



# **Storm Cycle 2014**

The Best of Kind of  
a Hurricane Press

edited by A.J. Huffman  
and April Salzano

# *Storm Cycle 2014*

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and April Salzano

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### *Thank You From The Editors*

In lieu of an introduction, we wanted to take a moment to thank all of our brilliant authors from 2014. We have been blessed with an amazing amount of extraordinarily talented authors who deemed our journals and anthologies worthy of their wonderful work. This thank you extends not just to the authors who made the pages of this anthology, or even to the authors that made the pages of our other anthologies and online journals, but rather to all the authors who submitted their work to us. Accepted, rejected, chosen as standouts, at the end of the day without any of you, none of our hard work would matter at all. Without the diligent work of these struggling artists, we would be a blank page on a screen or a book. So, for saving us from that horrific fate, we thank you. We hope to continue our relationship with all of you, and any and all new additions we can muster. We have an amazing year of projects planned for 2015. Hopefully, we will see you all again in the years to come.



*From The 2014  
Editor's Choice Contest Winners*

## *Scavenger Hunt*

The boy was devising a game for his father  
who might soon wake from a nap, his third that day.

He called his son *the boy* since the surgeon's  
knife had sliced most names from his memory. The boy  
called his father *Mr. Gus* when they were playing pirates.

In his best first-grade printing, he wrote instructions on  
small squares of paper for Mr. Gus to find the treasure chest:  
"Number 1: Go to the Bathroom." He smiled at his joke  
and placed a second note on the toilet tank: "Go to the Bedroom."  
a third: "Living Room." Yes. "Go to the Living Room"

He knew his mother would help Mr. Gus read the clues.  
Number 4: "Kitchen."  
Number 5: "Tree House Ladder."  
Number 6: "Ship," – the derelict porch at the back of the house,  
loaded with all that a seagoing scalawag could hope for.

In time, Mr. Gus found the boy's cherished booty: bits of sea glass,  
polished stones, foreign coins, and his great-aunt Jane's  
discarded pearls and brooches.

*They're yours, Mr. Gus. All for you!*

Mr. Gus loved the boy with all his heart and soul. He knew  
where his heart was and could even find his pulse points,  
but wondered obsessively about his soul: Was it there

behind his eyes, floating in the reservoir of tears?  
Perhaps in his throat that clutched when the boy piped  
sea chanteys they'd sung together. Maybe in his gut,  
where he would shit it out as a last angry act. Or his lungs  
where it could leave in the death rattle he knew was approaching.  
He tried to picture it hovering somewhere in a never-never-land  
until it was joined by the boy's, decades hence.

He heard the boy calling and found him standing on the toilet lid,  
rummaging through the medicine cabinet above, pulling out  
bottles and tubes and vials.

*This is what the doctor will do, the boy shouted.  
She'll go through all the pills in her closet and way at the back,  
she'll find the ones that will fix your sickness, his voice  
bounding from the walls*

Their blue eyes met in a gaze of longing and possibility. The boy  
touched his father's grizzled face, then he jumped to the floor.

*Wanna play swordfight, Mr. Gus? he asked. I'll find the cutlass,  
and he ran from the room.*

*-- Donna Barkman  
(First Place Prize Winner)*

*Visitation Tuesday*

Women in tattered sweat pants,  
swallowed by thread-bare t-shirts nest  
outside the visitor entrance  
waiting to see their papis,  
babies,  
better halves,  
soul-inmates.

The chica beside me tosses her brass blonde  
feathered hair, grabs the spaghetti  
strap of my cerulean dress, *This ain't a ball sister.*  
*Don't look at our men.*

Her doorknocker earrings swing,  
a caged bird's empty

perch. There are no windows inside.  
No way for them to see airplanes  
soar, with vultures and families  
escaping this dried up town.

To the left a mother, her son  
no longer legally a child, confined  
behind 2 inches of Plexiglas,  
cries, picks up the phone, toys  
with the cord that links them.  
He is the only detainee  
unable to hold his visitor.  
Her hand flutters, grazing the cage  
that took 20 years

to build. In Colorado, guards shoot  
crows during target practice  
then serve them for dinner to inmates.  
Visitors are ruffled, frisked,  
then released to an open room of their men—  
the well-behaved, in white jumpsuits.  
He is in orange

*Baby I have missed you so much.  
You drop off some cash at intake?  
When I'm sprung, we're taking off for Cali.  
We got 30 minutes baby, talk.*

Black wings rip through my shoulder  
blades the color of desire  
that cannot be contained in a state  
issue plastic chair.  
I glide above the prisoners  
beak first against Plexiglas.  
I snap, chirp a misunderstood subsong,  
the guards ignore my caws  
take aim.

*-- Denise Weuve  
(Second Place Prize Winner)*

### *Mathematics*

The distance traveled  
on the plane  
had value  
for the crew  
as far as  
fuel consumption,  
wear on the aircraft,  
and the mood  
of the passengers.

In row E, window seats,  
two fingers to the lips  
meant shh,  
surrender  
to the captured time,  
absorb the turbulence  
and remember  
it will end some day.

The hotel  
was ten miles  
from the airport  
on a road built  
with ruts,  
and held together by  
dust and stones.

Midnight crowed  
like a rooster  
insane from the heat,  
row E, window seats,  
shed their skin  
reborn as room 235,  
two fingers to the lips  
meant shh,  
this is all we have.

Time travels  
at a fixed speed  
and cannot be altered,  
you can pray  
to the father, son,  
or holy variable  
of the long lost  
algorithms,  
time will not  
respond.

Sun-heated  
blue-green water  
carrying bodies  
on dappled waves,  
buoyant layers  
of indirection,  
two fingers to the lips  
meant shh,  
we're almost done.

Air speed is something  
you don't feel  
when you're in the air,  
during flight  
no one thinks about  
flight altitude  
or the precise combustion  
of the modern  
jet engine.

Real world math  
feels leaden,  
time reversing  
through fluid  
thick with  
sleepless thoughts  
and fissures in

the new blood,  
two fingers to the lips  
meant shh,  
we have to start over.

*-- Christopher Hivner  
(Third Place Prize Winner)*

*The Traffic in Old Ladies*

I'm crossing traffic on 8th and 34th  
Looking for the cross-town bus,  
confused by the numerous vectors.

Leaning against a rail  
casual, one leg bent,  
a bright-eyed cocoa-toned young man  
croons solicitous:  
"What's bothering you?  
Hey, cum'ere ..."  
I don't remember what he called me  
but he called, again.  
Suspecting him a player in  
the traffic in old ladies,  
I didn't answer. But his solicitation  
propelled me to the mirror back at home.

Twilight softens the contours,  
not the intensity.

Face

Not the woman who twice rebuilt a crumbling life  
courageous and persistent  
(some would say stubborn)  
Nor the adventurer friends tap for vicarious trips  
(some would say reckless)  
Not the bitterness that sometimes thins my optimist smile,  
the worry that tightens my jaw  
(some would say tense),  
Nor the laugh old friends can recognize  
across a teeming room

no...

the shocked look of the curly-locked girl in amber silk

staring confused  
through undulating water  
wondering why  
her lover  
is holding her  
under

-- *Mary Newell*  
(*Honorable Mention*)

*this small rain*

this small rain sambas on San Vicente  
wanders through Whittier  
mambos past Montebello  
and East LA

this small rain moves like a Latina  
over-plucks her eyebrows  
drinks Tequila shooters  
fronts a girl-band

this small rain works two jobs  
dawdles in downpours  
this small rain seeds clouds

this small rain drives to Vegas in a tormenta  
has a friend in Jesus  
needs boots and a winter coat

in this drought-wracked city,  
this small rain dreams of flash floods,  
depósitos, indigo lakes,  
cisterns, high water,  
Big Gulps, endless refills

in this drought-wracked city,  
this small rain settles on the hierba seca  
sleeps under freeways  
plays the lotto  
is unlucky in love

this small rain longs to hose down the highways  
this small rain chases storms

this small rain has a tsunami in her heart

this small rain kamikaze's

in the gutter  
suicides on summer sidewalks  
dreams of a deluge  
that overflows the river banks  
washes L.A. clean

in this drought-wracked city,  
this small rain scans the heavens,  
looking for a monsoon,  
searching for su salvador in the  
reclaimed desert sky.

-- Alexis Rhone Fancher  
(Honorable Mention)

*yerba seca: dry grass*  
*tormenta: rainstorm*  
*su salvador: her savior*  
*deposito: reservoir*

*Signs of the Apocalypse*

Last night, everyone on the planet  
had a good night's sleep.  
This morning, everyone used their turn signals  
and were gleefully allowed to merge.  
No one used racial slurs,  
sex was not warfare,  
and warfare, finally,  
was declared illegal.  
The ridiculously rich  
fed the poor, voluntarily,  
and even fast-food chains  
decided to pay a living wage.  
Zeus and the Pope  
sat down to tea.  
And I opened up my hands  
and let go.

-- Terri Simon  
(Honorable Mention)

*From The 2014  
Pushcart Prize Nominees*

*Before the Winter Storm Drifted East*

As day changed color to color  
and the great light went out in the chamber,  
someone gathered straw to bury the earth.

Let the frozen fire of ice and snow collect its belongings,  
let it settle into seed and burrow, weed and grass,  
the tumbledown mesa over to the east.

This is a suicide land, a rock and pictograph,  
a grape for encouragement and a grape for the downfall,  
a green apple for the rest of us.

-- *Michael H. Brownstein*  
(*January Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Another Departure*

Only a week ago  
the ice was melting  
I was driving home

watching white ground slip  
into black – mud everywhere  
shining wet, black shimmer of crow

in motion and the slapping  
sound of wings whipping  
my speeding car, windows down

on the radio  
someone was singing  
mournfully long and slow

about love and letting go  
along the road  
dead deer were set free

winter – cold lover  
holding tightly  
forced to let go

only a moment  
a week ago I thought  
we were finally thawing.

-- *Theresa Darling*  
(*January Napalm and Novocain*)

### *Common Grounds*

A friend, the most modern of modern women, was rattled with the realization that romantic breakups and hookups worked as the natural boundaries of her existence. As we tiptoed around the corner between our twenties and thirties, this type of categorizing self-reflection echoed around me. Hair, apartment, job, car. Cataloging their lives brought out my friends' inner anthropologists. They marked trends, measured patterns. They itemized gestures and peeled back layers of mating ritual.

But I thought about coffee. Although coffee was not addiction or love affair, it was a mahogany river of continuity through scene after scene of my memory. It was the mostly empty mug of my best high-school friend chilling on the linoleum of the third floor hallway, banned from the slate lab benches of junior-year biology. It was the smell of epic college conversations at The Grindular Sensation, just off campus and open all hours, that meandered in and out of topics with the same loose fluidity as our drinks. It was the oh-thank-you-God of early mornings when sleeping in and skipping class were no longer options and opening eyes to another endless day of bottom-rung drudgery was made possible only by caffeine.

My parents drank instant, but that didn't stop my mother and her thick sludge and cigarette from laughing at my cream-and-sugar, my starter coffee sweet and innocuous like my heart. Every year I took half a sugar less, one non-dairy creamer fewer. Until one morning, one Christmas, she looked across the table and noticed the French press I'd dragged home, the black bottomlessness of my own mug holding down a corner of the Sunday paper. "Well well well," she coughed. "Look who's all grown up." She was dying, and we both knew it. But we just sat and sipped and read in silence.

At some point, coffee became—to me and everyone else—anything but coffee. It became coffee draped in finger quotes, an overture to possible passion without making intentions clear. It was wine without overt snobbery, fragrance and body and flavor tones. My mom turned in her grave as we derided Folgers and paid way, way too much for hand-

roasted, free-trade Columbian at that independent coffee shop down the street. We had great distrust for people who thought coffee too bitter or too unhealthy or too anything but perfect.

Some weekend afternoons, I sit in the window of that shop, still down the street and still with the outrageous prices, and I sip my witch-black brew and read the paper around watching foot traffic and counter traffic and taxis and cars and buses slide in and out of view. Despite the anchor of my mug, the engulfing smell of my coffee, change is all around me, our lives the unending processes of becoming who we are. Strangers, jobs, hair, loves come and go, and we are here to witness it all, all that living and dying and talking and drinking.

*-- Amanda Kabak  
(Something's Brewing Anthology)*

### *Twenty-Eight Seconds*

It took 28 seconds, but it was months in the making. I had been following the reviews about the ride since it debuted last summer. I bought the tickets to King's Dominion when my company announced the outing in December. I organized a group to rent a car, so we could arrive at the gates as they opened.

It wasn't without compromise. Two group members made us go on a water ride first since they were convinced it would be too disgusting after people had time to eat. Despite my thorough research showing a low incidence of riders throwing up and the high dilution factor of the water, this was non-negotiable.

It is frustrating to feel like an amateur going to the lower demand rides. There was no line because no one wanted to ride in a log. Everyone knew that Kingda Ka was THE attraction.

By the time we arrived at it 45 minutes later, the line was already two hours long. It was as if they didn't understand the unique properties of theme park time. The waiting included periods when the ride shut down whenever the tracks got too hot. And there were several restarts when the hydraulics did not propel the train high enough.

Three of our group dropped out after the first time they saw a complete cycle. Not sure what they expected since the ride was billed as the tallest and fastest ride in the country. Four more people talked themselves out of it over the next 90 minutes. Betty actually left in tears. "Humans were not meant to go that high!" she exclaimed with her typical drama. A more relevant thought was that humans were not meant to wear that much mascara before 8 pm, but that was for another day.

It was down to Patty and me, finally boarding the train after 126 minutes in line. We were in the second car, one row behind prime roller coaster seating. Patty gave me a long look, probing my face for signs I wanted to get off. But I was committed.

A moment of stillness fell after the ride was cleared to leave. A sixteen-year-old yelled to keep our hands inside with unexpected authority. The car moved backward, somewhat slowly, to lock into position. My brain finally registered that it was really happening.

And then blastoff! Unlike roller coasters based on gravitational pull, those with hydraulic launches have an abrupt start. The first three seconds took us from zero to over 100 miles an hour. We propelled in a straight line as my stomach pulled my body forward while the safety bar kept me braced in my seat. I literally felt stretched. Another ten seconds took us up the tower in a 90 degree angle towards the heavens, 450 feet above the earth.

And then we stopped. For a second or two I experienced the sensation of floating at the same time I had the sinking knowledge that I was about to fall. I looked over at Patty, somewhat surprised to see her smiling, looking thrilled by the experience.

As the drop started, I felt weightless. Going up was exhilarating. Falling brought fear triggered by a completely natural survival instinct. It made it even better! At the bottom, we abruptly stopped before our train slowly returned to the unloading section.

Patty and I laughed uncontrollably. Maybe it was the adrenaline. But we were warriors back from battle. And as they helped me out of the train back into my wheelchair, I wondered if any 28 seconds would ever feel that good again.

*-- Marla Kessler  
(Life is a Roller Coaster Anthology)*

*Signs*

In the interval between  
an open door and a closed heart lies

a secret rustling like  
dried leaves in the wind.

I ask for patience.  
Tomorrow comes  
before today.

I ask  
for truth.  
The paper boy  
stops writing  
advice columns.

I ask for remembrance.  
My pen cuts  
the hero before  
writing the ending.

And there are signs  
and signs of signs

and the wind runs  
naked in the grass

speaks of nothing

and the new world  
grows lightly over the old.

-- *Emily Pittman Newberry*  
*(Tic Toc Anthology)*

*Until Next Time*

I feel safest when I am held  
by the corner of the kitchen counter  
where I tuck myself in  
with the sink at my left  
and the stovetop at my back.

It feels like warmth,  
like coffee brewing and bread toasting,  
clean like plates just out of the dishwasher,  
like onions sweetening on the hot skillet.

I stare at the broken door  
of the refrigerator. My hands  
still shake with adrenaline  
from pulling him away  
before he tore off the whole door.

I stand in the corner  
calming down and girding up  
for next time.

-- *Leland Seese*  
(*May Pyrokinecton*)

*From The 2014  
Best of the Net Nominees*

*Urban Still Life*

*“A 23-year-old female was shot in the head tonight outside  
of a flower and card shop. She died a short time later.”*

Splashes of rain  
tattoo neon pools  
of pitted concrete.

Pulse of random gunfire  
startles the quiet,  
flashes revolving sirens

in wreathes  
of splattered crimson  
and shattered glass.

The 10 o'clock News  
punctuates the day's  
events—violent and pointless;

irreconcilable episodes  
between unbearable  
silences.

*-- Ben Rasnic  
(April Pyrokinection)*

***Spooning***

Dog hairs and lover's laundry lint,  
Two things not easily gotten rid of,  
And a third, images of love making.

He is the words brick and testosterone;  
I am the word confused --  
He makes me take vacations from myself.

-- *Deborah L. Wymbbs*  
(*March Pyrokinecton*)

*Walking Past Mt. Calvary Cemetery in Winter*

The last snow (for now) melts under soft gray skies.  
Even now it clings, like cobwebs, to corners.

The holly hedge's red berries and sharp leaves  
hold the eye until the next snowfall.

Gees graze for grubs on the hillside.  
The size of toy ponies, they do not fly.

Just like the waxy magnolia, the spiky cypress,  
the leafless, last black locust,

they persist.

Somewhere in the city a woman on a patio  
spoons sorbet. The nearby quince blooms.

Somewhere else a bronze nude on a tabletop confronts  
the indoor birds of paradise, the bittersweet.

They too persist.

-- *Marianne Szlyk*  
(*May Jellyfish Whispers*)

*I Meant to Tell You*

in my last letter  
about the downy woodpecker  
that hit the window  
and lay stunned  
on the door-step  
wings outspread  
each marking clear

how we stood  
behind the window  
hoped and prayed  
that wings would stir

we returned to the window  
again and again

the fourth time  
there was a movement  
a lift a whirr  
into flight

I meant to tell you  
but I'm too late  
- you have gone

-- *Joanna M. Weston*  
(*February Jellyfish Whispers*)

### *A Postindustrial Romance*

*. . . we live in a society that is both competitive and in which we are incessantly evaluated (school, university, performance as writer, poet or businessman or sportsman). The only place where you hope to stop that evaluation is in love.*

*-- Eva Illouz*

Donna married my paycheck  
on an unseasonably warm autumn day.  
Bridesmaids in antebellum gowns fanned themselves  
and congratulated her on her good catch.  
I still have the postcard she sent  
from their honeymoon in New Zealand.

I wanted them to be happy.  
Even when pricing helium futures  
at the zeppelin factory,  
I'd set down my slide rule  
and imagined her moaning with pleasure,  
my paycheck between her thighs.

When the downsizing began,  
she sat at my paycheck's bedside  
holding its hand telling it not to give up.  
At the funeral pallbearers had to restrain her.  
In her grief she began to live for her job  
staying at the office long after dark  
and subsisting on frozen dinners.

To console her I explained that in today's economy  
love depends on the trade balance with China  
as well as myriad decisions by executives  
in large corporations. Now she's dating again.

If you're interested, forward your resume  
along with a copy of your tax return.

-- *Jon Wesick*  
(*January Napalm and Novocain*)

*Domestic Dispute*

His storm trooper voice  
Bellowed downstairs  
As she meekly cried out  
For some miracle of mercy

I cowered in my room  
As outside the sky  
Filled with the darkness  
of black-hearted clouds

His anger seemed endless  
As I heard the dull thud  
Of something thrown against  
The thin, brittle wall

While the frail, little nest  
In the tree near my window  
Was seized by the wind  
And helplessly blown away

-- *Richard Schnap*  
(*February Napalm and Novocain*)

*From the Anthologies*

*Alzheimer's*

Across visible facets of a lofty winter,  
I am late. For the turning sun at day  
has been skipping in wider strides  
over possibilities of a blossoming,  
where little sprigs of cleaving self-  
adhering rationalities brown into nights  
of an unsolicited humidity presaging  
a fall into a calloused summer. Call  
the winter weak, meddled into twines  
of its own brittle verbosity or colour  
palette not agreeing to normal turns  
of a solstice – an unfolding trap  
of ambivalence; call me depleted,  
my snow has run its course of use  
for the garden soil; call me disposed,  
my trees bear no more use for labour;  
I am, indeed, late by a full turn  
of seasons' luminous vagaries  
but I am lucid in this ephemerality:  
*Now.*

-- *Sheikha A*  
(*Switch the Difference Anthology*)

### *Half Past*

We are hypocrites about the past,  
clinging to dead things, resurrecting  
some memories like avid hoarders  
while others are locked in penitentiaries.  
We snap stills with our camera phones:  
selected poses, stretched truth marketed  
to future reminiscences – in them we laugh  
and dance, our faces turned to their best angle.  
When we flick through them in twenty years  
we'll have convinced ourselves  
that it was our happiest time,  
that we will never be that way again  
and our grim acceptance of the lesser  
present is justified - we believe  
our own propaganda about ourselves;  
so busy remaking and remodelling  
the past, rereading and reinterpreting  
its texts, we never completely live  
in the here and now,  
making our past a half past  
and our present half lived.

*-- Amanda Anastasi  
(Tic Toc Anthology)*

### *Closing Time*

Carpet cigarette-burned and coffee-colored hue.  
*The light bounces off rows of bottles promising.*  
Doorless bathroom and urinal filled with bugs.  
*Pool balls cracking like marriages ripping apart.*  
Smirnoff and Everclear, Jack Daniels and Wild Turkey.  
*Bartender dragging a screaming man through the front door.*  
The guy to girl ration is fifteen to one. No one cares.  
*Pitchers emptying into sophomore college bellies.*  
The old drunks swim in loose orbits avoiding the frat boys.  
*Walking in the front door smelling fried food and despair.*  
Marty Robbins, Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, Lefty Frizzell.  
*The jukebox driving us on rutted roads through time.*  
In a year, I cannot recall a single, interesting conversation.  
*Bored men scratching labels off of perspiring bottles.*  
A man who fought in a war drunk-leans while talking to a girl.  
*This is part nursing home and part cemetery for hope.*  
College girls giggle in the corner turning every head.  
*There is no clock in this room, no phone, no windows.*  
Budweiser and Schlitz, Coors and Miller Genuine Draft.  
*This is part epic novel and part trash-reality tv.*  
I am stuck in the mud knee-deep and struggling.  
*Pitchers glow golden with backlight warming their amber.*  
Men moan when light pours in from an opened front door.  
*This is flypaper for the hovering hopeless.*

-- Steve Ausherman  
(Switch the Difference Anthology)

*The Steaming Cup Café*

Subtle as air altered by a wing, Nora Jones threads soft  
jazz through random conversation, through the focused  
reading I give to a poem by Donald Hall.

French roast and hazelnut cream weave in and out  
of the music, scent words both spoken and written,  
flavor images in my head.

Even The Wall Street Journal rustling in the hands of old men,  
augments and diminishes the morning fugue of “The Steaming Cup”

Toward noon, an Indian summer picks up the beat, drives a combo  
of expectation, all hum and vibration, until the place swells

with calypso and steel drums. A man calls “Mary Ann” and a yellow hard hat  
yells “Over here.” The door jingles open, closed, and a covey  
of orange leaves somersaults over the threshold.

Soon, the relaxed atmosphere fills every table, and the buzz of autumn  
warms to a tone-shifting improv with tropical color.

Heads bend over bread and brew as if noon were sacred, as if the Angelus bell  
that once rang in fields had simply moved to the city,  
still tolling respite, unhinging time.

-- *Mary Jo Balistreri*  
(*Something's Brewing Anthology*)

*Coffee at the Double Perk*

Neither of us is prepared for the curve in conversation.  
As my friend struggles with words, the story begins  
to emerge. It's as if an aftershock tilts our world.  
It was twenty years ago. And it still hurts.

All the time we had mourned privately, got lost  
in the questions:  
Why our bodies betrayed us  
How our boys were dying inside us, quietness  
deemed normal because they were small,  
with small heart beats  
How the doctors were not concerned until it was too late

Fissures crack open. We exchange our boys' names,  
say them softly, almost shyly. Swapping stories, we begin  
to interrupt each other, eager to share.

Andrew comes to me when I'm doing laundry,  
sometimes in the garden.

Danny visits when I'm making dinner or at the pond.

We both agree our boys like quiet and often come at night.

We walk toward the exit, arms around each other's waist.  
Halfway out the door my friend stops – Were we the dead ones?

The door bangs shut behind us and we start to laugh. The reservoir  
we thought empty begins to bubble like a fresh water spring.

-- *Mary Jo Balistreri*  
(*Something's Brewing Anthology*)

*The Truth About Dahlias*

Oh those dahlias!  
A drill sergeant's dream of puffball perfection,  
they fold out in lemony layers,  
salute orange, stand straight,  
face the sun, size to coffee cups  
and line up in a platoon of primary colors.

I cannot resist all this symmetry.  
I push through the inch wide rows,  
palpate their raspberry-red flesh,  
touch their purple pulse.

Just beyond the reach of my eyelash  
looms an arigope spider bigger  
than the eye of my center, shredding  
any Van Gogh color-soaked reverie.

*You need to know* say the dahlias *finger caresses*  
*and moony eyes are nothing to us.*  
*The spider nestles in the cups of our petals,*  
*we lick the silk from their spindled legs.*

-- *Pattie Palmer-Baker*  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

### *Recurrents*

There we are by the shore again—well, me  
by the shore, you out there, bobbing in the waves  
once more, eyes bugged out, lips ice-blue,

arms flailing. Desperate to keep your head  
above the white caps, you've somehow managed  
to grasp a fallen branch. "Are you okay?"

The classic stupid question, but what am I to say?  
"I'm sorry," you sputter-shout  
as you spit a school of minnows from your teeth.

"I'm always drowning when we're here together."  
Yet just last week we enjoyed a day here, dangling  
foaming feet, skipping little stones, but now

is not the time to argue. I throw the rope,  
always looped to my belt in anticipation  
of times like this, but you miss it every toss.

All the while your enormous eyes convey a bevy  
of emotions; fear of the current, rage at the waves  
and sympathy for my own failings. My rope is too short.

In a frenzy now I fumble through my pockets, and toss  
their contents to you—a marble, a feather, a rubber  
chicken, hoping you'll know how to use them. "Don't worry

about me," you gurgle. And I am touched; I know  
how you hate it when your moods affect me. Too late  
I dive and plunge into the icy flow, as you lose

your slippery grip and begin to drift  
around the bend, waving kind assurances  
as your head sinks beneath the surface. You're always

thoughtful like that. Resigned, I crawl back  
up the bank, and find my favorite rock. I check my watch—  
it could be hours yet, before you're washed ashore.

*-- David J. Bauman  
(Tic Toc Anthology)*

*DSM-V*

Do trees hurt when they grow new roots?  
The earth feels too tight for them.  
When the leaves shift red,  
dangle, you pluck one off,  
fat and whole.  
The tree flinches, either wind or  
it hurt like a pulled tooth.  
An empty socket, copper.

Sometimes I tear myself apart

You admit to the benches,  
the gravel, the becoming  
of October.  
Tear the red leaf down its veins  
    because it's daylight  
because your wrists ache  
    because it's just a symptom  
of a mistake in your blood  
    because a tree doesn't have the gift  
of tearing itself apart.

Because this season rips apart the world  
and it's diagnosed as beautiful.

-- Sarah Bence  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

*Sestina Omerta*

No muttered soul in the dark,  
left worn with frayed ages and ragged.  
No song for a ferryman who never  
takes coin if the payment is screaming.  
No virtue in smoke when all we want is fire,  
for none love the moment before a kiss.

What loud soul drinks a moment's kiss  
fearing Time's long embrace in the dark?  
Paradise is the last ember of a forgotten fire  
when all else has burned so cold and ragged.  
A mountain's pride bears the wind's screaming,  
its grand secret written on the pages of never.

Drink, terrible soul, which never  
hunted the dusk's silken kiss.  
A thousand bright dawns all left screaming  
in envy of one night's sinless dark.  
The robes of the secretless man look so ragged  
in the light of precious silence's fire.

What final soul will set to fire  
that simple pearl valued yet never  
given price? Once fine, now ragged,  
days hunger for a lost mute kiss  
in the heartless roaring dark, and  
turn away from tomorrow's screaming.

Endure, patient soul, all of Now's screaming  
that brings naught but trials for the fire.  
No quiet day gone by will comfort it in the dark.  
What soundless symphony for it to never  
know beyond a forgotten kiss,  
when confused for a thunder so ragged?

Cherish the serene soul that, while ragged,  
is placid where others tread screaming.  
The constant void bends low to kiss  
it, its faith a relentless fire.  
The finer gems sang of shall never  
shine more radiant than stones left dark.

So come, tattered soul, rest by my fire.  
Forget the World's screaming, that we may never  
forsake her secret kiss in the dark.

*-- Aaron Besson  
(Switch the Difference Anthology)*

## *Vintage Vinyl*

This is the conversation they never had.

He is sitting on one side of a large, brick wall. It's cold against his back, but he rests his head against the brick anyway. His eyes are closed. He can almost feel her.

She is on the other side of the wall. She's sitting cross-legged, facing it. When she hears him breathing, she looks up. Her hair falls away from her face and in a rush, the emotions paint her expression. She fancies herself stone, immune to everything and impenetrable, but he knows better. In moments like this, he knows exactly how her face looks.

He wants to reach through the stone, touch her cheek. He wants to hold her hands because he knows that she is shaking.

She is scared. She is always scared. And he is so far away.

How it really happens is like this. She stays there, for a few minutes. He begs her to say something. She doesn't. She reaches up and presses her palm against the stone. Then, lips sealed shut, imagining her heart to be stone, she climbs unsteadily to her feet and walks away. The next time he sees her, she is dead.

That's how it really goes.

After, he rewrites it.

He is still sitting on the ground by the brick wall. His knees are drawn up to his chin. He is looking at the sky and, almost too softly to be heard, he is speaking. He is singing. It's a song they both know, from when they were children. She stays, on her side of the wall, and listens to it. Her gloved hands are pressed to the brick. It hurts, especially where the skin has died at the tips of her fingers, but she pushes as hard as she can. She wants to leave a mark.

She says, "We should have never met."

He stops singing, but doesn't move. He says, "I'm glad we did."

Her dead fingers are just the beginning. There are other parts of her that are dying too. There are parts of her that have been dead since before he knew her. She is just pieces--always has been. Pieces that are alive. Pieces that fight. Pieces that are stone. And pieces that were buried a long time ago.

"You're going to ask me why," he says.

She doesn't, because she doesn't want to sound needy.

But he tells her, because she doesn't say anything else. "You changed me too."

"Not enough." Not the way that he had changed her. She'd been so different when they'd first met. She'd been only one piece then. Just the dead one. The buried one. Something terrible had happened to her--like terrible things always happen to people and turn them into something they never were before--and she had become nothing.

Stone, she'd said.

But he had made her more.

"How did I change you?" she asks.

He closes his eyes and breathes her in. It's almost as if she's right next to him. He says, "You made me."

She was two-sided. She had side A, before. She had side B, after. She had the incident that defined her.

But she was the incident that defined him. She was the before and the after. She had turned him from ordinary into extraordinary. She had made him brave.

On the other side of the wall, she hesitates. He can hear the smile in her voice. "You'd have been you anyway, without me."

"I wouldn't have," he says. Then, "And I wouldn't have wanted to be."

She understands, because of her two sides. The first side, from before, understands that he doesn't want to be what he is without her. The second side, the one that is forever, understands that she was the one that made him strong enough to do just that.

Side B says, "I'm glad you came."

Side A says, "I have to go. It's time."

He listens to both sides of her--the stone and the fire--and he understand that this is all they get. This last conversation.

"It's time," he agrees.

The next time he sees her, she's dead.

He wishes he'd said goodbye.

*-- Ali Carey Billedeaux  
(Tic Toc Anthology)*

*Morning Goes Down to Night: A Progression of Tanka*

The sun steps up the  
sky on pancake clouds  
battered yellow on scalloped  
edges as mist haunts the big  
pond. A horse munches breakfast.

Sun on sheet metal  
reflects from a barn roof. Spring's  
last storm lollygags  
in lazing clouds above ponds  
and puddles left by melting snow.

Window slats divide  
into jail bars the sunlight  
falling on upswept  
lion-colored hair. How I long  
to kiss the nape of your neck.

Coral and cobalt clouds  
loom over lush trees and red  
stoplights like great beasts  
too lazy to stampede. One  
light beckons from dim windows.

Sunset's last clouds, limned  
in gold by the vanished sun,  
swim above rustling  
trees, a sea serpent seeking  
prey beneath the crescent moon.

The light of three towns  
casts white underbellies on  
cloud salamanders  
splaying above the lake while  
one light probes the winter night.

Blacksnake roads, egret  
banks, black branches scrawl on mist,  
lights cast wakes in dark  
puddles, stars pinprick the night.  
It's a chessboard kind of day.

-- *Andrew Bowen*  
(*Switch the Difference Anthology*)

*Iced Latté*

Tall	Mt. Rainier	14,411 feet
Super	Mt. McKinley	20,320 feet
Grande	Mt. Everest	29,035 feet

My massive mocha  
comes with a mini-oxygen mask:  
coffee with an altitude.

A scoop of sweet snow  
captures the summit,  
drizzles down the side.

Ice cubes glisten  
like tiny glaciers.  
I radio for chocolate sprinkles.

No Sherpa guides, I slurp alone  
through a tall white straw.  
Caffeine attacks my mental clouds.

My brain crackles with adrenaline,  
a mountain of chores  
disappears and a cold caloric wind  
blows my doldrums away.

-- *Shirley J. Brewer*  
(*Something's Brewing Anthology*)

### *The Alliterative Assassin*

The tabloids labelled him, 'The Solomon Grundy Killer'. He inflicted a sliding scale of harm in a range of locations. He maimed Michael from Malmesbury on Monday. On Tuesday he tortured Tony from Truro. Poor Wendy from Wensleydale was assaulted by a welder's torch on Wednesday. Thirsk residents were already on stand-by on Thursday but it didn't stop Thelma from being throttled. Floral wreaths were left outside Frank's chippy in Frome on Friday. Forensic staff never released to the public which body parts they found in the deep-fat frier.

Many people claimed they were the sole perpetrators and gave reasons for their actions. Scotland Yard received an email at six minutes past six every evening giving details of the latest atrocity. After a few days, the accuracy of the information and specific named location proved the emails to be genuine. Sometimes the emails arrived before the crime had even been reported. Under emergency legislation, facebook pages that glorified 'Solomon's' handiwork, were taken down. Editorials searched for a meaning behind the apparently random acts and locations.

Newsreaders reported with grim faces how an elephant-keeper had been crushed to death by his favourite pachyderm. No connection was made initially as the tragic accident occurred at Whipsnade on the Saturday. When information emerged that the recently deceased keeper was called Satnam and the full name of the establishment was Whipsnade Safari Park. It came as no surprise that the elephant had literally sat on his victim. The daily email to Scotland Yard confirmed what was feared that this was the sixth in a worsening list of crimes.

The more sensationalist of bloggers attributed godlike powers to Solomon. 'He can even control animals!' The Sunday paper headlines were united for once. 'It's a race against time before he strikes again'. Inhabitants of Sunderland with the misfortune to be called Sunny were under self-imposed house arrest.

Speculation mounted over the manner of Solomon's next outrage. Sun-tanning salons were an obvious choice.

At 6.06 the police received a briefer email than usual.

‘Like God, I too need a day of rest. Normal business resumes tomorrow.’

*-- Andrew Campbell-Kearsey  
(Tic Toc Anthology)*

*Jean Cocteau's Shadow Play of Life*  
*"The Moral Tedium of Immortality."*

The blood of the poet is found  
in every room, the studio a  
tortured chamber experiments in  
death are practiced in, creating  
living statues, mouths transferred  
from pale canvas to the artist's  
beleaguered hand, speaking, then  
daring the man who paints to  
sculpt his life, to travel beyond  
self-enclosed rooms contained by  
solid objects, presumptive walls,  
dropped ceilings, entreating him  
to leap through a full length mirror  
to the other side wearing the trans-  
parent gloves that enable the way,  
to avoid the falling glass others  
must fall on instead of the unsheathed  
sword, to move past the pedestrian  
to the ephemeral, rebirthing in uncharted,  
subcutaneous passages through a place  
outside of Time, a place invisible to  
the untutored, the living and inconse-  
quential to the dead who hide behind  
all the locked doors in otherwise  
deserted tenements of the imagination,  
drinking spilled blood taken from  
the veins of poets as a curative measure  
against the fatal disease of living as  
half-men, half-shadows, their mummer's  
play of being, nothingness enacted  
against drawn shades, pulled curtains,  
part Afternoon of the Faun, part Guernica,  
the transition from Art to mass murder

as seamless as surgery, as a weightless  
Orpheus descending, sinking into darkness.

-- *Alan Catlin*  
(*Switch the Difference Anthology*)

*Mapplethorpe's Hand and Flower*

The hand that held the flower,  
held the whip, held an orchid,

a calla lily, an arrangement of  
tulips, held fading roses in black

and white, others in bloom, in  
color, held a gun in self-portraits,

made himself a woman in others,  
smiling and in multiple disguises,

was a smear in the mirror, a smudge  
on the wall; beauty and sadness,

disguised as a shock of the new.

-- Alan Catlin  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

*Going Steady in 2013*

You tell me  
we're Allison & Cry-Baby,  
because I'm your square,  
with cherry lips,  
you're my grease,  
hand cuffs released-  
diatonic to each other's keys,  
Lucille to BB King.  
We hook up  
King Khan & BBQ Show,  
phone to car stereo,  
shoes shuffle against gravel,  
silhouettes silk screened to headlights,  
bodies pressed,  
fret & strings,  
sway with melodies & palm trees,  
"No Outlet" sign & salty waves,  
our own lover's lane.  
The scythe moon  
reflects in your sun  
glasses & they slightly slide  
down your nose, passing  
off the night  
sky to your eyes,  
microdot sprinkles  
on Snow Caps,  
you kiss me with lips  
like pink Sweet Tart  
candy hearts,  
XOXO,  
we part & I press  
my cheek against  
your chest & cry, its

too much Rock N' Roll  
for me to handle.

-- *Cathleen Chambliss*  
(*A Touch of Saccharine Anthology*)

***Revenge of the Flowers***

The drunks were always having a go at the flowers,  
kicking petals, earth and roots  
like litter in the streets.  
The flowers held a meeting, distressed  
by the thoughtless, the human, the mindless.  
Shall we tear down their houses?  
A daisy counselled patience,  
As sure as the wind tugs at the long grass,  
as sure as withering, as sure as falling leaves,  
one day we shall dance on their graves.

*-- Aidan Clarke  
(Petals in the Pan Anthology)*

## *Again*

After years of fighting, pointless bickering, we materialize someplace with no walls, no boundaries, it takes in the air effortlessly and produces us as two people in our twenties. I sit in the cafeteria of the university and think--all I have to do is ignore her and this whole thing goes away. Our two trajectories will never touch. Long ago we had stopped communicating in any meaningful way--now we'll just eternalize the arrangement by never communicating in the first place.

