barney and Lamb Chop,  
I still wasn't convinced.

So when my niece  
told me she heard  
I liked poet trees,  
then asked where do  
they grow, we both  
picked up our cold  
glasses of root beard,  
held on to each other's  
hand, then headed out

the door to see if any  
were growing in  
the backyard.

**Kevin Pilkington**



## Parthenon

When you arrived in Athens  
you discovered the Acropolis  
was never named after a diner  
down on Second Avenue and  
the Parthenon could never fit in  
your hand the way it always did  
with coffee to go in a paper cup.  
Your hotel was just blocks away.  
At night you sat on the roof staring  
at the ancient ruin, lights shining  
on it—lit up like an old man  
on good wine.

The next day you toured the Acropolis,  
so amazed you kept taking photos  
of the Berilie gates, a few  
columns, next the east cella, another  
of a blonde in tight shorts. You pick  
up a stone to put in your pocket  
as a souvenir and to weigh you  
down against the wind that kept  
knocking your cap off like a bully  
from the grammar school near Plaka.  
Below the east pediment stronger  
gusts blow dust off the ground,  
spinning it into a statue of Athena  
who stares into your face until  
another gust blows her away.

In the Acropolis museum  
a young statue of a sixth century  
boy holds onto a calf that is  
draped over his shoulders like  
a sweater. You admire him since  
you were never able to hold onto  
anything for that long in your life.  
Near him is a maiden with the kind  
of curves in her stone you couldn't help  
noticing. Even with her hands missing  
along with a bit of nose, she still  
looks hot and hasn't put on an ounce  
of marble around the hips for centuries.

Outside you stop to look down at Athens,  
that in the distance under the bright sun  
looks like a path made of white pebbles,  
and beyond it the sea. You decide  
to go for a swim and now  
that you are convinced it takes more  
than one god to run a universe,

you are able to jump up on a wall,  
step down on rooftops and stroll  
all the way to the Aegean.

**Kevin Pilkington**

## Coloring Death

Orange was the shade of base  
on my grandmother's brow.  
Crimson: the rouge on her cheeks.  
Black: everyone's shirt.  
Blue: the sky that day.

Yellow was the colored paper  
Mrs. Loots, my dear seventh-grade teacher,  
printed sonnets on  
when I returned to class that afternoon  
with pink cheeks.  
My tears were clear. The sky  
was blue. Grandma's blouse  
was floral and vibrant.  
The ink of the program was black, the smudge  
on my fingertips,  
when she was buried, was black,  
and later that afternoon,  
when I clutched those sonnets,  
trying to understand, my fingertips  
were black again. The music  
was generic,  
the grass was green,  
and her mascara was black.

Brown was the casket  
my father hoisted outside.  
His muscles quivered in thirty-second notes  
as he walked into the blue sky,  
onto the green grass.  
We followed, and we didn't question  
the bright sunlight, didn't think  
that it should be any cloudier.  
Instead, we squinted  
until rainbow rays spread  
across our vision, understanding only  
that it hurt our tear-heavy eyes to look.

Lucas Pingel

## **Maria Dances and All I Can Do Is Drink**

She stands in front  
of the big band, her hands  
not rigid blades, but a relaxed  
mist of the wave,

scanning the rocky coastline—  
a hang glider plumed over  
the foamy coast. Her hips  
rock gently, the music  
dissolving into her veins like wine.

I sip my whiskey, sharp  
and bitter, my head tilts  
like a trumpet flare upstage.

I want to be lost,  
to feel that magical sway of her  
champagne ponytail. Her sand  
freckled neck. Her  
warm jellyfish legs

that keep moving to sculpt  
this basin of sound, growing  
and shrinking, growing  
and shrinking, billowing  
in and out  
like the lungs of the sea.

**Lucas Pingel**

## **Bombazine**

*n. a worsted silk dyed black for mourning wear*

A thirdhand acquaintance with death,  
Japan black trunk with brass hasp

opened, rank with stale sweat and trace of violet eau de cologne  
still, Suzie's gloat to have for dress-up  
her late grandmother's trappings,

swathes of jet-dark fabric, (dresses, countless buttons),  
a dingy fox tippet  
we array, and the material puddling around us like pillow lava.

Calling ourselves Mrs. Uppity and Mrs. Whosit,  
we traipse the attic.  
Suzie's terrier mix watches, blinking from an oblong of sunlight.

A pair of houseflies harry, circling the naked ceiling bulb,  
jumble of hat boxes and empty picture frames  
tottery at our tread.

With the deliciousness of being all grown-up,  
we peer through make-believe lorgnette,  
a fraction of time like a soot curlicue from the  
snuffed candle,

not a thought that our "bombazine" regalia represents  
twenty-five years of widowhood.

**Patricia Polak**

## Caravan-ing

Aromatics of a Middle Eastern port city:  
diesel fuel and tamarisk  
brine of the Mediterranean meets  
parching desert sirocco  
brazier coals and sewerage  
teasing linger of pungent, jewelescent  
spice bazaar.

Square with cadres of men in sun-glared white shirts.

A guttural hawked chant:  
*Homs-Hama, Homs-Hama* from long-distance drivers,  
and counterpoint other driver-touts  
pharyngeal *Haleb-Haleb-Haleb*  
(for the place conversant Westerners know as  
Aleppo, Syria).

Wraithlike burka-robed women thread the heat-baked square.

Accompanying small children stride with dirty toes in their  
leather sandals—seemingly free as colts.

We must hard-bargain (scrawling on a pad pounds and piastres;  
dickering on the blazing taxi's hood) to go from here,  
Latakia, to Aleppo.

*This* the Valhalla of the vintage Mercedes-Benz—flying  
the roads and, moreover, tanking it across the desert,  
where the endless shifting dunes yield to hard-packed  
tracks.

Our Mercedes once cream-colored—now weather-bleached,  
opalescent, and useless to inquire mileage because the  
shanty-housed car mechanics never let them die.

Amplified, reverberant, the muezzin, suppliant to Allah,  
cries out our departure time.

The Syrian has sold every possible place for the ride . . .  
and then some.

The car will barrel at top speed, all but the driver's  
door half ajar.

Jam of genial, swarthy Middle Easterners nearly fallen  
out of the speeding Mercedes, clutching the open  
window frames as the desert-cooked slipstream wallops.

Celadon-green worry beads dangle, swaying from the rearview  
mirror, making a chittery click-clack.

Roly-poly, pistachio-munching driver tunes the radio to an  
ear-piercing ululation and tambourine-heavy music  
until a sliver of crescent-topped minaret augers Aleppo,  
ancient and historic.

The Mercedes' engine ticks down. Completed caravan.

**Patricia Polak**

## Urban Homesteading

a jab of chemical,  
the handyman Brassos the entrance railing

bricks in rusty-red registers  
punch-holed with reflective window ports

the polar masquerade of air conditioners  
in flush-set oblongs

step down into a checkerboard of lobby  
with dusty savannah of planter ferns

once Conestogas drawn by yoked oxen  
cut a pioneering swath of track

across plains—  
the loam so fertile-rich and depthless

now, a pre-war Otis (numerously mechanic-ed),  
hoists upward a dozen floors

urbanite paranoia of locks  
keyed open to the welcoming familiar

a cubby of an apartment's refuge  
from a native's love-hate relationship

with strumpet-goddess Manhattan,  
her extremes of wealth and want

her million price-tagged opiates  
against life's capricious transience

Patricia Polak



## By the Window

I used to put your baby chair in front of the big pane-glass window facing the backyard.

You were tranquil and quiet as I watched your spirit lift, soon lost inside the dance of leaves of the tall tree outside.

At five months, you would stare for what seemed hours, cooing at the melodic motion of leaves, your hands and feet moving, synchronized with each turn of the tree's kaleidoscope of light.

As the afternoon would drip down upon me, I found tasks to do, not far away, and I would listen . . . imbibe your gentle baby sounds, feeling certain that you would grow to love nature, knowing that I must be doing something right to have such a calm baby.

I didn't know then that the temporary disappearance from this world was only the beginning of autism.

It was the dawning of other worlds of prisms that would take you from us, that would take language from you.

It was genesis of a specific kind of spinning that would yearn to make the picture whole, centered, to make the light and its refraction seem just right.

It is a time encapsulated in my mind when I could not have known where your silent motion would take us. Yet I still cannot separate from it, still cannot disengage from that time when I knew where certainty ended and began.

Yet, you walk in the living room today, a young man with straight brown hair, taller than I, slender and carrying a blanket you've had since you were three.

You go to the couch by the window, cover yourself in warmth, place your head on the distinct edge of the couch pillow, and watch the leaves dance above you on the trellis outside, adjusting your position to merge with all I cannot comprehend.

You smile in a satin and oceanic serenity I have rarely seen in another, become immersed in the incandescence of the entirety of this one day, this one afternoon from which I cannot disengage, and I realize that you have grown and have grown to love nature,

and, as much as I have lost and found you in all the waltzes of leaves and light, that I must have done something right.

Connie Post

I catch the droplet in midair on its way to my lap.

Clear as glycerin, it is suspended briefly as I dig for a tissue,  
twisting in my plastic seat on the Broad Street subway  
on this raw day that makes mucus drip and steam rise from the vents.  
I am among my own kind.

Invisible in plain sight  
we occupy our bodies. We make ourselves at home.

By the door a chubby twelve-year-old slouches  
against her brother and sucks her thumb.

A college student  
hugs a backpack to his chest, gnawing his thumbnail in pursuit  
of an unattainable scrap at the very quick.

My eyes droop in the overheated car  
like the toddler's across the aisle. In down jacket  
and tiny Timberlands he dozes as a trail of snot advances  
toward his upper lip. His mother swipes at it  
with the corner of his blanket.

Once on this train at midday I watched a man in work clothes  
eat green beans from an open can, tossing back  
his head with each shake of the tin.

On the 34 trolley, second leg of my journey,  
two teenagers huddle. The air between them  
breathes  
with each slow movement of their hands as they feed each other  
Slim Jims leathery with salt, cheese puffs  
sheening his fingers in day-glo orange,  
and for dessert, a glutinous pink cake  
like an overturned teacup, halved by her nail  
and offered to his lips.

When their meal is over and the wrappers  
crushed tenderly underfoot,  
they lean toward each other  
in a soft and sticky kiss.

I can taste it from eight rows back.

**Julie Preis**

## Jukebox Dancing

We drive past Macdona, Dunlay, Hondo,  
D'Hanis. And what pours out of us is  
uncertainty. Is this truly us? Then two miles  
shy of Sabinal, a Highway Patrol cruiser pulls  
even and for one single moment hesitates—I  
think of black-chinned hummingbirds poised  
before the nectar—and we blossom with exhilarating  
fear. The interior of this Buick Riviera is made  
of red leather and feels as sensual as courtship.  
There is a tennis racket on the floor, an infant's  
pacifier in the glove box. We are possessed.  
It has been a suffocating summer, but now we  
listen for an eerie lightness in our laughter—like  
the underside of some terrible affliction. At  
Knippa we cross the Frio River and soon afterwards  
turn north. There is a strange falling away with  
each new mile. At Garner Park we climb  
exhausted into the evening heat. There is physical  
loneliness in each new step, an indulgent pleasure  
that cannot tell itself from loss. We leave the  
keys in the ignition. Three years ago, when I was  
twelve, I rode here with my parents. We hiked  
past canyons, mesas, limestone cliffs. I vanished  
far inside myself and wouldn't come out. But now  
we stand beside this bigtooth maple and marvel  
at Rio Grande turkeys, black rock squirrels,  
hayhurt's scallopwing skippers. We are warm and  
swollen from our impulsiveness. We do not ask how  
we'll get home. We are abandoned in a way that feels  
both bottomless and hopeful. We wait for dusk—  
when the jukebox music will begin in the concession  
building. We tell ourselves that every skein of emotion  
will finally braid together. The night will grip us with  
impersonal tenderness—and every tremor of unease  
will float away. Unbounded feeling will rise up, and I  
will pull you in my arms, your face a moonlit oval.  
And we will dance.

Doug Ramspeck

## River Woman

What he feels is as deafening as chorus  
frogs in breeding season, like something  
hiding behind the jaundiced moon  
above his barn. When he spies her  
by the river he imagines that the heavy  
current will capture him and carry him  
downstream until he drowns.

On Sunday morning he watches her suckling  
her infant child on the back porch,  
watches her hanging her clothes on the line.  
He has never said a word to her,  
she has never said a word to him—but longing  
creeps into his ears like burrowing earwigs,  
swarms like pomace flies on rotting fruit.

He makes a potion of snakeroot,  
thimbleweed, corn cockles, celadines,  
lupines, skullcaps, and everlasting—  
then drinks until the cup is dry.  
But that afternoon while working in the fields  
he envisions her scooping from beneath  
her blouse that pale white breast—

hypnotic as the water moccasin's mouth  
before it strikes—and that night  
he dreams that he is standing at her window  
and looking in to where she's sleeping  
by her husband. The infant child hisses  
like a snake inside the crib. He tries to speak  
but air escapes from fang wounds in his throat.

In the morning he finds a dead pileated  
woodpecker on his dock beside the river,  
and at dusk he hears her singing from her porch—  
her voice as plaintive as the hoot owl—  
so he gathers from the woods destroying angels,  
Caesar's mushrooms, jack-o'-lanterns—  
and vows to swallow them for supper.

## Doug Ramspeck

## Strip Mall Apocalypse

Inland the ash suspends itself above the city as plainsong.  
Where once were strip malls

above the thrown-back head  
of ocean cliffs, where once was the Wal-Mart  
and the Taco Bell and the Radio Shack,  
now there is the nursery of flame and the acrid shadow  
and the malignant  
emptiness of sidewalks and parking lots  
and high-rises.