Somehow though, I begin to think of life without her. I'm not the man of the future, of pointless fights. I want to live it all again, even as I see the train wreck coming. We'll do it even worse this time. We'll be more joyous in our youth and bitter in our twilight--logic and good sense be damned. We'll be in love, we'll be exasperated. We'll rush where we should slow down, and slow down and wait when opportunity knocks. And in the little garden on the terrace of your favorite Italian restaurant, we'll make magic feel like an everyday experience again and again. All these places and times stop, turn, twist, and there I am again with you, where I should be: miserable, happy, but never lonely.

-- *Daniel Clausen*  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

*Writing Poems in Beersaba'h*

Mahmood's name contains two mountains.  
Modaefa's heart holds his brother and his horse.  
I stare out at limestone and rushing roads  
which gird this city. His horse?

Nothing alters on him,  
Not a smile nor a flicker.  
He lives far out and what do I know  
of all he knows?  
The color of his horse?  
How he fares in basalt rains  
that pound the desert,  
or the dust that streams in from Africa,  
choking blue from the sky?  
Does he finish his homework by flashlight?  
Walk miles to the bus?

February heat blows through windows.  
Students climb steps, fill spaces.  
They want to learn English and  
I yearn to sip this vastness,  
to learn why Ameen was named for patience  
and Alaa, for a prayer.  
I want to sniff the exact bloom  
Yasmeen was named for.

-- *Cathleen Cohen*  
(*Switch the Difference Anthology*)

### *Beehives*

“Gramma, what a weird hairdo,” said Susan, giggling and pointing to a prom picture in her grandmother’s college yearbook.

“That was called the beehive,” said Betty, stroking Susan’s straight silky hair, “and it was all the rage then. We teased our long hair until it bushed straight out, sprayed lacquer until we almost suffocated, then smoothed and twisted it around and around our heads, until, voila, a beehive. Sometimes we topped it with a flower. We felt very pretty.”

Susan looked doubtful.

“Child, girls with short, curly hair were just sick when the fad started. Took them forever to catch up.” She paused. “I have a story about that hairdo.”

“Tell me.”

“It’s an old story, maybe the oldest there is. One young man, two young women. . . call them Sally and Sue. Both mad about the man, maybe his bright blue eyes, maybe his athletic body, maybe his natural courtesy. He dated them both without making them enemies, possibly because he made no promises. Some thought he didn’t settle on one because he had a girl back home, but perhaps he really couldn’t decide. It was spring, and both women hoped for his invitation to a fraternity ball. When he asked Sally, Sue was deeply upset. Someone else asked her—both women were quite pretty and could choose among many who swarmed around them—but she declined.

The morning of the dance, Sue offered to do Sally’s hair. Sue had a reputation as a clever, if amateur, hair stylist, especially with the newest, the beehive, so Sally quickly accepted. She shampooed and dried her hair and hurried over to Sue’s sorority house. As Sue brushed and teased Sally’s hair, Sally began to talk, dreamily and lazily, as women tend to do when having their hair done.

“I know all about that,” interrupted Susan. “The things women tell their hairdressers sometimes!”

Sally talked of the evening, her dress, the dinner, the dancing and finally volunteered that she intended to be wearing the young man’s ring within the week.

Sue murmured a response and piled Sally’s hair higher and higher. When she presented a mirror, Sally laughed happily and jumped up and hugged her.

“You’re such a good sport,” she said. “My hair is gorgeous.”

“But it’s not quite finished. I have a special hairspray guaranteed to hold, no matter what. Afterwards, I want you to sit outside in the sun until the lacquer hardens.”

Sue sprayed—Sally thought the heavy, sweet scent somehow familiar—and then settled her into a lawn chair by the sorority garden, draping a towel over her face to protect her complexion.

Daydreaming of the evening, drowsy in the thick sun, Sally dozed off. Bees industrially plunging blossoms nearby, eventually detected an even richer scent arising from the glistening tower of hair. First one, then another, then a dozen flew to investigate, delicately probing the shiny mass. Their activity awakened Sally who shook her head, throwing off the towel.

Threatened, the bees attacked, stinging her forehead, ears, cheeks and even lips, as she screamed and swatted and slapped and finally, too late, covered herself again with the towel and ran for the house.

“Grandma, how horrible,” gasped Susan. “Was she allergic? Did she die?”

“No. Sue and the others killed the bees, covered her with ice packs and drove her to the hospital. She recovered but was too swollen to go anywhere for more than a week. Anyway, sweetheart, that’s how I went to the spring ball with your grandfather. Honey is a good hair-stiffener, and I swear, that’s all I intended to do.”

-- *SuzAnne C. Cole*  
(*Switch the Difference Anthology*)

### *I Broke into the House of Writing*

I had an idea to do it and then did.  
The address had changed.  
Used to be in a better neighborhood.  
In a building, a four story walk-up—4-E.  
I knocked for twenty years then kicked the door in.  
There were lots of locks but the frame had rotted.  
The front room was abandoned.  
A type too large to lift sat on a dusty floor.  
There were framed pictures on the walls: Mark Twain,  
Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Hemingway, Steinbeck. . .  
staring out from clouded glass; several of these guys  
were giving the finger, a strange contrast  
to John Updike, smiling, Phillip Roth, scowling.  
There was an empty closet with a rusty coat hanger.  
A single faucet iron-stained sink in one corner, a window  
with a cracked pane and lose caulk, looking down upon a tree  
that looked dead. I passed through this room into what looked  
like a dining room, empty but for a glass chandelier.  
Booger green walls and dark wooden floors  
creaked beneath my weight. There was a bar in the corner  
with only an ancient bottle of Pernod.  
I moved into a gutted out kitchen with vagina pink walls.  
There was a window over where a sink had once been.  
I looked out and saw a bar with flashing lights: Roy's Place  
it said, over and over. I passed into the apartment's  
one bedroom. Another door. I opened it. "Goddamn it,  
what do you want?" A huge fat guy was inside, lying down.  
"I'm a writer." I said. "Did you go through the  
submission process? Did you read the guidelines?"  
"Fuck you." I said. "Read this." "Poems?" he snarked,  
"This'll never sell." "What are you," I asked, "some  
kind of agent?" "I'm an independent publisher," he  
replied, "and I do it all except for what you're supposed  
to do. Here, sign this." "Jesus," I said, "this  
is too long." "Just sign it. No ones reads these,  
let alone fine print—You're basically agreeing

that I continue doing nothing while you  
will do everything.” “What kind of contract is this?” I asked.  
“Standard.” He answered. I took the pen he handed me  
and then stabbed him in one of his large pink toes. He  
screamed, and began to shoot backward around the room  
bouncing off the walls and ceiling, growing smaller  
until he collapsed on the floor, the size of a used condom.  
I looked around.  
The room was filled with manuscripts, most  
still in manila envelopes. I could barely see  
the room’s lone window.  
I pushed some envelopes out of the way  
they toppled like a tree.  
I opened the window. I felt bad for the little publisher  
all stretched out and small on the cluttered floor.  
I looked out the window. There was a bustling  
metropolis, grey, distant, no perspective.  
I crawled out onto a fire escape.  
The city sang its own praises  
as I climbed down and out from the house of writing.  
Maybe I’d have better luck on the street again.  
Maybe I’d hit Roy’s for happy hour.

-- *Larry Crist*  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

*In Streetlight, His Wet Hair*

On the sidewalk standing in the rain  
the old man is like a wounded dove.  
Longish white hair: wet feathers  
grounded in a storm. The rain is heavy  
and repeats itself, as if buckets of water  
thrown out of windows.

The old man stands there holding  
a memory or a wish.  
Under the streetlight  
his wet hair glistens like tinfoil.  
The downpour is a creature  
that's eating him up.

Darkness projects  
from a three-story deserted  
apartment building.  
Ground floor windows  
and doors are boarded, nailed shut.  
It appears dead, like an old disease  
or stripped, like a despoiled tomb.  
Its bricks cracked and crumbled,  
wooden casings dry rotted and helpless.  
Painted in bold red  
across the boarded front entrance  
is a graffiti-message: GIRLS RULE.

Looking back at the old man:  
He stands the way a king stands alone  
when doubting himself.  
Dark crawls around him. The old man stares  
at the building. He is motionless,  
in memory. Rain gallops over him.

Inside the warmth of a café:  
my steaming coffee. Outside, the streets

are laundered clean of everyone  
except for the old man who stands and stares  
at the apartment building. Time has grown  
over his face and body, has grown  
over the broken down building.

Now the rain is as heavy as mucus  
and with his tiny body  
the old man shuffles away  
shuffles into the dark  
and gradually disappears  
like a casket being covered with earth.

-- *Dah*  
(*Switch the Difference Anthology*)

*Spaces Among Spaces*

An epilogue to the hours  
On a canvas brushed with words  
And of the years reflected in a wavy mirror

TS Eliot once peered in and saw lilacs  
But I see opaque images  
Of spaces among stars  
And the clouds that caught wandering winds  
To dance aerial ballets

Even today I wander about in dreams turned ashen  
And feel a thin tremor of tenacity  
Tapping on the door of my soul  
Shrunk now to a hollow vessel  
To ply the melancholy waters of night  
With currents being lit by moonlight  
Spreading through the skies like spilled milk

Passions run parallel with time  
And swallow the distances  
Of spaces within spaces  
And fill them with \_\_\_  
Sprays of bygone springs  
When violets wore purple capes  
And rains fell warm as throats  
with memories thick and moist as sixteen  
My feet tripping over dreams cluttering my path

Body now \_\_\_ all but forgotten  
It follows after me like an absent minded apostrophe  
Many spaces behind my thoughts  
Thoughts I wear in a crown of thorns  
to pierce my head  
with here and there people  
And spaces absent in time, but fastened in my veins

Against my back they brush  
In soft breaths of remembrances  
Or in sudden shadows falling from trees

And when in a quiet sphere of night  
They pass across the moon  
In slow-motion wing beats  
They whisper "goodbye."

*-- Susan Dale  
(Switch the Difference Anthology)*

*Driving To Physical Therapy After Reading Delmore Schwartz*

If time is the fire in which we burn  
then each day is a slow match of salt-  
peter, cord, and ember. What  
measures an eternity of ash?

My clock is atomic,  
more precise than Swiss,  
accurate enough to incinerate cities; geo-  
synchronous satellites  
tell me exactly when I am.

“Better one hour early than one minute late,”  
said Batman to Boy Wonder. I prefer punctual.

-- *Tim Dardis*  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

*The Time of My Life*

Hot summer afternoon  
It's ninety-seven in the shade  
And more inside my gear  
White paper dust mask  
Padded rubber on my ears  
To stop some of the noise  
A pair of safety glasses  
Dark blue coveralls on top my clothing  
Heavy leather gloves  
Thick socks and steel toed boots.

Holding this powerful electric drill  
Eight pounds of heavy metal  
Spinning wire-brush wheel  
A blur of blue and gray  
Against the rust that has accumulated  
On eight tons of angle iron  
My job.

Eight hours inside a cloud of dark red dust  
Fire storm of sparks  
Steel bristles flying off  
Go through my fabric armor  
Into sweating skin  
Dust makes it hard to breath  
My glasses fogged by body heat  
I watch the slow shop clock  
Selling the time of my life  
Eight-fifty an hour.

-- *Bruce Louis Dodson*  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

*We Hope You Come Again to Funland\**

where in lime and melon boats you  
circle a spangled blonde mermaid  
as your tiny fingers slice water

where you clang bells of fire trucks  
and swoop in silver planes

where your bare feet sink into a sea  
of red and yellow plastic balls  
and you disappear into a jungle maze

where a crescent ship swings  
under a plump summer moon  
and cars bump like hulky bears

where carousel horses gallop  
and even when you're eighty  
you will recall its glittering oval mirror  
and how you saw yourself inside it

as you clutched the spiraled brass pole  
and your father scented with sea air  
his brawny arm about your waist  
holding you, holding you, holding you.

-- *Liz Dolan*  
(*Life is a Roller Coaster Anthology*)

*\*A sign in Funland, Rehoboth Beach, DE*

*Why I Called So Late*

Once, it was stone fruit  
halved on a low table.

It had been the backgammon board,  
neglected, gathering dust.

It might have been a stack of coins,  
could have been creosote from the railroad ties

you cut to make raised beds in the garden,  
or maybe just a curry we weren't used to—

that sluiced us into green streams (we'd lost  
the enzymes to break down animal flesh).

Someone said time held us, green and dying.  
Though we sang like the sea.

Someone else: *it's better to ask forgiveness  
than permission.* Love, forgive me—

it would have been  
a wilderness of water.

I called because time's a dish  
in which fine gold chains get tangled.

-- Chiyuma Elliott  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

*Tonight We Will Bloom for One Night Only*

Tonight you must plow me a respite between the moonflowers,  
mock orange, night phlox, and Epiphyllum Oxypetalum.  
You must open me to the summer night like cereus.

You must pick my perversions like petals, allow them for one night  
to bloom, frangipani wafting, a concupiscent wind humming at my door.

I've surrendered to your heady sweat of primrose, plumeria,  
addicted to your outstretched arms of night-blooming jasmine,  
my helicopter buds hard and wanting, reeking of Madagascar vanilla with its  
accompanying moral ambiguity.

I am more than a day lily.

We are each bodies, hard-wired for pleasure, destined for momentary blooming,  
then extinction.

When the bats swarm and the moths sidle up to this one night of fevered  
pollination, let's be ready.

Let's face them, our appetency the headlights they slam into again and again.

We will make our escape at first light. Singing.

*-- Alexis Rhone Fancher  
(Petals in the Pan Anthology)*

*Unadulterated*

He took me to the coffee shop.  
It was almost our first date.  
He showed me the his and her espresso cups  
on a shelf above the counter.

It was an awkward moment.  
They were his  
and hers.

And now he'd brought me there  
and we played checkers  
while we waited for our drinks  
and didn't talk about her.

We went back a few times  
before it closed for good.  
We mentioned it at our wedding.  
So she was even part of that.

I make my coffee in her home now.  
My tastes have changed and I haven't  
had cream in my coffee for years.  
I wonder what she liked in hers.

-- *Cyd Ferree*  
(*Something's Brewing Anthology*)

*A Bouquet of Glads*

When she moved from Nigeria to the Delta,  
the land was so flat that she imagined her  
homeland would be seen if she could just  
look past the horizon's jealous gaze, its blue  
garb no competition for the orange and yellow  
wrap she wore.

But what leaned toward her, wrapping her  
attention, was a wooden structure part-house,  
part-hovel, yet a place she would address home  
in time. Kudzu vines had mated on the front  
porch steps, their matted irreverence for her  
need to walk into her home unencumbered,  
disregarded.

Yet when she turned her decorative head to the  
sound of a gentle rustle, she saw Nigeria in a  
black child's squat hands.

When he handed her his bouquet of gladiolus,  
the smells of Nigeria slowly crawled back  
inside her, the African irises a petite  
introduction to an environment she could  
trust to embrace her differences and  
teach her, in time, its ways of survival.

-- *Claire T. Field*  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

***Beggar Lattés***

Drowning?  
*Baby.*

I've been drowning  
my whole life  
and now  
the thought of breathing makes me shiver.  
we're all in a coffee shop  
on laptops in lulls  
of latte steam  
screams I can hear  
everyone singing  
under their breath;  
here comes the sun,  
little darling,  
*here comes the sun.*

No one looks up and no one  
remembers  
what the words mean when we say them,  
I'm so hungry for honesty.  
outside I throw pennies down  
to give street people  
my luck,  
I collected too many clovers for myself,  
I'm selfish in that way.

a heart surgeon once  
couldn't find  
the iced heart  
in the fridge;  
by the time he found his heart it was too late,  
it had iced over and turned blue  
from the cold;  
like the lips I purse over broken  
coke bottles,

breathe out,

breathe in,

breathe

out,

breathe

in.

*-- Pattie Flint  
(Something's Brewing Anthology)*

*Talk to Me in Marzipan*

I want to be covered in  
smooth pink. roll up  
little balls and cut them  
up four ways I'll bloom  
bleeding and sugary  
monuments sprout  
frozen in refrigerated  
slices and crumbling  
stained saints. spin me  
on wooden sticks, paint  
me in petaled lapels  
pink and rubbed red.

-- *Pattie Flint*  
(*A Touch of Saccharine Anthology*)

*Moon-Fat Moths*

Breathing quietly  
in the midge massed dusk  
moon-fat moths crowd the window.

Pressing against cold glass,  
rustling paper wings,  
their soft bodies bump and batter

the impenetrable wall.  
The thin light they long to own  
floods its long fingers onto

the dew thick lawn.  
In the musky kitchen  
the violence of their passion

is muffled,  
their desperation ignored.  
On long summer nights

pain can be forgotten  
in the throes of infatuation.  
We see our heart's desire

but are blinded by  
Its luminescence.  
Moon-fat moths make dark of light.

-- Sarah Flint  
(*Switch the Difference Anthology*)

*Weather Hysteria*

Hurricane Irene has the eye  
for the East Coast and what I do is open  
my wooden-sash windows, and doors.  
To let the morning air in sweet,  
a field of Crayola  
“mauveulous” cosmos on the parking strip  
in their confusion/profusion  
to beguile  
as if it’s Van Gogh’s Provence garden,  
eyes squinted, bedazzled  
as he seizes the brush,  
always going for the devilish  
verb, forget about any diluting adjective’s addition—  
he channeled crux.

It is Saturday.  
I have been feral, alone all week,  
hunkered with the gerunds and the ferns.  
Watering the lazy housewife beans  
climbing their tipi of bamboo poles.  
Snipping the dying  
blooms of dahlia, zinnia, phlox.  
Pinching back the window-box geranium,  
leggy because it’s starved for sun  
this northwest summer that lasted all of  
six or seven days.

There’s a bug with a face, an African mask—  
shaman or unremarkable god?—  
above my desk between window and screen.  
*Waving Hello. Is anybody in there? Does any body see?*  
how already the one  
burnt sienna leaf is caught,  
brittle but unbroken  
in the sucker of a climbing rose.

Because, of course, I never got around to  
pruning this season, captured instead  
by the parts of speech,  
stringing them daily,  
lexical hankies on the line  
across the driveway  
where they dry, sometimes sail,  
evaporations toward every lie  
lifted above my unintelligible  
hopscotch chalk.

Because a sidewalk can never  
yield the truth, night upon night,  
this earth spinning that sun,  
reckoning with  
earthquake, heat wave,  
ice that melts,  
and every door in this house  
recklessly ajar.

As if I could crayon a sonnet  
from whatever makes a hurricane  
first category 1, then downgrade  
to tropical storm,  
these sentences that never storm,  
my free-verse floods—  
disaster longings that reach  
then retreat into the invitation  
that is an August shower overnight,  
its rooftop serenade. Then poof!  
It's this coloring-book poem  
with a magic wand to wave.  
Oh, look  
how painless it is

to change the weather  
*and* the station.

-- *Nancy Flynn*  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

***Dragonfire***

A silent smoldering has shifted  
the ground on which we've  
laid our track. Each day  
a steeper climb, until we

reach the crest.  
Words swallowed for weeks  
erupt, sting my tongue. I spit  
them out, a neon sign 'round your neck.  
Your roar thunders through me.  
We plunge.  
Metallic tarnished moonlight shatters.

Rage condenses into tears,  
you reach for me. Momentum pushes  
us from the hollow chasm. We level  
to an uneasy calm, lean into a curve,  
ride on.

-- *Linda Gamble*  
(*Life is a Roller Coaster Anthology*)

*Noir Couture*

“Where were you on the night of the crime?”

With a gloved hand, I calmly insert a cigarette into my jeweled holder, shutting my Deitsch handbag with a snap. The detective offers me a light and I lean forward toward the Zippo’s flame and notice the 5-barrel hinge on a chrome-plated nickel/silver case.

I cross my legs and inhale. Exhale. My Alice Caviness bracelet dangles from my wrist, making a soft clink. My hair is coiffed with two front victory rolls—the rest hanging down my back in a pageboy.

“I was at the opera,” I tell the detective.

“And what were you wearing?” he asks.

“A bias-cut beaded tulle evening dress with matching Ferragamo beaded satin evening sandals,” I reply.

“Wedge or stilettos?”

“Wedge.”

“What time did you leave?”

“Around midnight.”

“And how did you get home?”

“I took a taxi.”

“Checker or Yellow?”

“Checker”

“What was the cab driver wearing?”

“Button down shirt, pressed pants, tie, Eisenhower jacket and a hard bill cap.”

“And who can verify the time you got back to your apartment?”

“The doorman.”

“And what was he wearing?”

“A slate gray overcoat, 100% wool, with button-down tab detailing a dual front flap with welt pockets. Oh, and elongated peaked lapels.”

“So, when you entered your apartment, what happened next?”

“I changed into my apricot dressing gown embellished with trapunto stitching and studded with metal brads.”

“Then what?”

“I read for a while and went to bed around 2 a.m.”

“What were you reading?”

“*Vogue.*”

“The magazine?”

“Yes.”

“Who was on the cover?”

“An auburn-haired model in mauve silk tap shorts.”

“I’ll need to question the witnesses who saw you at the opera, track down the cabbie and interview your doorman.”

“Of course. Can I go now?”

“Yes, but don’t leave town as the investigation is still ongoing.”

I nod and reach for my coat. It’s a full-length Nevius Voorhees mink, with burgundy satin lining.

“Let me help you with that,” he says.

I walk out the door and take the stairs instead of the elevator.

As I make my descent, I let the mink slide off my shoulders; toss my blond wig on the steps and ditch the purse, bracelet and gloves. I exit through the “employees only” door and disappear into the night in my Oleg Cassini navy wool two-piece suit with matching Henri Flatow patent leather peep-toe pumps.

*-- Sue Mayfield Geiger  
(Tic Toc Anthology)*

*Assorted Centers*

As a teenager I remember coming home after a night out with my friends  
The police would be parked in front of my house

My parents had been fighting again and someone called the cops  
Sometimes there would be an empty box of candy strewn all over the lawn

My father's attempts at reconciliation had ended with nougats in the hedges  
Butter creams in the magnolias  
Dark chocolate caramels decomposing among the perennials

I once found two milk chocolate marshmallows  
Still in there brown paper swaddling clothes  
Huddled together like a pair of runaways from a Fanny Farmer foster home

Our house had only one center  
It was always nuts

Just nuts.

-- *Phil Ginsburg*  
(*A Touch of Saccharine Anthology*)

### *Misshapen Adulthood*

They remind you when it's time  
to disband your  
stuffed-animal militia.  
To take your imaginary tea and  
replace it with an addictive  
and acidic  
coffee addiction.

And though you're childhood  
was confident  
sure  
with clarity that now  
seems  
heart-breaking.

They tell you that conformity  
is what pays the bills  
fills your life  
with meaning  
and purpose,  
something that you didn't  
know  
was missing  
until reality gave  
you bruises in places  
you'd never even felt before.  
And the militia,  
sitting in a water-damaged basement--  
box,  
is sad  
silently waiting  
with a Care-Bear stare that will  
shoot life back  
into your lemming  
career.

Wishing you'd walk the plank  
back into  
an existence  
that would sustain you  
in ways that the 9-5 paycheck  
never could.

*-- Jessica Gleason  
(Tic Toc Anthology)*

### *Coffee Break on the Western Front, 1918*

Private Harry Johnson waited in a long line of soldiers for coffee and a doughnut just made by the Salvation Army volunteers. The line snaked around bombed out buildings and under trees. Even though they were miles from the front, they still needed to keep under cover. Harry wiped the sweat from his neck, pushed the strap of his gas mask satchel into a new position, and breathed in the occasional whiff of coffee and fried dough. He had a doughnut three weeks back, and it was the best thing he'd tasted since coming to France four months ago. Worth the wait. Getting a smile from one of the doughnut gals wouldn't hurt either.

Harry's unit had just come off an eight-day stretch in the frontline trenches. He'd pulled guard duty, gone on night patrols into no man's land, dug latrines, cleaned his rifle and gas mask, kicked and swatted at rats climbing over him while he slept, scrambled into dugouts when Jerry sent over an occasional whiz bang or shrapnel shell, and cleaned up the mess afterward, although it seemed like he spent most of his time thinking about his next meal of slumgullion and cold coffee carried by runners to the frontline, and day dreaming about his mother's table filled with pies, sweet breads, and cookies. He always had a sweet tooth.

The coffee smell and freedom to stretch and stand up straight lifted Harry's spirits. He'd been down ever since Lloyd, a soldier in his unit, was killed by a sniper three days ago. Lloyd had stood up on the fire step to take a peek into no man's land one minute, and the next, he was lying on the duckboards, his nose gone, face bloody, and his watery blue eyes staring up at Harry.

Lloyd had been a skinny, pimply-faced kid, not more than seventeen who never should have been allowed to join. "What kind of army would send a silly school boy like that into the fight?" Harry's friend, John, had said after the burial unit took Lloyd away. And that stuck with Harry; it just didn't make sense. At boot camp, Harry was excited about his big adventure. That's what he called going to France to fight the Germans, but he wasn't excited anymore.

Mouth watering from the good smells, Harry moved closer to the doughnut table. He wiped out the dust in his tin cup and tapped his fingers on it in rhythm to *Hinky Dinky Parlez-Vous*, making up a few verses in his head as he did. Nothing he'd repeat to his family, but something he'd share with his squad later.

A dozen men ahead, John waved his doughnut at Harry. Harry waved back, wishing he was up there with John. Just a few more men though. Harry readied his cup and watched the black liquid pour into a soldier's cup a few places in front of him. Then the man's shoulders slumped, and Harry overheard words that made his stomach tighten.

The man walked off, head hung down. Harry moved up, cup in hand, hearing the same words repeated to the others but not believing.

"We're all out of doughnuts," the Salvation Army sister said again when it was Harry's turn.

"Out of doughnuts!" Harry's voice cracked as he spoke. "You don't have just one more hiding back there? Back in the kitchen maybe? Just a broken piece? One little small bite?"

The girl smiled although her eyes had a sad look.

"I'm sorry," she said. "We ran out of flour. We even made the doughnuts smaller so they'd last longer. We'll get a shipment of flour in another week."

"A week?" Harry said which was echoed by the men behind him. Word about the missing doughnuts had filtered back. "A week?"

"I still have plenty of coffee," she said, lifting the big metal pot with two hands. "We just made another batch."

"Well, that's something, I guess."

Harry put out his cup, and the young woman poured out the steamy brew. He moved off, kicked at a stone in his path, and breathed in the bitter aroma. Careful not to burn his lips on the metal rim, he took a tiny sip. It was strong and hot and warmed him inside. He felt a little better. He took another sip and glanced up.

John blocked his way, a smile on his homely face, and a chunk of doughnut in his outstretched hand.

*-- Nancy J. Hayden  
(Something's Brewing Anthology)*

### *Learning a New Language*

A half-caf, double tall, non-fat, whole-milk foam, bone-dry, half-pump  
mocha, half sugar in the raw, double cup, no lid, cap to go.  
Certainly, ma'am. Next, please.  
Excuse me luv, a coffee, please.  
A what?  
A coffee, please luv.  
Sorry sir, what kind of coffee would you like?  
A mug please with a drop of the white stuff.  
Sorry sir. We don't have "A coffee".  
But this is a cafe isn't it?  
Yes sir, but could you look at the menu, please?  
Sorry I don't understand a word. All I want is a simple mug of coffee,  
Well how about a cafe latte?  
OK, once it's a mug of coffee with a drop of the white stuff.  
Would you like a small, medium, large or grande?  
A mug, please.  
Yes sir, but how big is a mug?  
I don't know, I don't work in a cafe, surely you should know that.  
Well how about a medium?  
OK once it's a mug of coffee with a bit of the white stuff.  
And would you like that hot or cold?  
Is this a joke? Who wants cold coffee?  
So that will be hot, sir.  
And would you like that to go?  
Would I like what to go?  
THE COFFEE.  
What do you mean?  
Would you like to drink your coffee here or would you like to take it out?  
Well I'm not bringing it out on a date, so I'd like to have it here.  
And would you like some ... Oh don't worry, Is that all sir?  
Yes, thank you.  
That will be €3.60, please.  
Jasus luv, all I wanted was a mug o' coffee with a drop of the white stuff, not  
with a shot of whiskey.  
OK, OK here's a fiver and I'd like the change, please.

Thank you, sir. Enjoy your coffee.  
And it's not even in a mug; I don't know what the world is coming to.

-- *Damien Healy*  
(*Something's Brewing Anthology*)

*The Dancer*

She twirled her skirt  
Free flowing satin  
    scalding  
My lips came closer  
    they touched

Tongue singed on the cup  
Taste buds red, awake  
I blew on the dancer  
The *duende*!  
She waved her wispy wings  
White, cloud laced  
I took another sip  
She stomped a synapsis with her heel

That hot brown liquid  
Washed down my gullet  
Bleeding energy like  
A cracked ethereal egg

She clapped her hands, stained with coffee grounds  
As continual wafts  
Steam sachets  
Floated and rested inside my cranial cavities

I stirred the dancer  
Watched her elongated steps  
My spoon tapped the cup  
A tambourine, solemn

I held the cup  
With both hands  
warming until  
she died

-- *Harmony Hodges*  
(*Something's Brewing Anthology*)

### *Trash Bag Burial*

When I was young, I collected odd things to remind me of moments—snapshots of friends, napkins with signatures and doodles, pieces of ribbon, Roland Orzabal’s comb, dried flowers hung upside down by a pushpin, newspaper clippings, mini bottles, candy wrappers, concert ticket stubs, restaurant receipts—mementos that littered the shelves and wall above my Curtis Mathes rent-to-own stereo. I spent many hours mooning the past, the moments that seemed pivotal to existence, the items that made me. Just a blip on the timeline later, what made me became dust collectors, muddied up the little space I had, complicated what I’d become. I didn’t think much of it, as I shook the folded trash bag, rushing it with air to create an opening for their burial. I pulled them roughly, tore from beneath pins, raked from shelves, and turned my head as the dust flew and the bag dropped heavy. I paused as I held the comb. It still smelled foolish, like ‘80’s hair mousse.

-- *Trish Hopkinson*  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

*Fall Follies*

Artificial cattails,  
saved from last fall,  
prove not so false.

Their fecund fuzz erupts.  
I spread it,  
a geriatric flower girl  
sprinting for the trash.

Over the can  
I release a flow  
of rippled gold,  
an autumnal tumult,  
like Rupunzel's hair  
let down.

Two stalks explode.  
One stays firm.  
My mother would toss it,  
fearing next year's  
fluffy shower.

But I am content with  
amber fairy children  
at wing in the house.

-- *Liz Hufford*  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

***BBC Radio Interview***

So Mr. Jones, you want to be an egg-timer?  
Has the demon of utility  
pursued you through life, compelling  
you to be useful in death?

No. I just want to be an egg-timer,  
to let my ashes drip out the seconds,  
pass the carefree time eternally  
from one glass world to another.

Mr. Jones, why can't you  
be buried decently  
like everyone else?

That would be a waste of time.

*-- Diane Jackman  
(Tic Toc Anthology)*

*Nine Year Microwave Sky*

You thought you could dive through time  
as you did the seventh waves  
of Cape Conran as a child

You thought the gaping black  
was hollow,  
except for the odd miracle

languid and creaking, bejeweled  
in moons and singing.

But it's a dusty contradicting force,  
full of debris and decisions  
colliding like chance love.

You didn't realize your ballooning mind  
dined on curiosity  
at the periodic table,

impossibly expanding in  
the belly of a finite law, stuffing

hot stars into your skull  
[ as much as your pockets  
could hold ]

You didn't notice your flesh  
was blushing,  
even as you lay your cooling gaze

on me

I didn't notice  
because my newlywed's red dress  
had me burning up

on her entry

-- *Miguel Jacq*  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

*A Poem of Praise for the Morning*

This morning  
I woke up early & watched your face  
move, tense, relax, watched the skin near your eyes  
stretch a little with every breath.

I slid my hand along your waist, hip,  
halfway down the leg & then back again  
across the hip, waist,  
cupping your warm breast.

I traced your lips with my finger,  
clockwise, counterclockwise,  
trailing down the cheek to the ear,  
pushing hair behind & over your shoulder.

This morning, before sunrise,  
a dull light drifted in through the curtains  
& settled on your cheek like a handful of ashes,  
making shadows.

& while my fingers smoothed through your hair,  
your face, your soft body,  
I watched your eyes float up from a dream,  
twirling and spiraling to the surface.

This morning  
after you finally woke & kissed me,  
I thought of telling you everything I did,  
everything I touched while you were sleeping,  
but I didn't.  
I never do.

-- David James  
(*Switch (the Difference) Anthology*)

*In the Church of the Holy Coffee Bean*

business plans unfold, spreadsheets  
spill off the table. Newspapers migrate  
from person to person, a shared offering.  
Couples gaze, those who should and those  
who shouldn't; tearful mothers, desperate  
for stimulation, both chemical and human,  
ply toddlers with sippy cups and pastries.

We, the regular parishioners, offer our daily  
tithing. We kneel beneath paintings of Latino  
saints, who smile and harvest bright red berries.  
We breathe in roasty incense, notes of tamari,  
smoke, peanut butter. We bow our heads before  
high priest baristas, chant *cappuccino*, *espresso*,  
*macchiato*, reverently sip the hot black heaven.

-- *Sonja Johanson*  
(*Something's Brewing Anthology*)

*Mindful, Mindless, October Date*

Mindful of my lover  
running late, as common  
as tying my shoestrings;  
I'm battered as an armadillo shell;  
I put my rubber band around my emotional  
body, hold tight, armor my manliness,  
walk like a stud  
in darkness.  
I am sealed with dismay.  
Though everything in October, has a bright side,  
a shade of orange, a hint of witches and goblins.  
In the leaves between my naked feet  
and toes, I pace my walk feverishly,  
trying to avoid adjectives  
and soured screams,  
in the parking lot.

I count them  
color charts, fragments, bites, anything of matter:  
hickory leaves golden, sassafras greens and yellows,  
maples of scarlet, shades of pink, even purple.  
The landscape is turning turf brown.  
Barefooted I break into tears, the year-fragmented.  
I am male discolored in this relationship,  
tested and declared void of my testosterone  
no sexual rectification or recharging  
of my batteries.  
I lie limp, native within myself, my circumstance  
mindful of my lover running late.

She finally arrives; I quickly transition myself.

*-- Michael Lee Johnson  
(Tic Toc Anthology)*

*She*

Somewhere

she has lost  
her shadow-

now,

she stands  
still...

with nowhere  
to go.

-- *Michael Lee Johnson*  
*(Tic Toc Anthology)*

*I Tunneled Out of Bone*

You might say I undreamed myself.  
Under the swollen moon I found you  
half in dust, wingless.

You reached for me  
wandering my body  
with an ache in your side.

You called me *sparrow, little deer*  
all the names you'd already given the world.  
But I would not swim in the small pool of your longing.

Now I am ready to haul rock upon rock.

To move muscled and blistered  
beyond the clutch of this garden  
where roses, dark petalled,

sorrow back each year.  
But I cannot hold you in the ruins  
of us. And what's more I am afraid

to wake naked in beggar's ticks and tarweed  
with night cold on my skin,  
and nothing and no-one

to hold onto,  
when the beast that sometimes stirs  
comes howling, inconsolable, wild mouth filling with rain.

-- *Babo Kamel*  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

### *Spring Sequence*

1

All spring I dream about my sister.  
She's dancing for rain during a garden drought.  
She's at the end of a road, watching dust clouds  
tease tractors, every crow haloed in the dust.

There's a dogwood blooming, anthracnose  
spotting the leaves, a bluebird perched on a branch,  
dropping down for a grasshopper, or a beetle, light  
gathered low into its wings, my sister watching.

All spring cancer is riddling my sister's prayers,  
marking the house as if soon it sells off heaven.  
Two kittens chase something across a rug,  
nobody can see it, curtains shaking towards her.

2

I stole from a dream.  
Flurries sank into the ground,  
found bloodroot, found redbirds.

Trees wrestled the skyline,  
looked at my face, tore clouds.  
I took their dark branches for my words.

Down where the bobwhites whistled,  
you could hear my family mock their songs.  
You could nod at moonlight, and shiver.

3

Marsh marigolds have begun to bloom.  
Their golden eyes are hypnotized with heaven.  
their little swamp pinches against a field.

Thieves might be dancing with a bag of money.  
Shape-shifters might be caroling all night with toads.  
Swans have twisted high into the stars to fly north.

4

I hide from the April jokesters.  
They're my best friends cranked from a dream.  
Let's dodge them door to door like medicine.  
If you notice their Adam's apples, they giggle  
about their deepening voices. I'm still a kid  
sneaking a biscuit to the granary for a stray dog.  
I dream how lightning kills somebody on the roof.

The real house is burning.  
Fire is anchored to the horizon, holds me.  
My long dead great grandmother drops a funnel  
full of smoke. Flames are curling around me  
while she combs my hair, whispers a lullaby,  
then winks into a mirror.

I am now awake, I say. I see bluets and moss.  
Turkey poults are fluttering across a sorghum field.  
They roll in the dust where sorghum should be sprouting.  
They roll like baby ghosts. The momma turkey is clucking,  
drags her body into a thicket. The poults scurry away.  
Our farm is shrinking into their wings. Somebody whispers:  
leave here, disappear. I steal from another dream.

5

A ghost is walking across the top of my car.  
Dusty boot prints cleave to the windshield  
as if glazed into the sky. It grinds the light  
into every curve in the road, forces the hills  
to strobe away their trees. It helps me swindle  
my folks with dreams, with faith, with rain.

My sister is planting amaryllis bulbs.  
She prays God will hear the scarlet flowers  
whispering for rain. My car is a shadow  
she wants to race with. She watches the ghost  
walking all over the windshield, tracks,  
and more tracks, pressing into the glass.

In April, you can nod at the sun, and shiver.  
My sister is shivering towards amaryllis leaves.  
My sister has gathered the tracks in the dust.

-- *Clyde Kessler*  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

### ***The Job Interview***

I was about to retire, so I spent the last few months trying to find my replacement. The first batch of applicants was absolutely awful! I am not sure why kids today don't think they have to work for a living. In my day, we were grateful for any job.

I rewrote the advertisement to improve our candidate pool. We needed someone industrious, a self starter. He would have to be a problem solver since issues came up all the time. The intensity of our factory was extreme at times, so thinking under pressure was a "must have." We also needed a natural leader. I was a shift manager. We couldn't waste time with someone that would take too long to develop. Business training was a plus.

When my last candidate of the day came in, I immediately knew he wouldn't work out. He had a real attitude about high season. He said he didn't see the need to work overtime. I tried to explain that we were in the perishables business.

"You could smooth out demand over the year. Most of your products have a shelf life of 24 months. There is no reason not to pre-pack them."

It sounded like someone who hadn't been on the front line. We spent eleven months of the year accumulating those items. The last month was a combination of production and assembly. Everything was then delivered over a one-day period using thousands of couriers. We scheduled things to the minute.

"And where would we keep the baskets?"

"You could use the advanced storage system that they deploy up North. You collect used baskets in April and have them cleaned and ready to go in May. The baskets could be stacked with packing materials in place by July. And for goodness sakes, stop buying your candy in September and October! Everyone knows you are paying Halloween premiums."

Wow, he had a point. I had been thinking about that for years. But our schedule was developed long before Halloween went commercial. Back then, pagan rituals didn't even involve confectionary items. I was especially intrigued to hear that Santa was using this already. His operations were world-class.

“But what about the eggs? Painting them is a bottleneck. You can't freeze egg whites, so we always have to boil and decorate them at the last minute.”

He smiled. He had already thought about it. “We are going to spray paint 50% of them and call it *graffiti eggs*. And the witches, who honestly have nothing to do before Halloween, have agreed to cast a spell over at least 25% of them to just make them look like they are decorated.”

I wasn't sure how the Easter Bunny was going to react to all of this, but he only asked one question before hiring the kid. “After the witches do the eggs, is there any way they could make me look like Zac Efron?”

-- *Marla Kessler*  
(*A Touch of Saccharine Anthology*)

*Chance Show*

I notice an image of Christ  
on the wood floor by the pool table  
the image appears byzantine  
long nose, oval eyes, orange tones  
his beard and thin elongated face  
almost visible his invoking hands

oh my god now I'll always notice this image  
the waitress says

I try to write while sipping morning  
from a small paper cup

what if a war dropped into my paper cup

what about Christ on the floor

-- Irene Koronas  
(*Something's Brewing Anthology*)

*Summer Sacrament*

Gates are open. Enter  
in a reverent

hush—crowds stream through  
turnstile gates to the bust  
of pipe organ and paper-drum  
on the far carousel. The first

coaster pulls me  
up, my hands raised  
in surrender, the most  
evangelical of worships. I spin

in the Scrambler,  
until languages unintelligible  
pour forth  
from my tongue. I rush to the rapture  
of the Sky-Lift, taken

up, while those left behind  
stare and wonder  
but will not dare. I whirl,

the air on my bare feet, spiraling  
as the Swings ascend, confess  
everything on the Round Up, repent of

all I have done and  
all I have failed to do.

Forgiven, I am  
splashed in holy waters  
and sky-sweat.

A cotton-candy mouth-melt, grape  
juice with a curly

straw, this funnel cake  
broken for you  
to share, pass to the next.

Benediction over the loudspeaker: drive  
safely, thank you for coming, go  
in peace.

Go in peace.

*-- Laura Lovic-Lindsay  
(Life is a Roller Coaster Anthology)*

### *Of Pigs & Pizza*

I am twenty-nine and, quite literally, a single-mother: sole-supporter and making 100% of the decisions. My son's father is nonexistent. 9/11 hasn't happened yet. My heart has been stepped on, picked up, cuddled, dropped, kicked, drop-kicked by my most recent boyfriend. Our relationship was an opossum, least appealing of the rodent family. It played dead. The final ending has occurred, I currently believe. I know he is seeing someone. I heard them having sex. It is the first time I've been butt-dialed, during coitus or otherwise.

I'm out having drinks at my favorite bar with my favorite frenemy. I think I just coined that phrase- I am totally drunk. We sit on stools, chatting with a pretty bartender. Behind us comes a twenty-one-ish guy. I can't hear what he is saying to us but from my friends' reaction, it is sexist and stupid. Pig is hitting on all three of us simultaneously, believing his odds are better. We are giving him the cold shoulder. Pretty Bartender is telling him to move it along.

Conversation resumes as he interlopes on down the line. We are talking about moving on from heartache. Pretty Bartender is telling me that remaining friends isn't something that happens in real life, especially when the breakup takes so long. As she is telling me that it only happens in romantic comedies, I hear Frienemy gasp. She is staring behind me. I look back to see Ex with his arm around his new girlfriend. I think I just pee'd a little. My tongue is a cottonball. I can't breathe and know, already, that my voice will not hold if he comes over to talk to me. He is heading over to talk to me. I see Pig next to me and tap him. I am shouting the first thing I think into his ear. I wish I'd heard myself say it because I already don't remember. He is taking the bait, turning his back on the girl to my left. She looks relieved. He shout-whispers something back and leans in. I see Bartender roll her eyes. Frenemy looks confused. Ex is closing the distance between us. He is saying hello to me and to Frenemy. He is calling to his girlfriend to introduce us but she is

taking a seat down the bar, glaring at me while yawning at him. He is telling me that she is bored and her name is Candy. I don't yet know that she is a stripper. I won't be surprised when I learn this fact. I am repeating it to myself, doubting I'll remember her name tomorrow morning. Ex is looking at me as though I've just said her name aloud. I am wondering if maybe I did. She is tall, covered in acne and has ridiculous bangs. She is refusing to wave. Ex is just standing there. I keep drinking, my tongue, still a cotton ball, is stuck to the roof of my mouth. He is waiting for me to introduce Pig, who is now leaning over and onto me. I realize Ex thinks we're dating. I don't know Pig's name. I say nothing. Frenemy breaks the silence with a witty remark about his vintage Pizza Delivery Guy tee-shirt. She is asking him if he gets a collared shirt for his fifteen year anniversary. He is asking *why she gotta be like that* as he is putting his hand out for Pig to shake. Pig is shaking it. They are exchanging friendly words. Probably names. I am leaning in to hear Pig's name. I am a few seconds too late. Bangs appears next to Ex, yelling that she's ready to go. She is wearing Daisy Dukes with pleats (I will later wonder if they were custom made- pleats with short shorts?) Miscellaneous scars are crosshatching her legs. I am trying to say hello. She is refusing to make eye contact.

They're gone and Frenemy is asking me what the fuck. I am telling her I don't know, that everything happened so fast. Pig is fucking off, probably per my request—it is blurry even as it is occurring. Frenemy looks at me with judgment and disgust. I feel ashamed, realizing I used Pig to cast shadow on my insecurity. Frenemy is ditching me (I must pay for my sins.) I somehow make it home.

I am waking up on the hardwood floor. My dog is licking my face. My first thought: shame. Before I am fully conscious. I already know the look on Frenemy's face will haunt me for twenty years, when Ex is a distant memory, long after I've gotten married, had a second child, moved away and left not only my twenties but nearly my thirties behind me.

-- *Jacqueline Markowski*  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

*Winter Eulogy*

January –  
magpies crowd the house  
during breakfast.

Two eggs, coffee –  
no smile,  
or simile.

Rain suffocates the glass,  
parlay to Monday morning  
mischief.

Outside, kids squash puddles  
with their bikes.  
You would have been 27 –

children of your own  
or grad school.  
You were smartest in your lucky sweater.

I drink my coffee monotone.  
Magpies flutter at my insides.

*-- Bradley McIlwain  
(Something's Brewing Anthology)*

*Making What We Can*

He is making stew.  
I know because I hear the knocking  
of his knife on the steps of the recipe.  
He is precise and measured,  
counting time on the carrots.  
I can hear in the steel's recoil  
their vibrant resistance.

This is our together life,  
making what we can,  
him finding a use for his hands,  
spicing a pork to cook slow,  
and me, shredding the silence  
with the clack of words to savor  
or recycle later. Nothing  
is wasted that can serve.

-- *Jane Miller*  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

*The Shelleys Visit a Twentieth Century Carnival*

Percy and Mary Shelley are not dead  
They are alive, as Dr. Frankenstein would say  
And still under the psychedelic enslavement of their opium buddy/pimp  
The immortal Lord Byron, brother of Lucifer  
Who is presently the depraved emcee of a carnival  
Where our two poets are invited to meander  
Like ghosts in breeches and frocks  
Infiltrating the sawdusty midway

Lord Byron greets the reluctant Shelleys when they arrive  
Donning his leather top hat and steel cane tipped with a carved asp  
He introduces his playmates to a myriad of silly exhibits  
Mary seems appalled by their fluffiness  
She comments, what decay constitutes the twentieth century, the decay of the mind  
Mary catches a glimpse of some blubbery Brooklyn broads, sucking on cotton candy  
And exclaims, what horrors Percy  
Percy passes some muscled queens who finger the drawstrings of his gauzy shirt  
And exclaims with an erection, what delights Mary  
Meanwhile, Lord Byron is rubbing his cane's snake-crest against Percy's butt  
Through a tent-slit, Mary catches a glimpse of the Frankenstein Fashion Show  
Where Caesar-banged punks maraud down a runway, wearing combat boots, hulking  
shoulder pads, and machine screws through the neck  
In the background, some alternative band is crooning a song titled, Boris Karloff is  
dead  
Mary exclaims, what transgression Percy, they've eviscerated my masterpiece  
She flees hopelessly and takes a suicidal rollercoaster ride

Lord Byron chuckles heartily at Mary's ethereal figure, standing in her speeding car,  
flapping loosely at the top of neon peaks  
Her hands thrown over her head in mercy  
She yells through the rickety wood Himalayas  
So close to God, I almost feel released from wicked Lord Byron, oh sweet wind of  
melancholia, take me, and let me not be reborn once again unto his cauldron

Lord Byron chuckles from below  
Such melodrama, my sweet  
Percy pleads with him  
Help her you fiend  
Lord Byron responds

The only help I offer, my boy, is this—he pats his cane’s tongue against Percy’s rapidly building crotch—Behind the tent, maybe Percy, that slut, is sold

Mary survives the rollercoaster ride and wanders haphazardly into another attraction  
The Tunnel of Womb

A sac-like grotto, ceilinged with blood-stalactites  
She rambles through, halting by a flowing spring of estrogen  
There, a compressed dead baby in veined marmalade, sits  
Undulating in its mahogany egg-barrel with peek-a-boo window  
Mary grasps her stretch-marked belly, mourning  
Oh, my poor baby, Mumma is here

Soon, the cask shatters, purging its infant  
Now, an eggy white gremlin with vulture wings and emerald eyes  
The baby attacks Mary, screeching  
Destroy thy maker, Destroy thy maker

Mary escapes from its rampage, drenched in slime  
In an attempt to eternally expedite this horrid carnival ride, Mary tears off a stalactite from above  
And plunges the rosy icicle into her floral heart  
Creating a gash that weeps dandelion seeds

As she lies dying in the symbolic cave of her own womb, she whispers  
Farewell, my love, my Percy, may my suffering eat itself out and be banished forever

This is wishful thinking  
For Lord Byron, Master of Ceremonies, will never permit Mary’s absence from his games

Back to Percy  
Who is standing behind a tent, pants around his ankles, receiving a blow-job from Lord Byron  
His cum is overwrought  
Lord Byron drinks it, declaring joyously  
You do ferment the sweet cream of life, my boy

Once Percy has revived from pleasure, he inquires  
When will you acquit us my lord, how grateful we would be if you freed us from your perpetual nightmare, oh, how us poets yearn to die

Lord Byron chuckles  
You will never be released, angel, after all, who else would I play with

He sacrifices Percy again, though still denying him Nirvana  
He tosses him into a quicksand ring where De Sadean wrestlers with leather straps  
and Boris Karloff heads, pound him into a spongy grave  
Percy screams before dying an umpteenth time  
Not premature burial, not again, not again

Lord Byron chuckles  
Yes, again and again my poets, as long as you keep your frail flower-hearts, the pain  
will never calm  
Nor will my games

*-- James Mirarchi  
(Life is a Roller Coaster Anthology)*

*Musical Chairs*

I constantly move  
the violin  
risking music and dust.

The house wants  
attention:  
the toilet sings,  
floors applaud.  
I pace and smoke.

-- *Mark J. Mitchell*  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

*Ophelia's Flowers*

This rusted wreck, rims coated  
by thoughts, words, turned to  
dust by actions—by twisted vines  
curling through your mind from  
the soft voice of another.

We would sit in this metal ruin  
like a lost throne where Ophelia's  
weeds, royal guardians' broken  
spears, spring up through the  
rotted floor like your moldered  
mind.

A handful of them torn like oxidized,  
ancient crucifixial nails, let them be  
hammered for you underneath this  
blasphemous dome:

*Rosemary and pansies* for those times  
of like thoughts, remembrances when  
your sorrow was sucked up like an empath  
turning Solomon's key, a lonely grimoire  
to shore up your fragments.

*Fennel and Columbine* for your words, present  
for your lover.

*Rue* for me to taste long after this wreck has  
dissolved into Ozymandian dust.

*Daisy* with a black center for no one  
save those who served with innocence.

Plant it beneath the roots of tangled trees.

*Violets* that do not exist for they withered  
before the last day you looked at me.

Life's bouquet for you tied up with  
Autumn crocus, Oleander and Belladonna—  
sweets for the sweet.

-- *Ralph Monday*  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

*New York, New York*

Jer you were ablaze  
with the smear of neon  
on the strip  
in the hot Nevada night

I didn't want you  
to go flying from my sight  
on that hotel roller coaster  
that flung you past me  
and my silent motherly fears

Your face gleamed with shy appeal  
so I lifted you from the trappings of safety  
giving you up  
to the gum chewing kid  
who measured your straight backed desire

against the line that separated

the faint gleam of stars  
and the shadowed pavement below

You were the dangerous one  
tucked under  
a torn blue shirt

already to let go of earth  
with just one step  
and become part of sky

-- *Jude Neale*  
(*Life is a Roller Coaster Anthology*)

*An Environmental Poet*

To read other minds  
that entwine your own  
is to go beyond shadows  
of the unfazed bones  
in fishing for lost  
flesh and bloody fins  
which die and regenerate  
in a subterranean pink  
as a changing lobster  
now vanished from the sea  
traces nearby a turtle egg  
not interfering with nature  
in a fetid feverish  
tidal basin  
spilling over in the sunlight  
a relieved whisper  
in a lagoon and Laocoon  
from a faint wave sinking.

-- *BZ Niditch*  
(*Switch (the Difference) Anthology*)

*Just One Chocolate, Slowly*

Lips parted –  
to be painted with melted luxury.  
Eyes wide to the curve and gloss –  
the sheen of velvet brown truffle.

Teeth –  
gentle at first touch –  
release liquid caramel.  
The tongue welcomes a rich river of gold.

The mind knows  
this single, round gift –  
sun spun into sugar,  
love caressed and curled around  
a dark, dense center,  
the afterglow of chocolate  
pointing starward.

-- *Cristina M.R. Norcross*  
(*A Touch of Saccharine Anthology*)

*Death by Turtle*

*Here, just bury this,*  
I say.

A plastic wrapped package  
with gold letters  
contains a milk chocolate-caramel-peanut confection,  
also known as widening-of-waist  
or –  
death by chocolate turtle.

The purple and gold box  
sits innocently on the counter.  
Calorific enticement stares at me –  
a sexy, small box  
covered with fancy food photography.

Hiding it on the bottom pantry shelf,  
next to the fire extinguisher,  
doesn't help one bit.  
I know where the turtle lives.  
Not the basement either –  
there are stairs to navigate,  
but I could always waltz down  
during a commercial break  
and open the cabinet above the bar.

Drastic measures ensue.  
Scotch tape,  
then wide, packing tape adorn the box,  
followed by the dark, plastic stretch of a Hefty bag.  
Leave no trace.

Holding my breath, I peak outside the window  
where my husband's jacket fades  
into the treacherous woods behind our pond.

*It's done, he says.  
Let's speak no more of it.*

There is always the leftover stash  
from Halloween.

*-- Cristina M.R. Norcross  
(A Touch of Saccharine Anthology)*

***First Kiss***

I gave her a kiss on  
Valentine's Day  
that honey-lipped lass  
of my just  
stirring dreams.

Wordless,  
heart weighted,  
barely not shaking.  
Brazen,  
emboldened,  
yet painfully shy.

But unlike most girls  
who would save such a trinket  
a foil-covered taste  
to remember me by

she ate it.

-- *Vincent O'Connor*  
(*A Touch of Saccharine Anthology*)

*Downward-Facing Lotus*

Downturned my lavender  
Face, turned toward the reflecting pool:  
My serene nature pressed to  
Blue-black water. Krishna makes  
A funny flower-face at me.  
My thousand-petaled hands pray him  
(I'm fuckably vulnerable) not to  
Take me from my floating bed.  
He pulls me up by the roots  
& has me on his watery lap.  
It's oceanic for a minute,  
But the way he everlastingly  
Dandles keeps me fast  
In muck I don't understand.

*As above, so below.*  
Namaste's my underwater name;  
This pose leaves me open—  
Vulva smiling, but taking on water,  
While fingerling minnows, tricky  
Little phalluses, tickle  
Me to little death.  
Serenity has its discomforts;  
I can't be a happy symbol—  
I'm open-minded but getting bogged down.  
I turn up my several-petaled face  
Too late for the sun's salutation.  
Bottom's up—I'm getting a sinking feeling,  
Lotus-positioned and going under.

-- *Coco Owen*  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

### *Time's Up*

Time and time again the long hand overtook the short one, an eternal movement, round and round, pounding to the rhythmic beat of his heart. Father Time or Tim as his colleagues called him, wondered what would happen if his heart stopped or if for once he took a day off. After all, he hadn't rested since kicking off time, that fatal flick of his toe that had set off the Big Bang.

"I think I'll stay in bed all day today," he announced to his wife who was already dressed and shining brightly in her golden attire.

"As you please dear," she sighed, remembering the other times Time had thrown a strop. Once, when Time had sneezed the whole world had frozen over resulting in the extermination of the dinosaurs amongst other species. Then there was the occasion when Time had slipped and days had merged into one another, a whole decade wiped from living memory. She worried what might happen this time.

\* \* \*

Meanwhile, far away, two inpatients at the local hospice crept along the corridors towards the kitchen in search of a late night snack. After all what was the point of being on a calorie controlled diet of healthy eating if you were soon to pass away?

"Hurry up, time is running out, whispered Bert, then, "Hush" as Sid stubbed his foot.

"I wish I could buy more time," Sid moaned. "I swear the days are getting shorter, I can almost feel Death breathing down my neck."

"Never mind Death, it'll be Matron who'll kill us if we get caught."

“Time’s up,” Death muttered, silently following the two closely behind, his scythe poised determinedly over Sid. He felt hurt and saddened by the manner in which he was always feared and never ever welcome. It was his unpleasant job to carry away the souls at the appointed time. Although gravity and magnetic forces would ensure the universe continued with its cycle of perpetual motion, Death needed Time to tell him when the preordained event of spiriting away the souls was to take place. Glancing at his time piece, which lay face upwards across his rotund belly, Death gasped with horror.

“No! Time’s standing still, and I’ve so many expiries to deal with still.”

Ahead of him Sid and Bert moved stealthily into the kitchen and gorged on the contents of the fridge. The sound of their crunching and munching drowned out the angry whoosh as Death in a flying rage stormed off to give Father Time a piece of his mind.

\* \* \*

“Wake up you cantankerous old fool,” Death burst in on Father Time’s sweet slumber. Pulling off the cosy, still warm blanket, he demanded Father Time get back to work.

Father Time, none too pleased at this intrusion flung his staff at Death who batted it off to the left with his scythe. Father Time rushing forward in a rage stumbled on the hem of his nightgown and fell heavily against the sharp edge of Death’s deadly weapon. Lying unseeing in a pool of crimson Time passed away.

With a curdling scream frozen in his throat, Death stared wild eyed as it dawned on him that he was now redundant and no longer able to carry out his job. The Devil and Saint Peter too would have a reduced workload unless he worked randomly creating chaos in his wake. Shivers waved down his spine as he mused on how Devil, a stickler for discipline, and Saint Peter, the ultimate bureaucrat, would react to this change? Worse still what would Godfrina, God to all her subjects, do

when she found out what he had done to her husband Father  
Time? Maybe she could reset Time?

\* \* \*

Far away, two elderly gentlemen, Bert and Sid finished their  
midnight feast and slipping past the snoozing Matron, returned to  
their beds.

“Funny, that little snack seemed to stretch infinitely!” Sid mused  
to Bert as he snuggled deeply under his duvet.

-- *Mangal Patel*  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

You grieve as if this shadow  
has no sound yet  
though once your face is covered

you let more darkness out  
and what you hear  
stays, clots the way one hand

clings to this dirt made black  
by the other, left behind  
to hide in the scent from rivers

that move again, keeps you company  
years after as the cry  
for water and already this crater

gouged from your mouth  
stone by stone, caving in  
and your lips boiling over.

*-- Simon Perchik  
(Switch the Difference Anthology)*

***Café Epitaph***

I bleed coffee  
conviction  
caffeine and certainty

my life is a sip  
between cups  
of eternity.

-- *Richard King Perkins II*  
(*Something's Brewing Anthology*)

*Mis Numeros*

Inspired by the bilingual picture book *Mis Numeros* by Rebecca Emberley

*Una lagartija*, one  
salamander—son  
spun in the vernal womb, you turn  
on my lap to gum this page,  
*dos hojas*, two  
leaves like your double tree  
of names, mothers, she  
(me) who waited and she who grew  
you, the reason we learn  
to try these words on our tongues  
like the wet fruit you mash in your fist,  
*tres fresas*, three  
strawberries, why is death the color of kisses,  
*cuatro corazones*, four  
hearts that never banged  
against baby ribs like the good ringing  
of your spoon on wood,  
*cinco zanahorias*, five  
carrots sunrise splattered, scattered  
brothers in a fairy tale,  
your other father's sons  
baptized in Colombian rain—  
him salamander again, gone to ground  
to work without a name,  
paperless, surviving in the cracks, as  
*seis serpientes*, six  
snakes of my lean years whispered praise  
for quiet rooms, bare cellars, battle-rest  
that you laugh at each dawn, silver  
rattle crash that shakes  
*siete estrellas*, seven  
stars from the sky over two nations,  
four ancestors, unnumbered questions

you will bellow, my April ram,  
when these words become yours.

*-- Jendi Reiter  
(Tic Toc Anthology)*

*Selective Recall*

*"We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are"*

*-- Anaïs Nin*

i remember my daughter's first smile  
beneath a maternity ward micky d heating lamp  
recall as hauntingly familiar as battery acid  
thrown into a public pool filled with black children

i remember wearing levi 501s  
raybans  
black panther/huelga/power to the people! buttons  
to my high school graduation  
& the echo of a gunshot as the messiah fell to hate

i remember first love's  
tentative carousing puppy love  
an emotion so deep i almost perished  
like the soldier flogged, lynched & castrated  
on the soil he fought to save  
hand to heart pledging red whiter blue(s)

i remember signs leading disciplined anger  
*i am a man!*  
rocks & bottles flying  
&  
scalding words like rock salt in open wounds  
&  
ill-mannered fire hose pushing & shoving  
men women & children  
&  
snarling gestapo hounds keyed on hate

i remember . . .  
chewy the pimp at the main motel on union ave.  
*to live life, you take the bitter with the sweet*

i remember . . .  
that ear-ringin' beam-me-up boo-yah sizzle  
as the gorilla shifted  
for better purchase on my back  
i remember . . .  
things were better yesterday that weren't

-- *henry 7. reneau, jr.*  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

***Old Dirk Savors the Prospect of Honeymoon Bliss with His Second Teen Bride***

Candy cigarette trembling in her haunted hand,  
adorable secrets loosely locked  
in that smiling sin vault,  
her giddy little-girl laugh track loops,  
like a busy signal when you phone  
the emergency room.

*She's mine now, all mine.*

Sweet ghost lounging  
beneath the cool avalanche of starched sheets,  
she's naked as a cupcake on death's island.  
*This isn't the first time  
I've shopped for tombstones  
at Toys R Us.*

-- Brad Rose  
(*A Touch of Saccharine Anthology*)

*Pink Candy Hearts*

It's just a matter of time  
before it's a big legal mess.  
I think I know what's happening,  
but I don't.  
She says, "Sweetheart, you know better  
than to try to change the weather in a doll house."  
Her skinny scalpel of a smile,  
slicing through my life's gray, imperfect fog,  
before the lawyers move in,  
eat all the little candy hearts.  
Some of them, you'd swear, almost beating.

-- *Brad Rose*  
(*A Touch of Saccharine Anthology*)

### *The Wallflower*

A beauteous garland of flowers, they declare,  
Surrounds the garden  
Dresses it in colorful saris.  
All speak of their pulchritude,  
ignoring the others.

But Lacy-leafed ferns,  
chided children of the forest floor,  
wait in the soil, bide their time,  
an artist's monochromatic palette.

Their exiled faces crammed  
into overcrowded trains of resplendent flora,  
searching for their own earth pockets to plow.

Obdurate roots sprout legs in the moist soil,  
their flags unfurl in whipping spring winds  
a verdigris sea pushing their popinjay neighbors aside  
trumpeting their independence.

Like Alfalfa's cowlick,  
mint green leaves emerge erect fans  
delicately curlicued arms,  
supplicants genuflecting to the heavens  
embracing their freedom.

They elbow the others into corners,  
their terran-flagged territory anointed.  
Nomenclature doesn't truly matter.  
Just a Sargasso Sea of whispering leaves  
dominate the landscape.

Slow motion time-cameras watch them blanket the others,  
colors canopied beneath their green swatches.

others listen for the new garden sounds,  
delicate breezes borne carry music in their swaying arms.

-- *Sy Roth*  
(*A Touch of Saccharine Anthology*)

### *Through Her*

On the first night  
of her marriage,  
late, late, later into the night,  
she found her husband's skin  
folded neatly on the bedside locker.

It was folded like a long sheet,  
folded over, and folded, and folded,  
and folded over onto itself. On the outermost most visible fold,  
like the hood of a hoody, was her husband's face;  
eyeless, tongueless, as flat as a folded pillowcase.

She shuddered; a chill ran through her,  
from her bones out, from her bones in.

From the bathroom she could hear the water  
flowing from the shower. The door of the bathroom was ajar,  
a thin ribbon of light  
cutting over the bed from the opening. She took a step  
towards the door.

Through the gap she could see her husband,  
a raw inner man of muscle, sinew;  
eyes and tongue the only inner-outer parts  
that she could now recognise.  
He looked out at her from the streaming curtain of water.

He was utterly horrid, sexless,  
red as blood but not a drop of blood dripping, every drop of it held in.

"This is the very beginning," she thought.  
"This is the very end."

-- *John W. Sexton*  
(*Switch (the Difference) Anthology*)

*Missing*

Five days after he disappeared  
a Pez dispenser still lay on his  
bed, nuggets of candy still left  
inside. What good is a desperate  
heart when two weeks have  
gone by? No sign of my eleven-  
year-old son, and every day I  
search for him underneath  
the uncaring sky. Hours before  
sunrise I press my tears with  
my fists; his favorite candy,  
a box of Junior Minds, near his  
picture right by my bedside  
where I can see it. On a cold  
night I write down a prayer,  
weigh it down with a chocolate  
Easter egg he once stole.  
How difficult parting is as  
weeks turn into months  
without any hope.

-- *Bobbi Sinha-Morey*  
(*A Touch of Saccharine Anthology*)

*Candy Foil Memories . . .*

Memories wrapped in old candy foil,  
pasted within pages  
yellowed, dogeared and moth-eaten,  
are like whispers echoing  
from alleys of forgotten minutes,

the lines long scribbled  
beneath glued chocolate paper  
have a remembrance to revive,  
an amnesic story to retell,

they walk me through  
long deserted gravel trails  
of an adolescence lost  
with its giggly reverberations.

wizened fingers caress them  
I can taste their long lost sweetness again  
while a wistful smile glows  
with precious moments relived.

a childish bet won, a silly prank played,  
a gift of friendship or a favor repaid,  
people forgotten, lost or gone,  
faces misted by myopia of preoccupations~

fleet in snippets of recollections  
like an old mute movie or a stilted song  
from arthritic gramophone,  
as I indulge in kaleidoscopic delights  
of varied fragments of reverie...

-- *Smita Sriwastav*  
(*A Touch of Saccharine Anthology*)

*Anecdotes of the Defunct Ferris-Wheel*

Lying rusted and forgotten,  
seemingly within a bubble of time  
in abeyance between  
yesteryears and nascent morrows,  
ignored by selectively amnesic present,  
its languid limbs too lazy  
to flirt with promiscuous breeze,  
it gazes bleary-eyed  
at distant periwinkle heights,  
where it once chatted  
with vagrant, chameleon clouds.

Even a shove of geriatric motor  
coughing its bronchitic lung out,  
spluttering in pungent, diesel epithets,  
fails to make its arthritic stagnancy melt  
into whirling fluidity  
of concentric revolutions,  
while it indulges in anecdote adventures  
rifling through sepia glimpses of reverie  
within realms of wistful daydream.

It reminiscences about  
those gleeful shrieks tinged in fear  
and heady anticipation,  
now mere faint echoes lost  
within the catacombs of memory,  
the delight of flight etched  
on broadly grinning faces,  
it fondly recalls, smirking inwardly  
at the pansies wilting  
with terror within its embrace,

The air was scented  
in sumptuous aromas  
of buttered pop-corns, ice-creams,

popsicles, sizzlers and more,  
and rarely it would luckily taste a morsel,  
due to careless fingers  
and gravity's weird idiosyncrasies  
~their flavors still revived  
as it smacks the lips of memory.

Excited and nervous faces  
of menopausal grays stealing a slice,  
of that childhood long lost,  
dirt smeared faces  
and impish grins of mischief,  
as adolescence inhaled deeply freedom  
from stringent classroom routine,  
innocent toddler crying  
for milk or sleep least interested  
in chaotic rides to nowhere.

The roller coaster and swaying boat  
see-saws, sliders and swings,  
stand in dazzling splendor performing  
to whims of fuel as laughter floats  
smearing the visage of moments  
like the varied holi hues,  
and even the snooty stars,  
the hoity-toity moon watch  
green with envy at winking fairy lights.

The midnight gossips  
amongst the park's inhabitants sharing  
funny incidents or heartfelt experiences,  
the fickle affections  
of soaring helium balloons  
emblazoned as air-kisses  
on corrugated cheeks while they fly  
to horizons unseen  
on wings of gypsy, giggling wind,  
the hoarse cries of vendors,

allure of magician's tricks,  
fortune-teller's round eyed predictions~  
premonitions read in the sky,  
amounting to mere conjecture,  
motorcycle acrobatics to assuage hunger~

The memories are kaleidoscopic,  
always seemingly new, multi-faceted,  
like beloved folktales read  
from a dogeared book,  
it munches imaginary peanuts  
reliving those lost and still coveted years,  
through languid, monotonous days,  
and lulls beggar boys to sleep  
on insomniac nights of loneliness,  
crooning frayed lullabies of tarnished bliss,  
and embellished stories of the half-forgotten . . .

-- *Smita Sriwastav*  
(*Life is a Roller Coaster Anthology*)

*& the stone man said*

serve me up dirty  
filthy & ill-used  
I am the cartoon  
at the end of dawn

a mother's prayer  
quick lips of sorrow  
kissed  
echo of the new night

god help us  
we are slain  
by moments of anger  
until it hurts  
hurts no more

echoes of woe  
cry the new city  
built upon pastures  
flowers of doom

don't cry me down  
ye awful lament  
scarlet promises  
sea of new blood

following empty  
you are what lies next  
stone heart  
eye of moon

fingernail traces  
eyelashes weeping  
a lone figure  
intolerant shadow

maybe she's wicked  
lips apart magick  
a tongue of flame  
passion divides

old soldiers  
& new lovers  
pretending peace  
a fortune of skin

we are the pale  
standing outside you  
a misting of star-shine  
penumbra undone

don't you dare wake me  
with mute invitation  
where dragons have flown  
mine heart is gone

our cloak becomes  
a withering wall  
beneath the veil  
a hermit resides

she is cooking fish  
to feed her man slave  
a bit of wine  
to hurry him down

he places an ear  
on the pit of her navel  
a child passes through  
the face of a dime  
it ain't hitler  
it's ike

hurry on singers  
watchers impatient  
they only came to hear  
the end of your song

& so it is father  
whose breast is without us  
whose heart is within us  
whose belt is upon us

& mother stirs the soup  
chicken noodle it is  
no chicken no noodle  
soup nonetheless

a caravan gathers  
round an open-mouthed child  
he points to their camels  
strange alien hump

an hour of madness  
must I possess  
a vision of angels  
heart of the beast

last night I saw you  
bare assed naked  
bombs made your cities  
& titties dissolve

who were you then  
with your crack in the sky  
who are you now  
laying spread before me

there are brave new voices  
islands of silence

where cave people dwell  
residue of shame

I want a new blanket  
to cover my faces  
to shield me from the  
I want the wind in my home

old man bite your tongue  
your gun lies dead in your hand  
cover yourself  
you are disgusting to the new children

a grave in the city  
where geese come to graze  
a feast of bones  
& hollow moments

pigeon shit in the sand  
the mortar of giants  
brave deeds spoken  
a crumbling wall

visions of paper  
pitiful wisdom  
the shaman in flames  
who laughs the fool

bruised sky of my face  
bitter sweet of mine heart  
divide the peace of me  
make arrows & napalm

-- *Tom Sterner*  
(*Switch (the Difference) Anthology*)

***Musical Lives***

Childhood seems to last forever  
My days are filled with fun and games  
(London Bridge is Falling Down)

I guess it's about time for my youth  
I'm growing and learning  
This is fun  
Can I stay a while?  
(Satisfaction)

What do you mean 'responsibilities'?

Oh, I get it...  
I'm an adult now  
Wow! Big deal.  
All work and no play  
(Let's Go Crazy)

How can you be moving out of the house already?

Your mother gave birth to you just the other day -  
Or was that twenty years ago?  
How many children do we have, dear?  
Two-and-a-half?  
Good, that's normal  
(Stand By Me)

Why am I in a personal care home?

I'm not that old  
The golden years? HA!  
There are so many things left to see and do  
I don't want to die yet!  
(No One Is To Blame)

Allow me tranquility  
And let me make my peace with God  
(Stairway To Heaven)

-- *Kevin Strong*  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

### *The Shadow Girl*

Dow lived in an alleyway of crooked bricks and poisonous ivy. It was not much of a home but it was the only place she could call her own. An occasional cat or fox kept her company and every now and again a couple would stumble in to have quick and alcohol soaked love.

They never noticed Dow. She was nothing more than a lingering presence, an uneasy feeling of somebody watching. Dow looked at the girls intensely, creeping so close to them that her nose would be just inches from their kissed mouth and she could even see the teardrop trembling on the eyelashes of some of them.

After a few minutes she always sighed with frustration and retreated to the dimness. None of them was Her. Dow stopped hoping a long time ago but since she had nothing else to do, she continued her search. Day by day, week by week she grew a little thinner and paler, becoming nothing more than an echo of a rain washed afternoon, when the girl she belonged to decided it was time to become a woman. Dow remembered the boy who smelled of overchewed bubblegum and had a pimple next to his left ear. She remembered turning her eyes, trying to melt into the darkness of the alley, she didn't want to see. She huddled behind the shadow of a fat garbage bag and closed her eyes shut. By the time she gathered the strength to come out from her hiding place, her girl and the boy were already gone.

Dow tried to run after them but the shadows of the alleyway were clinging to her and the fingers of poison ivy clutched her ankles. The graffiti overhead were laughing at her in their violent red voice.

In her moment of cowardice, Dow became a disembodied shadow and had to live with the guilt for the rest of her existence. As for the girl, she left the boy on the next corner and ran home; never truly realizing that she left a part of herself in that abandoned alleyway.

-- Fanni Sütő  
(*Switch (the Difference) Anthology*)

### *Keeping Time*

With open palms, relaxed wrists, to loosen congestion  
I beat your upper back like a drum—something  
—according to your doctor—that must be done  
if we want to keep you with us.  
This week, it's my turn. I drum. I drum.

How small you've become, how thin!  
Your heart beat a rhythm like this one once  
when I lay curled, feet upper-most, under your ribs  
as your breath nourished me.

“Okay, time to cough,” you mutter, and summon  
demon mucus from your lungs, spit  
fastidiously into a tissue you will later burn.  
We begin again. I drum. I drum.

After this session, we'll make tea, peel potatoes,  
cut up onions for supper, go on—  
as if your lungs were perfectly clear,  
as though they were filled with nothing but pure air,  
as though this were not a quest but an answer,  
as if we were not  
keeping time for that clicking rack of bones  
who calls himself a dancer.

-- *Anne Swannell*  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

*Bellis Perennis Imitates Narcissus*

Totally absorbed in the way their long slim petals  
radiate from their golden centres,  
their myriad tightly-stamen'd rows unfurling  
as they contemplate their own intricacy,  
they compare themselves to one another;  
all exactly alike, yet each the epitome  
of its own self-centred glory.

Altering minutely hour by hour  
with such light as the window allots them  
and whatever nourishment they can manage to ingest,  
twisting slowly in their struggle for eternal grace,  
these daisies/day's eyes/evolve.

More than a few  
have committed suicide on this coffee table;  
its highly-reflective surface pulls them in.  
Obsessed with their own image,  
they dive straight at it,  
lie there, petals splayed, wedded to glass,  
pollen spattered on the shine like dust.

-- Anne Swannell  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

*Augusta, Maine*

I was made for the sun,  
but here I am in Augusta.  
At Christmas, the snow  
is as real as ground glass,  
and the Three Kings,  
are just statues,  
less than the live dogs  
around St. Patrick's manger.

All summer *mi hijos* played baseball,  
and I shivered in the stands,  
drinking *café con leche*  
from a thermos.  
The sun gave no more heat  
than a postcard of Florida.  
My brown thighs shriveled  
like bananas  
left on the counter.  
I covered them in mom jeans.

All winter I sit, huddled  
indoors in a white parka  
bought from a catalog.  
I drink *Café Bustelo*,  
straight, no leche,  
my gloved hands around  
a thermos from the bank.

Neighbors hike to the ski lift  
on the edge of town.  
The men balance six-packs  
on their shoulders.  
No one else winces at the wind,  
the snow, the sleet,  
the black ice,  
the wind and the sleet

that pound at my windows  
like someone else's bad lover.

My sons play hockey.  
I keep them busy.  
They are made for Augusta.

-- Marianne Szlyk  
(*Something's Brewing Anthology*)

*Listening to No Other, Thinking of Takoma Park*

Lila remembers  
slipping into the storefronts,  
the places her parents called  
junk stores.

Then the world was a collage  
of tinted-blue tinfoil  
and broken mirrors (deliciously  
bad luck for seven years),  
cherry blossoms  
against a maroon sky,  
the sea-green walls of a  
luncheonette (we forget  
the cigarettes and grease),  
a frayed voice  
smothered in sopranos.

But it was not her past.  
None of it was.

Then Lila's daughter,  
the pink-haired girl  
in maroon vegan leather,  
a soprano  
in the school choir,  
slips into the kitchen,  
this collage  
of magazines, TV shows,  
someone else's taste,  
not her mother's.

Wishing for an electronic cigarette,  
Maddie looks out to the snow  
that falls on the cherry blossoms  
the shards of mirrors  
from Restoration Hardware

and scraps of greasy tinfoil  
alike.

-- *Marianne Szlyk*  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

*A Knight Shining, Without Armor*

As the years did pass so the daffodil did cobble together a survival of sorts.  
He buried deep his secrets and endeavored to forget them.  
And to reify their remove, to seal their coffin, as it were,  
so that the secrets would never reemerge or be faced and so that  
such events would not reoccur, the daffodil commenced a new project.  
His daffodildom had to be overcome to maximize his survival chances.  
In other words, rather than cultivate his inner daffodil, he worked to extinguish it.  
And the daffodil did go to the gym and did lift very heavy weights indeed  
and study the techniques of lifting in bodybuilding manuals  
and he did overload his body with fuel to feed his ever growing muscles  
and to bury still further the unspeakability of himself.  
And lo was the daffodil transformed into a tank.