Here is where the darkened birds  
impale themselves in sand, where the great embroidery  
of dead fish bob as preternatural stench in the shallows,  
when the sun is an embryonic scab in a blank sky.

It is Odysseus  
who has commandeered the rowboat,  
who wears his Abercrombie T and aims the bow  
into the rising arc of waves.

If once he hitched the ox and donkey  
to the plow, if once he sowed his fields with salt  
and played at madness, now he leans his weight into the oars  
and watches the city of Polyphemus

pluck out its last eye.  
And though once he heard the cry of the betrayed men  
devoured by Scylla leaking darkly from his ears  
as prodigal blood,  
now he listens through his earphones to the last scratchings  
from an iPod, and all he carries with him  
to the sea is a little irony and duct tape. Argos has long since  
given up and died. No one shoots the arrow through  
the twelve axe heads.

Even the sirens are exhausted from the bump and grind.  
And if all his life he's been waiting for someone to ask him  
why he carries the winnowing fan,  
today there's only rowing to be done. And ash to swallow.  
And the dulled raiment of eyeless days and nights above the cliffs.

Doug Ramspeck

## The Possessed

Long before the arrests, the suicides of Nikolai and Kirillov, the murder of Shatov, the death of his own father and Marya, Peter played baseball on a Little League team near Cincinnati. The name of the team was “The Tipton Forks Devils,” and he played second-string third base, though in truth his mind often wandered beneath the heavy Ohio sun. Sometimes as he sat on the bench he wondered about the Great Order of Things, but mostly he imagined a ball flying off a bat then soaring up to seek infinity, or he would grow weary of seeing his father plopped soberly in the stands. During those rare moments when Peter actually played, his father would chide him for fielding ground balls as casually as though gathering strange stones along a beach, for running the bases as though he believed it were a stroll. His father was all about subservience, of course, about sacrificing yourself for the greater team and the final score; but Peter always figured it was just a game, and not a very interesting one at that. Sometimes he imagined God hiding in the webbing of his glove, but mostly he figured he was all alone, that nothing in his life would ever matter, which is probably why he astonished everyone one Saturday by fielding a ball, pivoting with a sudden and surprising intensity, and flinging it into the stands toward his father’s head.

Doug Ramspeck

## **Birch Street**

Sitting on the porch outside my walk-up with Elaine,  
watching the Friday-night action on Birch Street.  
Southside's so humid the air weeps.

Me and Elaine are weeping too.  
Silent tears of solidarity.  
She's so full of prozac she can't sleep and  
I'm so drunk I can't think straight.  
Her depression and my beer free our tears  
from the jail we carry in our hearts.

Neighbors and strangers pass by in the water vapor.  
Walking in twos and fours. Driving by in souped-up  
cars and wrecks. Skinny, greased-up gangbangers  
with pants so big they sweep the street and girl friends  
in dresses so tight they burn my eyes.

I can smell Miguel's Taco Stand. Hear the cool  
Mexican music he plays. Sometimes I wish Elaine  
were Mexican. Hot, sweet and the ruler of my passion,  
but she's from North Dakota, a silent state where  
you drink to feel and dance and cry.

Sailing, drifting down Birch Street. Misty boats,  
street shufflers and señoritas. Off to their somewhere.  
I contemplate how empty my can of beer is and  
how long can I live with a woman who cries all day.

Mondays are better. I sober up and lay lines for the  
Gas Company. Good clean work. Work that gives me  
time to think about moving to that little town in central  
Mexico I visited twenty years ago before Birch Street,  
Elaine and three kids nailed my ass to this porch.

**Charles P. Ries**

## Los Huesos

*(the bones)*

I sit with the dead tonight. I have brought my father's tobacco and my grandfather's beer. Between their tombstones, I light a sparkler and *(with eyes open)* imagine them standing and dancing before me. So I get up and dance with them, turning, spinning, and falling to the ground. As I catch my breath, I look up to see their smiles shine down like porcelain stars. They point at me. "There's our boy; he's come to drink and smoke with us. He loves the lost ones with a heart as big as heaven and inhales our graves as if they were fields of red roses."

The beer widens my eyes, makes the deep night opaque. Revealing a tribe of dead lovers who protect us from devils and demons, insuring our first communions and last rites, ready to welcome us back home with cold soft hands.

The graveyard is full. The living and their dearly departed sit in tight family circles telling old stories that recall ancestors whose names have now been given to babies.

We pass funeral cards, rosaries, and wedding rings among us – tiny monuments to people whose portraits hang along the stairs leading to the cellar where we make our candles, crush hot peppers, and shed our tears.

We slice lemon cake, eat chicken breasts, and drink tequila in the Cemeterio de Santa Rosa. The ghosts are all brown, except mine. Pale faces who've passed over – German, pot-bellied, serious white people, who, in life, had things to accomplish.

We sing and dance to all the dead gone. Mock death and remember a cast of bit players who slip into our dreams with whispers just before dawn.



As I pour my tequila into the earth, I see  
their spirit mouths open and skeletons  
rise to dance three feet above the ground.  
White vapor swirling like clouds. Sweet  
misty blankets that embrace the tombs  
of my family.

**Charles P. Ries**

## First Kiss

We leaned against  
the side of her house,  
in the only spot of  
shade on the  
entire farm.

We had been ordered  
outside to  
"Get some fresh air."

Beige dust swam  
in the thick rays of  
a late July sun.  
Scratchy sepia pollen floated  
up from the moat of  
wheat fields surrounding her  
house, cart-wheeling  
on the air across the  
gravel road  
to that  
wedge of shade

where we leaned,  
our small spines  
pressed against the cool white stucco,  
reenacting the scene from  
"Guiding Light"  
that her mother had  
just clicked off before  
shooing us, reluctantly, outside.

I played Mike Bauer  
and she was Elizabeth Spaulding,  
lovers separated by  
his recent faked death  
and her current husband.

She said to me,  
"I love you Mike Bauer."  
Then she shifted,

her little lips  
pushing against mine.  
I could feel  
the lines of her teeth  
beneath the pink flesh of her pucker.

I didn't know  
how to kiss back.

She moved her head  
away from me,  
brown pigtails bobbing  
side-to-side as  
she told me,  
“That wasn't how  
the real Mike Bauer  
kissed Elizabeth Spaulding.”

**Amy Henry Robinson**

## The Man Who Hated Cities

moved to a small town  
which rapidly became a city  
and moved to a smaller town  
which began to become  
a bustling city  
and moved out to the edge of town  
but the edge grew populace  
and nearly became another city  
and moved farther out  
to the edge of the edge  
which immediately started to grow  
and become another city  
and moved even farther out  
to the edge of the woods  
which were quickly being developed  
and moved into the woods  
among the darkening trees  
and saw some hunters  
and moved back farther  
into the deepest part  
of the already over-  
crowded woods  
and finally found  
a cave in the side  
of a hill deep  
in the darkest part  
of the woods  
and lit a fire  
which cast his shadow  
on the walls of the cave  
in the hill in the  
darkest, deepest  
part of the woods  
and put out the fire  
because now he knew  
that it wasn't cities  
or towns or crowded  
woods or shadowed caves  
that he hated  
it was people  
even himself  
his own  
shadow

E. M. Schorb

## The Souls

Outside on a green lawn a giant water-oak conducts a sunset.

Some unsteady hum has summoned us out of our houses.  
My ancient lady friend, who lives nearby, is jawing now and wears  
an awed-holy expression as she says they are souls, yes sir.  
And they are everywhere, they wade the dusky clouds, they are  
giant black-winged fruits hanging, falling, bouncing. The green  
is black with them. And neighbors stare; they worry for their

cars and pickups. If they get into the red berries, it's hell on  
paint. Shoot them. No, they are beautiful. They are a menace.  
Look out below! They rise and wheel, kaleidoscopic, inside rings  
of themselves. They set themselves against the sky, black on blue.  
They caw. They are telling themselves, or us, something.

They caw and caw, and what is it they are saying, so  
earpiercingly, holes through your eardrums, through your brain,

as if lasered? Then they settle again, like a black blizzard  
of huge coal flakes. The souls come back to visit us to tell  
us that they know everything now. Now their sharp yellow beaks  
pierce the lawn. They are busier than worms in a feast  
of famishment, an ecstasy of appetite. Now, she says,  
the nonagenarian, I'll soon be with them, and then  
it's always now for me like them. The souls have found their

bodies. I don't know which is which, but somewhere, there,  
is everyone who died, all the loved ones, and even the others,  
the ones that nobody loved. They are all there now, she says.

I stare as deep as I can see. They are every blessed  
place—on roofs, looking down, in trees, on bushes, under,  
over, and around. Some seem to be waiting, some tug  
at the turning-emerald lawn in the lowering light: and now

how do they know to rise suddenly and become one wide  
black wing? How do they know to circle and circle in unison,  
one boomerang black wing composed of so many blood-beating,  
sky-rowing black wings? How do they know when it's time  
to fly along a horizon, rimmed with rising red? The souls,  
they know, they know! I think it must be out of some distant  
folklore that the old lady speaks, eyes fixed, waving them goodbye.

E. M. Schorb

## Big Cats and Saxophone

We met across the distance of counties  
in a spell of break-ups, unemployment,  
and disappointment. She would drive close  
to one-hundred-and-twenty miles to reach my door.  
She ignored the alcohol on my breath,  
found her way between my sheets  
before her shoes could leave her feet.

She asked me one morning  
that if we went to a zoo  
what exhibit I'd take her to first.  
"Big cats" I answered. "No question about it,  
the pumas, the jaguars, the tigers."  
That apparently was  
the right answer as I felt her crawl  
on top of me in the dark.

She played jazz saxophone in a band,  
though she never played for me.  
She said she practiced at a zoo  
and park near her apartment.  
She was stable, sweet and horny,  
but my life was about to implode  
so I let her fade.

Sometimes I still imagine her, practicing,  
working the keys, mere feet away from  
something that paces inside the iron bars,  
elegant, deadly, the color of a sunrise,  
the perfect note echoing into the  
man-made caves, the lush, pagan scrape  
of pacing claws.

Troy Schoultz

## Cosmic Weather

The Red Hurricane on Jupiter  
first stirred before a man learned how to strike flint in those caves  
where sweat tasted the dark sun of sacrifice and gristle.

The Red Hurricane  
began its churning before the hammering of bronze, the usage of bitumen  
to pave streets lined with citadels of glazed brick, while a bald scribe  
stylus-tallied an inventory of wheat, clay pots of mead, gold ingots,  
and slaves.

Mornings, dusks on Earth, tides pregnant with the moon, harvest of  
olives, birth of stones, and honing of birds' song from noise to the  
grammar of a great thirst, while the Red Hurricane, ammonia shrapnel  
& Richters of methane, gyre'd.

The Red Hurricane:  
crimson-gouged eyeball of Cyclopes, skinned testis of a black bull  
pierced by a hundred banderillas, while here on earth tribe decimated  
tribe, and Baal smoked on the plains of murder.

And later,  
when a priest officiated before a snake goddess clutching serpents in  
her fists, breasts juttied, her dress frilled with jabots of combustion,  
the Red Hurricane began to spin in an atmospheric pressure so dense a  
square inch would vaporize that faience idol.

And much later,  
when the farmer of Hellas recited hexameters of benched ships and  
betrayal, the hurricane would rotate up into one hemisphere, then down  
again, sweeping distances, rotations lasting hundreds of years.

Generation begot generation, fields were cleared, corpses were burned,  
and galleons embarked, flotillas treasured with lice and smallpox,  
argosies oozing dysentery, ships circumnavigating the globe, while  
mace'd fists bore wax-sealed papacies, Dystopias, new Zions, quetzal  
feathers, ash.

And the Red Hurricane,  
all thrust and compression, persisted. Tenochtitlan fell, yet the Red Hurricane persisted.  
Lisbon shook, Catholic marble bludgeoned rosaries, and the hurricane persisted.  
Monsoons and drought, locust swarms, yet the Red Hurricane endured, a sanguine yolk  
waxing.

And when the 20th century opened, with the sky now harnessed and New Mexico  
sand smelted in the furnace of a split atom, the Red Hurricane spun and swelled.

Weather on Jupiter remained—by terrestrial standards—apocalyptic:  
gas clouds bled electricity into radiation tsunamis, atoms sweated  
electrons, and the air hardened to a metal at its core

because that hurricane had not settled,  
nor will it for hundreds of years, when slowly, very  
slowly, at the velocity of tectonic plates ripping a continent in  
two, sprouting granite mountains, the clouds will seal, and the storm  
will dilute, samite sheets of hydrogen, rip-curls of electricity.

While on earth,  
entered above a strata of fossilized crustaceans and fern,  
a strata of reptiles,  
one of mammals with bones as delicate as violin strings,  
one with the litter of arrowheads, re-bar and oil;  
man and woman will be  
imprints in sandstone – a species crusted in  
rock, petrified and  
buried beneath a barren steppe of absence and heat.

**Anthony Seidman**



## Dream World

I look toward my mother's bed  
in its sunny spot by the window.  
Her young nurse is smiling.  
So is Mother.  
She lies in a blue hospital gown,  
a geometric print of triangles, squares and circles,  
in shades of gray, burgundy and dark blue.  
Her skin looks healthy.  
Her thin white hair is brushed off her face.

After the nurse leaves, she asks,  
"Do you want to play bridge? We need a fourth."  
Her eyes are wide and bright.  
"I haven't played in years," I say.  
She accepts that excuse  
and points her painted nails  
to the others she imagines in the room.  
"They will play," she says.