And as a tank he did garner glances glad returned on the street  
and in the bathhouses and in the kudzu-choked expanses  
behind the city park. And the daffodil did find connection,  
however fleeting, in this semi-public erotic sphere.  
And here he would kiss strangers in the day and in the night  
and run his hands over them and entwine himself with them and  
sink to his knees and perform that which shall not be named in this poem  
for the daffodil does not wish to offend his more modest readers.  
And on his knees, with his mouth full, so to speak, the daffodil did pray  
that the police would not arrest him for indecency or worse and that he  
would not be pummeled and left to rot, for kudzu is rapacious and would  
quickly cover the remains of a daffodil, even one transformed into a tank.

And as risky as was his activity—the groping and stroking and beyond—  
at least there were others around, and the daffodil thought that perhaps  
this was safer than going into a car and entering an apartment  
where he would meet a fate even worse than the night so terrible  
that it had to be buried and there would be no one around to witness  
or help just as there had been no one on said night.  
And the daffodil did encounter others truly interested  
in more than an encounter of the byway. Only they did grow  
impatient for there was much that the daffodil could not bear  
and ever did the daffodil deflect and pirouette so as not to

reveal and not to face his secrets. And these others left him to his dance moves and his evasions, however inadvertent they might have been.

And the daffodil did so yearn for someone less readily deflected. And he would dream of this figure, as if in daguerrotype, as someone strong and gentle and patient, someone who would button the button on the back of his shirt collar in the morning as a gesture of good tiding for the day and then nuzzle his neck and give his ass a squeeze as he raced to catch the train. And after yet another needle-in-the-haystack online date, the daffodil would think of the knight while staggering towards sleep, this knight on a white horse galloping towards the tangle of bramble and thorn and kudzu and muscle that formed the daffodil's carapace. And thus did the daffodil's years pass, with secrets intact and glances returned (or not) and beds briefly shared (but mostly empty) and hooves of the knight's horse always within earshot.

-- *Yermiyahu Ahron Taub*  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

*The Anchorwoman*

Bodies in rows like sunflowers.  
She wears a yellow suit.  
White blouse, collar overlapping  
lapels of her jacket.  
Too many gone in Gaza. Two  
strands of pearls. Think  
fifties and teas and silk shifts.  
And the trapeze.  
Can legerdemain hand us the past?  
Reserves of groundwater  
evaporating. A hundred sorties  
in Iraq. It's like nothing  
we've ever seen before, says  
Hagel of the red and  
blue striped tie. Sleeveless black  
dress tonight. She's of  
a certain age, but her biceps have  
definition. Two lucky living  
stiffs fight off ebola. An unlucky  
teen left on a "show me"  
street to wither, bleed. A flowery  
dress, tight around the bust,  
short sleeves, mandarin collar up  
against subtle make-up.  
Refugees leave Bangui, Central  
African Republic, for Cameroon.  
A hell of a way to learn geography.  
Red petals perk on a synthetic  
background of solid white. Hunger,  
wandering, weariness  
replace the djembes of synthesis.  
A gold chain with a locket  
triangles down a lilac sweater.  
A strand of her son's hair  
may be inside. Or his first baby tooth.  
Or a snapshot of her in those

other times. She wears long sleeves  
to keep her blood warm.  
We know for sure she's seen  
the unimaginable. Who cares  
about roots showing if the moon  
has forgotten its turn?

-- *Judith Terzi*  
(*Switch (the Difference) Anthology*)

*After the Before*

There was a before. Wasn't there?  
When new baby blues wobbled for focus  
At my breast we gazed into each other.  
Wasn't it in the before that he smiled  
And we beamed back at him, at each other,  
At the amazing art our togetherness bore?

Before he arrived we spoke of every possibility,  
A Harvard lawyer, Australian goat farmer and  
When we spun the wheel, landing on the  
Most amazingly perfect infant, we wept in gratitude.  
His first steps? They were before, right?  
We were his Pole Stars and he was ours.

When did the after start? Before the before was done?  
Reversing falls bewildered, stumbling chaos of  
Broken flow, hostages waters left to work it out.  
And when the falls reversed is that when  
The before ended? Time's not always so neatly split.

I touched the word as the before receded,  
Ran my fingers along the edges, but couldn't  
Speak it, until the cicada-stolen silence demanded  
Recognition. Who stole our son? Who stole our baby?  
And who the hell is Autism anyway?

After the after became the norm, new after-punctuated  
Befores began, life measured in past tense befores.  
He hasn't bitten anyone or himself in three weeks  
And words once learned have been relearned now,  
Some of them anyway, but not like before.

-- Talaia Thomas  
(*Tic Toc Anthology*)

*Not Sleeping*

I can't keep  
not sleeping at night  
I can't keep  
letting all those  
    open cupboard doors  
pull my shoulder blades  
I can't keep  
hoping for that miracle  
    change black tea  
    into coffee and cream  
I can't keep  
recycling those words  
    said and unsaid  
replies and responses  
never meet resolution  
I can't keep  
my head full of bees  
whispering why  
    it doesn't matter  
    it never matters  
I can't keep  
eating the edges of my cuticles  
it won't grow flat  
I can't keep  
my ear to my gut  
it's holding on to a secret  
    I'm listening  
    it's not telling  
I can't keep  
waiting by the phone  
waiting for that email  
    to make it right  
it will never be right  
I can't keep  
saying I don't mind  
I get it-I understand

I don't  
I can't keep  
not surrendering to anything  
since the switch flipped  
it got broke  
I can't switch it back  
I can't keep  
a single person as ideal  
as I have loved them  
stop idealizing  
I can't keep  
all the names off my lips  
the push out daily  
hourly I form them  
my mouth aches  
I can't keep  
this pencil moving  
its eraser is shrinking  
there's more mistakes to make  
I can't keep  
presuming the road's closed  
my feet are swelling  
until it hurts to walk  
but I walk anyway  
I can't keep  
listening to the air in my lungs  
rub against my nostrils  
I hear myself living  
I need to be sleeping

-- Sarah Thursday  
(*Something's Brewing Anthology*)

### *I Want Candy*

Candy is dressed all in pink – pink stockings rising to meet the thigh hugging hem of her tight pink dress, vanilla hair puffed and billowing like a cotton cloud, frosted crystals of cheap pick and mix jewelry resting on the plump cleavage of her marshmallow breasts.

There's a vicious little splinter in the hard stick that holds her head high. It will pierce the greedy tongue of anyone who tries to take too much of her in one go. Beneath the orange soda glow of the street lamp she paces in ever-decreasing candy cane spirals, teetering on the caramel constructs of stiletto heels and wafting the irresistible entice of her sickly sweet scent to the night.

A man appears, wide-eyed and drooling, trembling with unfettered desire.

“You look scrumptious,” he gasps. “How much to taste your sweetness?”

Candy smiles.

The white peppermint lozenges of her teeth reveal themselves between the cherry-red glossiness of her lips. She whispers a sum and flutters eyelids painted a bubblegum hue. With a jangle from her bangles the syrupy stickiness of her hand melds with the clammy sweat on his palm.

She leads him deep into the liquorice black of the alley.

His will dissolves and liquefies like chocolate become velvet in the intense heat of her embrace. The jellybean lacquer of her fingernails drives into his flesh. She allows him to unwrap her and claim the sticky prizes within.

He simmers a while before she brings him to the boil. She departs the moment he is spent and leaves him a single grain of her sugar. It wedges itself in the cavity of his cold and emotionless heart. In time the

lustful cravings that it arouses will bring him back again and again and again.

“You’re so sweet,” he will whisper. “So, so sweet.”

He is not the first and he won’t be the last.

Each time he indulges she will leave him with the gift of another granule that will hasten the rot that decays his soul. He will age at alarming rate, becoming wan and haggard and frail. The delicious delight that his torture brings her will help Candy maintain the glow of her sugary sheen. It’s all part of the bargain. Enter the candy shop and pay the price.

He will come to view what is left of his life through the peanut brittle fug of some diabolically diabetic coma and will find himself at death’s doorstep much sooner than he ever expected. In his final moment the words that ooze like molasses in the last exhalation of his death gasp will be tragic in their inevitability.

“I want Candy.”

And she will mourn him in pink - dusting her face in sherbet powders - rouging her cheeks in lollipop red.

*-- David Turnbull  
(A Touch of Saccharine Anthology)*

*The Last of the Old Gods*

1.

The torsos of women at the bottom  
of the ocean—they rush up like moons,  
  
they kick out my eyes like rolling crystal,  
like a heartbeat transfixed  
  
on the headless primordial.  
I know what it is to feel safe  
  
in a fool-sand darkness.  
The dead like cold mothers,  
  
breasts of cut diamond.  
I wonder about light in a tunnel.

2.

In time, I won't have limbs.  
Hips to neck, I'll be an island  
  
searching for its main.  
I'll be a moon  
  
without a body.  
When my shadow  
  
barrels like stone, who will  
skip me over the bend of Eridanus?

3.

Nothing else but the sound of rushing  
light in a conch, dark and endless.

Soon, the earth will speak;  
the young will swim

after two days, air and water blended.  
The sound of thunder

watering rock: the new gods  
shaking from their eggs.

My last thought is of the blind moon  
gaining sight of the cranes

spreading their wings at the mountain.  
Bog of wild and wicked dreams.

*-- Jessica Van de Kemp  
(Switch (the Difference) Anthology)*

### *I'll Show You Sunshine*

Rebecca adjusts the shocking pink flower on the prosthetic ponytail in her hair and draws dark yellow sidewalk chalk across the driveway.

The pavement is wet papier-mâché. The ponytail was a \$3.99 special offer, as-seen-on-TV, that aired during one of Rebecca's favorite edutainment shows with promises to 'Make Your Hair Pop!' and 'Bump Your Style!'. Rebecca has abundant flowing hair of her own and isn't usually taken in by faddish infomercials, but she relishes the feeling of having hair that isn't hers intermingled with her smooth straight strands, hair you can take off at night and are actually supposed to. She compassionately adopts the wayward simulation and pretends until she's no longer pretending, brushing it affectionately before bed in a solo show of self-esteem as if it's some kind of vulnerable creature.

The way Rebecca feels when bodily add-ons—jewelry, tie-in hair, a toy plastic claw hand—become part of her is very similar to her excitement when the chalk prints thick, soft lines on the asphalt or concrete, the motion perfectly smooth and buttery with no discordant resonance creating random jarring vibrations in her hand, which she hates. Today every stroke is like that, flawless, her squiggles bold and angles clear.

Rebecca's drawings are abstract, unrecognizable, yet distinctly mature. Playful, but they resemble more the idle doodling of a bored adult working at a call center. Now she sketches a warped essence of a hopscotch board, with letters instead of numbers, adrift in a scenscape of astral waves. A blue '4' is eked vividly above the entire drawing.

Rebecca's mom emerges from the beginning of the driveway and places a moist hand unobtrusively on the very top of her daughter's head. Katie acquiescently glides her hip, thick-rimmed glasses up the bridge of her nose for exactly the 40th time this day before gliding the opalescent orbs behind them thoughtfully over the visual network of chaotic intentionality at her feet. She thinks the drawings are projections of Rebecca's subconscious.

Dinner. *We could have this, this, or that, what sounds better?* As Katie presses pride and soft kissing membranes into Rebecca's built-in hair while stroking the ponytail, the final dot is placed onto the limestone

painting. The sun has shifted towards imperturbable sleep, and they are now lightly cloaked in shade.

Katie walks away and Rebecca notices the mushrooms growing from her scalp. Three diminutive toadstools with rounded caps at the back of her mother's cranium, little steps, like the pixelated 2nd, 1st, and 3rd place platforms at the end of a Super Mario Kart race. On second thought, she brushes another dark blue line onto the cement canvas and a tiny row of identical mushrooms sprouts instantly from the powdery surface.

-- *Tamara K. Walker*  
(*Switch (the Difference) Anthology*)

*Sunday at the Gallery*

“For I have known them all already, known them all—  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons.”

— T.S. Eliot, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and Others*

Well-dressed women come  
and go; some  
speak of Michelangelo.  
Time smells of coffee  
stirred clockwise. Tinkle  
of metal on china makes  
the wall clear its throat.  
*This wall is not a wall*  
warns Rimbaud's cupboard.  
An hallucinate Venus  
with spiky chitin vulva  
floats by, humming  
like an air-conditioner –  
it may belong, along  
with the violin,  
to Chagall.  
Quick - duck  
back through cracks  
while Miro explodes.  
Pick Constantinople -  
you'll need persistent weapons.  
Escher and stairs! Follow, but  
no matter where you go  
there you are.  
*Let's do the next room.*  
*They say there's a Magritte...*

-- Mercedes Webb-Pullman  
(*Something's Brewing Anthology*)

***Stirring Sugar***

your coffee cup  
has left Olympic rings on the  
classified columns  
of yesterday's newspaper

you stare through the window  
eyes fixed on some other place

while I stir sugar  
tinkling through the silence  
between us  
if you could see this impossible  
half-melted sugar Fibonacci  
on my glass coffee-mug's side -  
this diamond feather lace-web delta -  
you'd smile, too

-- Mercedes Webb-Pullman  
(*Something's Brewing Anthology*)

***Reading Shadows***

Breeze-stirred shadows tremble  
and tumble down your living-room wall  
like electronic blips that reassemble  
long forgotten warnings scrawled  
to the future; *'judge not by their looks  
but by their behaviour'* perhaps  
*'there is danger in having all the books  
in one library'* – Alexandria adapts.

Like Pythia's smoke they writhe and curl  
with no-one to translate them but you  
and you choose what you need, working girl  
pimping words, but all of them true.  
The universe spent centuries perfecting these  
exact transmissions, just for you to read.

-- Mercedes Webb-Pullman  
(*Switch (the Difference) Anthology*)

### *Love Letter*

I leave you messages in the dust. But you never read them. With a hiss of Pledge and a swipe of cloth, you wipe them away.

I line my hands up to match the marks yours make when you press against your bathroom mirror, examining your face for imagined imperfections. They match perfectly, and I think of how your fingers would feel interlocked with mine. Your thumb absently tracing circles over the flesh between forefinger and thumb. But you brush your teeth and leave without a backward glance.

I leave you poetry in the pages of books you got bored of. I scatter the dry petals of long-dead flowers at your feet. See me. Want me. I've waited so, so long.

When you leave the house for the day - all bustling, patting pockets, muttering lists of things you need to remember as you slam the door behind you - I get unsettled by the silence. I never enjoyed silence. I could never get the hang of sitting quietly, of not doing something. Perhaps that's why I'm still here. So I drift, making up stories for the people you drape around, grinning, in photographs. Trying not to feel sick that they know the weight of you, and I do not.

I follow behind you, lovesick - sick of love - as you potter from room to room; just close enough so the wisp of your scent passes between my outstretched fingers. I curl at your feet like a lapdog while you watch TV and pretend you know I'm there.

I adore the vitality, the reality of you. The way your blood blooms in your cheeks, the delicacy of each eyelash. The ease with which you laugh. The grace in your limbs as you fold your laundry. I long to be the breath which fills your lungs. You remind me of things about myself that I thought were long since lost.

Sometimes, I almost reach you. Some madness overtakes my mind and I begin to call your name, to touch your shoulder, you turn -- and then your eyes cloud over with confusion. You laugh under your breath. You shrug, and get back to your book. Nothing there. Silly you. Jumping at nothing. Next you'll be believing in ghosts.

Perhaps...perhaps, so many years from now, your heart will cease to beat, and everything will change. Your world will shift, the shade of the darkness will tilt, and there I'll be. Where I've always been. You'll see me, at long last. And you'll smile. We will drift together for all time, so close our atoms will merge and there will be no space between your lips and mine.

Or perhaps you'll leave this world as you live in it; happy, strong, busy, ever looking forward. Your loved ones will call you, and you will answer, running into eternity unafraid, unattached. And I will shrink into the cold sheets and try to remember the songs you sang under your breath. I would not hate you for that. We never met in life. My name was well-worn on my stone when you moved in here. Why would my smile make you weak, the way yours makes me weak?

But I do long for you, so.

I was never good at resting. Now, I cannot sleep, even when I am desperate for the oblivion of it. So I fill the secret places of your room - the top of a cupboard, the space between your drawers and the wall - and listen to your deepening breaths, imagining my heart beating in time as we drift into dreamless, contented slumber together. And I wait for the dust to settle in the stillness, so I can write to you again.

-- *Emma Whithall*  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

### *Placebo*

As an artifact of Catholic schools,  
I accepted half-truths,  
As long as they served the purpose of a good story,  
Like some that are in the Bible.  
So I had no trouble believing  
My friend sitting next to me at lunch.

Even when I knew he was manipulating me to share my M&M's,  
The ones the nun gave me for scoring highest on a beatitude test.  
He didn't come right out and ask;  
He had heard her warning me against charity,  
That if I shared them I was just encouraging laziness.

Rather, he took the approach that I would reward him for his tale:  
How his Dad's uncle, before World War II,  
First came up with the idea of coating bits of chocolate in hard candy.  
He had bet that since children love to mimic their parents  
They too would love to take pills.

Pharmaceutical firms had recently developed the technology  
Of compressing remedies, which had until then been dispensed in packets, into pills.  
Why not give kids their own version,  
A sign they were growing up, just like candy cigarettes?  
But that approach never caught on.

It wasn't until the Army Air Corps  
Were supplied with candies in cardboard tubes shaped like bombs,  
That the product became successful.  
The military wanted its crews to have an extra burst of energy  
On their extended missions to bomb and burn  
The last cities of the German Empire,  
Those left with nobody but children and the infirm.

When the pilots returned home,  
And this he heard from his father who was one of them,  
They brought with them an appetite for his uncle's invention.

Except for his father.  
He once heard his father tell his uncle  
It also brought back the flash and smoke of crumbled cities,

That the sound of the candy coating cracking  
Reminded him of bones breaking.  
Which was why this candy was never allowed in his house.

Feeling sorry for the way his parents were treating him,  
I passed him my last three.

-- *Ron Yazinski*  
(*A Touch of Saccharine Anthology*)

### *Class at Disney's Animal Kingdom*

After we had tired of watching the silver-back gorillas  
Chase each other like kids on the playground,  
And then the tiger fall asleep  
Like the misplaced student who found long-division,  
Even with a calculator, too difficult,

We ran into a pleasant old cast member  
Who guessed we were either teachers or nurses.  
Teachers, how did you know?  
“I noticed you were paying attention to other people.  
“The only kinds of folk who do that are either teachers or  
nurses.

“I myself am a retired teacher from New Hampshire.  
“After thirty-five years of killing Romeo and Juliet,  
“One-hundred-and-seventy-five death scenes,  
“I had had enough.  
“When I first started, I tried to make the kids feel that we  
were in it together.

“But I was only kidding myself.  
“During my career, my students went from Cliff Notes,  
“To movies, to Internet summaries, to “I bet you can’t fail all  
of us.”  
“My last year, I took them up on the bet, and failed all of  
them.  
“That’s when I came down here.

“But it wasn’t all wasted.  
“Since Disney doesn’t give out the names of the apes,  
“I’m free to call the immature ones Benvolio, Tybalt, and  
Mercutio.  
“Of course, the dominant male is Romeo,  
“And all of his females are Juliet.

“If anybody, ever asks me what I know about them,  
“I tell them that silverbacks speak to each other in sonnets.  
“They think it’s a type of ape-language  
“That Disney came up with,  
“And I let it go at that.”

-- *Ron Yazinski*  
(*Life is a Roller Coaster Anthology*)

*Among Old Graves*

Among old graves, you do this:  
you think about the dead,  
you leave small gifts, talismans upon their limestone  
markers. You brush crumbs of dirt out of the barely-there  
grooves of a grave-maker's etchings: numbers and letters,  
swirled stems of flowers.  
Some of the dead, here and always,  
will be remembered.  
Many more forgotten, even their names  
glazed to smooth oblivion by time, rain, wind, cold.

Which of the dead would I want to be?  
I ask this of myself, kneeling beside a young girl's headstone,  
cattails' white explosion of cotton drifting through my gaze.  
Forgotten, or leaving a legacy?  
I don't know, I say to the girl buried here.  
What should I answer?  
She is quiet, of course, as they all are,  
as I soon will be. I am middle aged but old,  
mind slower, legs like those of the miserable:  
bowed, knees in a dragging sort of ache.  
Maybe it matters, maybe it does not.  
My son says there is a cardinal in the gold leaves of a maple,  
although I cannot see it.

-- Dana Yost  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

*Natural Confrontations*

*1/ Orchid*

Far on the hillside  
Alone on a shady spot  
The orchid blooms aloud, albeit  
There are neither eyes  
Nor ears open nearby  
Paying the slightest attention  
To its shape or melody  
Be it ever so fragrant  
So fulfilling

*2/ Plum Blossom*

Without a single leaf  
Grass-dyed or sun-painted  
To highlight it  
But on a skeletal twig  
Glazed with dark elegies  
A bud is blooming, bold and blatant  
Like a drop of blood  
As if to show off, to challenge  
The entire season  
When whims and wishes  
Are all frozen like the landscape

*3/ Lotus Flower*

From foul, decayed silt  
At the very bottom  
Of a big lake of dirty murk  
You shoot clean  
Against the morning sun

Always pure  
Crystal  
Unpollutable

-- *Changming Yuan*  
(*Petals in the Pan Anthology*)

*From the Journals*

*While the Crickets are Mating*

The moon thinks the crow is firewood  
So it splits the bird's shadow from its sneaking.

The bird thinks the moon is the fruit  
Of contention that splintered the flock  
So it tries to return its fullness  
In the thickest crown it found.

In the right tree, the owl might be laughing  
If it hasn't swallowed the wrong snake.  
The frogs have stopped complaining.  
The boy scribbling under omniscient stars,  
Tending his mind's earliest fire, Albert,  
Who decades later will confound skeptics  
With three letters and a number: e, m, c and 2.

*-- Jonel Abellanosa  
(April Jellyfish Whispers)*

*In the Distance, Crows*

Heading to the roost  
the way they do with  
single-minded determination  
flying alone or with others,

she sees them from the window.  
On the table the steam from each  
bowl rises to meet the faces of  
silent strangers.

The salt is passed and spoons  
clink against the Delft-blue scenes  
into the shimmering broth.

She imagines the crows stopping  
at staging areas to gather forces.  
They sound their clarion calls and  
then, at dusk, hundreds meet in the  
silhouettes of trees greeting one another  
with a cacophony of welcomes!

Fussing and preening, fluttering  
leaves darker than night, they  
finally settle into their joined warmth

-- *Carol Amato*  
(*June Jellyfish*)

### *Wolf Cry*

“You keep the children.” Jason disposes of them just like that as the aurora burns over the Vermilion River. Witchlight. We’ve been married nine years. “I’ll keep the dog,” he adds.

Across the river, a wolf edges out of the forest to drink. Our sons, Jeremy, eight, and Kevin, six, sleep in our tent, unaware. Upriver, wolves cry, a pack. Jason doesn’t explain, but I know it’s Sharon, honey haired, golden, one of those twenty-somethings in the Montana Café in town, charming as otters, smooth and quick. Jason saw her, wants her. Her father’s rich.

In a sudden wolf silence, the river talks, chugs over hydraulic potholes. Our fire snaps. Jason’s throat works as he drinks cold beer, sits firelighted, honey gold as Sharon. I can almost hear the thunder of the falls, south of us. I can imagine the deep pool at the cliff foot, black water there, or maybe gilded by the streamers in the sky, running down the magnetic lines, like a script, like a written language of gods.

Ten miles north is the border. I’ve crossed it a hundred times. A lot of us from up here are very good at border crossings. Late at night. In any weather. Summer or winter. Private business. Nothing ever stops us. Jason has forgotten that. He’s from the Cities, from Minneapolis, not really like us.

The wolf drinks, looks at me, a knowing look. Wolves cry like humans sometimes, late, late at night on the Vermilion when the aurora shines. Things happen in the forests, at the border. The terrible witchlight of the aurora flickers green, white.

“So Medea,” Jason asks, “you gonna be all right with this?”

-- *Janet Shell Anderson*  
(*June Pound of Flash*)

Chalky limestone cliffs  
Lug upon their fossil backs  
Shadows of clattering birds.

-- *Steve Ausherman*  
(*November High Coupe*)

muted smoke-peach blends  
daughter watches gulf sunset  
mother's ghost painting

-- *Mary Jo Balistreri*  
(*February High Coupe*)

*Candy Colours*

Sunset paints the room  
pink, red, yellow and gold.

A pleasant numbness  
settles in my bones.  
It dances  
inside my head.  
You bring the same  
dedication  
to your seduction  
as you do to your music.  
Eyes shut,  
I smell the leather  
of your coat,  
the cigarettes on your lips.  
Almost fearful,  
I kiss you  
Risking my life  
with that kiss.  
Like a fool.  
Like an animal-  
Desperately in love.  
Shaken  
by a current  
of wild happiness  
that is dangerous,  
but strangely-  
Pure.

-- *Amy Barry*  
(*June Pyrokinecton*)

*Disassembly Required*

It was an unbuilding,  
more deliberate than a demolition  
a deconstruction accomplished over time  
a plank-by-plank denuding  
of our most basic structure  
as patient, planned, and organized  
as the original architecture.

Remember, this was a decision,  
this prizing-out of driven nails,  
this breaking away of all supports,  
these careful taps to dislodge mortar  
from every dusted brick. Lifting the planks,  
pulling down the ceiling, unhooking the doors,  
the windows not shattered, but closed, latched,  
then unshimmed, unsashed, uninstalled.  
You did it all on purpose.

The house is down. I hardly remember  
what it looked like, standing.  
It's been counted, divided, shared-out.  
But now you stand between the stacks  
with a list, gesturing here and there,  
along among the beams and braces,  
the shingles, fittings, screws and steps,  
smiling your encouragement,  
speaking words of salvage.

*-- Karen Berry  
(October Napalm and Novocain)*

*The Furnace Quarry, Llanelli*

*after the painting by J.D. Innes (1887-1914)*

The industrial juggernaut  
has continued  
into a new century.  
A background of stacks and smoke  
in a town by the sea.  
A primal wound,  
the cleft made on the shocked land.  
The quarrying goes on,  
filling the world elsewhere  
with promises of progress,  
remembering too  
that nature's mind,  
in all her eternal guises,  
will observe undaunted  
the pillaged scene.

*-- Byron Beynon  
(April Pyrokinecton)*

midwestern landscape  
patchwork quilt of green and gold  
best seen from above

-- *Jane Blanchard*  
(*November High Coupe*)

Chords rising through air  
Harmonica and guitar  
Naming human pains

-- *Sam Bockover*  
(*February High Coupe*)

### *Chattlebury Park*

A rising wind flicks ripples  
from the sun-flecked river.  
Kites float in the air  
and clouds laze far away.  
Grass fresh mown sends you off in time and space.  
The day beholds everything,  
wine and beads and smoke,  
love waits just around the corner,  
and happiness is just to live  
in Chattlebury Park.

A lady waits there;  
Mystery is her name.  
Straw hair flows down Venus' back  
she smiles with turquoise cat's eyes  
and her body flows like a river.  
Wine-sweet kisses make you drunk  
and lying within her arms  
you come to know eternity.  
You take her where the blossoms fall like rain  
in Chattlebury Park.

Tomorrow beams a million years away.  
Life says: live for now  
and feel the rush of this moment  
because all time stretches ahead  
and nothing seems vital  
in Chattlebury Park.

But phantoms rush from every corner  
and laugh inside the blushing ear:  
"Tomorrow is here and you've still got nothing done."  
The sky turns gray, the wine to sour lemonade,

and a dustdevil scatters the blossoms  
in Chattlebury Park.

*-- Andrew M. Bowen  
(September Pyrokinecton)*

the iridescent flash  
off a dark wing  
roadkill

-- *Alan S. Bridges*  
(*November High Coupe*)

*Participles of Speech*

midnight in the old saloon  
and we're tired and we're upset,  
the world's growing old  
and we're tired and we're upset.

wounded healer as shaman,  
the shade is the man,  
climb the valley,  
sink into the mountain

a good death rises  
from one spot of imperfection,  
blood-gates open:  
in the wind, the pull of backfire.

-- *Michael H. Brownstein*  
(*January Pyrokinecton*)

***Open Swing***

a wonderful sunny  
day spent indoors

trapped with the  
sick and children  
that just want to  
go out and play

they couldn't  
give two shits  
that grandma's  
on the verge of  
death

not when there's  
an open swing  
right outside  
the window

-- *J.J. Campbell*  
(*June Pyrokinecton*)

*Reflection*

when i pour  
water into the  
bowl for the  
oldest cat out  
here on the  
farm

she sees her  
reflection and  
gets ready to  
attack

the other day  
she actually  
threw a punch  
at the water

i patted her on  
the head and  
said good girl

that's the kind  
of self-hate i  
can admire

-- *J.J. Campbell*  
(*August Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Metamorphosis -- A Triptych*

*metamorphosis 1*

stretched butterfly seems to know too much  
about us as it pumps its wings,  
then tiptoes around the grass  
where family once met,  
can no longer grasp  
why it should cleave  
to the grub cave,  
long soft beats  
roil astray  
now.

*metamorphosis 2*

small tadpoles wriggling no knowledge  
of the miscreant tattered footfalls  
muddled on the bank dropped underneath,  
in slick form, cropped without water.

bull frogs taunt at the end of the rock-strewn  
ledge, recoil legs and bulging throats  
that rumble; I watch them destroy numb flies  
of decked love with the tips of their tongues.

*metamorphosis 3*

katydid mythology takes me into  
its folded wings, a panoply  
of leafy bits, remnant pupae  
loam flicks an acrid odor  
while new summer arrives  
at the top of the trees.

tsunami song engulfs last light,  
ever glib and dipping over

the deep night breeze, a wonder  
grip I want to see as  
well as hear; nature would rather  
simper under the cloying vine.

-- *Theresa A. Cancro*  
(*March Jellyfish Whispers*)

***Berceuse In Terra***

Each rumble of the 'quake  
holds in its grip last gasps,  
babies' first breaths, end tucked in  
at the beginning, a heart tremor,  
lost as it falls.

Blue sky catatonic soon folds  
with swells off the reef, isn't truly  
shaken. Cloud eyes dim, brighten  
when pressed to the sea,  
taken to cradle.

Long striations on the horizon  
mimic uneven lengths of energy  
fingers clawing thin crusts  
through scree, pumice,  
plied clay and rocking beds.

Earth crack elongated by sun's glare  
carries bright songs birds continue  
to warble, while it rends the selvage of  
sateen hours: in complacence,  
gaping wide, it exhales.

*-- Theresa A. Cancro  
(August Jellyfish Whispers)*

*Glower Scrapings*

Your malcontent mixes  
with ennui in the morning, just  
watch it cast mortal slices among  
minced words until we fall  
into the basin under the sink,  
bits of shaved lead, sexy-less  
yet still druzy, sparks beneath  
flannel, loose and shifty.

Shall we break the edges  
of that wilted rose, never notice  
where its soft petals land,  
slink away while walls crumble  
around us as a moth slips  
off chipped piano keys, those  
dirty teeth grinning at  
our final demise?

-- *Theresa A. Cancro*  
(*August Napalm and Novocain*)

*The Spoon in My Eye*

*for Cesar Vallejo*

*"I want to be free no matter what sacrifices I must make. In being free, I sometimes feel surrounded by the most frightening ridicule, like a child who mistakenly lifts his spoon up to his nose."*

*-- Cesar Vallejo  
Epistolario General*

The spoon in my eye  
now sparkling with sense, i reverse!  
daywards, weeping worlds  
with their shoulders  
that stutter into storms.  
My morning all mist  
raises these walls to my head.  
In this dull space i have been abolished.  
In this dull space i come back again.  
Unfreeing my debts i call out.  
Such sorrow to be human  
to beg in our being, cramped  
into thin air  
like a world blank.  
In this place words eat themselves  
with my hunger.  
Permanent, cyclical, my unruling  
now in its bones and syntheses.  
Here, dialogically, and written in economies,  
ripped to shreds and savaged by lovers  
our growing with abundance and  
convulsing in riots,  
here, erased in my vomiting and wounded  
by weather  
i throw the dog, my last friend in the temporary,

on my shoulders,  
and enter the rain.

Rooms fill in my beautiful abolition.  
"i have not been here," they say,  
(like the end of a vendetta, or a civil war.)  
"I have not seen him," she grieves, solemnly.  
(Her eyes black with the daylight.)  
In here life limps in wires and personalities.  
There is no one home to collect my longing.  
i am not, yet. In lungs filled to choking.  
In fingers whose funerals are wreathed  
in cigarette smoke.  
In armies denouncing the rights of man.  
In shovels heaping their criticism with friendliness.  
This spoon shakes my eye  
in its instinct to be born.  
My walls fall in their clocks and calendars.  
Such war!  
in my disarming, mouth disembodied,  
my meaning now matters!

This child is my little man, stunning in escapes.  
He eats, with solitude, the wind  
of my whistling.  
We are stilling the day to cement our dead.  
My debts pile up, in courtcases and laws.  
In waiting and endlessness.  
We are dying by radio, in newspapers,  
in secrets  
struggling  
to cross the universe of our feet,  
red and raw with their agitating.  
Our secret history and its life full of louts!  
i call out, to the spoon in my eye,  
let me go. Let me go!  
(in this war filled with skeletons).  
Only the dog

shows me his nose in my crippled friendships.  
i cannot eat the silence.  
i am shouting at my self, as large as an abattoir.  
In this way, with coffee and cigarette, with  
all the dead  
dancing on my tongue,  
and the living littering my life with their dying,  
i denounce my friends crippled with icepicks,  
i denounce all enemies with the price of my hate.

i see him born rolling in an unceasing complexity  
and in all my grim abolitions,  
my denouncements,  
and intrigues,  
in all this whipping weather, and  
the depth of my dog in depressions,  
in all these governments and juntas,  
and my funerals in bed,  
(in all these lithe women with their masks made up with air)  
and in this spring of a new year,  
and with the spoon in my eye, loosening its syllables,  
in all our fleeing, among reflections,  
in our history, their hunting, and our shapelessness,  
my daylight calls out its mourning:

now here is his incorporation in chestfulls,  
witness like a resurrection, all  
springtime to my easters,  
my exploding corpses. Both self, and you,  
and our othering.

*-- Seamas Carraher  
(October The Mind[less] Muse)*

***Plug into Confetti Ballroom***

cross the tropical galaxy threshold  
    my hair in knots  
you said you loved me  
but those were old threads  
the champagne   the mussels  
like birds are distant in flight  
    they melt into  
        moonlight static energy  
        on dusty interstate  
        searching for a new equinox

each curve that embraced  
    the morning splendor  
    on the back of your neck  
along the crest of the moving sea  
trembled and fluttered in distant breeze  
over fence   onto countryside road

where jasmine whispered and muse cried  
*these words were never hobbies*  
*or listless daydreams*  
*they're midnight blues*  
*with a million quivers of glitter dust*  
        *welcoming yesterday's page*  
        *the hidden story*  
*the smile's echo*

-- John Casquarelli  
*(April The Mind[less] Muse)*

***Light through***

a cracked window

All the things  
we once loved

lie broken  
on the floor;

only the bed  
still standing

-- *Alan Catlin*  
(*March Napalm and Novocain*)

The stillness of the bar after last call. All the bodies at rest. Some with their arms tilting back that last frothing pint. Others holding their hands about the glass, considering what lies inside: the dissolving head, the melting ice, the dregs, the hours lost.

Above the bar, tract lighting's reclusive glow amid dissipating clouds of cigarette smoke, blackening ashes spread across the dulled sheen of the bar top, so many times resurfaced by forgotten butts rolled from their glass moorings onto the wood. Or scratched by ashtrays sliding across scuffed surfaces pushed by a careless, drunken hand. Or gouged by broken bottles, glassware struck against wood in anger, jagged ends thrust in fury into an unsuspecting face, an equally as aggressive drinker, bearing his own weapon. Blood stains no longer visible beneath the daily wear and tear, the cursory repair.

But the impact scars remain.

The ghosts of wars fought, contained in the very stillness of the colored by pollutants, air, wrapping the drinkers tightly into a hypnotic state where dreaming, and living and drinking are all one frozen motion; a thought about to be blinked away into nothingness, drained away in the stainless wash sinks or the spill plates where the loose beer taps leak and the dead soldiers spit there, thick as mucous, remains.

Neon beer signs harsh bright lights reflected in the tarnished backbar mirrors, their unnatural red and green aura a glowing pit in the eyes of the drinkers, a flash of artificial life covered by a patina of not yet completely dry, tears. Gradually hardening, sealing the heat source, the heliotropic bouquet of plastic flowers tight against the unyielding surface where light meets tissue leaving only the bright afterimage of the killing tracer rounds inside.

The immovable clock hands pinned against the worn-to-almost-nothing, facing; glass front panel scratched and grime encrusted, shellacked with an impenetrable coating of nicotine; years of chemical infusions, a useless ornamentation at last call and beyond.

All the spaces between the sound of incessant, dripping faucets.  
The dull metallic ring of water on stainless steel, once shiny,  
now a collective of black mold, indeterminate growths: fading  
grey on a mound of black, on a living surface where the once  
rinsed glasses wait.

Hands collected in their individual suspensions: pressed against  
the dull shine of the smeared jukebox facing, liver spotted,  
ravaged, arthritic, not part of the selective process of sound but  
propping up the misused, diseased body of man in his formal,  
last decline. Others used for propping up the all-too-heavy head,  
paused in the futile signaling for what may never be delivered  
after the end, others reaching out in the night for what will never  
be there, still others grasping at the invisible fabric that separates  
them from what lies beyond, the evanescent place, the not to be  
avoided, compelling call that summons all to bars for the  
reckoning; to be fulfilled or denied in turn.

As the spirit wills.

As the silence fills stilled lives, the picture window facing the  
deserted street, the trees burdened with a weight of dark leaves  
and spread shadows, as the false dawn reconfigures the  
pavement and the glass and what lies within and without; a  
smear of light on glass disfigured by elective signs, the stillness  
more alive, more animated than the bar life trapped inside.

Last call an unnecessary formality, nothing is moving.

Nothing at all.

*-- Alan Catlin  
(April Pound of Flash)*

*The Fading*

The paint flakes away from the letters  
spelling Christ is the Answer  
along the tall white side on a trailer  
left in a yard beside the Interstate  
to stand before all weathers  
while traffic on its way to Tucson  
passes by. The message is paler  
at each journey taken; in winter  
when a chill runs inside the metal,  
and in summer when the heat  
burns right through it. Years ago  
the words stood out, their letters  
had crisp edges, and the black was blacker  
than any black before it. Nobody  
could pretend not to have seen it;  
there was no way around  
considering the possibility that here  
was the truth. Now the bold assertion  
has become shabby as graffiti  
after too much exposure  
to merciless light.

-- *David Chorlton*  
(*May Pyrokinjection*)

*A Rattlesnake in Summer*

In her place on warm concrete  
where a board has come loose  
from the house,  
a rattlesnake wound tight  
has come from the dark space  
to soak in morning sun.