I stroke her damp forehead,  
holding her bony hand bruised from the needles.  
I brush my fingers down her silky legs  
now devoid of hair.  
"Do I look a mess?" she asks.  
The setting sun casts a shadow across her bed.  
"No, you look wonderful," I say.  
She smiles, not minding  
that her mouth is without her bottom dentures,  
and brags how her cousins  
tell her how good she looks  
and how well-dressed she is.  
Even here with her gown hiked up to her diaper,  
she cares how she looks.  
I try to pull her gown down.  
She keeps grabbing it.  
I cover her with a sheet  
and sit down to watch her play cards.

"Six spades," she says.  
"Play out." I play out.  
She uses her nightgown as her bridge hand,  
trying to lift off each pattern section,  
one by one as if it were a card  
and place it on an imaginary  
table in front of her.

I want to know what happened to her  
and what can be done about it.  
"Hospitalitis," the nurse says.  
She has seen it a million times before.  
I go back to the bed and continue play-acting.

I am thankful too. Her mind is taking her  
to that other place where she is young and  
beautiful and lives on the west side of Chicago.  
I haven't seen her so happy in years.  
"I like this little room," she says.  
"I'm glad," I say.

**Madeline Sharples**

### **I Asked My Love**

I asked my love to lie with me last night,  
his face appeared unchanged, his smile the same:  
this morning I rose early with the light.

At his approach I felt the air ignite,  
he whispered softly: spoke my secret name.  
I asked my love to lie with me last night.

He said my eyes seemed older, he was right:  
only the dead remain immune to change.  
This morning I rose early with the light.

His lips touched mine as in a holy rite,  
his touch seared through me like a sacred flame.  
I asked my love to lie with me last night.

I trembled as our breath became one breath.  
He brought me to a place beyond all pain.  
This morning I rose early with the light.

He went from me just as the sky grew bright.  
I called my love. I called my love by name,  
I asked my love to lie with me last night.  
This morning I rose early with the light.

**Eileen Sheehan**

## Water Planet

"The death of the oceans means the death of man."  
–Jacques-Yves Cousteau

Now we've seen it  
    from space:  
green granite continents,  
rolling galaxies of charted  
water, salt depths  
forging the birth and  
death of man in a wet blur.

Despise what nurtures.  
Take cyanide and dynamite  
to coral, monofilament  
drift-nets to salmon and squid.

Repeat the  
    'no-one's looking'  
Anthem of the River Slavers,  
bury waste and death  
in the source of life.

Put the resurrection engine  
of the world into overdrive,  
harvest piled bones gone  
to chalk on Antarctic beaches.

Raw stone eyes  
    of thalidomide bass  
netted off New Jersey's coast  
stare through tricolored haze.

A sea's no God  
to endure everything.

Or is, and dies before us.

Dies with gliding dolphins  
cast like leaves,

hardens to a snow of petro-  
chemical rosebud ash  
    leaving only massive  
tube worms and blossoming  
magma rifts  
on the deep sea's  
desert floor.

**Michael Shorb**

## Round Dance

Men and women, one by one,  
dance until the dance is done,  
along the hallway in the glass,  
reflections within those who pass  
on courses similar to their own  
to places where they love alone,  
with big red noses, custard pies  
and a pair of sightless eyes.

Men and women, two by two,  
dance until the dance is through  
and when the lack of music palls  
move furtively through unlit halls  
to where each lover stoops above  
the promise of romantic love,  
the big red nose, the custard pie  
and the hard enamelled eye.

Men and women, three by three,  
dance until it's *tout finis*  
and though they feel a little grief  
the passage down the hall is brief,  
a second's searching for the light,  
a moment's love, then empty night –  
the big red nose, the custard pie,  
all in the twinkling of an eye!

Men and women, four by four,  
dance until they can no more  
then slowly from the floor repair  
towards the steep, unlighted stair,  
where, as they silently descend,  
darkness awaits them at the end  
with big red noses, custard pies  
and a shade across his eyes.

Men and women, five by five,  
dance pretending they're alive  
or at the tables of small bars  
pour alcohol onto their scars  
until at last all their dejections  
become as comic as affections,  
with big red noses, custard pies  
and a pair of painted eyes.

Men and women, six by six,  
dance until they've had their fix  
and all that sparkles is profound  
until the lights stop turning 'round  
and you hear, "That's all, folks.  
another of life's little jokes,  
with big red nose and custard pies  
and a knife to peel the eyes."

Men and women, seven by seven,  
dance into their seventh heaven,  
jiving through the offertory,  
faces lit in stained-glass glory,  
to where the ancient bobby-soxers  
lie in long black wooden boxes,  
with big red noses, custard pies  
and photographs of Old Blue Eyes.

Men and women, eight by eight,  
dance until the night grows late,  
when lashes at which young love pines  
run down the cheeks in greasy lines  
and lips that tempted once now drool,  
though eager still to play the fool  
with big red nose and custard pies  
and sockets where there should be eyes.

Men and women, nine by nine,  
dance until the fiddles whine  
for all the passion that has faded  
in halls where love once masqueraded,  
for all the passageways of lust  
that have been buried in the dust  
with big red noses, custard pies  
and with bright lascivious eyes.

Men and women, ten by ten,  
dance from the cradle yet again,  
along the hall to dancing class,  
from the small bar to Sunday mass,  
with feelings out of all proportion  
to love and romance and abortion,  
with big red noses, custard pies  
and a pair of condemned eyes.

**Raymond Southall**

**Frankfurt Airport**  
(for Debbie Wright)

Stopped over in this sterile air-con place  
We sit, squeezed into soft plastic seats,  
Gazing out the plate glass at idle jets  
Nestled in quiet neon darkness  
As the automatic walkway click-clacks gently,  
Marking out the slow passage of time:  
A dim metallic heartbeat  
Reducing all thought and all memory  
To the loose penumbra of unreality.

Airport jokes fade into dumb nothingness  
As time stretches out to meet infinity  
Somewhere high above the blank map of Germany;  
And another airline rep smooth-talks us  
Into accepting the extended waiting patiently.  
Just a technical hitch, he says,  
Smiling his vapid airline smile,  
Reducing all feeling, all sensation  
To numb inevitability.

I smoke one more cigarette and you sleep,  
Your tousled head on my lap, your doll hand  
Draped languidly in mine.  
Almost not here, away in a hallucinating space,  
A flickering smile plays upon your face:  
You are Kali Ma, dancing the Earth to dust,  
And I am The Perfumed Saint,  
Exuding insufferable benign sweetness.

I press my ear to your red, full lips,  
Listen to the slow rhythm of your breathing,  
The hieroglyphs of your dreams,  
The dark ocean of your being;  
And through the torpid mist  
Of this transitory soulless place  
I sense the quintessential spirit,  
The ineffable mystery that is you.

**Dee Sunshine**

### Taking Possession

The tumbler turned, the key withdrawn, the threshold crossed,  
The house was empty, cold,  
    scent of cigarettes,  
Tattling of regular Friday night whist  
And crinolines and big bands over the radio.

Rank kitchen drawer  
Echoing with the roll of the abandoned  
    corkscrew,  
House of smoke and drink  
And of successive husbands and habits.

You lit a match; the kettle went on.  
Your arms wrapped me from behind,  
    your body the shield  
Between me and the spectres,  
As slight and as lasting as their stench.

We climbed, found the garret,  
Scarred our knees, our elbows,  
    on the bare wood floor,  
Our heat reassuring the ghosts  
About the return of joy to the old timbers.

Soon after, you found a broom and swept the hearth.  
I reached for the  
    porcelain pot and,  
Under the kitchen's jaundiced eye,  
Put the tealeaves through their agony.

Lois Swann



### Thanksgiving

The frost left a simple beautiful pattern  
on the black car roof  
Like stars clustered or marcasite  
threaded with silver.

Shivering, undressed, I find such marks sparkling  
on the skin of my inner thigh,  
The sign of you I am loathe to bathe away,  
fearing to squander diamonds.

Lois Swann

## Voyeur

She's like expensive candy,  
hard to unwrap.  
I watch you struggle slightly to open her  
from my vantage point  
in your black office chair.  
You don't appreciate her utter perfection:  
narrow hips, small breasts and silence.  
You lean back on our bed  
with your sea-blue pajama pants  
hanging half off your waist  
and wait for her to become useful.  
She is high and eager but you  
force the yield,  
knowing it tortures me.  
You place her in your lap and begin—  
one hand on her neck,  
pushing her down to our satin sheets.  
She yelps as you pay her no mind,  
already on auto-pilot  
away in some distant jungle  
where cavemen still roam.  
You leave me cold  
yet you're a hundred degrees,  
heaving, sweating and staring at me.  
You want to make sure I see  
as you finish with her.  
You rise up, knees on either side of limp hips,  
and breathe that smile of victory  
over both of us.  
You've worn her dry  
and now the lady sleeps  
soaked in you.  
I gag;  
the scent of you so thick in the air  
it wraps me in its sick blanket.  
Trails of your infection crisscross our mattress  
and create a sticky, white web of damnation  
as my hands find my stomach to trace the  
memories of you that burn across it.  
You begin to sing her a lullaby  
in a voice that reminds me of a Greek chorus  
full of aborted choir boys.  
It's a brutal mouth forming beautiful words.  
I want to kill her.  
You never sing for me.  
I turn to run, to escape our cave,  
but I am hunted down in the hallway  
and, with the taste of her  
still on your lips,  
eaten alive.

Julie M. Tate

## The Lost World

No one speaks the words I need to know.  
The name of the tree near the Ventura mission  
that lopes and lurches like a drunken dragon  
when the wind blows, exposing a sinewed belly  
of branches, or the name for when you see the tree  
from your car and lower the radio  
as if to hear it better, wishing you could  
stand still in the street as the car continued  
without you, into town, obeying each empty light.

I don't know the words for the wildflowers  
that orgasm in this vacant lot, though they've coaxed  
my tears with their yellow fingers, their violet mouths.  
No one speaks the names of the four-petaled blue compass  
or the golden clarinet that turns a man into  
a honeybee, and few know. Though any child  
will tell you the name of the blinking towers on the hill  
or two roads crossing, no one knows  
the word for crying and laughing at the same time,

or the verb for two people thinking the same  
thought in the same moment—and variations  
when it occurs with your lover on a cross-country trip  
and you thought she was asleep; another name  
when it rises in bed as she dips her chest  
into the mirror-water of your face; another word  
when you stand together in the kitchen,  
slicing carrots and peppers and turn toward each other  
in the same instant, and nearly knife each other,

and you start laughing and you do not speak  
the thought, because it is everywhere like breath,  
like protons, and you know lightning has struck you both,  
but also everything—the room, the world. And it is  
another thing entirely when you are with your dad  
sitting on a mildewed wicker couch in a dark room,  
and he is dying, and for a moment you both glow  
remembering talks in the woods at night—a flash  
of divine mercy, another name no one speaks.

Sam Taylor

## The Undressing Room

*for Asha Greer*

They all had to stand naked there  
all ages in front of each other  
women, children, and grandmothers—  
sunken and budding breasts  
    side by side, as if  
    each was alone in a room of mirrors

placed at different angles and dates,  
reflecting one body through every age,  
what she once was, what she might have been,  
an illustrated life of the soul's anatomy  
    depicted with variances  
    for childhoods and chestnut trees,

bowls filled with pears or peas,  
a stern father who played the violin,  
a kiss beneath the steps of a forbidden  
church, all facing the same fate.  
    And each knew the feel of the rain  
    in the ground beneath their feet,

each was a witness to the brain, each could  
recite some text from memory,  
the sting of a bee, the call of a lark,  
a flint-spark off the heart. Except each stood  
    half-atrophied,  
    as if the present moment had worn through

every fantasy. In truth, they were not alone—  
they were packed like herrings in a tin.  
Yet each had to answer for herself  
the same question:  
    How will I meet my death?  
    Will I shriek? Will I scream?

Will I lift up one of the children  
and hold her to my chest?  
Will I sing? Many of the women sang.  
Though there was no reason to sing  
    around them were no birds prattling  
    in bowers, no milk and honey to bless

just naked bodies and souls squirming  
from their defects in the last, unfriendly light  
before an asphyxiated death.  
Still some sang. They sang for something else,  
    something that would not perish  
    and had not even been touched

by the gloved hands and secret orders,  
the early morning box cars rolling slowly  
out of Bialystok through the beech flowers.  
That's when the woman telling me  
the story paused and almost smiled  
and came again from a different angle.

*Maybe there never is a reason,* she said.  
I didn't know if she had been there.  
She wouldn't tell me, she said it didn't matter.  
I knew at least she hadn't died.

*Maybe that's the question we answer  
each moment of our ordinary lives.*

In line at the bank, buying milk for the night,  
in traffic fumes and ice-sleet storms, siren-breathed:  
how will I meet my death? How will I  
meet my death? And maybe there never really is  
*a reason*  
to sing

even in the arms of our beloved, wife or husband,  
even when we're licking  
a coconut sno-cone or chocolate torte,  
walking into a movie with our popcorn  
or driving, window-sealed, through the poor  
side of town, where a black girl turns

and slaps us with a look. How will we  
meet our death? . . . And the boys and men  
entered that room too, undressed, and squirmed.  
Would their humiliation really be  
their last concern? Would they still pretend  
not to cry? Some screamed. Some held

a hand. And like the women, many of the Rabbis  
sang. Was it that stripped to the bone  
they chose to wrap themselves in that clothing?  
Or was it that, stripped of everything—  
their clothes, their names, their lives—  
that's what was left, they were, the singing.

Sam Taylor

### Aunt Julia's lover

You giggle & twist your shoulders for the photographer trying to catch your yearbook smile in 1930. At seventeen, your face is an unlocked window in the moonlight, a waltz, a whisper of passion under the smile of a sailor's arms, alongside your mother's cherry tree where school days slid off your shoulders. The pearl button falls from your blouse – with your soft voice onto the grass. Somewhere deep inside a drawer I have the silver spoon you saved from *The Palmer House Hotel*.