    She's golden  
with brown angled all  
along her body, and her eyes  
look out from a current of scales  
when she shifts to accommodate  
the light, sliding

    against a metal tube  
lying on the ground to mark  
how close is safe  
for anyone approaching,  
until hunger leads her  
to the grass,

    and she stutters forward  
to where it slopes  
toward the road winding through  
the mountains that cut  
into the sky's every storm

    and settle back  
in place when the universe  
at night flows overhead  
after lightning has passed,  
    in the calm  
that follows a bite.

-- *David Chorlton*  
(*August Jellyfish Whispers*)

## *Memoir*

On a quiet evening in my upscale apartment in Tokyo, I start typing these words. I pour myself a cup of green tea, take off my suit, and without even understanding why, I sit down and begin to type something. Not sure what these words are at first, I suddenly realize that they are memories of my arrival in Nagasaki four years ago.

As thoughts work their way through tiny neurons, electrical pulses turn into movements and I find myself punching away at my laptop keys. I begin to see myself as I was: twenty-two, I might as well have been some kid on the verge of puberty—pimples, awkwardness, and all—except that my face had the ornery expression of a coal miner, or no, maybe a tired insurance salesman.

At the age of twenty-two, I was traveling across the world for reasons only half-understood, or not understood at all—my insurance salesman face took care not to register this fact too loudly. I was convinced that an English language school was bringing me there, some company, branded and marketed, active and thriving with power and money behind it, when really it was her.

Jet-lagged and hung-over, I came by bullet train to the steep slopes and regenerative soil of Nagasaki. Nagasaki—the not-birthplace of atomic warfare, but instead its brother, second cousin—was a radioactively peace-loving city. Though I was a foreigner, in a foreign land, I had not come alone. The vague presence of a disgruntled girl gnawed at the deep well where my heart had been. Not yet aware of the ghosts surrounding me or of the perils of my situation, I was compelled to think of it all in terms of a great adventure, like a Hemingway or Fitzgerald expatriate story. But she and the others were deceptively close, waiting for the romance to wear off.

In retrospect, I came to Nagasaki for the regenerative properties. The second atomic bomb blast so many years ago, which had swept up most of the city in a plutonium cloud, had made the city radioactively peace-loving. Reversing the usual cycle that turns victim into perpetrator, the

people who stepped from the rubble filled their hearts with a fervent devotion to peace in all its forms.

In my mind's eye I see them: wounded and dying, their lungs filled with ash and smoke. The ash sits there for some time, and when they exhale, miraculously, something akin to love comes out. From all those bitter seeds that usually grow hate, something emerged in Nagasaki's soil-spirit that could heal and grow hearts. Beyond scientific innovation, beyond administrative decision making, the power of a city to heal itself and others lay in something less tangible than the splitting of an atom. And there I was: awkward, tired, a nasty emptiness in my center that was filling itself with something unbearably sad and heavy.

I look on, and I see part of me, perhaps the part of me that is dying or perhaps the part that drinks and practices business analysis and dances with Apollo and Dionysus on the mountain top with the spirits. Or maybe it's the part of me that died the day I left her.

\*

In my Tokyo apartment, these observations pour out and exhaust me. I get up and stretch. Tea? What am I thinking? I need coffee. My mind wanders, I check my email, surf the Internet, look over some papers for work. As someone who has lived a great deal of his life in the pages of biography and autobiography, I know that self-revelation can be both the cure and the disease.

These memoirs. These bad news memoirs. They stand in the way of the serious work of beating back the past. Best to let the past lie, if it's willing. And the spirits that brought me to Nagasaki so many years ago? They were gone. They vanished the moment I left her. I should leave them where they rest. In the soil of half-

formed hearts, buried in history books, in the collective consciousness of the Japanese spirit—waiting for another historian-novelist to find.

-- *Daniel Clausen*  
(*April Pound of Flash*)

*Pieces*

I.

bonsai tree  
centered in mid-museum  
grows alone.

II.

main thoroughfare  
a tennis shoe equilateral  
to staring headlights

III.

a bit of brick  
embedded in tire tread  
and burqa now slightly moist.

IV.

a pepper switch  
behind the diploma  
Junior never displays

V.

jacaranda shits down its flowers  
onto my freshly pressed suit, cleaned car,  
I will chop it down with relish.

VI.

plywood tree house  
draped in flag  
confederate in nature.

-- *Mike Cluff*  
(*March Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Haiku Noir*

I did not want to  
burn the bridge, only remove  
a few of the planks

sometimes we have to  
throw ourselves off the cliff in  
order not to drown

lampblack raindrops fall  
from the nib of my fountain  
pen, a vein punctured

black widow spider  
mother protecting her young  
still, the hourglass drains

inhaling paint fumes  
the sigh of brush on canvas  
never been higher

-- *Kelly Cressio-Moeller*  
*(May High Coupe)*

*At Cheever*

time moves  
as slowly  
as paint  
peels from  
clapboards,  
as slowly  
as barn spiders  
dress monarchs  
in silken thread,  
as slowly  
as White Mountains  
shrug off ages past,  
so slowly  
I become  
a wood thrush  
at dusk

-- *Betsy Cullen*  
(*July Jellyfish Whispers*)

## Scratching

A quick swipe of fingernails—  
digging vigorously, like dogs on the scent,  
flaking skin from these legs, as if they could be sanded  
to perfection, rosy and ruby-studded, from imperfect marble.  
Blood erupts from volcanic scabs roused from dormancy  
and collects in red rings above ankle-length socks  
—at least the carpet won't get stained.

“Leave it alone” sounds simple, but my body's not my own.  
I inhabit, slave of impulse, a dog without a lampshade cuffed;  
I am choking on my long leash.

scratching at an itch...

and when the urge comes again, it's impossible to resist, it's inconceivable to  
resist—  
taking it in, sucking it down, shooting it up, shooting it out, letting it wash  
over you, seeking satisfaction and hiding in the flawless moment because it's  
easier than waiting for life

to brush against you like poison ivy, or alight upon you like a mosquito, or  
find a way into your body like *varicella zoster*

this is easy...

easier than applying creams and third-rate folk remedies

easier than wondering if there's something under the skin that needs to be  
torn out

or if some missing key component could tie it all together

and make it work

the way it was supposed to

A lucid pause turns cloudy  
and I crave clarity once more...

Looking down at bleeding scabs and welts that will not heal,  
my hand prepares to sin again. I think to myself, just before it takes me:  
there's so much more; this is only scratching the surface.

*-- Peter Dabbene  
(March Pyrokinecton)*

*Solo Flight*

In this valley of earth  
the wind  
comes with the same gift  
the same solitary wind  
that carries  
faith without speaking

with the same sightless purity  
that sees everything  
as it is  
that causes the same quiver of branches  
that have pulled their skins  
out of the soil and rocks

The wind's long horn blows  
into this valley's earthen jug  
and applies its wisdom  
as thin as  
this silver hair that holds the heat  
to my bones

this wisdom that assembles and  
stirs above me watching and  
me standing  
below  
in this valley as cold as heaven

where there has always been  
and even now a river's  
unsaid oath and lyrics  
where birds drop feathers  
where birds balance the wind  
even in sleep

even when nothing moves  
even when knowing that

each feather dropped  
can fly

alone

each one  
gifted with the wind's wisdom

-- *Dah*  
(*June Jellyfish Whispers*)

*The Song is Gone*

A 60's waltz  
Ephemeral as a dream,  
the song  
slipped into quietus  
The dancers gone too  
Their footprints washed away  
by the heartbeat of a lake, persistent,  
ever flowing onwards  
We danced our days into Lake Erie's currents

Rainbow seashells, driftwood sculptures  
Broken glass scrubbed gentle

Behind this rock, that  
water chants  
answered with a song of remembering  
Walking across the thin sands of seaweed and bloated fish  
to work our way into rocky waters  
And further  
past a broken pier  
Into a sunset horizon  
rising into twilight falling

Slivers of shadows creeping thin  
The soul of remembering  
Wrapped tight in tides of yesteryear

-- *Susan Dale*  
(*November Pyrokinjection*)

*A Fierce Winter Night*

The wind roars with polar bear breath  
And cuts with silver rapiers

Hoof beats thunder  
Across the mountain of night

Shuddering atop the pole  
A flag wildly furls  
Unfurls  
Wind swoops down the chimney  
And shouts imprecations to the fire  
In the stove\_\_\_\_  
blazing  
to greedily gobble up logs, cringing

In the basement the sub pump  
Gurgles and swallows

Scratching at the windows,  
Steel nails of sleets' white-bone fingers

Ah, we shiver inside, for we know  
we are held hostage  
by the blinding white wrath  
of a fierce winter night

-- *Susan Dale*  
(*January Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Us*

A barb wire  
hour  
around us  
A ragged tear  
Beyond repair  
Arrow piercing  
this bloodless vein

-- *Susan Dale*  
(*September Napalm and Novocain*)

*In a Video Today Two Small Deer Ran Across the Golden Gate  
Bridge Behind Them an Idling Line of Migratory Animals in Plexi-  
Glass Boxes*

when I was growing up we saw deer dart across country roads  
big brown eyes stealthy on pavement  
sometimes they didn't make it splattered windshield glass  
leaving meat inside the grill  
the whole car often crushed in around the body  
and there was trouble to get into if it wasn't hunting season  
so you quickly stuffed him in your trunk so as not to waste them  
washed the blood from your hood  
butchered him in your kitchen  
tables running red  
head staring sad eyes off the countertop  
hooves and soft hide a savage decoration

in season it was free reign and the hunters came by truck load  
dressed in their orange day glow vests their camouflage pants  
little pouches of hot rocks to warm bottoms and cases and cases of beer  
it is somewhat terrifying to wake up to armed men in your yard  
their hunger not for the venison, too gamey for suburban taste buds  
but for the kill the outsmarting of the spry animal  
the satisfaction of tying him to the front of their car  
prone legs splayed helpless  
I always felt compelled to cover them  
close eyes untie roped legs  
lay him buck or her doe down with dignity  
something those drunk and murderous bastards never had.

*-- Cassandra Dallett  
(October Pyrokinjection)*

*All Souls' Day*

1.

Here I shall lay a wreath  
of sugar skulls  
in hopes that a prayer can  
release my dead.

The candle flame lunges back and forth  
to a music only heard  
between the breaths of the living.

In my quiet making,  
the shrine rises up out of needful things  
that miss their place in a hand  
as a (dare I say this word:) possession.

Offerings of wine, of smoke, of favorites.  
The morsels I forego  
on this day of my dead.

How do I begin to say the words  
of the tiniest remembrances  
I have of them?  
The shard that cannot  
remake a complete image.

2.

Yes, I too have a shimmery thing  
within me, a body of water,  
a fog that rolls in each morning  
and out each afternoon—a thing I call my soul.

And who do I believe would pray for it  
when I won't? Who do I think will  
bother an offering on its behalf?

It will go back to the collective pool  
of eternal waiting. Eventually forgetting  
everything for the repetitive motion  
of a ripple.

3.

There is no one way to build an altar, like the many dead, each  
remains a life that was served individually. The ornate cloth  
of one altar attracts its intended while repulsing others. Each  
spirit makes its way. The candled pumpkin and marigold light  
the way. We summon these dead to us to embrace. Here all  
the words that bond one person to the next are offered on the  
altar. What was shared is reconnected again.

I do not know what happens after life. It does not even matter  
what I believe or cannot. The dead know but stay  
silent. Good for them. I take this day to remember my dead  
and thank them.

4.

If the naked soul travels  
then let them see what is offered.

It is in their memory that I am here.

I leave all my words on the altar  
beneath those things that made a life so memorable.

*-- J.P. Dancing Bear  
(June Pyrokinecton)*

***Caked***

*I just ate my feelings. They were equal to a sizable portion of cheesecake.*

-- Dyana Bagby

What I saw in the cake was the silver reflection  
the cold eye I hate the most about myself

calculating the cut and then adjusting for a selfish portion  
that would slide down and disappear

like a collapsed star in my gut—  
eventually pulling in everything, but not

at first, and not for a long time...  
thousands of slices later, in fact.

All the while whatever was there that I saw  
within myself, real or imagined, regenerated—

like something fresh from hell's oven.  
I rode the pastry cart like one of the four horsemen.

Each new sweetness a misery, a pang,  
a feeling I had forgotten, refused, denied;

until something escaped the gravity well within me,  
something sparking, alive, and angry,

the little imp of self-improvement,  
ready to phoenix me, right after I blazed down to ashes.

-- *J.P. Dancing Bear*  
(*June Pyrokinecton*)

*The Sunflower Chronicles (A Triptych)*

*Straphangers*

Sunflowers cram into the morning bus,  
they unfold yellow newspapers  
and droop their heads reading over  
each other's shoulder.

*Sunflowers*

They crowd about me  
as I open to the Gospel,  
their yellow heads  
wait for that moment  
when Jesus speaks  
and only as they can,  
bow their heads  
in prolonged adoration.

*The Countenance of a Sunflower*

She leans towards the Virgin Mary  
her yellow Stole swept back,  
two Queens in an earthly garden,  
one hastening to the other  
in a peaceful acquiescence to radiance.

-- William G. Davies, Jr.  
(*September Jellyfish Whispers*)

The flying flowers—  
fairies of reality—  
ignored as insects.

-- *Pijush Kanti Deb*  
(*January High Coupe*)

*Wednesday Morning #137*

Then it wasn't about above  
or below, it was about forward  
& stasis, which consumes us.

to  
be alone with you

-- *Darren C. Demaree*  
(*May Pyrokinecton*)

*We Are Arrows #195*

Segmented  
fruit, we have  
arrived in  
stages, we  
have entered  
with a  
piercing  
action,  
without sound,  
without regret  
for the  
minimalist  
thwack of our  
descent.

    We have  
no existence  
until we  
acknowledge  
the width of  
our own  
shoulders.

    We have  
no existence  
until we  
reassemble the  
great path  
that crumpled  
to deliver us.

    We are  
heart-  
stopping, as  
in our hearts  
can stop at  
any moment,  
and this is  
why we are so

desperate to  
prove that we  
have existed  
at all.

If you  
trip near the  
edge of this  
problem, shed  
your weight,  
and it could  
be flight you  
have found.

-- *Darren C. Demaree*  
(*December The Mind[less] Muse*)

*Fences Do Not Mend Each Other*

Time  
said, sea needs  
you, immediate light  
or curved  
word  
to break like bread  
in the insular atmosphere.  
Lend me quarters-  
spare me politics,  
specify on the door  
and your body  
if I wasn't suppose to enter.

-- *James Diaz*  
(*March Pyrokinecton*)

*Mountain Never in the Gutter Belly*

There  
you are  
spread like an animal  
small talk

composition of seriousness  
below the primal want

wed to painting  
mother mouth  
mourning in a time of laughter

day or sea  
lit from the inner flower  
bowing to lover  
in Arabic  
proximity

the nearness  
of the invisible dead  
falling asleep under  
the door.

Here; I threw myself-  
I took the Occident  
under my tongue  
and bowled out the earth  
from which the wound name  
lived  
pouring blessing  
into the honey lung of hell.

Eye-

the double olive

pin prick

present  
under a skirt  
where the law cracks

to pieces  
inside you.

*-- James Diaz  
(October The Mind[less] Muse)*

*I Never Told Anyone About That Trip to Serendipity*

I was seven, and thought my father and I were going into the city for a special date. I'd gotten dressed up and had wanted only to order a fruit tart because it looked delicate and grown up inside the glass case. My father pushed for the hot fudge sundae, perhaps wanting something he knew would take me a long time to finish.

He started up with his ums and ahs when I was just a few bites in, and as he continued talking I began shoveling larger and larger bites into my mouth, barely stopping to taste the ice cream or the chocolate sauce, feeling only the sticky film on my hand and the end of my spoon and around my mouth.

When he finished talking, finally, we both sat staring at the cherry I'd left in the bowl, so red it was almost obscene, though that couldn't have been what I thought at the time. He asked me then if I was going to eat it, as though it had been any other day and any other dessert and I leaned over and threw up beside the table. My vomit looked like some lunatic's idea of happiness, just like my parents' marriage.

-- *Melissa Duclos*  
*(June Pound of Flash)*

### *Inventory*

We have set aside too many things  
As if supply and demand had little  
To do with everyday use, as if our  
Demands could ever be satisfied  
As if supply was the easy answer  
We bought and brought, selected  
And collected, this and that and yet  
More to store away, let's just say  
Until today, our day of reckoning  
Of tabulating, getting the measure  
Of our time spent, of our hoarding;

Here we have several shelves of  
Canned goods, without opposing  
Selves of canned evils, an obvious  
Metaphysical flaw, a balance lacking  
Like this explains the unread books  
The recordings and tapes no one  
Plays, like the tree falling way out  
Somewhere with no one to hear it  
Fall or call, and over here we have  
Paper products, all useful things  
Waiting us out, enough tissues to  
Sneeze at, to wipe tears and noses  
Soothe and suffer, paper plates and  
Plastic cups, enough plastic knives  
And forks to feed the troops, and  
There are toys and games minus any  
Children or anyone playful enough  
Any more to find the sense in them;

There are cobwebs enough here too  
And dust, as parts of our collection  
Reminders of where all this is going  
This supply and demand, our certainty  
Our caution, our planning, inventory

Surrounded by cobwebs, turning to  
Dust, as we sit here counting it all.

-- *J.K. Durick*  
(*August Pyrokinecton*)

***When He Leaves You***

I.

When he leaves you, he will say, "It's not you, it's me." He will say it is all his fault. He will say he has changed, there's nothing you can do, things are not the same anymore. He will say he knows it hurts you now but this will make you happy later.

(You will say, out loud, "Can we please just talk about this?")

He will say his mind is made up.  
He will say he still loves you. He  
will say I hope we can still be  
friends.

II.

When he leaves you, he will say, "Of course it's you, you crazy bitch!" He will say it is all your fault. He will say you changed. He will say you are not the girl he married.

(You will say, to yourself, "Well, no. Mostly because I am no longer a girl.")

He will say none of his friends ever liked you. He will say you were a mistake. He will say he doesn't love you, not anymore.

He will say he is keeping the television, by the way.

He will say don't call me. He will say I don't want to see you again.

Ever.

III.

When he leaves you, he will say nothing. No explanation, no reason why.

When you scream and cry and thrash on the ground shouting, "Just talk to me!" he will only blink and say, "I don't know what you want me to say." He will be gone by the time you come home from the grocery store, arms loaded with the apple juice and Little Debbie snacks and rack of lamb you know he loves. He will leave you in the bed that smells like him, alone in a hurricane with the wind rattling the windows and a leak sprung overhead.

-- *Liz Egan*  
(*October Napalm and Novocain*)

***Woods (2)***

*after the painting by Gerhard Richter*

In the woods a lexicon's  
concentric rings  
speak ancient dialects

of seasons come and gone  
broken promises  
civilizations' rise and fall

liaisons in the shade  
of twisted limbs  
names carved in weathered bark

of the forgiven and unforgiving  
confessions and lies  
the birth and death of gods

straining to the light  
trees endure, survive  
to teach the earth its past.

*-- Neil Ellman  
(December Jellyfish Whispers)*

**Survey**

" . . . *hell doesn't want you,*  
*and heaven is too full . . .*"

-- Tom Waits  
*"Earth Died Screaming"*

And the survey of the selected  
says there is no justice for  
the trafficker, no sufficient  
retribution for the salesman  
of a seven-year-old's still-forming  
sex, just a businessman, he'll  
claim, matching service to clientele,  
finding a market and making it known.

The survey of the selected offered  
suggestions of the second bunk  
in a rapists quarters, of incarceration  
and the burial of an ocean-bound  
key, of torture and colonization  
and the chance to prey on one  
another, of a metal chair and  
a slowly flipped switch.

The survey of the selected fell  
silent *en masse* with a thoughtful  
pause before a voice rose over  
here and a murmur issued from  
somewhere there, words measured  
for weight and handled with care  
as I asked with the certainty  
of genetic disease if hell, in  
all its permutations, could be too  
good for such an enterprising soul,

the punishment grotesque enough  
for the incomprehensible crime.

-- *Eric Evans*  
(*August Pyrokinecton*)

***Bad Apple***

he's a bad apple.  
the kind you hope kills himself,  
saves you the trouble.

says there's a gun in  
the garage, but won't say where.  
in clutter it hides.

she sees she was blind.  
now that it's too late, two young  
boys to feed and clothe.

protection order?  
get real. if he wants you, he'll  
find you, anyway.

at your mother's house.  
your girlfriend's. some cheap motel.  
there's no money left.

he's ruined your credit.  
destroyed your self-esteem. now  
you can only wait.

he's a bad apple.  
the kind you hope kills himself,  
before he kills you.

*-- Alexis Rhone Fancher  
(April High Coupe)*

### *Mental Illness*

Ahh . . .  
I love the idea of  
Reading.  
The author.  
I've only read half of  
*The Bell Jar*, but yet  
I love Sylvia Plath.  
The more you read of someone  
The less you can romanticize about them;  
Except for Bud Light & Bukowski,  
I'd rather keep their words inked to page.

And editor said, "It would be more interesting to read about  
the  
Origin of, not the present state of,  
Suicidal depression."  
Well . . .  
I'd like to understand the root of it  
Too.  
But until you pick apart and  
Buy my beauties from me,  
I cannot fund such analysis.

#

How narcissistic is mental illness . . .  
Hours of therapy, premium drugs, and  
Thousands to find out  
How badly Mother & Father  
Damaged you. While there are  
Beaten prostitutes, like my sister Desiree.  
Single alcoholic mothers, like my sister Marie.

#

And it's amazing what the mind is capable of  
How much it will repress.  
Freud said our conscious mind is like the  
Tip of an iceberg. While the subconscious mind is  
The other 80%, buried deep down  
And it is the forgotten memories which haunt,  
Causing anxiety daily, without you knowing.  
And that's what my family is.  
Knowing your own sister sucks dick, gets beaten by pimps in  
order to  
Smoke crack &  
Shoot dope in order to  
Escape her own life, disables mine  
Subconsciously. Thousands I must spend on my  
Pompous mind just to feel real, while there are  
Starving children and  
Pretty girls on tv telling me  
I should donate to save the crying animals as well,  
Well, 10/10 I will choose me because  
I cannot control the kittens or the whores  
My family is blood but the river steadily streams,  
Fleeting.  
Hopefully I can fix me before I  
Implode.

-- *Daniel N. Flanagan*  
(*February Pyrokinecton*)

*Everyone Loves a Motorcycle*

Everyone loves a motorcycle,  
and here it was  
cleaned and polished  
and set to the curb,  
the *for sale* sign staked  
into the lawn  
with firing squad finality,  
and the neighbourhood kids came  
from all around;  
the boys climbing on  
and playing the outlaw,  
the starry-eyed girls  
dreaming of something their fathers  
wouldn't like -  
60 years after Brando,  
*the Wild One*  
in black and white -  
this motorbike for sale  
in a world  
long sold away;  
the silver swanlike handlebars  
like some strange chrome god  
straight out of  
Egypt.

-- *Ryan Quinn Flanagan*  
(*February Pyrokinecton*)

## *Perfume*

I will make a box.  
A box that comes from the dirt,  
that is molded by crackling frost and parching sun  
and that smells of wet soil after rain.

I will make my box from  
the bark of Eucalyptus  
with a lid of quilted hosta.  
It will be lined with satin magnolia  
and have hinges of antirrhinum.

I will embellish my box with  
the eye of viola  
the tooth of sumach  
the claw of pyracantha and  
the tongue of digitalis

I will put in my box  
a drop of the blood of euphorbia  
the heartbeat of helianthus  
the sigh of gypsophila and  
the breath of Daphne

I will keep the box in a dark and cool place  
for several weeks until  
it rots and withers away  
And then I shall press it between my hands  
until the sap runs  
and from this liquid  
I will make a perfume that only I understand.

-- *Sarah Flint*  
(*November Jellyfish Whispers*)

***The Book***

He's a closed book.  
A hard back cover of control  
Hides his story  
Until a grin flashes across his face  
Like lightening  
And I hear the pages rustle.  
A deep salty kiss lets me taste  
The text with my tongue.  
Later  
In the sweet sweat of bed sheets  
I gently prise open the cover and  
Start to unstick the pages  
His gift:  
He lies wide open for me to read.  
But it's a short story:  
I hear the slap of the book closing  
Before I reach the end.

*-- Sarah Flint  
(February Napalm and Novocain)*

*Fun and Prophet*

The linear  
met retrospective entities  
previously hidden

where the chiseled glyph curves

Cassandra  
her message a twisting  
inventory

meaning shifts its moment

a vacuum away  
from tiding the breath events  
cresting over

the wrath of uncomprehending seas

-- *Vernon Frazer*  
(*February Pyrokinecton*)

*All That Remains*

In startling desiccation,  
    he lies  
    beneath a pink peony  
in my garden,  
    no smell of death,  
    no weight in my hands,  
    only bones  
and feathers,  
black starling wings  
    extended stiffly,  
    dark feet  
clasping emptiness,  
    beak crookedly agape  
from the impact  
    that broke his neck.

Above him,  
    the window  
    to my studio,  
cruel cause  
    of a simple error,  
real reason  
    to question  
    why we create  
such fatal illusions,  
    how man fits  
in this world.

-- *Patricia L. Goodman*  
*(April Jellyfish Whispers)*

*When Winter Stayed*

The geese look  
like decoys, asleep  
on the ice, not praying,  
yet all facing west. You say  
it is because  
they are heading the wind.  
I have other questions,  
but I watch a hawk  
land in a bare maple,  
and when I turn  
you are gone.

-- *Patricia L. Goodman*  
(*April Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Bird I Never Saw in Daylight*

It hit the windshield, changed parabola  
of flight.            You braked the car,  
ran back.

          Great Horned Owl broken  
in the ditch. Quite dead.

How gently you cradled it  
to the trunk. How many lambs like ours

disappeared to its talons.

          Such a beauty,  
you said, folding it in plastic;  
placed it in the freezer, prepared  
to ship to the museum.

          Now our windshield  
begins its fine-calligraphy fault-  
line, a glass

trajectory of dawn-dim into bright.  
          Inside the Hall of Ornithology

          Owl stares down  
from its beaked mask,  
          fixed forever-eyes, its voided  
breast and fluted bones  
          immobilized in flight.

          -- *Taylor Graham*  
          (*July Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Wild*

Mini-cougar in domestic guise,  
the cat assumes his Crescent Moon pose,

a motionless dance. You hardly notice  
how he segues into Extended Sphinx:

claws retracted, energy uncharted. Never  
mistake it for giving up the more than possible,

though he radiates indifference, a mime  
of Consciousness Exhaust. Now

the dog, who's journeyed farther with you  
from the wild, lies down facing him.

Palms reaching. Dog touches finger-tips  
with Cat. Silence gaze-to-gaze.

Do you dare lie down with them,  
speak to them as friends--

you with your load of expectations  
in a language they don't share?

-- *Taylor Graham*  
(*November The Mind[less] Muse*)

*Complete, but*

to no avail. Sitting as a new house sits  
on its lot, needing occupants.  
Sewer sludge, soiled napkins, anthills  
too late underfoot. Held up by restlessness  
in the many gardens of Mount Sisyphus, heave-hoe  
to the point of rudimentary madness.  
Windows I look through, birch trees I stop at  
to collect nuances, rest like the sparrow in hopeful  
camouflage, wearing myself down with unrealizable dreams.

If I had claimed myself a calling as a chaplain -  
ritualized pacing in university halls, my arm  
around youth, accompanying my affection  
with a spiritual smile, then I would have  
the certainty of some kind of career,  
not be a carved body on fire, totem  
of tripwires and aftershocks.

If I was a young starling neck deep in uncut grass,  
pecking at exposed roots, I would be  
sky, downspout, bush, tip of a cross on a steeple,  
cured of isolation, taking flight and landing when I choose  
and  
I would choose a fenced-in backyard  
where a boy's imagination owns the splintered bench, weeds  
and a dug-up secret hole. I would watch that boy plot his  
course  
and leap, knowing no separation,  
I would spread, sing  
and fold.

-- Allison Grayhurst  
(February Pyrokinecton)

*Regarding the Hawk*

The hawk plunges  
into the crowd at the bird feeder,  
grabs a mourning dove  
in a wild flurry of feather and blood.

It had been waiting for just this moment:  
the convergence of  
my generosity with seed,  
the hunger of the small birds,  
the even greater hunger of the raptor.

I watch the hawk lift off,  
the flapping gray bird in its talons,  
shifting to another gear for uplift,  
then settling on a wind draft  
to calm its racing blood,  
before alighting on the top  
of a telephone pole,  
to devour its catch  
in full view of the neighborhood.

How can this sight not stay with me,  
aiding and abetting death as I do.

The hawk will return to its aerie in the high oaks,  
sparrows, finches, retreat to their nests in the thick brush.  
mourning doves batten down in their loose bed  
of leaves and twigs in forks of maples.

And I will fill the empty feeders, pick up the feathers,  
hose away the stains.  
That's as close to nature as I get.

-- *John Grey*  
(*April Jellyfish Whispers*)

*I Have My Own Importance to Attend to*

I break the plane of your surface,  
as my lips on your lips,  
holy upon holy,  
moon, light, couch, zipper--  
this will have ramifications  
like world war three starting.

Look at that guy in the photograph.  
Your father is it?  
He most certainly would not . . .  
He would not try to . . .  
He would not say or do anything.

But I'm tired of living like  
I'm the only one that matters,  
the only one loving  
at any given time.

Responsibility . . . how about a rain check?

I should drown myself,  
leave it to a morgue attendant  
to identify this man--  
not your fingers,  
not your yearning.  
Lots of water in the lungs  
and let's let see if I take  
all feelings down with me.

Yes, sex is what the stars  
would be doing if they weren't stars.  
And I do twinkle and shine a lot.

Outside, there's traffic,  
people watering their gardens—  
bad choices on their part.

They leave it all up to me.

Well, of course, you have a say,  
a role, in this.  
What I mean is,  
who's writing this poem?  
me or you?

*-- John Grey  
(November Napalm and Novocain)*

*Television*

No one on television is ever going to live  
My life for me--and it is both  
Disgusting and disappointing  
That it took so long for me  
To figure this out.

*Notate bene*, you people of the cold Pacific:  
I have been repeatedly woken up  
By all sorts of irritating  
Noises: rusting buses idle interminably  
Outside my apartment in Little India;  
Nearly ask and my laundry room  
Window, a thin woman with brown, rotting  
Teeth slurpily sucks cocks in the alleyway; George  
Bowering angrily writes shitty poems  
In rathole that passes for Kelowna;  
My downstairs neighbors actually stay  
Drunk for weeks on end. The guy who got  
Evicted rather than break  
Up with his girlfriend, returns  
Every other Friday to sell me  
Illegally-caught sockeye  
For five bucks a fish. Virtually worthless  
Knowledge continuously washes  
Down on me like fire. It no longer  
As much as stings and I miss  
That sting in much the same  
Manner that I miss the cold  
Ocean and all those dank  
Mats of stinking cedar needles.

If Floyd showed up, by God,  
I would wave away the flies

And buy a fish--the Crown  
Be damned.

-- *Carl James Grindley*  
(*August Pyrokinecton*)

### *Weapons*

Sterile weapons, dead and yoked  
To a horsey mist of regret: this poem is a meat.  
Missile, one you cannot possibly  
Recall--recall, by the way, meaning  
That a) you cannot take any of it  
Back and b) in a few years, you will  
Not remember any of it, even  
If you wanted.

Life is a salad of doubt  
And fate and as everyone grows old  
And misshapen, a whole  
Bunch of ruthlessly random  
Maladies conspire  
To crop the edges away  
Until everyone is either content with  
Everyone else or too miserable  
And too drunk to care.

No amount of arugula is ever  
Going to change  
Anything. *Frisee avec lardoons* is ultimately  
Pointless with or  
Without Southern Ontario *chevre*.

Ballcocks and razorblades and  
Two young people screwing  
Every single chance they get--  
If there is more to life than that  
You are going to have to work much  
Much harder than I did and even if you  
Do, you are never going to convince me  
That I should care.

-- *Carl James Grindley*  
(*August Pyrokinecton*)

*Split*

The headboard  
has a crack in it, five inches  
from the top, nine inches across.

I've no idea  
how it happened, nor  
any clue how long it's been there.

When the movers  
arrive to pack up the house,  
one of them notices the fissure

in the marital bed,  
asking how long it's  
been damaged in that way.

Presumptuous,  
I'd say, though I'm  
sure he means no harm.

I shrug  
and say I've no idea  
when the split first occurred,

but it's  
clearly grown  
to unbearable dimensions.

I pack the rest  
of my things, then call  
the Salvation Army to pick up the bed.

-- *Cristine A. Gruber*  
(*October Napalm and Novocain*)

Bright constellations  
form a nocturnal map  
lead the cat back home

-- *Cristine A. Gruber*  
(*October High Coupe*)

*Standing Room Only*

Like a scene from a hospital show from the 90s, I stand in the hallway, one hand on the wall, fingers splayed, not so much to hold myself up, as much as to simply have someplace to put them, something to do with my quivering digits, the other trembling set wrapped firmly around my waist. I'm polite as you give me the news, nodding slowly, my eyes never leaving your face, focused on your mouth, possibly believing if I stare hard enough, I'll be able to rearrange the words spilling forth, thus altering the news, changing the course of the landscape. You apologize more than once for the lack of privacy as you tell me the MRI shows an undetermined mass at the base of my brain. I think I ask you for a more precise explanation of what I'm supposed to do with that information, but the effects of the morphine rushing through my system make me question whether I speak at all, or merely hear the words inside my head, false niceties alongside vicious curses I'd only heard in movies I'd never admit to watching. Tears well up, but not for me. Surely, they're nothing more than tears of empathy for the look of pain on your troubled face as you graciously conclude by telling me it will be another three hours before the Attending on Duty will have the time to get to my chart, review my paperwork, and find me a bloody room.

-- *Cristine A. Gruber*  
(*September Pound of Flash*)

*Psyche*

Fear is septic  
and reeks of something evil. Sharp  
rusty claws scratch in the night.  
Joy and despair quite  
fine and sweet.  
About a lonely peak.  
Love is fond in the tales  
on a white knight's shield.  
Pride has thin and  
lovely feathers. Hate is  
incessant inferno almost ready  
to die. The seeds  
of righteous anger are easily poisoned;  
a snake oil salesman  
rapist and murderer. Uncle  
Sam meat packing quickly. A  
hell-fire missile, two  
degrees, a brown family  
sees the cup empty, ignorant  
the office worker sits  
quietly, in his cell, tired.  
His co-worker hidden  
behind a luminescent screen  
a message pops up again and again  
irritating, infuriating. Guilt  
is the strongest, hate is  
most torrid, apathy  
is man's poison of choice.

-- *Ahab Hamza*  
(*November Pyrokinecton*)

### *Driving through Utah*

Cracks and wrinkles in blue skin  
sliver across the desert sky  
like streaks of clouds.  
The left and right horizons  
are fractured jaw lines and coffee stained teeth.  
The desert seems flat  
but beyond the asphalt  
lumps of sand spotted with tufts of grass  
rise and fall: the moles and pores  
of Utah's skin. Then a butte  
and ridges, a wall  
like shards of dark glass slicing into a brown back  
bent forward at the waist from hard labor.

The acrid air abrades even human skin.  
Funnels of wind  
rise and dissipate  
in the distance: rust red,  
burnt orange sand and gravel. The turn  
to Moab and the National Park  
promises fossilized dunes, like layers of stretch marks  
and cellulite across the belly,  
and geologic fractures,  
beauty framing the blue,  
leaking sky and tears of sunlight  
between round windows and arches  
of granite and sandstone,

formations like ogres, like trolls,  
like abstract sculptures and sand paintings  
defying the world's evil spirits,  
to balance the spirits  
of breathing creatures.  
Tourists' car radios, cameras,  
caravans of RV's and plastic water bottles  
leak the world into this space,

a hot wind billowing out of the horizon,  
a haze that distorts the landscape  
into photos and family vacations.

We are all guilty of anthropomorphism.  
The arches continue to stretch and lean  
despite the humans hiking and posing around them.  
Snakes, lizards and scorpions, ravens  
rabbits, yucca, pinion pines, prickly pear cactus,  
live despite us. The sands burn and cool, shift  
and erode, despite us.  
The asphalt road circles back to the entrance of the park.  
The desert and mountains  
stretch and streak and wind and drop and rise  
despite us.

*-- Patricia Hanahoe-Dosch  
(September Jellyfish Whispers)*

## *Silence*

We lay together  
I twined around you like ivy on oak.  
Warm and dark  
a soft blanket of silence  
comforted and carried us  
together into a single dream.

*Morning came  
dreams dissolved.  
Light shone in the space  
between you and my idea of you.*

We faced each other  
you a wall against which  
I flung myself.  
Silence cold and gray  
froze and shattered  
strewn the ground with  
fractured passion.

*no I wish no I can't  
no I meant no I should  
no but you no you wouldn't  
no you didn't no you never*

*Shards of us pierced my soul  
desire catalyzed memory  
memory blurred and grew  
soft at the edges.*

I sit alone in silence.  
Our last words hang  
in the empty air.  
I breathe them in

like toxic fog  
and my heart  
implodes.

-- *Margery Hauser*  
(*October Napalm and Novocain*)

### *The Chicken Dance*

When it came down to it, I slept with him because Mom made a dead chicken dance. She hefted it up under its wings as if presenting a child. A trail of pink slime dripped on the counter as it kicked and shimmied its way across. A dead thing, a used-up thing, a pitiable thing, but for two minutes it danced and soaked up a little admiration.

I met him at the park, behind a line of shrubs, when my friends and I shared a single cigarette I'd stolen from Mom. I tried to smoke the one he gave me without coughing as he played with the strap of my dress. His skin cracked over his knuckles, like a road map of a hard life. His hair had started to recede, and lines creased the corners of his lips. The years that sat behind his eyes doubled my own, but the way he watched me made me forget to care.

He drove me to the end of a dirt road. I stared at the frayed hem of my dress, pulling at a wayward thread when I couldn't bring myself to look at him. The shadows cast by the light of the dashboard made his face dangerous. The anticipation eluded me as it always had. Shame scrubbed away any excitement, leaving me covered in welts like road rash.

The weight of the night smothered me like his body did. His calloused hands felt rough and his shadow of a beard scratched my neck. I felt no pleasure, and swallowed down the complaints and refusals that always crawled up my throat like bile. Instead, I closed my eyes and clung to his shoulders as he made me dance, a dead and used up and pitiable thing soaking up a little admiration.

-- Heather Heyns  
(*December Pound of Flash*)

## *Appellation*

### I. In June I Changed My Name

It happened during my wedding, right at the very end,  
when I was being kissed.

Then the two of us and our nine grandchildren  
clambered and scrambled

into the wagon and my son started the tractor,  
drove us by river and cove.

After eating cake we swam and sailed  
all sunny afternoon.

It's so different this second time – different river, wagon, us.

### II. Switchbacks

For our honeymoon we're climbing a mountain—  
me with a pacemaker, him

arthritic knees. It's his first crack  
at this crest, my third,

each time lugging a different  
name. At our trailhead

the forest is lovely, leafy. But  
why didn't we check

the forecast, memorize the maps, why did we choose  
this track of many stones? Midway,

I'm thinking we're drinking  
too much too quickly from our canteen; late,

we argue but cannot resolve:  
why is it all so steep?

### III. Precaution at the DMV

This is the third name I've driven  
and it feels

like I'm grinding my gears.  
After the cake and tossing

of flowers, it only took a week  
for our first fight, "minor tiff"

his terminology, though I asked myself  
just what my name is anyway.

First time around I threw my birthname  
out without a second glance, rubbernecked

the new one like grass  
on the far side of a fence.

This time maybe I should stow that old friend  
in the glove compartment—

keep it close  
just in case.

-- *Wendy Elizabeth Ingersoll*  
*(April Pyrokinecton)*



*Chinese Take-Away Sky*

Muttering something from Shakespeare,  
perhaps "Woe, alas, time calls upon us!"  
the nuthatch pokes sunflower seeds  
into a cranny of the psychiatrist's palm.

The shrink asks him again how many followers  
he has on Twitter...

--Over a million, he replies,  
including the Boston symphony Orchestra.

--and how does that make you..

--feel?

\_ I don't feel, Doc, I fly..

The psychiatrist makes a cage with her fingers,  
and starts over:

--in our last session you were checking the pulse  
of a Hawthorne  
in the 12 thousand block of Martinazzi Avenue..

--that's right.

--tell me again exactly what happened or did not happen.

-- well, Doc, there were these two hearts  
carved into the bark, old hearts,  
stuffed with micro jitter and boneless parades,  
twerking mites smarter than Pascal,  
but unintentionally funny like Sid Caesar..

--and how does that make you.

But the nuthatch had hidden himself  
in a Bonsai tree  
on the left edge of her enormous desk.

When his hour is up  
the psychiatrist takes a carton of Chinese takeaway sky  
out of her backpack  
and stares at the sun inside.

-- *Bill Jansen*  
(*March The Mind[less] Muse*)

*Ambulance Chaser*

bypass the heart attack  
and don't go out  
in that broad stroke  
of genius  
known as  
sleeping through  
your own death  
instead go out  
surrounded by  
jugglers who go  
for your jugular  
or go out  
on a limb  
limber as a gymnast  
until the branch  
breaks then  
fall with the  
autumn leaves  
and land with a thud  
on the auburn crud  
or better yet  
lose a game  
of strip poker  
slash  
Russian roulette  
and die in a  
naked  
bloody  
Peckinpah  
pirouette  
then writhe  
on the floor  
only to extinguish  
your existential  
anguish  
with one

silver  
bullet more

-- *Ivan Jenson*  
(*September Pyrokinecton*)

*Cut Grass in Snow*

All daylong  
night is my storm lantern.  
I carry it into the farmland  
cutting into my harvest emotions  
covered by snow  
edge them in half  
in front of me  
see me open, bleeding.  
I am seed like a small orange  
pit me out and devour me  
spit pulp and seed  
I step on jagged edges  
of my feelings, sense my pain  
cut stretched skin with glass shavings  
torture under toes hurt bad with pain.  
Pitch that stuff with dark  
black top tar if it makes  
you feel relief.  
Do not laugh at me, a circus clown down,  
I am 66; my dimples show smiles, ripples, age.  
This day is a lawn mower  
even in Canadian December.  
Machinery is shackled-up, covered.  
I plow beneath the white surface  
cut rotten leaves beneath settled snow.  
The aggravation,  
cultivation nonsense hell with my runny nose.  
In spring, the grass never pops up right.  
All day, night is my storm lantern.

-- *Michael Lee Johnson*  
(*February Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Untitled I Walk*

Untitled I walk  
through life  
with a shrink  
from Yugoslavia,  
who is as large as Bigfoot.  
With a novel in one hand,  
and shaking his fingers at me  
with the other,  
he wants to control me with a shovel,  
tie me in knot balls, emotional twisters,  
and squeeze the emotional pages  
out of my life like a twisted sponge.  
I retaliate, control him back,  
wage war in a vicarious cycle  
squeeze his testicles like electrical wires  
inside my mind's eye,  
cut his tongue with razors,  
dull his clinical words.  
Play his game, only better.  
He picks up the play phone,  
threatens to call the police,  
leashing me in my corner  
like a trapped dog  
forces me to bark  
into submission  
like a beagle basset bitch.  
He treats me with word babble.  
I tell him he is a damn Ukrainian idiot.  
Peeved off I race  
to the parking lot, head to the bushes,  
like a blue racer snake threatened,  
hop bunny rabbit into my S-10  
Chevy pick-up truck,  
memo pad in hand,  
scribbling ruminating notes

I surrender naked until my next prescription,  
untitled I walk.

*-- Michael Lee Johnson  
(January The Mind[less] Muse)*

*Appears To Be Rimbaud Speaking*

My shadowy wraith like goldfish pond is only bones and gristle  
An ominous childhood collage of fairy lands  
That causes my living room to speak in a gravelly whisper  
And here where you first have to descend into Kurt Schwitter's Prelude  
Of nasty red welts to where the railroad tracks beat their wings  
Near a city that has become a touchable phantom  
As its asphalt comes awake and the lost jazz  
Of Ezra Pound is played upon a punctured saxophone most red  
Till it becomes a key turned in the lock of that egg spoon hour  
When poetry pulls my strings till my hands do ache  
Before it releases me from its power once more  
Until later it once again lights my powder keg.

-- *Ken L. Jones*  
(*April Pyrokinecton*)

*A Few Choice Lines About the Deities of the Mad Tea Party*

Green husks everywhere  
Bamboo like stalks  
Now divested of their  
Ripe golden roasting ears  
Filaments of silk  
Blow on the wind like manna  
The most wonderful and yet neutral  
Smells of the kernels themselves  
The ruts in the cultivated earth  
Dark and brown  
And moist and fertile  
And all beneath a painfully  
China blue sky  
Agog with chicken and dumpling symmetried clouds  
On this most perfect of harvest afternoons.

-- *Ken L. Jones*  
(*January Jellyfish Whispers*)

*The Minotaur in the Dime Store*

My thoughts they are a puppet show  
Where sour apple paper dolls  
Act out candlestick lit bedtime stories  
As ashen as Emily Dickenson's  
Purple shadow songs  
And in the sweet, sweet lilac  
Of my afternoon nap  
Where tumbleweeds like spinning wheels  
Perform a rusted symphony  
As I dream of the silver dust of your kiss  
Now an apparition in the mist  
A warm whisper of indigo  
Because though we still live together  
You left me long ago.

-- *Ken L. Jones*  
(*June Napalm and Novocain*)

*Unicorn Hunt*

The mind drinks up the highway straight ahead  
Dogs and cats in slow motion  
On a night full of the evil thoughts of typewriters  
Drowning in the dish water of comic books  
The image is a loaded gun that must be burned  
A well read stomach that must be fed  
It lights such a candle that it tapes up your mouth  
Like delirium in a red brocade smoking jacket  
Inching across your lawn like a snail  
Then down the streets of fever in the morning  
In a vertigo of top forty song lyrics  
Gathering dust on the lips of millions of women  
In the navel of a love manual  
That can't be purchased at any store.

-- *Ken L. Jones*  
(*January The Mind[less] Muse*)

***Dear Mother***

my mother died yesterday  
she was 95 years old and  
a mean bitter woman

she hated my father  
she hated me

she swore she would haunt me  
after she died.

bring it on  
bitch.

-- *Larry Jones*  
(*May Pyrokinection*)

### *Escaping Criticism*

Last night I dreamed a zen monk was writing  
a description of paper by dipping his dry brush  
into an empty inkwell; then letting the bristles splay  
for a few seconds on each square-inch of pulp.

Most of us can't, of course. We stage a play  
called *Nothingness*; but can't resist, at least once,  
coming out onto the dark stage  
bowing from the hinge of our waists,  
whether we expect rancour or applause.

The best is not to lay a single finger on the strings;  
to say the sound most natural to *violin*  
is what it does in the corner of a quiet room,  
responding to woodlice and small currents in the air.

The best is not to paint at all. Just ask del Caso  
who should have left his critics with an empty frame;  
who couldn't help but render the boy's fleshy toes,  
two fingers and a thumb; hair lit and eyes overawed  
by a light no artist ever caught.

-- *B.T. Joy*  
(*November Pyrokinjection*)

*Cat Energy on the Dog Walk*

While walking the dead I woke the dog.  
Their small bodies are audible at 60,000 hertz.  
Every link in the choke-chain is another poem  
that John Keats never wrote. Every photo album  
is a catalog of human strivings.

The streets are watermelon red.  
The experts of the cold seas say  
the seesaw of the tide has gone off kilter  
by a quarter of a degree. Somewhere  
the Beaufort scale is hitting twelve and a hundred million  
pairs of sweatshop trainers are irredeemably lost.

While walking the dead I saw two pools,  
their freckled water was the colour of unwashed jade  
and somehow they resembled your eyes before leukemia.  
Mystic tunnels in a pine-nut shell. How every pistachio  
longs to visit the cave of silver doves.

I'm a penniless student outside the dancehall at 3AM.  
I'm a mother of three, turning fifty now,  
and already unseen among the mangoes' sweat.  
I'm a terrapin's legs and the chalky night and all  
the young hopes Augustine must have had.  
I'm walking a dog  
while walking the dead.

The morning moon is the color of an artichoke's heart.  
The hedges smell like the heat of July  
and the linden, like a moody child, throws the puzzle  
of faint shade across the grass.

-- *B.T. Joy*  
(*November Pyrokinecton*)

*Reading Jinzhu Ridge*

Dry blooms are shivering in the varnish trees.  
Lines of white daffodils bend on greenish hills.  
Wang Wei is up on Jinzhu Ridge again,  
not a buddhist yet, but writing buddhist poems.  
I imagine this as some time before the war.  
The spring wind tugs childishly on his grey robes.  
Out of the sharp grief he felt, thin as a bird,  
under the shade of his dead mother's shrine  
I see him smiling beneath his thinning facial hair.  
Never one to write about the things people do  
he has found the most direct road over mountains;  
a path that even the woodcutter doesn't know.

-- *B.T. Joy*  
*(February Jellyfish Whispers)*

### *Grampians*

The hills spill with light  
interminably along the landscape's endless lines.  
Standing in these highlands: their enormity,  
and their rivered roots rolling in gentle tides,  
give you the impression of being  
very weak and very small.

On each extremity  
the furthest mountains in the range  
are blue clouds wilting, partially-unseen,  
against the blue sky.

You have no idea where the river is flowing  
or where the mountain raven will perch  
among the upper-stones.  
Sometimes it seems  
not even to matter.

So you cried with joy in the silence above the town.  
So the electric burn of your constant mental questioning  
died away in the tireless answer of terrain that steeped  
its forested body in geological time.  
What does any of that matter?  
The wide Grampians are still as impassable to you.  
Nowhere did you solve the puzzle of your life.

-- *B.T. Joy*  
(*April Jellyfish Whispers*)

*The Winter Shadow*

on the wall  
has no eyes but it sees  
every grain of grit  
pushed and anguished  
by snow

it has hands like dark  
webs shooting out  
from thin wrists  
it has legs like stilts  
stalking a cold land

Tonight the shadow will shrink  
to a frozen  
spot

which cold night  
will swallow  
the shadow is  
not lost  
but wandering far  
in the moon's restless dream

-- *Steve Klepetar*  
(*March Pyrokinection*)

*Staff Meeting*

The girl to my right is wearing three shirts,  
gray over black over white. Her nails are clear;  
her friend's are painted black. Each has driven

a thin spike through the flesh of her ear.  
This room is cold. Some people are eating  
banana cake; white icing clings to yellow plates.

Wall clock lurches forward, one minute at a time.  
Somewhere, green snakes wind their twisting way  
beneath the blasts, deep through undulating earth.

-- *Steve Klepetar*  
(*March Pyrokinection*)

***All That I Have Felt***  
*(In some semblance of order)*

(1967 to 1975)

kittens

carpet burns

*fear*

WGN presents "One-Eyed Jacks" starring Marlon Brando

my grandmother's basement

slaps from my mother

*fear*

kicks from my father

*fear*

Nerf basketball

10CC "I'm Not in Love"

*fear*

(1976 to 1980)

sunny, cool, fall days

the woods on Sundays

tall green grass

raised red seams on a baseball

*fear*

Tickle Pink wine

the smell of hashish

the buzz of high tension wires

Stroh's beer, pull tab tall boys

the woods at night

the breeze through the car window

her breath in my ear

*fear*

(1981 to 1988)

"Footloose" starring Kevin Bacon

Michelob Light in bottles

extra spicy guacamole

*fear*

“Members Only” black jacket

para mutual wagering

fellatio

4 seam fastball

*fear*

the garlic taste of Dimethyl Sulfoxide (DMSO)

a 91 mph fastball

Feldene dissolved in Dimethyl Sulfoxide and applied to my skin  
via tongue depressor

my 93.5 mph fastball

The roar of the crowd

*fear*

October

the swirling light and sound of a west Texas freight train at night  
in the fog

Jesus Christ

*Fear*

(1989 to 1999)

the anticipation of child #1

the birth of child #2

6 hours of uninterrupted sleep after child #3

an 8mm obstructed kidney stone

*fear*

morphine

*fear*

Vicodin

*fear*

sunny, cool, fall days

“The Road Less Traveled” by M Scott Peck

hydrocodone

*fear*

the woods in fall

thunder

Valium

*fear*  
the woods in winter  
the rumble of Niagara Falls  
Valium  
*fear*  
Oxycontin  
shame  
Valium  
*fear*  
“Ruthless Trust” by Brennan Manning  
the woods in spring  
The Stanley Cup  
*fear*

(2000 to 2004)

detox  
nostalgia of my youth  
photos of my children as children  
hydrocodone  
detox  
*fear*  
Jose Cuervo silver tequila  
sunny, cool, spring days  
Major League Baseball opening day  
Jose Cuervo Gold tequila  
*fear*  
Chinaco Reposado tequila  
the stench of pavement  
Gran Patron tequila  
the heat of pavement  
Herradura Anejo tequila  
detox  
hydrocodone  
*fear*  
Marca Negra Mezcal  
detox  
AA meetings

Oxycontin  
*fear*  
Alice in Chains "Down in a Hole"  
detox  
nostalgia for opiates  
*fear*

(2005 to 2007)

AA meetings  
Camel 99's  
her infidelity  
*fear*  
photos of my children as children  
Camel 99's  
the sweet, sweet voice of Martin Sexton  
AA meetings  
shame  
regret  
*fear*  
Suboxone  
regret  
shame  
*fear*

(2008 to 2010)

the tenderness of your touch  
a king size memory foam mattress  
the tenderness of your touch  
Amerique Verte Absinthe  
*fear*  
discussions with the dead  
the tenderness of your touch  
Ray Lamontagne "Winter Birds"  
the tenderness of your touch  
ablution by Amerique Verte Absinthe  
*fear*

visions of the dead  
*fear*  
visits from the dead

(2011 to 2014)

their forgiveness  
AA meetings  
Camel 99's  
my inability to sleep  
*fear*  
[www.hellopoetry.com](http://www.hellopoetry.com)  
the tenderness of your touch  
*fear*  
Centenario Reposado tequila  
regret  
Tramadol in large amounts  
regret  
thoughts of you leaving me  
thoughts of me being left alone  
thoughts of you being left alone  
regret

nothing  
nothing  
nothing

the words I have just written

darkness

*fear*

-- *John Kross*  
(*June The Mind[less] Muse*)



### ***Back Then***

Just because it happened a long  
time before my imagination's  
eyesight, my retina's perfection,  
Just because it now all seems blurry  
and memorably impaired . . .

When I relax the I and see the full  
stop and let my mind loop from  
thought to thought, I find symbolism  
in the ulcers bursting in my stomach  
feeding me organic wisdom.

My soul's windows need a wash  
to see my students in the balance  
they offer me when they exercise  
all the muscles of their mind even  
though they don't process the facts

I feed them day by day. They are not  
to blame for emotions triggered by  
my hypnotic influence, my vision  
training, my problem-solving approach  
skillfully gazed upon their innocence.

Mother and child bonded on a clean slate  
back then, but I've learned to become scared  
of dark material clouding my equilibrium.  
My ears, my eyes, my orientation have  
grown deaf, stress-inhibited, unrecovered.

My preference is to link sound, smell and  
taste and indulge in a bowl of chocolate-flaked  
ice-cream while I listen to Maria Callas'  
frequencies even though some are missing.  
It's been a long time since my brain hungered

for otherworldly explorations: the ability to  
communicate subtly through the electronic  
ear, not shutting down at a baby's cry or  
closing my eyes when romantically kissed  
—my left stockinged calf elegantly uplifted.

-- *Martha Landman*  
(*June The Mind[less] Muse*)

*Haiku Stupid*

1.

sixteen chickens cross  
I curse the road for its width  
stupid slowpoke birds

2.

they roll themselves down  
stupid Pakistani socks  
blame it on Wal-Mart

3.

stupid galaxy  
we have nowhere else to go  
stay home in the pits

4.

deadly golden arch  
America malnourished  
stupid plastic food

5.

turn the damned thing off  
stupid reality shows  
big ol' bunch of dopes

-- *Ron. Lavalette*  
*(June High Coupe)*

*Some Afternoons When Nobody Was Fighting*

my mother took out  
walnuts and chocolate  
chips. My sister and  
I plunged our fingers  
in flour and butter  
smoother than clay.  
Pale dough oozing  
between our fingers  
while the house filled  
with blond bars rising  
and kisses of fudge  
Mother in her pink dress  
with black ballerinas  
circling its bottom  
turned on the Victrola,  
tucked her dress up into  
pink nylon bloomer pants,  
kicked her legs up in the  
air and my sister and I  
pranced thru the living  
room, a bracelet around  
her. She was our Pied  
Piper and we were  
the children of Hamelin,  
circling her as close as the  
dancers on her hem

-- *Lyn Lifshin*  
(*July Pyrokinecton*)

*Terrestrial Illumination No. 380 (2014)*

I.

The garden ticket booth wet by rain.  
Minute stone chips  
Loosened from old asphalt  
Rolled from roof

To fall on slabs of cement,  
To fall on  
A fallen world

As the world has been libeled for over two thousand years.

A string quartet was to play in gazebo postmodern music.

II.

It was as if the downpour was a new flood to cleanse the  
world  
Of its past fantasy enchantment and its false beliefs.  
For over two thousand years the people had misled  
themselves  
By mistakes, and lived by lies.  
The had lived by illusions  
Of the theological and the scientific circus and sideshows,  
and now  
With the transvaluations of mostmodern people were on the  
threshold  
Of salvation and finally, a relationship with reality.

The music would celebrate the new dispensation of  
postmodernism.

III.

The rain was the heaviest of the year,  
But the people not having read the program was to be  
postmodernism, set  
As it dry, awaiting the usual trivial and petty amusements.  
The old beliefs and living according to the old axiology  
Had made the people obtuse  
And the people could not feel any more natural sensations  
Such as the wetness of rain.

But they were told by the TV set that it was raining. The  
commentator  
Read from a script that outside was a heavy downpour.  
The report resulted in everyone putting on raincoats.  
Over their unnoticed soaked tuxedos and evening dresses.

IV.

For over two-thousand years the earth had been turned into an  
insane asylum.  
Causation was the theological and the scientific minds  
Echolalia was the normal way of communication,  
Communication had ceased to exist under the old order  
before postmodernism.  
The clean and distinct had failed to communicate,  
Postmodernism discovered profound and meaningful  
communication  
Came only from poetic opacity.

V.

Now in raincoats, some started to pass the time by reading.

The scraps of paper turned from page to page  
Are seen as graphic elementary designs, straight, cursive  
lines.  
Blurred by false memories of their blue blood,

And the curls under the hoods of nuns. Antic,  
Their fingers whirl car keys. Some have in bags  
For gifts toy replicas of anorexic tiaraed royalties  
Posed as the tiny white globes that roll over numbers  
On roulette wheels. All eyes spin as do slut machines.  
What is there to be read is never read, content chased  
Away by vague desires and inherited meta-narratives  
Of angels painting their fingernails gold as tattooed  
On hairy arms or shaven legs. Books written to be destroyed.

From the shrubbery comes the song of the wren,  
What is unconcealed by the wren's song is vaguely heard,  
And quickly reheard as something else, as something  
That was believed to exist but never existed. And  
The current fractured, fragmented, faked life  
That began in ancient time with the original lie  
And original sin still reigns, comforted by the thermostat.

#### VI.

Adorno observed how faith in logic and reason by  
The Enlightenment's white wigs, bows on knee pants,  
And white stockings prepares for Auschwitz  
And the Marquis De Sade. But the Enlightenment  
Was already corrupted by attitudes and habits  
Implanted from the Middle Ages. Logic and reason  
Were the clowns whose acts took the peoples' minds  
Off the fact that there were truths.

#### VII.

The musicians have not arrived, a nightclub comedian is  
substitute.

Champagne is distributed and the audience is in ecstasy.

The applauded comic weeps as the audience laughs.

The comic has sensed the responses to his stolen jokes

And how these responses will lead to the destruction of  
humanity.  
He knows that the inferior quality  
Of his jokes is what makes them such an outstanding success.

VIII.

The wet chairs in the park await the musicians  
To play the music that celebrates the return of enchantment  
And the return of truth that postmodernism will bring to the  
world.

The musicians' instruments rest on the chairs,  
The musicians have refused to play.  
The musicians refused to play  
When the musicians learned they were to play a composition  
That celebrates postmodernism.

IX.

The comedian was informed, so he had to tell more dirty  
jokes.

*-- Duane Locke  
(August The Mind[less] Muse)*

*Ephram Pratt Exhales the Bliss of Light*

The bandage on the clock  
fits tightly

like amnesia  
leaking into

a dry pool of acid,  
into a drift-wood

alabaster ingot  
tasting the wares

of insulated daylight.  
Crease your fingers

as if they were  
on fire,

ignited by  
crystals of joy

dripping onto the page  
of mismatched

mandalas  
clustered in silence

around an enclosed  
isothermal blot,

anchored in space  
by practiced

and practical  
insignias of light.

-- *Jack e Lorts*  
(*October The Mind[less] Muse*)

*A Breeze She Hardly Knew*

She used to watch the waves crash the breakers  
Clutching old love letters like life-strings;  
the only things she had left of him.  
She stood wishing for times to be as they were,  
Despite having moved to the Puget Sound.  
Sometimes she would think about the rock facings,  
And how high they once stood.  
How they had been weathered by surf and time  
Yet still remained.

Seagulls used to scour and pick for crab shells.  
on the beaches below.  
They'd peck  
the remains until  
they were bored,  
and then fly away,  
without a care,  
on a breeze  
they hardly knew,  
from the bones they'd never remember.

Staring out over the breakers,  
As the waves splashed over and over,  
she would read the letters over and over,  
searching, as if missing some key element  
time or her own blind negligence had somehow overlooked.  
She still wore the ring, when she went to the ocean,  
She still wore the dress. She still thought of him.  
She carried those letters on a breeze to forever,  
The seagulls picking away at the remains of everything she  
needed to let go.

-- *Chad W. Lutz*  
(*April Napalm and Novocain*)

*Already Broken*

As soon as my elbow grazed  
the wineglass left carelessly close  
to the counter's edge, I was  
already reaching for the broom,  
knowing that was all she wrote.

Somewhere in the final years,  
long after we'd given up  
on trying to find the perfect gift,  
you came home from a yard sale  
with four glass goblets, each one  
large enough to hold a good  
half-bottle of Sonoma red.

I loved them on sight, while you  
grew to loathe that love.  
Now, only two remain, and  
as I sweep up sharp-edged  
shards from the linoleum floor  
of my single-room apartment,  
I imagine that I hear you laugh.  
Sympathetically, I hope.  
Enough's been spilled already;  
no need for malice now.  
Whatever we think we have,  
we come to learn, will not endure.

*-- Iain Macdonald  
(October Napalm and Novocain)*

*Hanging the Stars*

She's not doing much,  
Just wrestling a werewolf moon  
And hanging silver stars

-- Stacy Lynn Mar  
(October High Coupe)

Worn roadside sign says  
Unlimited dreams ten bucks  
All nightmares are free

-- *Denny E. Marshall*  
(*May High Coupe*)

*The Twinkies Are Gone*

But then they came back,  
even after Hostess tanked.

Other Big Firms to the rescue,  
lest you flip  
out and horde, as some did,  
the golden sponge,  
filled and artificial.  
You'll wish you'd had more cream  
before The Nuclear  
Winter  
with only cockroaches left to feast  
on the sugary nectar,  
the radiated sponge a bygone thing.  
Take back the night swinging  
on the yellow mini cake like an oblong moon  
bounced into open ovens in bakeries.

A skilled workforce pulls down the door  
to 425 degrees or so of heat —  
slips raw batter into the cooker  
open  
euphoric  
a sugar high  
at the Emporia.

Sons, daughters, mothers, fathers,  
cranking out sponge cakes for 50 years.

Better than Hungarian cherry pie.

The darling of fake foods:  
golden

and glorious,  
from which American dreams are made.

-- *Grace Maselli*  
(*July Pyrokinecton*)

*Found*

As the needle compresses  
her bones melt and  
she oozes out between the slats of her parents' picket  
fence

Her gelatinous form  
slinks along the curbs of  
dozens of streets  
through dozens of  
months

Each time she tries to  
form an arm from  
the liquid she has become  
and reach the hovering glow  
of satiation just above her  
shape diminishes that much more  
Until one day someone  
stepping in her puddle  
leaves a piece behind

Life blooms within her and  
she finds herself solidifying  
once again

She reaches up and finds  
that fullness in another  
way and she is  
emptied out again and  
holds her daughter in  
her new-found arms

-- *Anna McCluskey*  
(*September Pyrokinecton*)

### *Where the Lost Gather*

"Maintain your perspective just keep going" she thought while waiting for the bus. The sky resembled an ink blotter drenched in grey and black. People trekked along avenues attempting to cross over mounds of snow. Teenagers ganged up huddling under broad awnings. Their brightly colored jackets spread like rainbow clusters against brick buildings. She twitched her umbrella awkwardly, its handle was cold. Where were her gloves? Would the bus ever come?

Stepping off the curb twisting her head fidgeting . . . "Stay optimistic. Be brave. Everything will work out eventually." The familiar tape played over and over in her brain. Another appointment, another pill pusher . . . another doctor as healthy as a horse. How could he possibly understand? Always the same questions. What about her habits . . . smoking, drinking, taking street drugs, having an active sex life? Was she anxious, depressed? Prying into her life then offering no solutions. A waste of money with so little cash left. And a waste of time. But time stood still now. . . heavy hours pressing down crushing her.

The doctor's office needed a paint job. There was no coat closet or water fountain. An old magazine minus its cover curled up next to the lamp. Lorraine wished she had brought her crossword puzzle. Increasingly annoyed by the long wait, she realized her turn was hours away. Looking over the other patients, wondering what was wrong with them. Finally the doctor had time to see her to listen to complaints about fatigue, shortness of breath, being dizzy. Promising to run some tests, he left. A nurse entered to draw her blood filling three vials with a long needle. The results would be available next week. Handing her check to the receptionist, that was that.

It was so great to get home, she felt so free, so happy after leaving the oppression of the doctor's office. Home now: beating a retreat under lumpy bedclothes where several paperbacks and her eyeglasses were hidden.

Many pages later windowpanes clatter like nervous teeth. Zillions of icicles etch fine line portraits of frost. Snow fell and kept falling. Unleashed . . . storms overtake darkness . . . making all mute. A storm of light covers the night as she slid to sleep. Dream sliding to a house of mirrors where countless images surrounded her. Where is she? Reflections without number repeat her every gesture. Somehow she must look for her real self. Sifting within these icy sheets of glass, suddenly all her fingers began to burn.

*-- Joan Mc Nerney  
(November Pound of Flash)*

*Night Train*

A train of thought,  
traveling from somewhere to somewhere else,  
the engineer dragging on its lonesome whistle  
as if a convict his cigarette, the conductor  
in two minds, in two opposing quantum states,  
existence vying with non-existence.

A train of thought in the long black night,  
the passengers inhumanly quiet,  
their tickets punched and paid for,  
their mouths shut but their eyes open,  
stealing a few cursory glances  
at the blackened countryside,  
that light at the end of the tunnel  
receding, coming closer, moving away.

-- *Bruce McRae*  
(*May Pyrokinecton*)

*Less Than a Single Breath*

On an island in a lake on an island . . .  
At sea level. Stranded on morning's beach.  
Donning our rough apparel.  
The small appearing large. The sleepers weeping.  
Yesterday's rain making fools of us all.

Dawn saws a jig on its catgut fiddle,  
the wind in an awful and needless hurry,  
gravity's barbed hooks dangling provocatively,  
the wind beside itself with work and worry.

Pauses couple, birthing an inbred stillness,  
each eventual life losing its tiny lottery.  
Soon the moments have piled high,  
a tower of time, a backlog of grim reckoning.

Soon, the unbearable gifts of winter.

-- *Bruce McRae*  
(*May Pyrokinjection*)

*As It Is*

The door closes and the round mirror holds her image a moment before she turns away. She looks over the room he has just left. She gets her black suitcase from the closet and puts it on the bed, and begins to pack. She bites her lip.

Well now, she thinks—that is done—

Her hands tremble as she moves the clothes from the drawer to the suitcase.

—and I am glad that it is over.

Outside, he gets into his car and turns the key. The car powers to life. What should I do now, he thinks; what should I do where should I go.

Upstairs, inside, the phone interrupts her. She picks it up.

Yes?

She holds the phone to her ear, but there is no one there. It's funny how phone calls come like that sometimes. They click hanging up. It is just as well. Listening is impossible; she hangs up and resumes her packing. Two tickets are lying on top of the dresser. They were to have gone together but now that's just a ridiculous memory. She thinks what to do with the extra ticket. She takes it and tears it up and throws it in the trash can. One ticket means one person. There is no turning back. She resumes packing.

Outside, in the car he thinks he should have brought his ticket down with him and he half-thinks to go up to get it, but no, that would mean seeing her again. He is done seeing her; he never can see her again. The car backs out of the lot and he drives off into the dark. The street lamps on the poles cast down circular beams of overlapping brightness into the night. It is late and the streets are deserted. Headlights appear in the distance and

approach. The black car pulls up before the apartment building's door. It sits idling. Waiting.

She closes her suitcase and puts on her coat. It is cool outside; not cold, but cool. She leaves the room after looking in the mirror again and turning off the light. Outside, she gets into the waiting car. It leaves. It turns off onto the ramp to the Interstate and in a moment is up to seventy, eighty; she sits in the back seat reveling in the speed of it. She reaches two fingers into her purse and the ticket is there. Her ticket.

He drives randomly. He passes Steck's bar—then Solly's—then Mijo's. He wants a drink badly, but is in no mood for company. He cannot speak to anyone tonight. He will go home to drink. It is twelve-thirty.

She is nearing the airport. The black car pulls up the departing flights ramp. The driver helps her with her bag and briskly she walks toward the revolving door of the terminal building after having tipped him, and he drives away. She goes through security—there is hardly anyone there. She goes to the gate; the red-eye flight to Newark is boarding. She has just made it; thank God she had not spent too much time with him before. Thank God it had been quick, and easy.

He gets home and goes in. He takes off his jacket, throws it on the couch, and rips off his tie. The vodka comes down from the shelf. It pours into the glass. It is pure, clear, and honest. He looks through the bottle; everything is distorted. He puts down the bottle and picks up the glass.

She boards the plane after checking her bag at the gate. She enters, finds her seat in first class, sits, wipes her hand down her cheek and after they have rolled and are in flight, she asks the attendant for a drink.

Vodka, she says.

He takes his glass into the living room. He sits in his chair. He drinks one, then another.

She drinks; one, two. She puts her glass in the holder.

Their hands reach out gripping the chair arms as the liquor does its work. With eyes closed, they squeeze the chair arms; it feels as if they are sitting side by side, hands clasped together, as they used to; as if that were not now forever impossible; impossible, as it is.

-- *Jim Meirose*  
(*April Pound of Flash*)

## *Harpies*

Margaret came in the yellow kitchen and flicked on the light. Centipedes scurried out of sight under the stove and under cracks in the baseboard. Margaret got the big black iron stew pot from the refrigerator, put it on the stove, and lit the gas. Mother Rose came into the room trailing her scarf as Margaret put knives forks and spoons and plates out onto the chrome trimmed table. Mother Rose went to the glass-fronted side cabinet and opened it and reached for the dark brandy bottle. Margaret was quicker--she pushed Mother aside and grabbed the brandy bottle down from the shelf and pressed it to her breast. Rose grasped at it.

Give me that bottle, said Rose--I need it--I want to get out of here--this lousy place--the brandy takes me out of here--give it to me.

No Mom, said Margaret, holding the bottle closer--you're a damned drunk--

No, I'm not, shouted Rose--I need that give it to me--

As she clutched at the brandy bottle, Jeffrey came in the room, open mouthed and haggard.

--give me the bottle--Margaret, I am your Mother--

--No--you're a lush, Mom--you're a damned lush--

God, said Jeffrey, tearing his hair, looking from Rose to Margaret and back again--don't argue--you're always arguing--please don't argue--

Ignoring him, Rose went on, pounding her palm into her own chest, her black eyes bulging.

--I need the brandy for my nerves Margaret--you're a damned prude--a damned prude is what you are--

The stew pot softly simmered.

Margaret held Mother at arm's length.

No Mom--it's bad for your health--it will just make you more nervous--you know how you get when you've had the brandy--

Jeffrey raised his hand and shouted and pushed between them.

No--Me! I have had it with both of you--I will decide who gets the bottle!

No! said Margaret, setting the bottle on the table and pointing into Jeffrey's chest--you have nothing to go by to make that decision--

Oh no? And why not--listen, he said, tearing his shirt--I am the man of the house!

Rose and Margaret froze a second, wide eyed.

--I am the man of the house--and you are mere women!

The stew pot bubbled on the stove.

What do you mean, mere women, barked Margaret.

What I said, yelled Jeffrey--just what I said--

As Margaret and Jeffrey faced off, Rose fumbled for the bottle--

Mom! said Margaret--no--no!

The two women wrestled with the bottle and it slipped from them and smashed to the floor.

Oh real smart Margaret, yelled Rose, kicking at the broken glass--real smart--

Margaret pointed from Rose to Jeffrey, saying If he hadn't said those shitty things bout us being mere women, it would never have happened--it's his fault--

Rose turned to Jeffrey, eyes ablaze.

Yes it is his fault isn't it!

The stew pot boiled harder.

Rose grabbed a kitchen knife from the table, as did Margaret--they advanced on Jeffrey, like two jagged toothed sharp clawed winged creatures, two harpies.

He did it--

Yes! He did it.

Jeffrey fled out the door, ran across the living room to the staircase, and ran up and locked himself in his room.

My God, he yelled as he ran--my God--

In the kitchen, atop the broken glass and brandy puddle on the ground, Margaret and Rose smiled at each other as they waved the knives, and stamped hard on the glass shards on the floor, crushing them smaller and smaller until you'd never have known they had been a bottle. The stew pot boiled up, finally out of control, spattering, spattering, spattering.

*-- Jim Meirose  
(September Pound of Flash)*

*Ménage à Trois*

*for David Richter*

Once upon Rimbaud's 1870s time  
in a Left Bank gay quartier, as a man  
fragmented, saturated, he first wrote,  
first recited in public the 100-line poem  
of a drunken boat, boat like himself,  
drifting, sinking at sea, lost  
in the shadowed arrondissement of loss.

Once upon his time, a century later, Richter lived  
just around the corner, one steep flight up  
at #4 Rue de Canivet, window shutters open  
to Saint Sulpice at his back (in case of guilt),  
Steinway facing south so he could play nocturnes  
for the bronzed, muscled pagan statuary  
in Luxembourg's lush garden of easy liaisons.

Once upon a time this summer in Paris,  
just down the street, I stared at gaunt twin ghosts  
haunting the worn cobblestone ways of doubt,  
the narrow, shadowy paths from pain.  
From nearby belfry rings the hour of need,  
from apartment window sounds a coda-echo of desire  
from marble wall etched with "*Le Bateau Ivre*—  
I read in full— at long last write my *Chanson d' Amour*—  
in reply—

*-- Karla Linn Merrifield  
(December Pyrokinjection)*

*By the Bye*

By chance,  
they met  
at the bus stop.  
The weather,  
was the topic  
as they waited,  
in the rain,  
for the bus  
that never came.

By choice,  
they agreed  
to share a taxi.  
Their homes  
were in the same area.  
During the journey  
they became better acquainted.

By coincidence,  
they met again  
later that same night.  
As they queued  
for a pizza take away.

By mutual consent,  
they went Dutch  
on a bottle of wine.  
Choosing the nearest  
of their flats  
to dine together.

By the time  
they had wined, dined  
and enjoyed a smoke,  
they realized how

attracted to each other  
they were.

By the morning,  
they knew it was  
an unforgettable experience.

“Bye for now,”  
they said in unison.  
Knowing  
they would never  
see each other again.

-- *Les Merton*  
(*March Napalm and Novocain*)

girl on mobile phone  
plaits hair with freehand fingers  
her eyes comb escape

-- *Les Merton*  
(*March High Coupe*)

*Dinner with the Ghost of Marilyn Monroe*

An odd pair these two,  
Marilyn's ghost, Rush  
And his cigar, dinner date  
For the living and the perished  
Though difficult to fathom  
Which airwave specter  
Truly voices knobs of desire:  
A lipstick microphone or a  
Golden ass pundit braying.  
She didn't discuss Robert  
Or Jack.  
He never mentioned femi-Nazis,  
Obama or Romney.  
She dined on ghost bites,  
He on filet mignon.  
How can one distinguish the  
Living from the dead?  
Radio or movie dittos  
Slaughtered images,  
Soundwaves slicing dead air.  
Marilyn blonde, unbloodied;  
Rush balding, forever eating  
Progressives, Marilyn drinking  
Presidents, they inhale the  
Same group vapors and she  
In her dress, he in his tie,  
Are removed from the land  
Of the living.

-- *Ralph Monday*  
(*April Pyrokinecton*)

*Love the Fiber Optics*

God may be dead but love is not. The internet has revived romance.  
Strange thing the way that time is not linear or cyclical,

but rather a weird juxtaposition of images, memories, experiences  
all jumping about like pieces in a puzzle.

The way surfing works, the dead made living, all fitting into the  
living room picture frame, Scotch and sofa, roses and violins,  
a few tapping keys like Poe's raven at the window.

Here, controlling the screen, and forgotten goddesses of  
the 40s, 50s

live again, images placed in the mind and they know time and kudos,  
but more importantly Kairos, a moment of indeterminate time where  
everything happens.

Like now and Gigi Montaigne, Mollie O'Day sit in this room

drinking Turkish coffee, giggling, alive in death, digital tropes that bring  
with them the lost values of another time, stirring romance of creatures  
who know that this instant matters.