I imagine this tryst, a stolen rendezvous with the sailor – spent holding hands across a linen table, how he must have carefully unfolded the lavender starched napkin onto his lap & later unfolded you under the sheets while you watched a piano playing secrets in his eyes, waiting for the rest of your life to begin in that single afternoon.

A husband, a house, a baby carriage, a life that never came true, staring in the mirror, angels at your side – it doesn't work to close the years in your eyes. You never found the map for lost lovers, children or lives. You died before you were born, in a glass room, darkly.

I imagine you now, a ghost of a girl, silky blushing blue as you swan into the pale city streets at night, searching for your past life to wander a world of hallways & rooms inside *The Palmer House* where you & your sailor lover once slept. Folding back warm sheets still damp & twisted, you feel a familiar soft sush across your cheek as his fingers touch your face. You look up to see the threshold of his smile, a flashing snap of bright light that lifts & carries you up and into a wedding of forever.

Arlene Tribbia

## The Rescue of Natalie Wood

She plays the victim so often,  
her small shaky voice  
seems as tiny as she is,  
those beautiful dark Russian eyes  
pleading  
like rippling pools of fear . . .

And now she is here –  
in this dark water –  
no camera to record her fear,  
no sound engineer  
to capture her cries . . .  
just a curious moon  
spreading no light  
as her slim form slips  
almost imperceptibly  
beneath the surface.

I wait in the cold current,  
then surge forward,  
grabbing her.

She's so fragile,  
doll-like almost.  
I can barely make out  
her perfect features  
in this troubled seascape.

I hold her firmly,  
her face just above the wave.  
We struggle in the darkness,  
no ship's light,  
no miracle lifeboat,  
no compass, no guide . . .

I hold her tightly,  
our breathing labored.  
I hear her whispered prayers  
like soft billowing epiphanies  
carrying us quietly gently safely  
back to shore.

Vernon Waring

## A History of Red

Lifted out of the horrific flames of Hellfire  
by God's bare hands, that first red, molten

vermilion dripping through his fingers, might explain  
the sun and Mars, specks of now cooling stars.

To offset the persistence of green in the Garden, red  
poured over tomatoes, radishes, raspberries, fuchsias,

roosters and cardinals, a mere streak across the fleet  
blackbird's wings, a tinge in the legs of shrimp,

vivid again in snappers, cochineal anemones and coral  
in warm oceans. After a blush of shame, the same shade

as the apple when those two were caught red-handed,  
came menses, Abel's blood, Ham's wine harbinger of clarets,

burgundies and port, Cleopatra's henna-stained lips,  
rubies and garnets on the death masks of pharaohs,

the rusty sea Moses led the chosen through, russet  
autumn maples. Later, clay bricks, fireworks in China,

clerical robes, Titian's models, rouge, the color spreading  
like plague in scarlet fever, rashes, sanguine flags,

Little Red Riding Hood, a 50/50 chance in roulette, jackets  
at fox hunts, boiled lobster, communists, hot peppers, geraniums,

the flush of rubella, what we see when we're angry,  
ruddy complexions, cerise British buses and telephone boxes,

a lighted district of prostitutes, kidney beans, a new penny,  
cinnabar, the coppery skin of the Navajo, valentines,

poppies for the fallen in battle, failure to show a profit,  
crimson lipstick, ketchup, fire trucks and hydrants, stop signs,

bureaucratic delays, a railroad porter's cap, Coke labels,  
Matisse's magenta studio, algae tide, Tabasco, distress flares,

Grenadine, early morning plane flights, paprika, traffic signal,  
auburn hair, maraschino cherries, Crane's badge of courage,

cranberry glass, exit signs, international hospital crosses, and  
the terrible wounds of war even now somewhere in the world.

**Sarah Brown Weitzman**



## Painter

Looking at bug guts, mostly yellows and greens, through the windshield  
or eating watermelon under the delicate pink of a dogwood  
with a cardinal hopping in and out of puddles of sun on the grass,  
we can imagine God as a painter

working with a limited palette, a trinity at first,  
his blue period lasting eons for over-brimming oceans and skies  
while fire, blood, bursts of hot lava, and the excesses  
of sunsets soon used up red, just drips and splatters left for geraniums

and apples. While daubing forsythias, egg yokes and flitting canaries,  
had he overturned yellow into the cistern of left-over blue  
so then green green green poured out onto the grass, leaves  
and the fruits he couldn't wait to let ripen for his still lifes?

A minimalist phase would account for redwing blackbirds,  
luna moths and stripped skunks. What an eye for detail  
in black dots on the ladybug's wings, the eyes of the panther at night,  
the bow after rain. Even shadows release purple tints

the impressionists discovered. So many colors, such variety,  
almost nothing was left untouched, though he'd have had to miss  
a few which would explain angel wings, clouds, wave crests,  
albinos, and Carara marble because he never managed the climb.

A general lack of restraint in some patterns and shapes shows in  
the rococo of jungles, tropical fish, bird plumage, and the baboon's rear.  
If he had a grand design, he obviously revised it on alternate continents and  
in a fury, like an ice age, smashed up everything a couple of times.

I suppose he finally gave up on this canvas and is off now  
somewhere in the universe starting fresh, looking back at us  
over his shoulder just past Uranus, saying, "Oh, that,  
that was when I was just learning."

Sarah Brown Weitzman

## Flying White

With the dampened fine point  
brush of long-bristle horsehair,

he deftly snatches some carnelian  
red with quick flicks of the wrist

as if plucking rice with chopsticks.  
He funnels a life's worth of technique

and insight into practiced strokes,  
dabbing, grazing, feathering

the rice paper, circling, circling.  
Not perfect, thank goodness, but

not bad for a persimmon, with tracks  
of bare paper in between the paint,

an effect in sumi-e called "flying white,"  
here to thread the fruit with highlights.

The pressure he applies must be just  
so, or harsh and broken lines are left.

He is pleased, but not too pleased,  
sets aside the brush, picks up the tea

his wife left him who remembers when.  
Out on the deck, he leans on the bamboo

railing, sips, watches in the sky a plane  
shedding vapor trails across a setting sun.

**Philip Wexler**

## Hard Drive

Coming down from the floor  
above, she penetrated my strapped  
quarters on the pretext of trouble-  
shooting my computer. I offered  
her a chair but she declined, so  
I reclined as she wedged herself  
between me and the machine,  
bending over parabolically in her skin  
tight jeans, screwdrivers, pliers, can  
of lubricant sticking out of her  
back pockets, cold metal touching  
the naked ribbon of her waist.  
She was so close that her behind,  
hardware and all, rubbed up  
against my knee, and I didn't shrink  
from the contact, on the contrary,  
nor did she, whose forceful tapping  
on the keyboard filled the monitor  
with line after line of the word "MORE."  
I sensed an itch and hardened  
my heart against it, to no avail.  
It was time to advance to the power strip.

She reached back to bring my hands  
to her waist where they rubbed  
and kneaded while she poked  
and stroked the mouse, propelling  
the cursor in a pulsating trajectory  
across the screen. I inched a hand up  
the right side of her stretchy red blouse.  
She pressed "SHIFT." I slid my other  
hand under the left side. Another  
"SHIFT." With both hands, I reached  
way under and up her bulging  
front. She chucked away her tools  
and dropped onto my lap. Pliant  
as a contortionist, she extended  
a bare leg over the keyboard  
and with pink-painted toe pressed  
"ENTER," or was it "INSERT?"  
And who was I to deny her anything.  
Turbocharged, we rose to peak  
performance under the desk. Relieved  
and satisfied that all systems  
were in order, we disconnected  
and entered sleep mode  
for the duration.

Philip Wexler

**Night of Down**  
(Berlin - November 9, 1938)

The feathers, the down, more  
than anything else, I remember.

People, these days, they talk only  
about shattered glass, official havoc,

sanctioned confusion, an incessant  
din. Yes, maybe

I heard some breaking, shouting,  
faintly from the main streets.

But the neighbors that dropped by  
without knocking spoke little, broke

no glass. The clatter they made pulling  
out drawers and overturning tables was faint.

Softer still were the sounds of the quilts,  
blankets, and pillows they ripped. This part

they carried out with great spirit.  
They were like children, shaking fluff

throughout the rooms, down stairs,  
and out the windows. It was a soft falling

snow, and I could see it snowing  
out the windows of other houses.

In my life I never thought  
about the insides of our bedding,

but that night, after we gave up  
pleading with them to stop,

we stood aside, spectators,  
and I mourned

the slaughter of all the ducks and geese  
we ever ate. This scattered plumage,

their coats in life, was the filling  
we slept on and under, while we stuffed

their bodies other ways  
so we could gorge our own. Such fowl,

supporting us with their lives.  
Our neighbors shook hands

for a job done rightly, and left.  
No stormtroopers these, just simple folk.

Once the blizzard settled, my husband  
leaned his forehead against the cold

kitchen window, his eyes shut.  
My son I released from the foyer closet

and he ran about tossing  
the white stuff over his head.

I sat on the floor in a drift,  
feeling what it is to be plucked

when there are no more  
feathers to give.

**Philip Wexler**

## Potato Salad

At the picnic, Mom  
shoved Rita's face  
into the potato salad,

and told her to keep  
her hands off Dad.  
It wasn't all that

difficult, the salad  
maneuver, I mean.  
She tilted the bowl up

with her right hand,  
cupped her left  
on Rita's flaming

red hair and, quite  
ladylike, slapped  
the two together.

A shallow, vague  
impression of a face  
was left

in the potato salad  
still clinging  
to the shiny steel bowl.

I'd never seen Dad  
speechless before.  
Rita slapped him

for not coming to her  
defense, as if it were  
possible. Afterwards,

Mom carried on  
like nothing happened,  
peeling the cellophane

off the sweet potato pies.  
Taking no chances,  
everyone inched back,

and Aunt Esther tried  
to drag me away. Mom  
was smiling, but had

no more mischief  
on her mind.  
Still wiping potato

salad from her face  
and slyly licking some  
(it was so darn good),

Rita glared at her,  
and sped off  
in a flaming red

sports car. Dad shrugged  
his shoulders and went  
into the woods to smoke

his pipe. Awkwardly,  
people began leaving.  
Small though I was,

I escaped Aunt Esther's  
clutches, and helped  
myself to a ladleful

of the potato salad  
imprinted with, yes,  
Rita's flaming red lips.

**Philip Wexler**

### **Their Morning in Flannels**

He sits at the table screaming.  
She stands at the stove scrambling.

He asks for answers, reasons.  
She dices, sprinkles spices.

He is spitting mad, glares.  
She fries and trembles, cries.

He accuses, fumes, threatens.  
She denies, pleads, gets out the plates.

She takes the offensive, ridiculing,  
pressing for confessions, motives.

He defends, rebuts, deflects.  
She throws down the silverware,

tells him to get his own damn juice.  
His neck tightens, turns red.

She brings the omelet to the table and sits.  
“It needs more salt, Cynthia, as usual.”

“Oh, Jim, let’s put it aside.” She touches  
his shoulder. Tentatively, they kiss.

A solitary woman pauses outside  
the window, latches onto the momentary

kiss, thinks how lucky they are,  
how she longs for such a life.

She resumes walking. In the kitchen  
they wave knives at each other.

**Philip Wexler**



## Under the Weather

Fresh out of the shower  
you sit down opposite & I wonder  
at the one brazen drop, the runaway  
tearaway bead sneaking down your cheek –  
meeting co-conspirators at the ear lobe  
    abseiling to the slowly rising nipple  
        then joyously plummeting  
to the soft springs of pubic hair.

You don't understand the cause of my wonder  
but that's okay because we've been naked like this  
beyond count, sometimes  
beyond interest,  
but we always return to this certainty of flesh.

I follow the path of those drops like their lowliest acolyte;  
my tongue repeating their paths of prayer.

Hand paints in broadest strokes,  
moving in to fine point/  
the detailing of arousal.

You always say this is a dance,  
demanded rhythms beyond timing.  
Seeking deepest resonance  
where the music itself moves with you.

But to me we are painting –  
the coaxing of colour from  
beneath the white canvas of our skin.

My hands are moving hard, avoiding the tender points  
but nudging flesh towards those centres  
as if your whole body was congregating.

Your hands are roving lightly  
like a bay-protected tide.  
You reach down & surprise us both  
(because in these things we can all  
be at the edges of extremity). A few words  
& you come out to greet these two fingers. I  
come in like a boulder easing into earth.

We seek the rhythms of your dance. Blood rushes north,  
rushes south. My thumb  
grinds nipple to fine ochre/  
you are so intent

& have come, then try to come again but I miss cues  
(as usual, imagination beats the art) –  
have to wind down

to a calm, so calm that lakes are left looking  
strung out & shabby/  
stillness poured from a distillation of afternoon sun/  
a book waiting in its store – gilt, ink & resin.

We sense a rhythm in the distance  
as though initially it has nothing do with us:  
something in the flat downstairs even  
a movement deep in the earth.  
Both concentrating,  
trying to find a point where it meets & seconds us.

It does.  
This pulse is neither smooth, nor subtle.  
You can't call it any relative  
of waltz or bossa nova.  
This is a storm.

Your hands are busy again,  
a slickened finger slipping in  
stirring frenzy in the spine.  
Then you  
then me.

I lie on you.  
Like moon-teased water you rise again from time to time –  
those aftershocks you love.  
*Just . . . yes . . . .*  
I move & am still simultaneous.  
*Just like this.*

Les Wicks

## Citrus

flat moonlight on the great wide mesa  
contains in its brilliance a circular idea  
of full moon the snowfields of other places  
glistening with irised ice on humped and  
smooth plains full of shadow and always a cold  
interminable silence growing deeper the  
deeper you listen until you are there at  
two citrus trees near the plaza where  
for some mysterious reason the birds all noisily  
choose to congregate in the gray dawn when  
luminescence is barely there as the eyelid of  
the sky cracks open on the eastern horizon far  
against the *Sangre De Cristos* a wild matin of  
many high pitched tiny voices stabbing out of  
the round dark heads of the trees not yet able to  
be seen as green as though a small bomb has  
burst out of the darkness and its shrapnel is  
sharp obsidian shards that you hear rather  
than see or feel and are not sure they even  
exist thinking for a moment it must be  
the trees themselves making this litany to a  
powerful star

until after sunrise  
they are perfectly green and silent and tourists  
step carefully around chalk-like droppings  
painting the red brick walks at their base  
not knowing all the notes that have flown  
leaving small white husks which are nothing more  
than wild grains mixed with morning

Daniel Williams

## The Old Italians of Aquatic Park

the old men of Aquatic Park  
sit on hard wooden benches  
late in the afternoon  
their eyes moving left, right  
front, center as if at a tennis match  
pausing to feed the pigeons  
using their hands like cutting knives  
to separate the crust from the bread  
which they toss into the air  
like rice at an Italian wedding  
rising to brush the crumbs  
from their baggy trousers  
one with a suit vest and tie  
pulling at the gold chain  
holding his pocket watch  
tucked securely next to his heart  
the old men of aquatic park  
have the smell of garlic and pasta  
embedded in their skin  
Italy beating in their hearts  
the old men of aquatic park  
are dying off with grace and dignity  
and a love for the old ways

there is something sad  
about being Americanized  
there is something sad  
about growing old  
the bocce ball rolls slowly  
along the grass lawn  
coming to rest like a hearse  
parked next to an open grave  
funerals wait on them  
flowers scattered like empty promises  
the mourners growing fewer in number  
their ranks depleted  
file slowly into their cars  
disappear into the shadows  
of late afternoon monotony  
bocce ball will resume  
in the morning  
there are pigeons to be fed  
wine to drink, stories to tell  
the thirst for life masked in the  
face of death

A. D. Winans

## The Blessed

I wake up happily beside your back,  
Its naked shoulderblades as near as dusk.  
They sway ever so lightly as you breathe—  
A motion imperceptible did I  
Not know so well the rhythms of your body.  
You're sleeping; I can hear the whisk of breath  
From out your nose—the quiet rush of warmth  
Warming your upper lip (perhaps a bead  
Of moisture lingers there)—it sounds just like  
The sighing of a distant breeze! So quiet . . . .  
To think that sound could be so quiet, and yet  
Be heard! Or is it my imagination?  
Perhaps I am so rapt that I imagine . . . .  
Your hair is knotted on the pillow, tangled  
In piles tickling my lips, which kiss  
The strands in bunches (since their counterparts  
Upon your face—though longing to be kissed—  
Are turned away and inaccessible).  
Clichéd it is, but . . . I inhale your hair.  
It is a kind of secret, guilty pleasure,  
Which I permit myself occasionally.  
And then I touch your back, a timid finger  
Afraid to mar the skin, which looks as if  
It's made of fairy-tales solidified.  
How can there be such symmetry in life?  
—Except . . . yes, I see an auburn fleck  
On one side of your back, right near your neck.  
It's almost hidden by the hair; to touch  
It I must move the tousled mass aside  
—Though slowly, carefully. You mustn't wake.  
Who knows what dreams are passing underneath  
Your darting eyes (for surely they are darting,  
Bird-like, as I have seen them do before).  
Oh, how I'd like to see your face right now!  
A glimpse only . . . perhaps of just the dimple  
That bunches up the right side of your face  
(It's deeper than the other, prettier).  
Or maybe just your lips—or your eyes,  
Those sapphires that I sometimes dream about.  
But I must lie here restlessly, in rapt  
Anticipation of the moment when  
You'll wake. To look into your droopy eyes,  
To be the being they see first, as sleep  
Still clings to them . . . . Your sluggish smile will be  
The answer to my expectant grin. And then  
Together we will sit outside, beneath  
The dogwood tree, and watch the setting sun.

Chris Wright

## On the Loose

In traffic's wake he stands, shuddering,  
silently bearing his cardboard entreaty,  
while mute processions of unattached witnesses  
head for destination anchors.

Unchained to any routine's desk,  
unwanted by the taxman's agent,  
ears free from cellular growth,  
no lawn requires his cutting attentions.

No fashion's demands hold his body.  
Divorced from scheduled grasp,  
he holds a wealth of unblocked time  
undreamt of by the passersby.

Unfettered and footloose,  
no ties that bind or obligate,  
addressed constraints unknown,  
free to roam and choose his bridge,

yet tied to hunger's appetite  
and ninety-eight point six,  
to unrelenting sleep demands  
and deep thirst's slaking,

to endless foraging hunts  
for respites from the cold,  
survival's endless demands  
suck seconds from his life.

Shackles of want, chains of choice –  
what a difference a lane makes.

**Martin Zehr**

## Bar Serendip

She snuck up behind him  
like a panther in the dark  
and draped herself around his neck  
like a python around its next meal.

If he had looked into the mirror  
like an owl into the night,  
he would have seen her coming  
as sly as a witch on a broom

but he was too busy talking  
like a magpie in a tree  
on how The Beatles ruined Rock  
like Cortez ruined the Aztecs.

She was as drunk as a fish  
flopping on a pier  
and as beautiful  
as a full whisky bottle

when her empty-glass voice  
curled a thirsty question  
around the dangling part  
of his lusting left ear.

Her “Buy me a drink?”  
flowed into his mind  
like a river of gin  
into a lime-and-tonic sea.

He smiled into her smile  
like a vulture circling in the sky.  
“Maybe,” he said  
like a bee buzzing into a rose.

“What’s your name?” he asked  
as if he owned all the flowers  
that blossomed every night  
in the garden of her thighs.

Larry Ziman

## Father Dancing

My father liked to dance alone.  
Late at night, when he was sure  
the rest of the house was sleeping,  
he would turn on the old Philco  
and dance with the broom.

One summer, when mother sent me  
out with his lunch, I caught him  
doing the rhumba in the berry patch.  
Music seemed to come from his pores.  
One winter, he waltzed for the cows.

I went to the barn to feed the cats.  
I found him doing a perfect pirouette.  
His arms spun out and up  
until he was like a giant top  
spinning before the stalls.

The cows were lowing into their cuds.  
I could tell they'd seen it all before.  
Occasionally he would spin to a stop,  
bow, kiss one of them right on the nose,  
and two-step back into his turning.

One day I caught him dancing nude  
in the small meadow down past our creek.  
He and the dance were exquisite as prayer.  
I thought of Noah's sons covering  
their father's nakedness, and wondered why.

Fredrick Zydek



## The Boy Who Lived on Perkins Street

He liked stamp and coin collecting over sports, used the radio for only news and music, preferred hiking through the woods to games of tag and enjoyed Tarzan comic books

over *Mechanics Illustrated* and *True Detective*. He didn't like guns, wouldn't go hunting and found ways to get out of fishing because he didn't like killing worms or hooking fish.

He liked to climb trees, bring in the cows, feed chickens, gather eggs, chop kindling and hang out in the kitchen when Grandma baked cookies. He liked churning butter,

keeping the spring on the Edison Victrola wound tight when his uncle played Glenn Miller and Harry James records and could spend hours picking and eating fresh cherries

from all his favorite trees. This was a boy who favored books to pinups, and watching clouds take on unexpected shapes to doing homework. It was difficult for him to be

on time for things. Tardy was his middle name. He said it was because he was always dreaming and that whether people knew it or not, good dreams did not have deadlines.

**Fredrick Zydek**

### The Death of Plecostomus

For years he lived in the tank,  
watching the filters darken,  
nibbling plastic weeds, performing  
magic for snails, clap-grass,  
and one porcelain mermaid  
blossom-deep in grains of sand.

He knew the tank like the eagle  
knew the field, and he could swim  
with such simple grace  
sometimes truth grew a newer name.  
I once caught him watching me,  
wooing me back to the germ of man.

I gave a single pellet, a garland  
for the skinny victory between us.  
He took it as though to scratch its soul.  
For one minute I almost believed  
in the last mineral agony  
of an all mineral thing.  
Then, one night he swam too far.

I found him mute as a sponge,  
bruised as an invalid plum  
lying on the cold plastic  
of the kitchen floor.  
Had he bumped and gagged  
through four rooms to find me?  
I Knew the sting of fear along his bones

and rushed him back  
to his fifty-gallon dream of escape.  
He tried, once, to escape again, then moored  
himself beneath some plastic kelp.  
In the morning, he was belly up,  
and the one-eyed Swordtail  
had eaten most of his left fin.

Fredrick Zydek

## The House on A Street

It was a house where net sacks of onions, wild hazelnuts and English walnuts hung from wooden pegs on the attic's ceiling to keep the mice from getting to them. We kept a wood-burning stove in the kitchen to check the chill of cool mornings, a few

chickens to ward off earwigs and bottles of homemade root beer on the lee side of the back porch to take in our lunches. The house was always clean, the wood box always filled with kindling, and the lawn always trimmed and neat. There was an

upright piano in the living room, pump organ in the hall, a squeeze box and two guitars. It was a house where music took privilege over politics and what my father called *literary airs*. He kept rabbits in hutches behind the garage. Mother called them

four-legged chickens when she fried them for Sunday dinner. Ours was the finest vegetable garden on the block and the only strawberry patch for miles around. Dad kept a rocking chair on the front porch and a fishing pole and basket on the back.

Except for the few times he went downtown to have a beer with his pals or play cards, I doubt an hour passed in which he wasn't trying his best to provide for us. I marveled at how quietly and vigorously he cared, hoped that someday I would be a man like that.

Fredrick Zydek

## The Line Dance of Field Ants

They're on safari again. It happens every summer. The only thing that's never sure is the direction. One year they headed west. There was a carcass of a stillborn calf at the end of that journey. I don't know if they were hauling back flesh or bits of bone.

Are ants carnivorous? Perhaps they build castles made of bone beneath the shelterbelt. Maybe there are cities down there that would make Frank Lloyd Wright swoon with envy. How much winter do they get down there? Who lights the halls I'm told they build?

Today they have headed south. Somewhere out there they've found new work that will sustain them. I will check daily. Eventually the line of ants will lead to strange and waiting booty. They will make their way to this find until all that's left are bones or thistles. Then

the dance will end with the last of them, prize held in pincers, doing the rumba or watusi as it carries a tiny spoil through the tiny door that leads to their enormous city. Inside there will be feasts and celebrations. Perhaps lady ants will drape themselves in fine silks

and strut, slow and sexy, across some stage where all the workers have gathered. Perhaps there will be music and some kind of ale. Maybe there's a philharmonic down there for all those ants who don't go out to the fields, and great taverns with lady mud

wrestlers for those who do. One thing's for sure. The ants know something we don't – how to go single file without crowding.

Fredrick Zydek

## Notes on Poets

**Chuck Augello** lives in Randolph, New Jersey, with his wife, his dog, his three cats, and a growing collection of dust. His fiction and poetry have appeared in *Rattle*, *The Santa Fe Literary Review*, *Pindeldboz*, *Word Riot*, *SLAB*, and other journals. He spends his days in a cubicle, slowly plotting his escape.

**Fred Bahnson** is the recipient of the 2006 Pilgrimage Essay Award, was shortlisted for the 2007 Lange-Taylor Prize from Duke Center for Documentary Studies, and was the William Raney scholar in non-fiction at Bread Loaf Writer's Conference in 2008. His poems and essays have appeared in *Orion*, *The Sun*, *Fugue*, *Geez*, *Pilgrimage*, *The Rock & Sling*, *Sojourners*, *The Cresset* and the anthologies, *Dance the Guns to Silence: 100 Poems for Ken Saro-Wiwa* and *Best American Spiritual Writing 2007*. He is currently a Food & Society policy fellow at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. He lives in Brevard, North Carolina.

**Gay Baines** has been writing since she was eight-years-old. Her work has appeared in *REAL*, *Rattapallax*, *Poet Lore*, *Nimrod*, *California Quarterly*, *The Pinch*, *dislocate*, *Louisiana Literature*, and many other journals. In 2008, she was awarded the Mary and Gil Stott Award for writing. She is co-owner of July Literary Press. At present, she is preparing a chapbook, *The Book of Lies*, for publication. She lives in East Aurora, New York.

**Kristin Berger** lives with her husband and two children in Portland, Oregon, where she serves as an Associate Editor of *VoiceCatcher*. She is the author of a poetry chapbook, *For the Willing* (Finishing Line Press, 2008), and her non-fiction has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Kristin's poetry and essays have appeared in *CALYX*, *New Letters*, *Mothering*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, and other publications. For more about her, visit her website at [www.kristinberger.wordpress.com](http://www.kristinberger.wordpress.com).

**John C Bird** has worked as a civil servant, journalist, and university lecturer. His poetry has been widely published in newspapers, magazines, and anthologies. His published and broadcast work also includes plays, short fiction, television comedy material, and non-fiction books on subjects as diverse as Britain's treatment of enemy aliens in wartime and new careers for the over-40s. His first novel, *Alby and Me*, was longlisted for the UK Waverton Good Read Award for the best debut novel of 2007-8. He lives near Birmingham, England.