They love me as I them, the more so for bringing conversation, drink,  
flowers,  
to black and white images snapped decades ago that is the present  
moment.

Alas that the relationship ended before it began.

-- *Ralph Monday*  
(*October Napalm and Novocain*)

*Limbs Like Dark Branches*

That morning your tongue turned to leaves  
articulating changing seasons where you  
walked with green moss, tangled vine  
as hair. In the evening a waning moon  
became your pupils, your laugh sound  
of an owl among treetops.

By the witching hour your body's heat  
forced all the insects absent, a skin-fed  
fire that made me turn my eyes away  
where it consumed your dress and left  
you naked, smooth brown skin belonging  
to a Mayan priestess.

At dawn your kiss left forest traces on  
my tongue. I knew the stuff of streams  
running to the sea. Your limbs, like  
dark branches, carried you away to  
mate with life. No solace in your passage—  
I would not see your kind again.

-- *Ralph Monday*  
(*October The Mind[less] Muse*)

*Unbutton the Night*

I breathe in the peppermint moon.  
It floods through the valley  
and settles over the trees.  
onto the frozen ground.  
Shadows collect  
like sticky pollen  
in the icy footpath.  
Quickly, quickly,  
you come to me .  
Your hand, a white dove  
suspended by moonlight,  
reaches out to touch  
my chilled skin.  
We lie in silvered meadow,  
on a porcelain bed,  
unbuttoning the night  
with our yearning.

-- *Jude Neale*  
(*July Jellyfish Whispers*)

*We Sing Ourselves Back*

We are born singing,  
orchid air in freefall beneath our trapeze feet.  
We open our jaws wide,  
balloon our throats  
swinging ancestral anaconda notes down  
across the emerald city.  
We dance antic swags, ellipses, somersaults,  
wound the air  
with our bass, treble, bellowing melodies.  
The women go first  
and the men sing back in waves,  
above the recitative.  
And later with dusty feet,  
we wander like leathery kites  
shipwrecked with words.  
Wanting again to float above it all,  
we drill underground instead  
to look for our voice,  
deep inside the belly of the whale.  
We sing ourselves back  
and become once again whole.

-- Jude Neale  
(April The Mind[less] Muse)

***Eleven Things About Wet Noodles that Everyone Should Know:***

-- a six-year-old nicknamed Chuck-a-muck often drapes wet noodles over his ears (when his mother isn't looking)

-- Chuck-a-muck's sister Maria doesn't drape wet noodles over her ears

-- Thor didn't eat wet noodles as a kid (Odin and Elvis did and still do)

-- every wet noodle is first cousin to all other wet noodles

-- wet noodles give boa hugs

-- dry noodles sometimes hesitate before accepting boa hugs from wet noodles (but never regret it afterwards)

-- unintentionally stepping barefoot on a wet noodle means good luck

-- unintentionally stepping barefoot on several wet noodles means a gooey foot (but in a between-the-toes goody sort of gooeyness)

-- wet noodles are allies of wet beeps, drippy faucets and poets with writer's bloc

-- wet noodles -- so cool when hot!

-- and hot because we're always so coooooo!

and we wet noodles (us) of every where/when/how/dampness thank you for reading (and appreciating) eleven things everyone needs to know. . .

about wet noodles!

-- *ayaz daryl nielsen*  
(*February The Mind[less] Muse*)

replacing floorboards  
the grey expired strides  
of ancestors

-- *ayaz daryl nielsen*  
(*February High Coupe*)

### *Body Language*

When you came in through the  
door,  
language followed you.

The way you held your  
head,  
was in itself more eloquent  
than speech, high,  
regal like a queen decked out in

pink petals which decorated  
the ruffled neck of your gown  
flowing, its own smooth river.

No words tumbled out  
of your mouth, or crashing  
waterfall, yet your eyes held

a vocabulary more vast  
than Shakespeare. You sat  
in the window seat to watch  
the morning sun  
speak  
to the gold-coloured curtains in  
soothing phrases.

Your presence was meant to calm.  
Every time you raised a slender finger  
to smooth your hair  
each strand  
was a personal idiom that admonished  
me.

About mother's death? Wipe  
away your wretched frown.

In your presence, I flourished in the  
flesh  
but memory floated higher

and higher  
each time you stepped through  
the door, language, an epiphany  
like a dog at your heels  
chewed dead consonants.

*-- Agholor Leonard Obiaderi  
(July Pyrokinecton)*

in a few days  
spring painted herself  
ecstatic

-- *Mary Orován*  
(*March High Coupe*)

***Reverse Haiku***

he was the rainbow  
of my life  
and the blueberries

-- *Mary Orován*  
(*March High Coupe*)

*Ballerina of the Sky*

A Blood Moon  
Lunar Eclipse  
smiles in the skyline of a predawn morning  
with rampant fervor building to a crescendo  
of age changing ramifications.  
The signs of the times spark with vibrations of  
electromagnetic transfiguration  
as metamorphosis of the spheres spins in full effect.

Tides shifting . . . pivoting . . . pulsating  
with a sideways advance,  
crisscrossing in a dizzying twirl  
from a high spot in the heavens  
downward into my wide open heart;  
beating in harmonized accord  
with the nexus core  
across eternity  
and the infinite abyss  
one inch at a time  
closer to you . . .  
closer to me . . .  
closer to eternal answers . . .  
closer to the truth  
of reality's ultimate grasp of reason.

The existential energy source  
of perfect Veritas  
sparks across the Elysium heights  
where I seek solace  
in the blue/black canopied sky  
which is lit up with pillowed comfort  
as the symphonic stars sing out  
in an awesome conductive opera  
of God's sweet lullaby,  
mimicking the initial word  
of creation as it was first manifested into form.

A miraculous spontaneous generation  
of divinely orchestrated inspiration,  
intuitively embedded in the blueprint  
of our collective DNA signature,  
is woven like a synchronistic web and  
sent Earthward to fill our souls with wonder as the  
satellite signals play out in a rotating orbital dance.

The ballerina of enlivened rock dust  
rolls across the gravitational ether  
in astrological intoxication,  
smiling out across the vacuumed void  
with a Cheshire grin of deeper knowingness.  
As within, also without;  
as above, so below.  
Awed in mesmerized transient grace,  
we watch patiently throughout the cycles  
as these ageless planetary seeds  
take root in dark matter,  
mature, sprout wings and grow.

*-- Scott Thomas Outlar  
(November Jellyfish Whispers)*

You are pulled and the same darkness  
lifts your arm around these stars  
spreads out door to door

knocks so your fist can smell  
from blood become your heart again  
dragged ahead as if you belong

near distances, end to end  
                                  though this cemetery  
has forgotten its dead

holds only the invisible hillsides  
                                  soaking in stone and narrow alleyways  
passed along till they close

and what will be your tears  
waits as lips, as the sky brought back  
crumbling with not a light left on.

*-- Simon Perchik  
(December Pyrokinjection)*

*Am I Awake*

During winter the shadows  
awaken me. I gasp, seek  
the faithful glass holding fluid.  
Outside some birds fly away  
as if once they leave we'll have  
a birdless world, inherit  
numerous nests, cold, brittle.  
Then I seek you and find you.  
Why do I feel disheartened?  
Do I want to stay alone  
and crave for warmth, toil over  
finding what I want and know,  
I have right here? I swing the shawl  
around my shoulders and stand  
not doing a thing, not  
gathering my body and hauling  
it back to sleep.

-- *Kushal Poddar*  
(*October Pyrokinecton*)

*Autumn*

The crows are murder  
this autumn, the finches  
nowhere to be seen.  
Just when we gave up  
on the wind fallen  
in the well of rot,  
it rescues itself  
and knocks on the door.  
We brace silence  
even harder.  
The shadows of the crows  
devour the crows.

-- *Kukshal Poddar*  
(*October Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Anaphase*

the quantum physics of  
attraction solely dependent  
upon a singular view

inanimate  
still life two enigmatic  
now lickety-split

his &  
her (lipstick smeared)  
cigarettes flattened on the pavement

two impossible  
(smashed & torn)  
to read the remnants

cleaved two heartbeats  
torn asunder  
two break apart

or two holding on  
across some distance  
as cleaving athwart  
the distance grown fonder

-- *henry 7. reneau, jr.*  
(*November Napalm and Novocain*)

*A Bowling Ball in My Stomach*

A dragon laid an egg inside my corpse;  
not a body, nobody sees that I exist,  
yet my scales shine in the beams  
but an egg lies here inside me.

The hatching is coming,  
I can sense strange vibrations,  
the ovum was once fertilized,  
invaded by white sperm  
from an ancient Python,  
or some reptilian snake.

-- *Walter Ruhlmann*  
(*July Pyrokinecton*)

*After Rendition*

He wakes naked on the wet metal chair,  
breathing inside the pillowcase hood,  
wrists tied with her nonsense-colored scarves.

She wants him to say it.  
She wants what she wants.  
She wants it all.

He says nothing.

So she jerks off the hood, and he blinks in the light.  
Her furrowed forehead concerned at his silence.  
She'd rather not hurt him, but she will if she must.

She wants to hear it.  
She wants what she wants.  
She wants it right now.

Still nothing.

So she throws the switch on that voltaic smile  
somehow hooked up to his limbic insides.  
From scrotum to scalp his subdural wiring  
twitches and hums. Vision tunnels. Belly cramps.

Then, in a sudden incontinent whoosh,  
the gut-heated words spill out over his chest,  
and puddle embarrassed on the floor. Maybe now  
she'll turn off that terrible grin. Now that

She has what she wants.  
She has it all.  
She has it forever.

-- *Fain Rutherford*  
(*December Pyrokinecton*)

*Winter Ops*

It's so cold outside, flies  
lie along the doorjamb  
where a little heat leaks.  
They're lined up like fighter jets  
de-icing on a vertical runway.  
Stealth black fuselages conserve fuel,  
vibrating just enough not to freeze.  
Bug-eyed cockpit canopies defrost.  
When the door opens,  
the squadron suddenly scrambles  
into the studio's steamy warmth,  
flying missions against assigned targets-  
coffee grounds, egg shells and toilet lids,  
evading all countermeasures until,  
one by one, acting on higher insect orders,  
they crash into the window glass and die.

-- *Fain Rutherford*  
(*May Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Encounter*

A stranger with no shadow  
Came to me last night

He offered me a key  
That would unlock any door

I asked why he was here  
He said "You called for me in your sleep,"

And then I remembered  
The dream of a realm of cages

With prisoners who all wore  
The exact same mask

And sang the same song  
The one with one note

But when he asked me "Well?"  
I sent him away

For I recalled the secret  
The wise man builds his own cell

-- *Richard Schnap*  
(*February Pyrokinecton*)

*World Without Bees Amen*

On the sills the bees are dying. Bumbles  
fuzzing in their humming. Their furred knitwear  
losing lustre; their breathing visible,  
their wings crisply stopped. The dustpan will share  
them to the hedged garden. I fling them out  
against the wind, and they fly one last time,  
but just the flight of falling. Who will shout  
to stop the dying?

There just isn't time,  
so watch them die in their furry troubles,  
fuzzed in their humming, the dying bumbles.

-- *John W. Sexton*  
(*October Jellyfish Whispers*)

***Migrants***

*Please state your full name?*

seals  
dark blisters

*What is your country of origin?*

on the surface  
of the ocean

*How long have you been domiciled at your current address?*

fishermen claim  
that they hear them  
barking  
beneath the waves

*Have you been actively seeking employment?*

that they lounge  
on the shoreline rocks  
for hours under the sun  
until daylight burns them  
into new shapes

*Are you currently in receipt of welfare benefits?*

and then rising  
as plump men or women  
in leather coats  
will wade ashore

live for months  
the mundane lives  
of villagers

*State the number and names of any dependents:*

then take  
to the waters again  
having sired or conceived  
half-human pups  
in their sojourning  
amongst us

*Failure to answer these questions truthfully may result in prosecution.*

moonlight leaves its signature equally on all

-- *John W. Sexton*  
(*November The Mind[less] Muse*)

*Mouth to the Sky*

The speckled thrush stepped onto the sunlight conveyer-belt to the hedge-depth and was gone into shadow. Somewhere in there the thrush became a cat, or was eaten by a cat, or killed the cat and wore it as a coat; but out the far perimeter of the hedge emerged the cat. The cat approached the opened door of the car, the car shining black like a soul, a soul of darkness so pure that the sun turned it white as a flash. Out the other side of the car stepped a woman in black coat, a coat so black it absorbed the sun. She opened her mouth to the sky and out came the song of the speckled thrush.

-- *John W. Sexton*  
(*November Pound of Flash*)

***Raven***

A raven drinking  
Out of a small puddle  
Formed rudely,  
On a tar road in the  
Suburban Mumbai,  
On a rainy afternoon,  
Blending well with the  
Darkness around;  
Its bobbing neck,  
Giving a queer kinesis  
To the little fractured pool  
And the otherwise static scene.

-- *Sunil Sharma*  
(*November Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Of a Run Aground Ship and Winged Crows*

marked depth of saltwater by a  
yardstick in inches,  
storm clouds receding like  
playground children  
into secret places, oak timber  
painted white  
painted red  
ran aground in a mist,  
in a rainy fog, crew abandoned...  
fallen sails and  
mitered joints left  
to rot in mud, on a forgotten  
shore, winged crows  
to nest in a timbered mast,  
reeds grab and choke  
the oxygen  
out of splintered wood,  
last breath taken, gasping,  
choking...  
a trickle of saltwater,  
then a torrent, canvas hoisted  
by an updraft,  
sets sail, no longer moored,  
crows cast adrift  
in flight, wings like  
oars in clouds.

-- *Lance Sheridan*  
(*January Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Thinking of Limes in the North*

The man's changed again, fuse  
lit by a scent come into a leaf  
so succulent he must've wanted  
to eat it whole, and go from there  
into the center of the bush, pulling  
under ripe fruit with his teeth.

Hearing the sound a lime makes  
when it comes off its sprocket  
above a canyon marked by interstates  
crossing and re-crossing what was once  
the floor of a great ocean.

Ever since she saw the number of green citrus  
held like tennis balls, bound to thick stems  
in a yard so foreign it might as well  
have been the moon, she can't abide  
her marriage.

She would prefer to bake in the oven  
of sun, to step on a rattlesnake,  
a scorpion-treading the path toward  
the hills that surround their arena.

There, a million sadnesses plague  
the landscape, and firs blossom upward  
in flames for nothing more than  
a chaste wind, an errant match head.

-- *Judith Skillman*  
(*October The Mind[less] Muse*)

*Parallel as Fixation*

a multiplying motive spans itself:  
cannot its version, this/now  
interpretation—the language’s  
fulcrum invites, incites what  
excels within a watching version of  
motivated simplicity, exceeding  
virtue as rest, or visitation as  
corporeal manifestation, rejoice  
then when time’s verbal praise  
relaxes muscular tendencies, and  
the purity of comprised permissions  
persuades within the action of  
particular interactions

-- *Felino A. Soriano*  
(*January The Mind[less] Muse*)

*Passing*

Twilight fell like silent rain,  
memories felt hallucinogenic and beautiful,  
popping into existence like lightning  
thrown through a lifeless sky,

visions of familiar children laughing  
and tire swinging in an open yard,  
the Potomac's peaceful power, a one-eyed  
*Tiger* still hunting for love,  
broken bones and friendship,

but we have become a screaming corpse  
waltzing and pirouetting our way through  
forgotten fractions that once comprised  
a legitimately perfect equation.

We have come to rest in this residual realm  
of remembrance, a place that no longer produces  
any form of pleasure or protection,  
much like a weeping willow earning its moniker  
through a storm, a place  
that like these barren days is passing  
and that's alright because let's face it,

this world,

our world,

was never paradise.

-- *Brandon C. Spalletta*  
(*January Pyrokinecton*)

*See-Saw Dialogue*

She sat on this swaying plank  
with quicksilver moods,  
its temperament reminiscent  
of a confused pendulum,  
munching on peanut moments  
as it weighs life's pros and cons,  
with a weird boy  
his hair spiked as a porcupine,  
barely familiar from  
earlier trysts in this park.

He wore a wide grin  
as the ones seen on potato smileys,  
emerging from frying pan promises~  
so too intrigued to bother  
about familiarity she asked him  
the reason for his delight,  
wondering what was so special.

With a saucy wink he recounted  
a visit to an amusement park,  
regaling her with descriptions  
of the most amazing rides in the world,  
as she felt her gaiety seep out  
from her pleasant evening  
making it dull and insipid  
as she yearned to savor  
the delight alluded by him.

She sat forlorn, wishing she could  
visit this amazing place of fun n' frolic,  
aware it would be deemed  
a wasted, frivolous expense  
by her strict and pragmatic parents,

when a girl in freckles and pigtails  
peered at her to inquire  
if her brother had been bragging again.

The boy had a penchant  
for telling tales—the taller the better,  
about things he'd heard  
at his father's barber shop,  
pretending to be richer and luckier  
than he was just to feel grand,  
making her realize  
her foolish gullibility at  
ignoring the joy of graffiti skies  
and leisure moments with friends,  
behaving as the frenzied moth  
unaware of golden glow of the lamp  
as it pines for an indifferent moon . . .

-- *Smita Sriwastav*  
(*September Pyrokinecton*)

*Mist*

Between lamb's wool and lion's claw  
A grey mist attaches  
To the air in every meadow  
Winter lies in frozen ditches  
Its life almost drained  
But spring trapped in a bramble bush  
Continues to be restrained

Fingers outstretched each ragged tree  
Beckons as we tear past  
Urging us south desperately  
Neither first journey nor the last  
But just another  
Each farm fence post appearing  
Like a fox breaking cover

Between cockcrow and owl screeching  
A feeble sun breaks through  
London's busy highways reaching  
That once darker denser fog knew  
Weary heads turning  
We head north from railway stations  
To our own lands returning.

-- *David Subacchi*  
(*October Jellyfish Whispers*)

***Horse Frightened by a Lion***

*-- from a painting of the same name by George Stubbs*

Every sinew strained  
Every muscle stretched  
Every hair on end  
Hooves scraping the rock  
Striving to reverse

The silent lion  
Calmly confident  
Taking in the scene  
Knows you run faster  
But that you may fall

Your white coat stands out  
His color blends in  
With the brown landscape  
He is a hunter  
You are a victim

Dull trees and pale sky  
Complete the background  
All eyes are on you  
Willing you to escape  
From this encounter

*-- David Subacchi  
(October Jellyfish Whispers)*

### *Greening*

Spring is still sliding on the strings of a guitar  
waiting on side-roads  
to flash  
to splash  
the world in  
every kind of  
green.  
Envious ivy—chains  
Cities of glass moss  
Yawning grass after a lengthy nap  
The lawn mower is resting in the shed  
Jaded rings of melting puddles  
Jade drinks of rain-wet maples  
Willow, oak, poplar: sleeping giants  
but their frosty lips are already  
greening with spring

-- *Fanni Sütő*  
(*September Jellyfish Whispers*)

*When the Writer Decided to Share Relationship Advice*

when all of it shits the bed  
the tumble is long,  
hard.

you'll find yourself  
spewing page after page

of blunt force trauma  
bandaging wounds

with whiskey, and women  
you'll forget by morning.

you'll never quite get it  
all back

the bones  
will never heal

and the smell  
will never leave.

*-- Ag Synclair  
(December Napalm and Novocain)*

gray ghosts of winter  
a bluster of blinding snow  
flakes of poetry

-- *Ag Synclair*  
(*December High Coupe*)

*Looking Out to Spectacle Island in April*

The beach this time of year  
is nothing but rocks.  
She ignores the man  
who is placing one  
on top of the other,  
trying to balance them.

She ignores his dog.

She is waiting for the summer  
of bare-chested boys in shallow water,  
baseball on the radio,  
and the reggae ice cream truck  
with its flavors  
of soursop, mango, and rum raisin.

She is waiting.

-- Marianne Szlyk  
(*May Jellyfish Whispers*)

### *It's For You*

is going through the aging pop star's head as he pedals downhill and then across the village green, doing his five miles of cardio in case the guys reunite one last time. He imagines another life, one where he played guitar like Pat Metheny. He'd be touring with friends who loved music, not the limelight, who were musicians, not actors too typecast for another show.

But jazz wasn't for long-haired kids in jeans when he started out in the Village. Jazz was standards, something played with horns and pianos, sung by a lady in a satin sheath dress, something performed in night clubs for men who could not cry or laugh or love.

He still can't get over Mark's fingers stumbling, slowing down the beginning of their most famous song. He nearly grabbed the guitar from him then and there. From that night on, he played lead.

Taking off his helmet and locking his bike up in front of the library, he pictures himself like Metheny on stage, not looking up, bent over his guitar, playing what comes, playing with his band, building the song together with his friends, while the audience is with them, listening.

-- *Marianne Szlyk*  
(*January Pound of Flash*)

*The Song of the Mean Eyed Cat and the One Eyed Fox*

Cat was a gypsy of his street,  
a loose tooth vagabond  
with nimble ballerina feet.

The neighbors wouldn't know this  
due to his sagging old linen belly  
woven threadbare from the loom,  
tattered but strong and ready.

Cat was the one on the fence  
eyeing you with suspicion—  
a ready claw, a ready purr  
hinging on his disposition.

Fox was an older soldier  
medals clung to his chest  
along with dirt, leaves and all the rest.

He may have had a folding limp  
when the air was hung with damp  
but when the sun shone fiercely  
he was an acrobat.

Fox was the eyes you felt  
on your back from within the trees,  
he was the uneasy chill  
that made you pick up speed.

Cat, the one claw killer  
(perfected over time)  
of the starling napping  
on the washing line.

A giver of gifts left behind  
on doorsteps cold at 5 am,

the prize winning fish—  
a dissected corpse with a dangling eye.

Fox, the seventh cub of a seventh cub  
intimate between the mists,  
hands shook with comeuppance,  
just another ration over chewed.

Dashing in red beret,  
captain of those midnight raids  
on dustbins laden with enemy supplies  
destined for the home stomach.

Both roamed the bi-ways of the town  
and had a paw in all things devious,  
for the work of the Devil lies  
not just in idle hands  
but in all clean clawed creatures.

-- *Grant Tarbard*  
(*December The Mind[less] Muse*)

*Honey*

The first time you kissed me  
I should have seen it coming  
You were animal-starved  
pawing hungry at my hips

You were hurricane-tongued  
bracing me against your mouth  
I pulled up fierce to match you  
claw for claw around your neck

I could not hear us breathing  
deafened by your torrent eyes  
I did not recognize the beast  
devouring my skin like victory

I wasn't your prey or your prize  
bound to be death-squandered  
I had waited beyond time for you  
to lay yourself down at my feet

I had hoped for honey sweet  
and slow to drench my lips  
with tenderness. But I—  
I should have known

-- *Sarah Thursday*  
(*June Pyrokinecton*)

*She Has A Body Like My Spirit*

She has a body like my spirit  
and a heart Welsh mountain sized.  
Calm with a smiling tenderness  
to quell the ferocity of my storm.  
A tender nature ripe with giving.  
A contented, caring gentle soul  
Our emotions fit like puzzle pieces  
the North and South sides of a whole.

-- *Paul Tristram*  
(*March Pyrokinecton*)

*Doubtful*

I watched a grey squirrel  
in the park  
scamper and jump around  
like a lunatic  
trying to shake off  
yesterday's shadow.  
The poor thing  
really seemed  
to be in a bad mood.  
"How curious!" I mumbled  
quietly to myself  
as I left by the side gate,  
into the back lanes  
to avoid you.

-- *Paul Tristram*  
(*February Napalm and Novocain*)

*She was Insensitive to My Sensitivity*

. . . so I refrained from looking  
as she chose to not wave goodbye.

-- *Paul Tristram*  
(*May Napalm and Novocain*)

*A Naïve Trap for Love-Sick Souls*

She unclasped the ornate  
silver Celtic chain  
from around her neck  
and held up the little  
coffin shaped locket  
to my ear and I listened  
at the little hinge upon the side  
just like to the sea inside a shell  
as she had instructed.

“It’s faint but I can hear them.  
It’s like being in a back bedroom  
of a terraced house late at night  
when it’s perfectly quiet outside  
then hearing someone groaning  
loudly in every consecutive house  
all down the side of your road.  
How fascinating and remarkable,  
will you show me how it’s done?”

“In its native tongue it is called  
‘a naïve trap for love-sick souls’  
Yes, I will show you soon enough  
just be patient while I finish tiring  
of our present moments together!”

-- *Paul Tristram*  
(*September Napalm and Novocain*)

Our last thanksgiving  
Turkey stuffed with words of death  
We smile and laugh

*-- Matthew Valdespino  
(November High Coupe)*

*Expansion*

mother's crinoline  
scrapes while she paces these paths  
too blistered to fly

prairies built on less  
breathe as though sleek hummingbirds  
when she wanders past

and the silhouette  
I remember twice she called  
beyond mere windows

with snow slick as skin  
hedgerows our blank crucible  
hush the violets

all along the trees  
whisper their benediction  
they call her starlight

-- *Michelle Villanueva*  
*(December High Coupe)*

This is how it starts:  
A misplaced promise.  
Old light tearing heaven.  
Where the pieces land,  
You're born.

Each wide, a mountain  
Because of the others.  
All motherless,  
One way or another.  
All mothers.

Marking time in the sky,  
Bearing histories through  
distances.  
Witnessing  
The drag. The skip. The mystery.

Go on, seven sisters.  
Burn, muting Orion.  
You ancient test of vision,  
Love's beautiful ambush,  
Where darkness dies to light.

*-- Anne Richmond Wakefield  
(March Jellyfish Whispers)*

### *The Wolf's Trail*

"Come home. Come home to the Cookson Hills,"  
Mother's old Cherokee friend wrote. "I will show you where  
Sumacs redden and pokeberries ripen purple-black within  
Shadows of the great oaks."

There was never time for things we wanted to do. Instead, we  
Sat in mixed company on straight-backed wooden chairs  
Talking about mundane matters, catching up on years of  
Living between visits.

"What's the name of that man you married?" Golda asked,  
Acting like my mother who had already gone ahead to sit  
Beside the Wolf's Trail, waiting for her old friend, Golda.

Golda never waited for my answer. She wanted to walk the long,  
Dusty road to the mailbox. While the persimmon-red  
Oklahoma sun bled into dust, scorching my feet, Golda kept at me.

Words, like arrows, pierced my conscience.  
"Next time you come home . . . take me to town.  
I want you to buy me new clothes." Promises were made going down  
Dusty road and back; solemn promises never meant to be broken;  
Promises impossible to keep.

Ninety-two, as supple as the slender branches of the  
Wahoo tree growing in her front yard.  
"They were everywhere when I was young," she said.  
"Now it's the only one around here."

She squatted before her old bookcase,  
Searching for The Advocate so I could catch up on all the  
Happenings in The Nation since I'd been away. Finding one  
She jumped to her feet, a young girl again.

I wanted Golda to be 'Spirit' in a diaphanous gown of mist to  
Rise above the Cookson Hills, soar high to Sky and disappear like  
Eagle, but ninety-two winters made her host to the great worm and  
She went to sit with the Ancient Ones beside The Wolf's Trail.

Through the boughs of Ponderosas surrounding me  
Comes my mother's voice, joining that of her old Cherokee friend, Golda.  
They call with the wind.  
"When are you coming home?" they ask.  
"Come soon. We'll show you where to find good  
Huckleberries on the slopes and where sumac reddens and  
Purple-black pokeberries grow within shadows of the great oaks."

*-- Nadine Waltman-Harmon  
(January Pyrokinection)*

icy waves spew wrath  
upon a deserted shore  
drowning self pity

-- *Nells Wasilewski*  
(*September High Coupe*)

*Wedding Vision*

Blue jay and robins  
march us down  
the evergreen tree aisle way  
in sister-woman-sister love.  
We hold hands on the edge of a mountain  
with our valley future in panoramic views.  
Should we jump?  
Leap away from marriage,  
pretend  
we don't pledge  
soul mates till death,  
welded by wedding bands  
for all to see or not to see,  
love in the eye of the beholder?

-- *Diane Webster*  
(*March Pyrokinecton*)

*Soul Mates*

On this crisp morning we walk  
like children pretending to exhale  
great plumes of cigarette smoke  
or dragons blowing flames  
to envelop the tiny knight  
struggling to inject us with  
the poisoned sword.

But this cold, oppressive day  
your soul breathes momentarily  
reaching for the clouds above . . .  
when failing I feel  
the whisper of your breath  
like lilac in May.

We stop.

Breath, soul, fragrance  
mingle, vaporize  
in ever shortening gasps  
until only a breath separates  
our lips.

I inhale your exhale  
you inhale my exhale  
we breathe in visible  
unison.

*-- Diane Webster  
(March Pyrokinection)*

*Puddle Passage*

The puddle assimilates the girl's feet  
into amputated reflection rippling  
like shivers across the surface  
as she crosses with shoes and socks  
balanced in outstretched hands  
wanting her passage unnoticed  
like a mosquito surfing wind  
until shore as each foot emerges  
in minimal disturbance,  
a seashell glistening for discovery.

-- Diane Webster  
(February Jellyfish Whispers)

### *Deflation*

I used to love the tides,  
The taste of chilled salt air,  
And the granite boulders scattered along the shoreline  
Like dice in a glacial game of craps.  
But there came a morning when  
I looked for the ocean and I saw nothing but  
Miles of seaweed shining in the sun,  
Deflated.  
I picked my way down the slope past the low tide mark  
Where I swam the week before,  
Now stepping carefully rock to rock.  
A mackerel flapped at my feet,  
The smacking sound too loud.  
I stood with the fish  
Until it was still.

“You disgust me,”  
He said on the last night we spent together.  
I sat on the floor and did not cry.  
Later, the apology swooped in like a vaudeville hook,  
But true things linger.

Tectonic plates drag apart  
So slowly.  
Solid rock splits unnoticed until  
Continents are separated by an ocean  
So vast the far coast is  
Invisible.

The sun was hot and  
The fish was dead.  
Pebbles and silt underfoot  
Warm and sharp,  
Black grit between my toes.  
I could hear the armored legs of a crab

Tottering towards the trench ahead.  
It disappeared over the edge  
And I followed.  
Climbing down the Cliffside,  
Hand over hand,  
The wall slick,  
Damp algae underneath my fingernails.  
The abyss was drained of sea-water and  
The fall, when it came, was infinite.

-- *Catherine Weiss*  
(*July Napalm and Novocain*)

*Monica Wanted to Be 2-D*

She was okay as a centerfold.  
Then she put on blue eye shadow and heels,  
became a Cosmo cover.

I wanted to wrap her around books  
art, philosophy, anything to add depth  
but she became a crayon drawing  
of a house and baby  
yellow sun  
lollipop trees.

I folded her into a paper airplane  
and launched her into the sky.  
She fluttered back as a credit card bill.

I took up origami  
practiced cranes, butterflies, and elephants.  
She countered with liquor ads and romance novels.

I thought a Mobius strip would satisfy both of us  
but her feminist language critique cut my tongue  
when I licked its adhesive edges.

Finally, she became a page from *The Rules*,  
slipped under my door,  
and skipped  
away  
pursued by the wind.

-- *Jon Wesick*  
(*January Napalm and Novocain*)

*I Have Seen These Stones Rise*

an illusion of waves on the cliff  
where gloves lie waiting for frost

fall of sunlight as winter spins  
bleak tides under oak and elm

gulls soar over ragged stones  
watching spiders linger in moss

night rubs grains of roiling sand  
through cave of polished pale bones

steps broken in waltz-time to place  
on kelp falling under an ebb-tide

these rocks have been stifled by fog  
thrown against ears ringed by guitars

short messages traced by slim feet  
balanced green under the solstice

broken keel slides into short grass  
seaweed tangles between prayer and altar

pockets of faith in mapped oceans  
dispersed in a salt-sprayed cemetery

-- *Joanna M. Weston*  
*(March Jellyfish Whispers)*

*Held in Forever*

the year turns in my hands  
from snowdrop to bluebell  
through daffodil and rose  
spinning pansies into chrysanthemums  
and copper and gold maple leaves

I want to hold the year  
so that each petal remains  
distinct as the moment  
of the wind's caress  
each stamen waiting for a bee  
in that second when sunlight cuts  
shadow and a finger touches my skin  
with the color of the season  
imprisoned in a cup of petals

-- *Joanna M. Weston*  
(*November Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Never Again Hand in Hand*

from the fir a whisper  
the click of the answering machine

the mutations of a glacier  
his girl wore running shoes

tangled spears of grass hay fields  
wind takes the veil from her head

feathers strewn across the carpet  
these letters written years ago

we are better strangers than friends  
initials carved on a fence post

a crow drops twigs on the roof  
phone call from another continent

*-- Joanna M. Weston  
(February Napalm and Novocain)*

*On Bad Days*

we stretch  
barbed wire  
through the house  
entangle ourselves  
in recoil

bleed into  
one another  
staunch jagged  
wounds before  
cut    clash  
again knives

-- *Joanna M. Weston*  
*(March Napalm and Novocain)*

thin window shade—  
my neighbor's Christmas lights  
flash in my dreams

-- *Kelley White*  
(*November High Coupe*)

*God Visits Michelangelo at the Sistine Chapel*

Michelangelo was painting on his back  
God giving the spark of life  
and intelligence to Eve.

God appeared next to him, lying on her back,  
“they will never believe you, you know.”

“I know,” he admitted, applying apple cheeks  
to Eve. “But I can see the truth  
and I paint what I see.”

“They will persecute you,” God warned,  
“you better paint me with a beard  
and make Eve into Adam.  
It is what they expect.”

“You could show yourself,”  
Michelangelo suggested, “show them  
they are wrong.”

“They would not believe me, not even  
if I brought some plagues or turned salt  
into wine. They would want some proof.  
After seeing proof, they still would not believe.  
And even if they did,  
they would want to look up my skirt,  
make sure I am a woman.”

After making the changes, he said,  
“I guess you have to give them what they expect.”

-- *Martin Willitts, Jr.*  
(*December Pyrokinecton*)

*Inanimate*

I end up  
watching  
anime at  
four in the  
morning. *Cow-*

*boy Bebop.*  
There is a  
jazz sound-  
track but for  
some reason

Sinatra is  
singing 'when  
I was seven-  
teen' inside  
my head. It

is raining.  
It is always  
raining in  
anime. Out-  
side & in.

-- *Mark Young*  
(*October The Mind[less] Muse*)

*Chronometry*

I kissed your morning  
With mine, and held  
Your night closely with mine too

Between your spring and autumn  
I lay my summer  
Deep in winter

From your January through February  
To your March, I wrap your April and May  
With my June and July

Within your August  
I use my September or October  
To caress both your November and December

And right from your moment  
I suck my whole year

-- *Changming Yuan*  
(*July Pyrokinecton*)

*Chinese Gentility: Four Confucian Haiku*

Orchid: Deep in the valley  
Alone on an obscure spot  
You bloom nonetheless

Lotus: From foul decayed silt  
You shoot clean against the sun  
Never pollutable

Mum: Hanging on and on  
Even when wishes wither  
You keep flowering

Plum: Your brave bold blood dropped  
As though to melt all world's snow  
Before spring gathers

-- *Changming Yuan*  
(*August High Coupe*)

### *A Hemingway Day*

While on a short vacation in Havana I ran into Ernest Hemingway at the bar Floridita and he invited me to sit down with him. Of course, he did most of the talking, telling me about a recent hunting trip in Africa and marlin fishing with some movie star friends. At some point, while there was a pause, I decided to tell him about a recent event that happened to me back in New York City. I decided to tell him the story even though I doubted that a man like Hemingway, who'd been everywhere and done everything, would be much interested in what I had to say. Mainly I wanted to find out what he would have done in the same situation.

"So I was walking down the street on one of those hot, muggy days in Manhattan when I noticed a child in a stroller eating an ice cream. Stopping to watch him lick at the ball of ice cream, it was only a short time before it fell out of the cone, bounced off his knee and onto the sidewalk. Immediately the kid started crying and screaming, while his mother tried to comfort him. Seeing that we were right in front of the ice cream parlor, I walked up to the mother and asked her to wait there a moment. I then went inside and ordered a fresh strawberry ice cream on a cone. Of course, I failed to notice what flavor the kid was originally eating, but just decided on strawberry because it was the first flavor that I saw. I walked out and tried to hand it to the kid, but he just looked at it for a moment, and then started crying and screaming even louder than before. Obviously embarrassed, the mother thanked me anyway, and started pushing the stroller down the street while I stood there holding a melting strawberry ice cream. Not really caring for that flavor, I walked over to the nearest trash can and dropped it inside."

At this point, I looked closely at Hemingway and realized he was staring to the side of me at a group of people sitting at a table. Sitting with the group was a beautiful woman who seemed to have captivated Hemingway's attention. "What would you have done?" I asked him, and still looking to the side of me, he responded, "It's not what I would have done. It's what I'm going to do!" And he got up from his seat and went over to the table where the beautiful woman was sitting. He introduced himself, and because everyone knew who he was, they immediately invited him to join them.

Now sitting there alone I wondered if my story would have impressed anyone other than an average person like myself, who never had a 'Hemingway Day' in his entire life, and probably never would . . .

*-- Jeffrey Zable  
(October Pound of Flash)*

*From The Editors*

*Life is Like a Bag of Cheetos*

Full of hard pieces, devoured  
without thought of consequences. Potential  
choking hazards that dissolve,  
a mouthful of memories that stain  
everything they touch.

-- *A.J. Huffman*  
(*June Pyrokinecton*)

*Toes in the Wind*

Baby girl waits for greyhounds to emerge,  
feet swinging over railing as she holds on  
to supportive hands holding her. She giggles  
excitedly as the eight graceful gallopers are paraded  
before the crowd, waves her arms in support  
of her fast and furious friends. She knows  
nothing of protests or controversy of animals  
raised to race as sport. Her eight-month-old eyes  
only see freedom found by four paws pacing four more,  
running, streamline away from the sun.

-- *A.J. Huffman*  
(*October Pyrokinecton*)

*Twinkle Twinkle*

Little starfish  
flicker beneath layers of darkening  
water. Clouds of sand shift over  
their shapes, a reflection  
of night's sky. I touch this almost  
reality, my fingers shock  
its expanse. For a moment  
it prickles, before settling  
back into its eerie looking-glass  
impersonation of what lies  
beyond.

-- *A.J. Huffman*  
(*February Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Dawn Breaks*

through remnants of midnight's rain,  
illuminates the residual gray  
clinging to nature's morning. Eyes  
search for disruptive streak of lingering  
silver, refusing to relinquish  
the slick elegance of moonlight's glow.  
Failure: the abysmal haze holds,  
complete. I shrivel  
deeper into my own  
skin, an automatic escape  
attempt, focus on following  
a now less discernible path home.

-- *A.J. Huffman*  
(*October Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Your Penis Made You Do It*

You could not control it. You tried, but  
it would not listen to reason, drained  
all the blood from your head. You blacked out,  
woke with that blonde in your bed, had no idea  
where she came from. You think I should  
understand, forgive you for its mistake.  
I don't. I am not impressed  
by you or it. An erection is not monumental  
in my eyes. I do not mythologize it  
the way you do, the way you want me to.  
I have no desire to build a temple around it,  
flat out refuse to sacrifice my self  
respect in its honor. You continue  
your misogynistic diatribe, hoping  
to charm me into swallowing something,  
maybe even my pride. I eventually submit,  
fall into resignation, finally accept all you have  
to offer is the truth: you are truly sorry  
(though I prefer the term pathetic). I slam  
the door and my mind shut as I leave. Thoughts  
of you echo momentarily before fading  
into the forgettable pile of my other past  
mistakes.