**Regina Murray Brault** lives in Burlington, Vermont, where she leads the Cherry Lane Poet's Workshop. She received her diploma in the arts from Burlington College in 1997 at the age of 60. She previously served as editor of the *Mountain Troubadour*. She has judged local, national, and international poetry contests, and has served as critic for The League of Vermont Writers as well as the Poetry Society of Vermont. She is the recipient of over 250 national and international poetry awards, including the 2008 Creekwalker and the 2008 Euphoria poetry awards. Her poem, "At Either End of the Web," received a 2009 Pushcart Prize nomination. And her poem, "Timesweep Cantata," was a finalist in the Salem College Center for Women Writers 2009 International Literary Award Competition. She was named 2009 Vermont Senior Poet Laureate by Angels Without Wings Foundation. Her poetry has appeared in more than 90 publications including *Hartford Courant*, *Comstock Review*, *Grandmother Earth*, *Karamu*, *Northwoods Journal*, *Silver Quill*, *The Mennonite*, *Anthology of New England Writers*, *Ancient Paths Literary Magazine*, *ByLine Magazine*, *Crucible*, *Lyric*, *Midwest Poetry Review*, *Poet Magazine*, *Sacred Stones*, *State Street Review*, *Bloodroot*, and June Cotner's Random House anthology, *Mothers and Daughters*. Her first illustrated book of poetry, *Beneath the Skin*, was published by Jane Wollmar in October 2007.

**Susan Breeden** lives in Houston, Texas, and works as a technical editor for the aerospace industry. Her fiction, essays, and poetry have appeared in commercial and literary publications, including

*Woman's World*, *Playgirl*, *BorderSenses*, *Zone 3*, *34th Parallel*, and *Texas Magazine* published by the *Houston Chronicle*.

**Don Brennan**, a retired high-school teacher, won the *Haight Ashbury Literary Journal* 1st Prize for Poetry in 2000, and he won the Milton Dorfman 3rd Prize in 2001. He has hosted and co-hosted numerous poetry readings including the Yakety Yak series, the Bibliohead Bookstore readings, and the Hospitality House readings at the San Francisco Main Library. He is widely published in journals and anthologies, including the City Lights 2007 anthology, *From the Other Side of the Post Card*. His books include six poetry chapbooks and a novel, *Barbaria*, released by PublishAmerica in 2009. He lives in San Francisco, California.

**Alan Britt** teaches English and Creative Writing at Towson University. His recent books are *Vegetable Love* (2009), *Vermillion* (2006), *Infinite Days* (2003), *Amnesio Tango* (1998), and *Bodies of Lightning* (1995). His work appears in the anthology, *American Poets Against the War* (Metropolitan Arts Press, Ltd., 2009) and in *Vapor Translantino*, a bi-lingual anthology from Hofstra University Press. He lives in Reisterstown, Maryland, with his wife, daughter, two Bouviers des Flandres, one Bichon Friese, and two formerly feral cats.

**MCBruce** is a lawyer in McKinleyville, California. He hosted "The Poets Café" on KPFK in Los Angeles and was the editor of *The Blue Mouse*. His chapbooks include *Clients* and *The Book of the Dead*.

**Howard Camner** is the author of 16 books of poetry and an autobiography, *Turbulence at 67 Inches*. He was the headliner with New York's West End Poetry Troupe from 1978-1981. He is recognized as Florida's most widely published poet and was nominated for Florida's Poet Laureate in 1980. He has received the MiPo Literary Award and was named Best Poet of 2007 in the *New Times* "Best of Miami" readers-poll edition. He lives with his wife and children in Miami, Florida.

**Carol Carpenter** has had poems and stories published in numerous online and print publications, including *Margie*, *Snake Nation Review*, *Neon*, *Georgetown Review*, *Caveat Lector*, *Orbis*, and in various anthologies such as *Not What I Expected* (Paycock Press, 2007) and *Wild Things* (Outrider Press, 2008). Her work has been exhibited by art galleries and produced as podcasts (*Connecticut Review* and *Bound Off*). She received the Hart Crane Memorial Award, the Jean Siegel Pearson Poetry Award, Artists Among Us Award, and others. Formerly a college writing instructor, journalist, and trainer, she now devotes her time to writing in Livonia, Michigan.

**Alan Catlin**, since retiring from his unchosen profession as a barman, has been working on various extended writing projects. His fictional memoir in progress, *Hours of Happiness*, is a series of linked short stories and a novel. Poetry projects include several chapbooks on art. Published titles include *Down on the Beach* (Snark Publications), *Our Lady of the Shipwrecks* (Finishing Line Press), *Effects of Sunlight in the Fog* (Bright Hill Press), *Self-Portrait As the Artist Afraid of His Self-Portrait* (March Street Press), *Men in Suits* (Madman Ink), and *The Insomniac's Gift* (Shark Art). He lives in Schenectady, New York.

**Joanne Riley Clarkson** has published two chapbooks of poetry, *Pacing the Moon* (Chantry Press) and *Crossing Without Daughters* (March Street Press). Her poems have appeared in many journals including *Emrys*, *Cimarron Review*, *South Dakota Review*, and *The Seattle Review*. After working as a professional librarian for 20 years, she re-careered as an RN with a specialty in hospice care. She lives with her husband in Olympia, Washington.

**Rob Cook** is the author of *Songs for the Extinction of Winter* (Rain Mountain Press, 2007), *Diary of Tadpole the Dirtbag* (Rain Mountain Press, 2009), and *Blackout Country* (BlazeVox, 2009). His work has appeared in *The Bitter Oleander*, *Colorado Review*, *Tampa Review*, *Zoland Poetry*, *A Cappella Zoo*,



*Fence, Greatcoat*, and others. He lives in New York City.

**Barbara Lydecker Crane** is a longtime quilt artist and a relative newcomer to poetry. Recent poems have been published or accepted by the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Light Quarterly*, *Measure*, *Four and Twenty*, *Raintown Review*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Lucid Rhythms*, *Bumbershoot*, and others. She is the founding member of “X. J. Kennedy & the Light Brigade,” a small group of Boston-area performing poets. In 1995, she was awarded a New England Foundation for the Arts Regional Fellowship in Visual Arts. Her quilts (primarily landscapes) are in public and private collections, including the National Quilt Museum of the United States, the New England Quilt Museum, Cambridge Savings Bank, and Massachusetts General Hospital. She lives in Lexington, Massachusetts.

**Steve De France**, MFA, has traveled widely in the United States. On more than one occasion, he hitch-hiked across America. He rode the rails on freight trains, worked as a laborer with pick-up gangs in Arizona, dug swimming pools in Texas, did 33 days in the Pecos city jail as a vagrant, fought bulls in Mexico, and dove for salvage off a small island off the coast of Mazatlan, Mexico. His poetry has been published in most English-speaking countries. Recently, his work can be seen in *The Evergreen Review*, *The Wallace Stevens Journal*, *The Sun*, *Rattle*, *Why Vandalism*, and others. He has won writing awards in England and in the United States, and he continues to write poetry, plays, essays, and short stories. He lives in Long Beach, California.

**Stephanie Dickinson** lives in New York City. Her work has appeared in *Green Mountains Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Short Story*, *Glimmer Train*, *Dirty Goat*, *Fourteen Hills*, and others. Spuyten Duyvil published her novel, *Half Girl*. *Corn Goddess*, a book of poetry, and *Road of Five Churches*, a collection of short stories, are available from Rain Mountain Press. Along with Rob Cook and the cats, Vallejo and Sally Joy, she edits *Skidrow Penthouse*.

**James Doyle** lives with his wife, poet Sharon Doyle, in Fort Collins, Colorado. His most recent poetry book is *Bending Under the Yellow Police Tapes* (Steel Toe Books, 2007).

**Nicola Easthope** lives with her partner and two-year-old daughter on the Kapiti Coast of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Before motherhood she was an English teacher and an advocate for Education for Sustainability while writing poetry to keep sane and happy. Her poems have appeared in *The Guardian* (UK), *The Red Wheelbarrow* (Scotland), New Zealand Poetry Society anthologies, *Landfall* (NZ), *Poetry New Zealand*, *Takahe* (NZ), and *Staples* (Australia). She won 2nd prize in the Bravado International Poetry Competition in 2005.

**Maureen Tolman Flannery** has had her work published in fifty anthologies and over a hundred literary reviews, recently including *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Xavier Review*, *Calyx*, *Pedestal*, *Atlanta Review*, *Out of Line*, and *North American Review*. Her newly-released book of poems about Latin America is *Destiny Whispers to the Beloved*. Other volumes of her work include *Ancestors in the Landscape: Poems of a Rancher's Daughter* and *A Fine Line*. Although she grew up on a Wyoming sheep ranch, she and her actor-husband Dan raised their four children in Chicago. She now lives in Evanston, Illinois.

**Christine Fotis** has had her poetry published in *Page Seventeen*, *Litmus Journal*, *Seven Deadly Zines*, and others. She researched and compiled the updated edition of *Aussie Slang Dictionary*. As an editor for a small publishing company, she loves helping other authors create their best writing. She volunteers for *Harvest Magazine* and also works as a digital artist. She lives in Melbourne, Australia.

**Marilyn Friedman** lives in Los Angeles, California. Her poetry has been published in *Pearl*, *Squaw Valley Review*, *California Quarterly*, and *Rockhurst Review*. She teaches poetry and creative writing at Writing Pad, a school that she founded where gourmet food is served at every class.

**Cheryl Gatling** is a registered nurse in Syracuse, New York. A chapbook, *Stickleby Wood*, is available from FootHills Publishing. Her poem “Schroedinger’s Newspaper” can be seen and heard as a multimedia piece online at [www.bornmagazine.org](http://www.bornmagazine.org).

**Howard Good**, a journalism professor at SUNY New Paltz, is the author of nine poetry chapbooks. *Visiting the Dead* (Flutter Press, 2009) is his most recent. He lives in Highland, New York.

**June S. Gould, Ph.D.**, is the author of *The Writer in All of Us: Improving Your Writing Through Childhood Memories* (E. P. Dutton, Plume). She also co-authored with Ruth Steinberg and Barbara Haber the poetry book, *Counting the Stones* (Shadow Press), and she now has a 2nd generation Holocaust novel, *In the Shadow of Trains*, from Xlibris. Some of her poetry has appeared in *The Writer’s Round Table*, *International Women’s Writing Guild*, *Dasein*, *Pearl*, *The Storyteller*, *Ship of Fools Press*, *SheMom*, *The Sheltered Poet*, *Talisman*, and *Inkwell Magazine*. She leads writing workshops and keynotes for The International Women’s Writing Guild, The National Council of Jewish Women, The Aegean Arts Circle, and an Advanced Writer’s Workshop at Shelter Studios in New York City. And she has received an award from the American Education Association for her written contribution to *Constructivism: Theory, Perspectives and Practice* (Columbia University Press). She lives in Fairfield, Connecticut.

**Nathan Graziano**, a high school teacher, is the author of three books of poetry, a collection of short stories, and seven chapbooks of poetry and fiction. His work has appeared in *Rattle*, *Night Train*, *Quercus Review*, *The Owen Wister Review*, and others. His latest book of poetry, *After the Honeymoon*, was published in 2009 by sunnyoutside. He lives with his wife and children in Manchester, New Hampshire.

**John Grey**, an Australian-born poet, playwright, and musician, is a U.S. resident since the late 1970s. He works as a financial systems analyst. He has had work recently published in *The Pinch*, *Ekphrasis*, *Cape Rock*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Rockhurst Review*, *Art Mag*, *Poetry East*, and *Reed*. He lives in Providence, Rhode Island.

**Rasma Haidri** is an American writer living on the arctic coast of Norway where she teaches English. Her poetry and essays have appeared in many journals including *Prairie Schooner*, *Runes*, and *Third Genre*. Widely anthologized, she has won the Southern Women Writers Association Emerging Writer Award in Creative Non-fiction, the Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Letters, and Science Poetry Award, the Mandy Poetry Prize, and other distinctions. More about her work can be found at her website, [www.rasma.org](http://www.rasma.org).

**Joseph Hart** for the past forty years has been a founding member of Rutgers’s School of the Arts, creating ensemble theatre productions. He has now returned to poetry, his earliest love. He lives in Highland Park, New Jersey.

**Michael Hettich** has had his work published in numerous journals including *Orion*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Tri Quarterly*, *The Sun*, *Poetry East*, and the *Southern Poetry Review*. His books of poetry include *A Small Boat*, *Swimmer Dreams*, and *Flock & Shadow: New and Selected Poems*. He lives with his family in Miami, Florida, and teaches at Miami Dade College. Visit his website at [www.michaelhettich.com](http://www.michaelhettich.com).

**Kenneth Hickey** was born and lives in Cork, Ireland. After leaving Secondary School in 1993, he went to sea for seven years before returning to dry land to pursue a serious writing career. He set up the Will It Workshop at the Sirius Art Centre Cork where he regularly reads work in progress. He has read at the Frank O’Connor Festival and has had performances of several plays at various Cork Theatres. He has also had two rehearsed readings of full-length plays by Moving Parts Theatre at Carr’s Café in Paris, France. His video shorts have been screened at the Cork and Foyle Film Festivals. Print publishing credits include *Southward 6* (the Munster Literature Centre anthology), *Destination Anywhere* (the Feel Free Press anthology), *Aesthetica Magazine*, *Shadow Poetry*, *Quill Magazine* (US), and others. He was shortlisted for the PJ O’Connor Awards and the South Tipperary Chapbook Awards in 2003 and 2004. And he won the Eamonn Kane Full-Length Play Award.



**Robert Hoefft**, a Northwest poet, lives and writes in Ashland, Oregon. Widely published in little magazines throughout the United States, he has also had poems published in Canada, England, and South Africa. His collected works include four chapbooks and one miniature book.

**Tom Holmes** is the editor of *Redactions: Poetry & Poetics*. He is also the author of *After Malagueña* (FootHills Publishing, 2005), *Negative Time* (Pudding House Publications, 2007), *Pre-Dew Poems* (FootHills Publishing, 2008), and *Henri, Sophie, & The Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound: Poems Blasted from the Vortex* (BlazeVox, 2009). His work has appeared online at *Verse Daily*. He lives in Brockport, New York.

**Tom C. Hunley** is an associate professor of English at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and he is the director of Steel Toe Books. His books include *Octopus* (Logan House, winner of the Holland Prize), *My Life as a Minor Character* (Pecan Grove, chapbook contest winner), and *Teaching Poetry Writing: A Five-Canon Approach* (Multilingual Matters, New Writing Viewpoints Series).

**Lockie Hunter** teaches fiction, satire, and media/essay writing at Warren Wilson College in the hills of North Carolina. She is a graduate of Emerson College's MFA program in Boston, Massachusetts, and her poetry, fiction, and essays have found their way into numerous print and online journals. She is currently working on a low-country novel in hopes of preserving the eccentricities of her family and the region. She lives in Asheville, North Carolina.

**Marcia L. Hurlow** has had four poetry chapbooks published. Her most recent, *Green Man in Suburbia*, won the *Backwoods City Review* Chapbook Contest and was published last year. Her first book of poetry, *Anomie*, won the Edges Prize at Word Press. She lives in Lexington, Kentucky, and teaches creative writing, journalism, and linguistics at Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky.

**Carrie Jerrell** received her M.A. from the Writing Seminars at John Hopkins University. She received her Ph.D. from Texas Tech University. Her debut poetry collection, *After the Revival*, won the 2008 Anthony Hecht Poetry Prize and was published by Waywiser Press (UK) in November 2009. She is an assistant professor of English at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky.

**Brad Johnson** is an associate professor at Palm Beach State College in Boca Raton, Florida. His two chapbooks, *Void Where Prohibited* and *The Happiness Theory*, are available from Pudding House Publications at [www.puddinghouse.com](http://www.puddinghouse.com).

**Amy Kitchell-Leighty** is a graduate of the Writing Seminars at Bennington College, and she teaches English at Vincennes University. Her work has appeared in *Bellevue Literary Review*, *The White Pelican*, *The Coachella Review*, and others. She lives with her husband and two dogs in Lawrenceville, Illinois.

**Jim Kober** is inspired by the solo work of guitarist John Frusciante. He lives in Tucson, Arizona.

**L. Leaf** has been writing poems most of her life but only occasionally made the effort to consider them closely for publication. Reading others' poetry supports and inspires the stories and novels she puts hours into every day. She lives in Chicago, Illinois, participates in writing workshops, and is part of the editorial staff of the *Chicago Quarterly Review*. Old Bean Hill Road in the Berkshires in Massachusetts is a pleasant route by day.

**Michelle Lerner** worked as a legal aid attorney for 10 years. She has an M.F.A. in Poetry from The New School. Her poetry has been published in *Lips*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Harvard Women's Law Journal*, *Sojourner Magazine*, *Knock*, and many other print and online journals, as well as in the anthologies, *The Poetry of Place: North Jersey in Poetry* and *The American Voice in Poetry: The Legacy of Whitman, Williams, and Ginsberg*. She lives in Flanders, New Jersey.

**Lyn Lifshin** has had published more than 120 books and chapbooks of poetry. Texas Review Press published *Barbaro: Beyond Brokenness* in the Spring of 2009. In 2008, World Parade Books published *Desire*, and Red Hen Press published *Persephone*. In 2006, Texas Review Press also published *The Licorice Daughter: My Year with Ruffian*, a prize-winning book about the race horse Ruffian. *Another Woman Who Looks Like Me* was published by Black Sparrow Books at David Godine in 2006 and was selected for the 2007 Paterson Award for Literary Excellence for previous finalists of the Paterson Poetry Prize. Other books include *Cold Comfort* (Black Sparrow Press, 1997), *Before It's Light* (Black Sparrow Press, 1999-2000), *In Mirrors* (Presa :S: Press), *Upstate: An Unfinished Story* (FootHills Publishing), *The Daughter I Don't Have* (Plan B Press), *When a Cat Dies, Another Woman's Story*, *Barbie Poems*, *She Was Found Treading Water Deep out in the Ocean*, *Mad Girl Poems*, *Marilyn Monroe*, *Blue Tattoo*, *What Matters Most*, and *August Wind*. March Street Press brought out *A New Film About a Woman In Love* in 2003. Other titles include *92 Rappale Drive* (Coatalism), *Nutley Pond* (Goose River Press), *Light at the End*, *The Jesus Poems* (Clevis Hook Press), *Lost in the Fog* (Finishing Line Press), and *Ballet Madonnas* (Mastodon Dentist). She has won awards for her non-fiction and has edited four anthologies of women's writing including *Tangled Views*, *Ariadne's Thread*, and *Lips Unsealed*. Her poems have appeared in most literary and poetry magazines. She is the subject of an award-winning, documentary film, *Lyn Lifshin: Not Made of Glass*, which is available from Women Make Movies. An update of her Gale Research Projects Autobiographical Series, *On the Outside, Lips, Blues, Blue Lace*, was published in Spring 2003. *Drifting* is online. Visit her website at [www.lynlifshin.com](http://www.lynlifshin.com) for interviews, photographs, more bio material, reviews, prose, and other samples of her work. She lives in Vienna, Virginia.

**Ellaraine Lockie** has seven published poetry chapbooks. She is the recipient of eleven Pushcart Prize nominations, the Lois Beebe Hayna Award from *The Eleventh Muse*, the Elizabeth R. Curry Prize from *SLAB*, the One Page Poem Prize from the Missouri Writers' Guild, the Writecorner Press Poetry Award, the Skysaje Poetry Prize, and the Dean Wagner Poetry Prize. A non-fiction book author and essayist, she also serves as Poetry Editor for the lifestyles magazine, *Lilipoh*. She lives in Sunnyvale, California.

**Florence McGinn** has had over 400 pieces published, including free-verse poetry, essays, articles, haiku, and children's poetry. Her full-length collection of poetry, *Blood Trail*, was published in 2000 by Pennywhistle Press in New Mexico. Her haiku and free verse have been published in journals including *Midwest Poetry Review*, *Modern Haiku*, *Voices International*, *Paterson Literary Review*, and *Parnassus*. Her children's poetry has been published in *Cricket* and in *Clubouse*, and it has been used in McGraw-Hill's standardized tests, in the Montana Comprehensive Assessment System, and in the North Carolina Public Instruction Assessment. She has completed a novel manuscript. She presently serves on the New Jersey State Board of Education and served as a United States Commissioner on the US Web-based Education Commission during the Clinton administration. She is the retired Vice President of GKE (Global Knowledge Exchange) and has made presentations on innovative learning and the creative process throughout the United States and internationally in China, Australia, Italy, Singapore, Japan, and Korea. She taught English literature and writing for twenty-five years. She is the recipient of awards including US 1998 National Technology & Learning Teacher of the Year and the Princeton University 1998 Distinguished Secondary School Educator Award. She lives in Flemington, New Jersey.

**Michael McIrvin** is the author of five poetry collections including *Optimism Blues: Poems Selected and New*, the novel, *Déjà Vu and the Phone Sex Queen*, and the essay collection, *Whither American Poetry*. His new novel, *The Blue Man Dreams the End of Time*, was published by BeWrite Books in December 2009. He lives with his wife Sharon on the high plains of Wyoming.

**Terry Martin** is an English Professor at Central Washington University. An avid reader, writer, and editor of journals and anthologies, she has had published over 200 poems, essays, and articles. Her most recent book of poetry, *The Secret Language of Women*, was published by Blue Begonia Press in 2006. She lives with her partner in Yakima, Washington.

**Lorraine Merrin**, a Southwest native, now lives in the Pacific Northwest. Her work has appeared in various journals including *The Salal Review*, *Quercus Review*, *Rattle*, *Tar Wolf*, and others. She says, "Writing and breathing are the same. They sustain life."

**Les Merton** is linked to writing by words such as author, poet, dialectician, reviewer, competition judge, publisher, promoter, performer, and festival organizer. His penance for the forementioned sins is to be the founder and editor of *Poetry Cornwall*. He was made a Bard of Gorseth Kernow in 2004 for services to Cornish literature. His bardic name is Map Hallow (Son of the Moors). He lives in Redruth, Cornwall, England.

**Joyce Meyers** taught English in high school and college before becoming a lawyer. Her poems have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *The Comstock Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *The Ledge*, *Pearl*, *White Pelican Review*, *Mad Poets Review*, *Philadelphia Poets*, and others. In 2004, 2007 and 2008, she received International Merit Awards from *Atlanta Review*. Her chapbook, *Wild Mushrooms*, was published by Plan B Press in 2007. She lives in Wallingford, Pennsylvania.

**Pamela Miller** has had three collections of poetry published, including *Fast Little Shoes* (Erie Street Press), *Mysterious Coleslaw* (Ridgeway Press), and *Recipe for Disaster* (Mayapple Press). Her work has appeared in many print and online journals and anthologies, including *The Paris Review*, *Pudding Magazine*, *Free Lunch*, *Wicked Alice*, *flashquake*, *Inhabiting the Body*, *Her Mark*, and *Online Writing: The Best of the First Ten Years*. She lives in Chicago, Illinois, and is working on a fourth book, *Miss Unthinkable*.

**Fred Moramarco** is the founding editor of *Poetry International*, published annually out of San Diego State University where he taught literature and creative writing for many years. His poetry and literary criticism have appeared in many magazines and journals, and a great deal of it can be found online. He is also artistic director of Laterthanever Productions ([www.laterthanever.org](http://www.laterthanever.org)), a small, non-profit, theatre company he started in San Diego in 2006. He lives in San Diego, California.

**Carmel L. Morse** earned her Ph.d. in English from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Her work has appeared in *Pudding Magazine*, *Fairfield Review*, *Darkling*, *Dana Literary Review*, *Nexus*, *Children*, *Churches and Daddies*, and several other journals. She is an Assistant Professor at the University of Northwestern Ohio in Lima, Ohio.

**Nora Nadjarian** has had published three collections of poetry and a book of short stories, *Ledra Street*, and she has won prizes and been commended in international competitions. Her work has appeared in journals and anthologies in Cyprus, Germany, India, Israel, New Zealand, the UK, and the United States. In 2009, her story, "And the Seven Dwarves," was a finalist in the Binnacle Sixth Annual International Ultra-Short Competition at the University of Maine at Machias. Her poem, "Flying with Chagall," was published in the anthology, *All of Our Lives*, which was edited by Sarah Shapiro and published by Targum Press. You can contact her by email at [noranadj@logosnet.cy.net](mailto:noranadj@logosnet.cy.net). She lives in Nicosia, Cyprus.

**Peter Nash**, when he was eight years old, noticed Ormsby's *Diseases of the Skin* in his father's medical library. Reaching high above him, he dislodged the book which fell to the carpet and opened to a photograph of a naked native of the Amazon rain forest sitting on a log. Both testicles were so swollen with elephantiasis that they rested on the forest floor. The shocked little boy vowed that he would become a doctor and cure the man. Peter's relatives on his mother's side were writers, reporters, editors, and novelists. In junior high school, Peter's English teacher, Miss Violet Walker, after reading his first essay, told him that he would become a writer. But he was committed to a life of medicine. Though he has been practicing medicine for forty years, the voices of Miss Walker and the writers in his family have never stopped whispering. Ten years ago he finally listened and moved to a rural community in Northern California where most mornings he writes. A semi-retired family physician

who makes house calls in his pickup with his dog Henry, he occasionally helps his wife in the garden, boards horses, and participates in the Mattole Salmon Group whose goal is the restoration of the Mattole River. He has recently been published in *Snowy Egret*, *Passager*, *Camas*, *Off the Coast*, *The Labletter*, and *City Works*. His chapbook, *Tracks*, won the 2007 HOTMETALPRESS Chapbook Prize, and he was the National Award Winner of the 2008 *City Works Literary Anthology*. He lives in Petrolia, California.

**Ann Floreen Niedringhaus** is the author of two poetry chapbooks, *Life Suspended* (Poetry Harbor, 2003) and *Parallel to the Horizon* (Pudding House Publications, 2007). Her work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *The Comstock Review*, *Sojourners*, *Albatross*, and *Peregrine*. She writes in view of Lake Superior in Duluth, Minnesota, and receives inspiration from participants in poetry groups she co-coordinates at the St. Louis County Jail.

**Leonard Orr** is Academic Director of Liberal Arts and Professor of English at the Tri-Cities campus of Washington State University in Richland, Washington. He is the author or editor of thirteen books of literary criticism or critical theory. His most recent published books are *Joyce, Imperialism, & Postcolonialism* (Syracuse University Press, 2008) and *James's The Turn of The Screw* (Continuum, 2009). He was named the Lewis E. and Stella G. Buchanan Distinguished Professor of English (2005-2008). His poetry has appeared in many journals including *Black Warrior Review*, *Fugue*, *Poetry International*, *Poetry East*, *Natural Bridge*, *Isotope*, *Midwest Poetry Review*, *Pontoon*, *Rosebud*, and *Rocky Mountain Review*. His poetry chapbook, *Daytime Moon*, was published in 2005 by FootHills Publishing, and his full-length collection, *Why We Have Evening*, was published in 2010 by Cherry Grove Collections, an imprint of WordTech Communications LLC. He was a finalist for the T. S. Eliot Poetry Prize and the Blue Lynx Poetry Prize, and he was a semifinalist for the Floating Bridge Chapbook Prize and the William Stafford Poetry Prize. He has been a featured reader in many venues throughout the state of Washington, and he has led poetry workshops at the Burning Word Poetry Festival and elsewhere. He hosts the open-mic and featured-poet events at Washington State University Tri-Cities, and he served as president of the Washington Poets Association for three years. In recent years he has taken up painting abstracts and had his work featured in a solo-exhibition of fifty paintings in 2007. Both his poetry and painting utilize a similar aesthetic based in spontaneity, surprise, and passion.

**David Parke** is a hypnotherapist and life coach. His short story "Lessons in Hate" appeared in *Cantaraville*, Issue 9. He lives in New York, New York.

**Rae Pater** has had many poems published both online and in print. She lives in Christchurch, New Zealand, where she teaches adult literacy and tries to snatch spare moments for writing.

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**Ronald Pies** is the author of a collection of poems, *Creeping Thyme* (Brandylane), and a collection of short stories, *Zimmerman's Tefillin* (PublishAmerica). A physician, he teaches at Tufts University and at SUNY Upstate Medical University. He lives in Lexington, Massachusetts.

**Kevin Pilkington** is a member of the writing faculty at Sarah Lawrence College, and he teaches a workshop in the graduate department at Manhattanville College. He is the author of six collections of poetry. *Spare Change* was the La Jolla Poets Press National Book Award winner, and *Getting By* won



*The Ledge* 1996 Poetry Chapbook Competition. *Ready to Eat the Sky* was published by River City Publishing as part of their new poetry series, and it was a finalist for an Independent Publishers Award. His poetry has appeared in many anthologies including *Birthday Poems: A Celebration*, *Western Wind*, and *Contemporary Poetry of New England*. Over the years he has been nominated for four Pushcarts and has appeared online at *Verse Daily*. His poems and reviews have appeared in numerous magazines including *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *Iowa Review*, *Boston Review*, *Yankee*, *Hayden's Ferry*, *Columbia*, *Greensboro Review*, *North American Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Valparaiso Review*, and *Urthkin*. He lives in New York City.

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**Connie Post** served as the first Poet Laureate of Livermore, California, 2005-2009, during which time she created two popular reading series, "Ravenswood" and "Wine and Words." Her poetry has appeared in *Calyx*, *Kalliope*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *Chiron Review*, *Comstock Review*, *DMQ Review*, *Dogwood*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Main Street Rag*, *RiverSedge*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Up The Staircase*, *The Toronto Quarterly*, and *Wild Goose Poetry Review*. She was the winner of the Cover Prize for the Spring 2009 issue of *The Dirty Napkin* and the winner of the 2009 Caesura Poetry Awards from Poetry Center of San Jose. She lives in Livermore, California.

**Julie Preis** lives in Silver Spring, Maryland. Her poems have appeared in several print and online publications. Her interests include children, old people, family relationships, low-effort cooking, travel, and learning Spanish.

**Doug Ramspeck** directs the Writing Center at The Ohio State University at Lima, Ohio. His poetry collection, *Black Tupelo Country*, received the 2007 John Ciardi Prize for Poetry and is published by BKMK Press (University of Missouri – Kansas City). March Street Press published his chapbook, *Where We Come From*.

**Charles P. Ries** is the author of five books of poetry and a novel based on memory, *The Fathers We Find*. His narrative poems, short stories, interviews, and poetry reviews have appeared in over two hundred print and electronic publications. He has received four Pushcart Prize nominations for his writing. Most recently he was awarded the Wisconsin Regional Writers Association "Jade Ring" Award for humorous poetry. He is the former poetry editor for *Word Riot*, Co-Chairman of the Wisconsin Poet Laureate Commission, and a former member of the board at the Woodland Pattern Book Center. He is a founding member of the Lake Shore Surf Club, the oldest fresh-water surfing club on the Great Lakes. He lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Visit his website at [www.literaiti.net/Ries/](http://www.literaiti.net/Ries/) for samples of his work.

**Amy Henry Robinson** is currently in Santa Monica, California, cleaning her oven instead of writing as she ought to. Her work has been published in *Origami Condom*. Her published children's book, *Too Many Monkeys*, is illustrated by her sister Janet. She loves her husband because he loves the cats.

**E. M. Schorb** has had his work published in *The Sewanee Review*, *The Yale Review*, *The Chicago Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The Texas Review*, *The American Scholar*, *Stand* (UK), *Agenda* (UK), *The Notre Dame Review*, *Rattle*, *The New York Quarterly*, and others. His poetry

collection, *Time and Fevers*, won a *Writer's Digest* Award for Self-Published Books in Poetry, and it was also a 2007 recipient of an Eric Hoffer Award for Excellence in Independent Publishing. Another collection, *Murderer's Day*, was awarded the Verna Emery Poetry Prize and was published by Purdue University Press. His novel, *Paradise Square*, was awarded the Grand Prize for Fiction from the International eBook Award Foundation at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2000. His latest novel, *Fortune Island*, was published in 2009 by Cherokee McGhee Publishers. He lives in Mooresville, North Carolina.

**Troy Schoultz** has been writing and publishing poetry, fiction, reviews, and articles for the past ten years. He recently earned a Master of Science degree in English from the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. Currently working on his first novel, he lives in Marshfield, Wisconsin.

**Anthony Seidman** is the author of several books and chapbooks, including *Combustions* (March Street Press) and *Where Thirst Intersects* (The Bitter Oleander Press). His poetry and translations can be found in such journals as *Beyond Baroque*, *Borderlands*, *The Bitter Oleander*, *Nimrod*, and *Skidrow Penthouse*. He lives with his wife, poet Estrella del Valle, and his children in Los Angeles, California.

**Madeline Sharples** has worked most of her professional life as a technical writer, editor, and grant writer. She currently is a proposal manager turning engineering "writing" into readable prose. She co-authored *Blue Collar Women: Trailblazing Women Take on Men-Only Jobs* (New Horizon Press, 1994), a book about women in non-traditional professions, and she co-edited the poetry anthology, *The Great American Poetry Show*, Volumes 1 and 2. She wrote the poetry for two photography books, *The Emerging Journey* and *Intimacy*, and she recently had poems published in *Memoir (and)*, *The Muddy River Poetry Review* and *Perigee - Publication for the Arts*. "Lunch," an excerpt from her memoir in poetry and prose, *Leaving the Hall Light On*, also appeared in *Perigee*. Visit her blog, Choices, at [www.madeline40.blogspot.com](http://www.madeline40.blogspot.com), where she posts poems, photos, and musings about life choices. She lives in Manhattan Beach, California.

**Eileen Sheehan** lives in Killarney, Ireland. Her work is featured in *The Watchful Heart: A New Generation of Irish Poets*, edited by Joan McBreen and published by Salmon in 2009. Her collections of poetry are *Song of the Midnight Fox* (Doghouse Books, 2004) and *Down the Sunlit Hall* (Doghouse Books, 2008). She is the current Poet in Residence with the Limerick County Council Arts Office.

**Michael Shorb** writes frequently about environmental and political issues in tones ranging from lyrical to satirical. His poem, "Water Planet," is dedicated to Jacques Cousteau, the pioneer ecologist. His work has appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies, including *Nation*, *Michigan Quarterly*, *The Sun*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Rattle*, and *Underground Voices*. He lives in San Francisco, California.

**Raymond Southall** has written critical works including *The Courtly Maker* (Barnes & Noble), *Literature and the Rise of Capitalism* (Lawrence & Wishart), and *Literature, the Individual and Society* (Lawrence & Wishart). His poems have appeared in various collections including *Secrets Beneath Stones*, *Sailing in the Mist of Time*, *Across the Bridge*, *Traveling*, and *The Argument from Desire*. He lives in Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia.

**Dee Sunshine** is a new-age gypsy, poet, and artist. After writing this blurb, he is going to Spain to walk the Camino de Santiago. After that he might return to India. You can follow his adventures at [www.facebook.com/captainmelted](http://www.facebook.com/captainmelted), and you can read more of his poetry at [www.thunderburst.co.uk](http://www.thunderburst.co.uk).

**Lois Swann** has written two novels, *The Mists of Manitoo* and *Torn Covenants*, both published by Charles Scribner's Sons and reprinted by Avon Books. *The Mists of Manitoo* also had a Dutch edition. She won the Boehm Memorial Prize for poetry, and she founded Calliope's Chamber, an ensemble of live music and live readings of her published work and works-in-progress. She lives in Cummaquid, Massachusetts.

**Julie M. Tate** works as a journalist and freelance nurse. Her writing has appeared in numerous literary journals such as *Papyrus* and *Cram*. She is the owner, author, and editor of *Gossip [&] the Devil*, a creative/lifestyle blog that features interviews with independent artists in a variety of mediums and also features commentary on the arts, culture, music, and travel. Her first chapbook, *The Rough Chronicles of Bipolar Romance*, is available through her publishing and design label, Modern Orphan Designs. Currently she is at work on a book of flash fiction. She splits time between Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Chicago, Illinois.

**Sam Taylor** has had poems published in many journals including *The New Republic*, *Orion*, *Agni*, and *Michigan Quarterly*. His first book of poetry, *Body of the World*, is available from Copper Canyon Press. He is also the lyricist for the band, Some Say Fire, whose website is [www.somesayfire.com](http://www.somesayfire.com). He lives in Charlottesville, Virginia.

**Arlene Tribbia** is an artist who has had short stories and poems published in many print and online literary journals in the United States and Canada. Her short stories have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and she recently completed a novel, *The Ten Thousand Loves*. She lives in Palm Harbor, Florida. Her website is: [www.arlenetribbia.com](http://www.arlenetribbia.com).

**Vernon Waring**, a native of Philadelphia, has a background in journalism, advertising, and graphic arts. His poetry has appeared in many literary publications including *The Writer*, *The Iconoclast*, and *Anthology*. His work has also been featured online in *Ascent Aspirations Magazine*, *Starving Arts Literary Magazine*, *poetic inhalation*, and *A Prairie Home Companion*. He lives in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania.

**Sarah Brown Weitzman** grew up in Port Washington, New York. Over 200 of her poems have been published in many magazines such as *Poet & Critic*, *Ekphrasis*, *Nassau Review*, *North American Review*, *American Writing*, and *Potomac Review*. She received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and twice was a finalist in the Academy of American Poets' First Book Award. In 2003, she was a finalist for both The Foley Prize and the National Looking Glass Poetry Chapbook Contest. Her second chapbook, *The Forbidden*, was published in 2004 by Pudding House Publications. A full-length volume of her poems, *Never Far from Flesh*, was published by Main Street Rag in 2005. Retired, she now lives and writes in Delray Beach, Florida.

**Philip Wexler** has had over 80 poems published in assorted literary magazines through the years and has given readings of his work in the Washington, D.C. area. He lives in Bethesda, Maryland, where he works for the Federal Government.

**Les Wicks** has had work published in over 200 different magazines, anthologies, and newspapers across 12 countries and 7 languages. His 9th book of poetry is *The Ambrosiacs* (Island, 2009). He lives in Mortdale, New South Wales, Australia.

**Daniel Williams** has been writing poetry of the Sierra Nevada in Northern California for 20 years. His work has appeared in many journals and anthologies. He has read at Cody's Books and Barnes & Noble, and he regularly records for KSER Radio in Seattle, Washington. When not writing of the natural world, he "vacations" in the 19th Century and finds many fascinating subjects for his poems there. He lives in Wawona, California.

**A. D. Winans** was born and raised in San Francisco, California, where he now lives. He returned from Panama in 1958 to become part of the North Beach scene. He is the author of over 45 books and chapbooks of poetry and prose, including *North Beach Poems*, *North Beach Revisited*, and *The Holy Grail: The Charles Bukowski Second Coming Revolution*. His poetry has been translated into 8 languages. He edited and published Second Coming Press for 17 years, publishing many Beat and post-Beat poets such as Charles Bukowski, William Everson, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Allen Ginsberg, Bob Kaufman, Josephine Miles, Harold Norse, David Meltzer, and Jack Micheline. In 1980, he

produced the Second Coming Poets and Music Festival, honoring poet Josephine Miles and blues-legend John Lee Hooker. In 2005, a song poem of his was performed at New York's Tully Hall. In 2006, he was awarded a PEN National Josephine Miles Award for excellence in literature. And Presa :S: Press published his *Selected Poems: The Other Side of Broadway* in 2007.

**Chris Wright** is a graduate student in history and philosophy in Boston, Massachusetts. His first book, *Notes of an Underground Humanist*, is available at [Booklocker.com](http://Booklocker.com).

**Martin Zehr** is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Kansas City, Missouri. He is a member of the Mark Twain Circle of America and has made presentations on a number of Twain-related topics at regional and national literary conferences and at the international conferences on Mark Twain studies held in Elmira, New York, where the Clemens family spent their summers. His poetry has been published in *ZITIG*, the European online journal of culture and politics, and in the *Kansas City Star*.

**Larry Ziman** says, "Putting thoughts and feelings on paper without craft may be fun but never art." He lives in West Hollywood, California.

**Fredrick Zydek** is the author of nine collections of poetry. *T'Kopachuck: The Buckley Poems* was published by The Winthrop Press in 2009. Formerly a professor of creative writing and theology at the University of Nebraska and later at the College of Saint Mary, he is now a gentleman farmer when he isn't writing. He is the editor for Lone Willow Press. His work has appeared in *The Antioch Review*, *Cimmaron Review*, *The Hollins Critic*, *New England Review*, *Nimrod*, *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Yankee*, and others. He is the recipient of the Hart Crane Poetry Award, the Sarah Foley O'Loughlen Literary Award, and others. Retired, he divides his time between his home in Omaha, Nebraska, and a working corn-and-soybean farm in Brunswick, Nebraska.



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A decorative frame consisting of four ornate, symmetrical scrollwork flourishes that curve inward from the corners to form a rectangular border. The word "Intermission" is centered within this frame in a black, elegant, cursive script font.

*Intermission*