*-- A.J. Huffman  
(January Napalm and Novocain)*

*Desire*

is a drop of blood permeating the ocean.  
An infusion of color consuming initial point  
of contact, slowly spreading in wash  
of tendrils. Temporary is the label  
of their touch. They tickle, tease with soft  
hues that distort vision, but quickly grow  
weak, dissolve until there is nothing  
but the original body, flowing, tainted  
by memory.

-- *A.J. Huffman*  
(*May Napalm and Novocain*)

***With Iron***

icicles carved from moonbeams, I battle  
mind-monsters crawling from moments  
of half-sleep. My adrenaline-junkie REM  
ranger rides past me. His dune buggy  
laden with long lost sleep dust. The bitter  
little bastard bits his thumb at me. I string  
a streak of bloody wishes, watch them erupt  
just under the skyline. Spin out, double  
flip. Bogey! My score is definite  
ly improving.

-- *A.J. Huffman*  
(*January The Mind[less] Muse*)

*I Wish I Had a Donut*

to sing me to sleep tonight. I have been  
a good girl, making friends with celery  
and carrots, really annoying vegetable sticks.  
Sadly, I find them standard issue. They bore me  
with their mocking selflessness. I would prefer the indulgent  
sound of jelly dripping through over-sugared dough to tuck  
me in, to lay itself beneath my head, a perfect pillow  
to foster sweet dreams filled with visions of a dietless life,  
a world where a crunchless bite doesn't echo with regret.

-- *A.J. Huffman*  
(*October The Mind[less] Muse*)

Fallen leaves dissolve  
beneath winter's smothering  
kiss. Seasons' cycle.

Skeletal trees stretch  
through morning's fog, desperate  
for hint of sun's warmth.

Grey eye of winter  
blinks, snowflakes fall at random,  
bless the earth like tears.

*-- A.J. Huffman  
(January High Coupe)*

### *Game of the Gods*

Admiral Richards idly strolled the upper deck of the U.S.S. Guitarro. The ship had been stationed off the Japanese coast for three months now. He was beginning to miss his wife and daughter back in the states. *Maybe it's time to request a transfer state side*, he thought as he ran his white-gloved hand instinctively under the railing. Satisfied that the fingertips remained clean, he prepared to return to his quarters. He was intercepted by Lieutenant Commander Collins.

“Sir, the radar is picking up Japanese naval movement just beyond those cliffs,” Collins indicated the steep cliffs about 4500 yards out.

“Have the men established radio contact?”

“Yes and no, sir. They have managed to isolate the ship’s transmitting frequency, but they aren’t getting any response.”

“I see,” Richards stared off towards the ridge. These situations were always difficult. If one is not careful an international incident could start because a destroyer’s transmission officer had too much wine at dinner and fell asleep on the job. “Tell the men to continue trying to establish contact. I will put in a call to the base in Yokohama to see if they have any military movements in the area we need to be aware of.”

The lieutenant had barely finished his departure salute when the first explosion sounded. The torpedo exploded about 1000 yards out, sending a pillar of water into the air that rained down on the admiral’s head. “Sound the alarms,” he demanded, wiping the water from his eyes. “Get the ship into attack position. I want all men on deck -- NOW!”

In minutes, alarms all over the ship were buzzing. Red warning lights flashed as another torpedo exploded -- only 500 yards out this time. They were getting closer. The admiral had visual on the ship now.

The Japanese destroy had moved from behind the cover of the cliffs, and was alight in full battle glory: flags raise; guns smoking.

“Red alert! Red alert!” the blow horn resonated across the deck. “All men on deck! Report to your stations immediately! Red alert!”

The admiral could feel the ship rock as the men clambered up onto the deck to man their battle stations. Collins had just returned when the third torpedo exploded. The ship rocked violently as the torpedo finally found its mark. “Damage report! I want a damage report immediately,” the admiral screamed over the din. But Collins was already scrambling back up the bridge.

Collins returned within moments to report that the damage was minimal. A small breach in the hull on the starboard side. The damage was above the water line and was already under control.

“Are the men in position?”

“Yes, sire.”

“Fire when ready.”

The lieutenant disappeared back into the bridge. And the blow horn sounded the order: “Fire.”

The ship bolted from the thrust of pressure as the torpedo was ejected. The admiral tracked its deadly path with his binoculars. It swept silently through the water. He saw the fire before he heard the explosion. “Direct hit,” he whispered to himself and smiled. That transfer would be guaranteed now.

The lieutenant returned as a roar rose up from the men. “Direct hit, sir. She’s sinking.” And as they watched, the flaming

inferno that was once a vessel of death slowly disappeared beneath the waves.

\* \* \* \* \*

The moon had just sunk below the cloud line when their game ended. A frown creased Buddha's brow as he slammed his fist down hard on the table. "You sank my battleship!"

God just smiled. "What shall we play next?"

*-- A.J. Huffman  
(January Pound of Flash)*

***Referential Mania***

*Everything is hideously symbolic*

-- *Dorianne Laux, "Abschied Symphony*

The ashtray hanging above the no-smoking sign, its one eye hole  
daring and inviting someone at the County Assistance Office  
of Mental Health (And Retardation, both) to extinguish  
a butt before entering by way of code punched  
into an archaic phone pad, speaks to me. It says I should  
quit smoking before I die of cancer.

It says time is running out. Life contains a code  
I have yet to crack.

The book of poetry that showed up in my mailbox  
says my name in it, right there in the text. This is no coincidence,  
even though my name is a month and that is probably what  
the poet meant. The songs on the radio,  
their metallic complaint of whining electric  
guitar speak to me, talking of skin graphs and war  
and making peace before we all die. Before we all cease.

The approach of autumn. My dying  
petunias and hibiscus. These things say to me  
it is time to do something great. But I do not know what  
that something is. So I light another cigarette, let its smell roll  
up in waves around my hair, consume me with its aura,  
look for following fire.

-- *April Salzano*  
*(January Pyrokinecton)*

*Garden Hoe*

I fuck for flowers.  
He is filling my garden now  
with the brightest purple pansies.  
He tills the earth in the bed, better  
dirt raked up to fertilize. Spores  
will catch the wind and ride  
to greener grasses.  
Pollinating progression breeds  
more blooms, spreading wide  
my intention to color the world  
in temporary shades of lusted hues.

-- April Salzano  
(*May Pyrokinecton*)

*Weeping Willow*

I am finally afraid to die, though I know  
that was not my husband's intention  
when he planted a willow tree at the edge  
of the driveway. I know this  
is where I will sit in twenty years  
when the trunk has finally grown tall  
enough so the embrace of branches forms  
the canopy where I will wait for my grandchildren  
to arrive on a day not unlike today,  
autumn a mere threat against September sun.  
They will say, *there is grandma under her tree.*  
I know the roots my tree is forming  
will ensure that it outlives me, them,  
their own children, just as I know my roots  
extend only just beneath the surface.

-- April Salzano  
(*January Jellyfish Whispers*)

*Running Dead*

Dear people who live  
in the house near my nest, today I am going  
to commit squirrel suicide. Know that  
it was nothing you did. Next chance  
I have when the man is driving (because  
the woman will risk her life not to hit me),  
I am going to run headlong into your tire,  
make it to the other side  
of the car, run 5 feet while dead,  
dive for a tree on pure instinct,  
and collapse in a tail twitching tragedy.  
There will be no other explanation  
for what did not appear to be an accident.  
It is simply too cold and I am too tired  
of attempting to gather my nuts.

-- April Salzano  
(*May Jellyfish Whispers*)

*If Love Can Be Put on a Shelf*

hatred can line the pantry, spin  
around on the lazy Susan like cans  
of kidney beans, organ pebbles held  
in aluminum captivity, dusty, waiting.  
Jealousy can rage in the fridge,  
barking at the plastic jug of milk,  
that bloated breast of sustenance,  
unnecessary, conspiratorial species'  
potion that slides down throats  
of our young, who believe they cannot  
live without it. Honesty can  
be folded with the laundry, washed  
clean, erased like a stain on fabric  
that hides flaws, covers scars, cracked  
open scabs on knees, flaking eczematic  
skin. Trust can be swept under the rug,  
crumbs, bits of bread and other garbage  
no one believes in anymore.

-- *April Salzano*  
(*January Napalm and Novocain*)

*He Loved Me Like a Whore*

like he was running out  
of time. His hands were  
everywhere his tongue  
would not go. He loved me  
like an ocean that threatened  
to drown us both, carry our wasted  
bodies to shore, enough salt  
to cleanse any wound. He loved me  
like I was no longer  
breathing. The air he exhaled  
was a breeze from that moment  
he was just passing through.

-- April Salzano  
(November Napalm and Novocain)

*Out of Thin Air*

I must choose my words, carefully  
and quietly, so they do not hear me coming  
with a butterfly net and a straight jacket.  
I am diving up/through loose threads of sleep.  
Neither will not come willingly & Both/  
is too heavy for me to lift//on my own, what  
goes unhomogenized will settle at the top  
to be skimmed/from another dream.

-- *April Salzano*  
(*January The Mind[less] Muse*)

*The Girl of My Dreams*

She is thin in the morning and fat  
by nightfall, loose seams tearing apart, death  
a wish that comes as much as it goes,  
a passing fancy, a fancy passing.  
She watches a string dance, umbilicus  
of dust laced from ceiling to cupboard,  
she is sure it is not the reverse.  
She watches it blow but never fall.  
Falling and mingling with the rest of the filth,  
it will go undetected. Her skin has a mouth  
that eats everything in sight. Careful,  
she thinks you look delicious.  
Dust bunnies romp in the garden of her  
dreams, unflowered, save the dandelions  
with all their heads popped off  
because of people who had babies  
and made rhyme out of reason,  
not the reverse. Laughter is her echo,  
a paralyzing fit of convulsions.  
She is contradicted.  
Look into the mirror. Her  
reflection is yours. Now read this  
backwards and see  
how lovely she is.

-- April Salzano  
(*May The Mind[less] Muse*)

Rote answer robot  
programmed with your ABA.  
Independent thoughts?

Undeniable  
truth rests in what you say that  
you think I can't hear.

Limit what is fun.  
Electronics, narcotics,  
poison for my brain.

Zipper weighted vest,  
offer sensory fidget,  
thing to bite or pull.

*-- April Salzano  
(January High Coupe)*

### *Days of Our Lives*

Sometimes I say it aloud, though in a whisper, the way they do on soap operas. As if the actors could hear them anyway. As if they wouldn't just act like the replacement actor was the regular character. But saying it helps me make it real. "Today April will be playing the part of a good mother."

Other days I actually feel it without having to say it. These are the days of cookies baked from scratch. They are just Nestle Tollhouse pan cookies, but you would be surprised how many people have never heard of them. Once at a BBQ hosted by my best friend for her new husband's family, the retarded brother in law who loved milk and home movies asked on a reconnaissance mission for his chain-smoking, wax-eared mother if he could have the recipe. He simultaneously insisted the cookies were "from a mix." I do not attribute his lack of manners to his being retarded. I didn't give him the recipe though I am pretty sure it's a matter of public record. It may even be printed on the bag on chocolate chips. I bake the cookies and play outside with my two sons on the swing set and only sneak off to smoke a couple cigarettes, answer only half my text messages and keep my F-bombs to an absolute minimum. I may even suggest a board game after dinner.

Then there are days I plan to play the role and fail miserably. There are no cookies. The television serves as babysitter and my ashtray overflows. I admit to hoping my kids don't notice the poor substitute for a mother the casting agency has sent, that neither of them will sting me with a "what's the matter mommy?" or worse, an "are you happy, Mom?" These are the kind of days I can only wait for bedtime to come and pray everyone wakes the following morning unscathed. I tell myself these are not the days that translate into memory, though I remember my fair share of them, a locked screen door and the smell of smoke on my mother's breath.

-- April Salzano  
(*May Pound of Flash*)

## *Author Bios*

**Sheikha A.** hails from Pakistan and United Arab Emirates and is the author of a short poetry collection titled *Spaced* [Hammer and Anvil Books, 2013]. Her work appears in over 40 literary zines/journals/magazines such as *Red Fez*, *The Muse*, *Ygdrasil*, *A New Ulster*, *Pyrokinecton*, *Mad Swirl*, *Carcinogenic Poetry*, *ken\*again*, *American Diversity Report* to name a few, and several anthologies by Silver Birch Press. Her recent publications have been in *Switch [the Difference]* anthology by Kind of a Hurricane Press and *Twenty Seven Signs – Poetry Anthology* by Lady Chaos Press.

**Jonel Abellanosa** resides in Cebu City, the Philippines. His poetry is forthcoming in *Anglican Theological Review*, *The Lyric*, *Ancient Paths*, and has appeared in *Windhover*, *PEN Peace Mindanao anthology*, *Star\*Line*, *Liquid Imagination*, *Mobius Journal of Social Change*, *Inwood Indiana Press*, *Golden Lantern*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *New Verse News*, *Qarrtsiluni*, *Anak Sastra: Stories for Southeast Asia*, *Fox Chase Review*, *Burning Word*, *Barefoot Review*, *Red River Review*, *Philippines Free Press*, *Philippine Graphic*. He is working on his first poetry collection, *Multiverse*.

**Carol Amato** has had her poetry appear in several magazines and journals. She feels the goal of much of her poetry is to help the reader to visualize and appreciate the interconnectedness between humans and nature. She is also the author of several nature-based children's books and a natural science educator in the greater Boston area. Her 'Let's Find Out Program' carries her across the state in pursuit of the wonder of children! As an evaluator of children's books for Barron's Educational Series (one of her publishers), she is devoted to encouraging writers to also inspire wonder.

**Amanda Anastasi** is a poet from Melbourne, Australia, and is a two-time winner of the Williamstown Literary Festival's *Ada Cambridge Poetry Prize*. Amanda's first poetry collection *2012 and other poems* was named in Ali Alizadeh's Top Ten Poetic Works of 2012 in *Overland Literary Journal*. She is also the co-writer of *Loop City*, a spoken word/music show about Melbourne, which was commissioned by MSO violinist Sarah Curro for the *Volume* concert series.

**Janet Shell Anderson** writes flash fiction, has published a "flash" novel, has been published by decomP, Vestal Review, FRIGG, Convergence, Grey Sparrow, Cease Cows and others and has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize for fiction. She is an attorney.

**Steve Ausherman** is an artist, photographer and writer whose poetry has thrice been nominated for the Pushcart Prize in poetry. His first chapbook entitled *Creek Bed Blue* (Encircle Publications, 2012) has been nominated for a 2014 New Mexico Book Award and celebrates farming, family heritage and a connection to place. His forthcoming chapbook entitled, *Marking the Bend* (Encircle Publications) is scheduled for 2015 publication and celebrates travel, spirit in the landscape, and a love of wilderness. His poetry has recently been in the literary journals *Decanto*, *Bear Creek Haiku*, *the Aureorean*, *Cheap Seats: Ticket to Ride*, *Pilgrimage and Shemom*. As well, his work recently appeared in the poetry anthology *Mo'Joe* (Beatlick Press, 2014). Free time finds him exploring the hiking trails of the American West with his wife Denise.

**Mary Jo Balistreri** has two books of poetry, *Joy in the Morning*, and *gathering the harvest*, both published by Bellowing Ark Press. A chapbook, *Best Brothers*, is forthcoming in spring, 2014 from Tiger's Eye Press. Mary Jo has published widely, and has three Pushcart nominations and two Best of the Net. She is a founding member of Grace River Poets, an outreach for schools, women's shelters, and churches. Please visit Mary Jo on her website [maryjobalistreripoet.com](http://maryjobalistreripoet.com)

**Pattie Palmer-Baker** discovered, after exhibiting her work, a combination of her poetry in calligraphic form and collages of paste paper, that most people, despite what they may believe, do like poetry, and in fact many like the poetry better than the visual art. She now concentrates on poetry. She still creates artwork but not as often. She finds poetry is more engaging. She loves words.

**Donna Barkman** was born into a family of actors, and started performing in kindergarten and has been writing for a dozen years. Recent productions: "What Goes Around" and a solo play, "Sticks and Stones and Women's Bones," produced in NYC and Peekskill, NY. Her poetry has been published in *The Westchester Review*, *Pennsylvania English*, *Chautauqua*, *Common Ground*, *Adrienne Rich: A Tribute Anthology*, and others. She's enjoyed two artist residencies in Wyoming.

**Amy Barry** writes poems and short stories. She has worked in the media, hotel and Oil& Gas industries. Her poems have been published in anthologies, journals, and e-zines, in Ireland and abroad. Her poems have been read and shared over the radio in Australia, Canada and Ireland. Trips to India, Nepal, China, Bali, Paris, Berlin and Tramore-have all inspired her work. When not inspired to write, she plays Table Tennis.

**David J. Bauman** has been printed in various student and faculty journals. His awards include the Savage Poetry Prize from Bloomsburg University and the Academy of American Poets. He has recent poems published or forthcoming in *T(OUR)*, *The Blue Hour Magazine*, *Word Fountain* and *Watershed*, a Journal of the Susquehanna. He writes regularly about the joys of fatherhood, nature and poetry in his blog *The Dad Poet*, <http://dadpoet.wordpress.com>

**Sarah Bence** is a senior English and Creative Writing major at Kenyon College, where she also works as the Community Outreach Intern for the *Kenyon Review*. Her poetry has previously been published in *The Dunes Review*, *The Round*, and *Apeiron Review*.

**Karen Berry** lives and works in Portland, Oregon. Her poetry has been published in *Goblin Fruit*, *Fireweed*, *Seek It*, *Prairie Poetry*, and many more journals and anthologies. Her poem "Ceres" was nominated for the Dwarf Star Poetry Prize, and her piece "Caught" was a runner-up in *The Binnacle's* ultra-short fiction competition. Her first novel, *Love and Mahem at Francie June Memorial Trailer Park*, was published in June of 2014.

**Aaron Besson** is a writer of horror and dark fiction from Seattle, Washington. His writing has been published in the *Weird Fiction Review* from Centipede Press, James Ward Kirk Publishing, J Ellington Ashton Press, and Spinetingers.

**Byron Beynon** has appeared in several publications, including *Jellyfish Whispers*, *Montucky Review*, *Worcester Review*, *Poetry Wales*, *Poppy Road Review* and *London Magazine*. His most recent collection is *The Echoing Coastline* (Agenda Editions).

**Ali Carey Billedeaux** is a Midwestern writer, but she doesn't usually write about what she knows. For more information about her work, follow her blog at [aliwriteswords.wordpress.com](http://aliwriteswords.wordpress.com).

**Jane Blanchard** lives and writes in Georgia. Her work has recently appeared in *Boston Literary Magazine*, *The Enigmatist*, *Halycon*, *Kigo*, and *Leaves of Ink*.

**Sam Bockover** is a writer and poet from the American Midwest.

**Andrew M. Bowen** works as a sales manager. He is trying to publish his first novel. He has appeared in eight independent films and five stage productions.

**Shirley J. Brewer** is a poet, educator, and workshop facilitator. Her poetry has appeared in *The Cortland Review*, *Comstock Review*, *Passager*, *New Verse News*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Manorborn*, and other publications. Her poetry chapbook, *A Little Breast Music*, was published in 2008 by Passager Books. A second book of poems, *After Words*, was published in 2013 by Apprentice House/Loyola University. [www.apoeticlicense.com](http://www.apoeticlicense.com)

**Alan S. Bridges** began writing haiku in 2008, with encouragement from poet John Stevenson after the pair met on a cross-country train ride. Alan was subsequently included in *A New Resonance 7*, *Emerging Voices in English-Language Haiku*, Red Moon Press, 2011. An avid fisherman, he is

currently compiling fishing-related haiku for an anthology. He resides in Littleton, Massachusetts.

**Michael H. Brownstein** has been widely published. His latest works, *Firestorm: A Rendering of Torah* (<http://booksonblog35.blogspot.com/>) (Camel Saloon Books on Blogs) and *The Katy Trail, Mid-Missouri, 100F Outside and other poems* (<http://barometricpressures.blogspot.com/2013/07/the-katy-trail-mid-missouri-100f.html>) (Barometric Pressures--A Kind of Hurricane Press). *The Katy Trail, Mid-Missouri, 100F Outside And Other Poems* His work has appeared in *The Café Review*, *American Letters and Commentary*, *Xavier Review*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Meridian Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*, *The Pacific Review*, and others. In addition, he has nine poetry chapbooks including *The Shooting Gallery* (Samidat Press, 1987), *Poems from the Body Bag* (Ommation Press, 1988), *A Period of Trees* (Snark Press, 2004), *What Stone Is* (Fractal Edge Press, 2005), and *I Was a Teacher Once* (Ten Page Press, 2011: (<http://tenpagespress.wordpress.com/2011/03/27/i-was-a-teacher-once-by-michael-h-brownstein/>)). He is the editor of *First Poems from Viet Nam* (2011).

**J.J. Campbell** has given up the farm life and is currently trapped in suburbia. He's been widely published over the years, most recently at The Camel Saloon, Your One Phone Call, Pink Litter, 48th Street Press and Dead Snakes. His latest collection, *Sofisticated White Trash*, is available wherever people buy books these days. You can find J.J. most days polluting the world with his thoughts at his highly entertaining blog, evil delights. (<http://evildelights.blogspot.com>)

**Andrew Campbell-Kearsey** is a former headteacher/principall who now writes short stories. His first anthology was printed last year by Spinetinglers, called 'Centurionman.' Two of his stories have been filmed and screened at Cannes and at the Hollyshorts Film Festival, Los Angeles.

**Theresa A. Cancro** writes poetry and short fiction from Wilmington, Delaware. Many of her poems have been published in online and print journals, including Kind of a Hurricane Press anthologies, The Artistic Muse, Kumquat Poetry, Birds By My Window, The Rainbow Journal,

Lost Paper, Brass Bell, A Handful of Stones, A Hundred Gourds, Cattails, Chrysanthemum, Shamrock Haiku Journal, and Presence, among others.

**Seamas Carraher** was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1956. He lives on the Ballyogan estate, in South County Dublin, Ireland, at present. Kind of a Hurricane Press published his chapbook *South Dakota Suite* online, in July 2014. <http://www.seamascarraher.blogspot.ie/>

**John Casquarelli** is the author of two full-length collections, *On Equilibrium of Song* (Overpass Books 2011) and *Lavender* (Authorspress 2014). He serves as Editor for *Otter Magazine* (<http://ottermagazine.com/>) and *Overpass Books* (<http://overpassbooks.org/>). He was awarded the 2010 Esther Hyneman Award for Poetry and the 2015 Petite Kafka Award. John is a member of a literary and art community called the Unbearables. His work has appeared in the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association's (HETL) anthology, *Teaching as a Human Experience* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing). Other publishing credits include *Storm Cycle: Best of Kind of a Hurricane Press*, *Suisun Valley Review*, *Ginosko Literary Journal*, *Pyrokinjection*, *Visceral Brooklyn*, *Flatbush Review*, and *Kinship of Rivers*.

**Alan Catlin** has been publishing since the seventies earning him the title Venerable Bard, not to be confused with the Venerable Bede, an entirely different kind of writer. He has published a number of chapbooks and full length book including a chapbook of surreal poems illustrated by collage artist Michael Shores titled, "The Insomniac's Gift", which was nominated for a Bram Stoker Book Award. He has a new full length book, *Alien Nation*. It is a collection of four thematically related chapbooks of poetry.

**Cathleen Chambless** is a Miami native. She is an MFA candidate in poetry at FIU, and also a visual artist and activist. Her work has appeared in MPC's 10 Cent Journal, the

anthology *A Touch of Saccharine*, and she was a poetry finalist for the Bellingham Review's 2014 Parallel Award for poetry. She co-authors a queer/feminist zine called *Phallacies*.

**David Chorlton** came to Phoenix from Europe in 1978 with his wife Roberta, an Arizona native. He quickly became comfortable with the climate while adjusting to the New World too longer. Writing and reading poetry have helped immensely in that respect, as has exposure to the American small presses. Arizona's landscape and wildlife became increasingly important to him both as a source of pleasure and a measure of how precarious the natural world is. Thirty years ago he regarded the idea of "nature poetry" as one tainted with sentimentality but today it appears ever more necessary as an element of resistance to the conformity that Edward Abbey confronted so well in his writings on the Southwest. FutureCycle Press recently published his *Selected Poems*.

**Aidan Clarke** has been a writer for more than 3 decades during most of which he has lived, worked and walked around in Newcastle Upon Tyne. He has been performing his poetry at Spoken Word events for 4 years. His USP is a menu of around 140 poems each of which he can perform off by heart on request.

**Daniel Clausen** has been published in *Slipstream Magazine*, *Zygote* in my *Coffee*, *Leading Edge Magazine*, and *Spindrift*, among other literary journals. You can learn more about his newest novel, *The Ghosts of Nagasaki*, at: [ghostsofnagasaki.com](http://ghostsofnagasaki.com)

**Mike Cluff** is a writer living in the inland section of Southern California. He is now finishing two books of poetry: "The Initial Napoleon" and "Bulleled Meat" -- both of which are scheduled for publication in late 2013/early 2014. He believes that individuality is the touchstone of his life and pursues that ideal with passion and dedication to help the world improve with each passing instance. He also hopes to take up abstract painting in the next several months.

**Cathleen Cohen** is Education Director of *ArtWell*, ([www.theartwell.org](http://www.theartwell.org)), which brings poetry and arts workshops to thousands of children of diverse cultures and faiths in the Philadelphia

area and abroad. Cathleen's poems have appeared in such publications as *Apiary*, *Baltimore Review*, *East Coast Ink*, *Ember*, *The Four Quarters Magazine*, *Ishaan Literary Review*, *Moment*, *Layers of Possibility*, *Philadelphia Stories*, *6ix*, *The Breath of Parted Lips*, and *Bridges: A Jewish Feminist Journal*. She has received the *Interfaith Relations Award* from the Montgomery County Advisory Board to the PA Human Rights Commission and the *Public Service Award* from the National Association of Poetry Therapy. Her paintings have been exhibited in Philadelphia, New Jersey and NYC at *Rosenfeld Gallery*, *RiverArts Gallery*, and *Soho20 Chelsea Gallery*.

**SuzAnne C. Cole** holds an MA from Stanford, is a former college English instructor, and writes from a studio in the Texas Hill Country. Her flash fiction has been published in many anthologies and magazines including *The World's Best Shortest Stories* (of all time), has been listed on *The Best of the Web del Sol*, and nominated for Pushcart Prizes in both fiction and poetry. Her book *To Our Heart's Content: Meditations for Women Turning Fifty* was published by Contemporary. She's also published more than 400 essays, plays, and poetry in venues ranging from *Newsweek*, *Baltimore Sun*, *Houston Chronicle*, *San Antonio Express-News* to literary and commercial journals. She and her husband have traveled the world— Iceland, China, Nepal, Panama, Peru, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, Britain, Ireland, Turkey, Slovakia, Costa Rica, France, Italy, Switzerland, and Russia. That being said, she also likes to imagine future worlds of exploration and imagination.

**Kelly Cressio-Moeller** has new poems forthcoming in *Gargoyle*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Spillway*, and *THRUSH Poetry Journal*. Previously, her work has appeared in *Boxcar Poetry Review*, *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Rattle*, and *ZYZZYVA* as well as the anthology *First Water: Best of Pirene's Fountain*, Diane Lockward's book, *The Crafty Poet*, and elsewhere. Her poems have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best New Poets. You can visit her website here: [www.kellycressiommoeller.com](http://www.kellycressiommoeller.com)

**Larry Crist** has lived in Seattle for the past 20 years and is originally from California, specifically Humboldt County. He has lived in Chicago, Houston, London, and Philadelphia where he attended Temple U receiving an MFA in theatre. He's been widely published. Some of his favorites are Pearl, Rattle, Slipstream, Evening Street Review, Dos Passos Review, Alimentum, Floating Bridge Press and Clover. Larry is publishing his first poetry collection in March '14, *Undertow Overtures*.

**Betsy Cullen** resides in West Chester, Pennsylvania. She views the natural world with reverence tempered with realism. Her work has appeared in two anthologies published by Kind of a Hurricane Press. She earned a B.A. from the University of Rochester and an M.A. from Cornell University and began writing poetry in retirement. She is married with two grown children and three granddaughters. She can be reached at [ewcullen@yahoo.com](mailto:ewcullen@yahoo.com).

**Peter Dabbene** has seen his poetry published in many online and print literary journals, and collected in the book *Optimism*. His stories can be found online at [www.defenestrationmag.net](http://www.defenestrationmag.net), [www.mcsweeneys.net](http://www.mcsweeneys.net), [www.piginpoke.com](http://www.piginpoke.com), [www.wordriot.org](http://www.wordriot.org), and elsewhere, and his comic book work can be seen in the graphic novels *Ark* and *Robin Hood*, and the magazine *Futurequake*. He has published two story collections, *Prime Movements* and *Glossolalia*, and a novel, *Mister Dreyfus' Demons*. His latest book is the humor collection *More Spamming the Spammers (with Dieter P. Bieny)*. He writes a monthly column for the *Hamilton Post* (viewable at [www.mercerspace.com/blog/pdabbene](http://www.mercerspace.com/blog/pdabbene)) and reviews for BlueInk Review and Foreword Reviews. His plays have been performed in New Jersey and Philadelphia venues. His website is [www.peterdabbene.com](http://www.peterdabbene.com).

**Dah** has appeared, most recently, in *The Sandy River Review*, *Stone Voices Magazine*, *Diverse Voices Quarterly*, *Orion headless*, *Words & Images In Flight*, and *Miracle Magazine*, and is forthcoming in *Eunoia Review*, *Perfume River Review*, *River & South Review*, and *Literature Today*. The author of two collections of poetry from Stillpoint Books, his third collection is due for publication in 2014, also from Stillpoint.

Dah lives in Berkeley, California, where he is currently working on the manuscript for his fourth book.

**Susan Dale** has had her poems and fiction published in Hurricane Press, Ken \*Again, Penman Review, Inner Art Journal, Feathered Flounder, Garbanzo, and Hurricane Press. In 2007, she won the grand prize for poetry from Oneswan.

**Cassandra Dallett** occupies Oakland, CA. Cassandra writes of a counter culture childhood in Vermont and her ongoing adolescence in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has published in *Slip Stream*, *Sparkle and Blink*, *Hip Mama*, *The Chiron Review*, *Bleed Me A River*, *Ascent Aspirations*, *Criminal Class Review*, *Enizagam*, *The Delinquent* and *The Milvia Street Journal* among many others. Look for links and chapbooks on [cassandradallett.com](http://cassandradallett.com)

**J.P. Dancing Bear** prefers to let the work speak for itself.

**Tim Dardis** grew up in Northbrook, Illinois and lives in Boulder, Colorado. He earned a Bachelor of Special Studies from Cornell College, in Mt. Vernon, Iowa, and a Master of Arts in English-Creative Writing from the University of Colorado Boulder. In past lives he's been a special education teaching assistant, a wilderness canoe guide, and an adaptive ski instructor. He currently works as a Content Services Specialist for Vertafore and competes as an Expert mountain bike racer. His poems have appeared in *Flatirons Literary Review*, *Toad Suck Review*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Chicago Literati*, *Fat City Review*, *Midnight Screaming*, *Whetstone*, *Hudson Valley Echoes*, *Grasslands Review*, *Kinesis*, *Sierra Nevada College Review*, and *Poetry Motel*. He is the author of *Road Rash – Selected Poems*, forthcoming from Shakespeare & Company - Toad Suck Press.

**Theresa Darling** has been published in The Green Hills Literary Journal, Baily's Beads, Hellbender Journal, Kind of a Hurricane Press, and The Cellar Door. Her poem "Another Departure" was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She recently fulfilled a lifelong

dream by moving to Vermont, where she hopes to live happily ever after with her husband Reg, and two shelter cats.

**William G. Davies, Jr.** lives in a town surrounded by dairy farms. He has been happily married for thirty-eight years. His work has appeared in the Cortland Review, Bluepepper, The Wilderness House Review, Gloom Cupboard and many others.

**Pijush Kanti Deb** is a new poet with 60 published poems and haiku in different national and international magazines and journals-print and online. He is an Associate Professor in Economics. He lives in India.

**Darren C. Demaree** is living in Columbus, Ohio with his wife and children. He is the author of "As We Refer To Our Bodies" (2013) and "Not For Art Nor Prayer" (2014), both collections are to be published by 8th House Publishing House. He is also the recipient of two Pushcart Prize nominations.

**James Diaz** lives in New York. His poems can be found in Pismire, Epigraph, Negative Suck, Abramelin, and My Favorite Bullet.

**Bruce Louis Dodson** is an American expat living in Borlänge, Sweden, where he practices photography and writes fiction and poetry. Some of his most recent work has appeared in: Breadline Press West Coast Poetry Anthology, Foreign & Far Away – Writers Abroad Anthology, Sleeping Cat Books – Trip of a Lifetime Anthology, The Crucible, Blue Collar Review, Barely South Review, 3rd Wednesday, The Path, Northern Liberties Review, Pirene's Fountain, Sounds of Solace – Meditative Verse Anthology, Tic Toc Anthology, High Coupe, Vine Leaves, and Cordite Poetry Review.

**Liz Dolan** was nominated for both the Robert McGovern Prize, Ashville University, and a Pushcart for her poetry manuscript, *A Secret of Long Life*. She has been published by Cave Moon Press. Her first poetry collection, *They Abide*, was published by March Street. An eight-time Pushcart nominee and winner of Best of the Web, she was a finalist for Best of the Net 2014. She recently won The Nassau Prize for prose. She has received fellowships from the Delaware Division of

the Arts, The Atlantic Center for the Arts and Martha's Vineyard. Liz serves on the poetry board of *Philadelphia Stories*.

**Melissa Duclos** is the founder of the Clovers Project, which provides mentoring for writers at various stages of their careers. Her work has appeared in *Salon*, *The Offing*, and *Electric Literature*, among other venues. She received her MFA from Columbia University and now lives in Portland, OR, with her husband and two children. She works as a freelance writer, editor, and writing instructor.

**J.K. Durick** is a writing teacher at the Community College of Vermont and an online writing tutor. His recent poems have appeared in *Write Rome*, *Black Mirror*, *Third Wednesday*, *Foliage Oak*, and *Orange Room*.

**Liz Egan** holds an MFA in fiction writing from George Mason University. Her writing has been published in *ink & coda* and *Sliced Bread*. She teaches writing and directs the writing center at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi.

**Chiyuma Elliott** is an Assistant Professor of African American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. A former Stegner Fellow, Chiyuma's poems have appeared in the *African American Review*, *Callaloo*, the *Notre Dame Review*, the *PN Review*, and other journals. She has received fellowships from the American Philosophical Society, the James Irvine Foundation, and the Vermont Studio Center. She is currently at work on a poem cycle called *Vigil*.

**Neil Ellman** writes from New Jersey, and has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net, and the Rhysling Award. More than 900 of his poems, many of which are ekphrastic and written in response to works of modern and contemporary art, appear in print and online journals, anthologies and chapbooks throughout the world.

**Eric Evans** is a writer and musician from Buffalo, New York with stops in Portland, Oregon and Rochester, New York where he currently resides. His work has appeared in *Artvoice*, *decomP magazinE*, *Tangent Magazine*, *Posey*, *Xenith Magazine*, *Anobium Literary Magazine*, *Pemmican Press*, *Remark* and many other publications and anthologies. He has published seven full collections and three broadsides through his own small press, Ink Publications, in addition to a broadside through Lucid Moon Press. He is the editor of *The Bond Street Review* as well as the proud recipient of the 2009 Geva Theatre Center Summer Academy Snapple Fact Award.

**Alexis Rhone Fancher** is the author of “*How I Lost My Virginity To Michael Cohen and Other Heart Stab Poems*,” (Sybaritic Press, 2014). You can find her work in *Rattle*, *The MacGuffin*, *Fjords*, *Broadzine!*, *Slipstream*, *H\_NGM\_N*, *The Chiron Review*, *Menacing Hedge*, *Ragazine*, *Cactus Heart*, *Carbon Culture Review*, *The Literary Underground*, and elsewhere. Her poems have been published in over twenty American and international anthologies. Alexis is Photography Editor of *Fine Linen Literary Journal*. Her photos have been published worldwide, including spreads in *River Styx*, *Blue Lyra*, *Blink-Ink*, and the covers of *The Mas Tequila Review* and *Witness*. Since 2013 she’s been nominated for three Pushcart Prizes and a Best of The Net award. Alexis is poetry editor of *Cultural Weekly*, where she also publishes *The Poet’s Eye*, a monthly photo essay about Los Angeles. [www.alexisrhonefancher.com](http://www.alexisrhonefancher.com)

**Cyd Ferree** is a songwriter (as Cyd Ward) and graphic designer. She lives in the Sunshine State, and attends the Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia full-time, where writing revives her between storms.

**Claire T. Feild** has had 286 poems accepted for print publication in 101 journals and anthologies such as *The Tulane Review*; *Chinaberries and Crows: An Anthology*; *Palimpsest: A Creative Journal of the Humanities*; *Zymbol Magazine*; *Folio*; *The Path: A Literary Magazine*; *Pinyon Review*; *Dewpoint Literary Magazine*; *Birmingham Arts Journal*; *Kudzu*; *Words Dance*; *Coup d’Etat*; *Folio*; *San Pedro River Review*; *The Homestead Review*; and *The Carolina Quarterly*. Her first poetry book is *Mississippi Delta Women in Prism*. Her second

collection of poetry is titled *Southern Aunts: The 1950s. Indigo Blues*, a micro-book, was published by the Origami Poetry Project. Her fourth book is a creative non-fiction book titled *A Delta Vigil: Yazoo City, Mississippi, the 1950s*.

**Daniel N. Flanagan** is a Worcester, MA native. He is the author of three short stories, including the popular “Daddy's Girl,” along with twenty poems, featured in *Poppy Road Review*, *Three Line Poetry*, etc. He has one chap-book, four stories and six poems scheduled for publication by various journals, including *Stone Path Review*. Check him out at [www.DanFlanagan.webs.com](http://www.DanFlanagan.webs.com) and follow him @DanielNFlanagan.

**Ryan Quinn Flanagan** has published thirteen collections of poetry and one joint chapbook through various small presses. He is a Pushcart Prize nominee, and a 2010 Sundress Best of the Net finalist. His poetry has appeared in nearly a hundred online and print journals spanning five continents.

**Pattie Flint** is an uprooted Seattle native toughing it out in Scotland binding books by hand. She has been published in *Five [Quarterly]*, *Hippocampus* and *TAB*, amongst others. She is currently working on her MFA at Cedar Crest College.

**Sarah Flint** lives in the West Country of the UK and for several years has written about diverse interests including gardening, cooking and climbing. At present she likes to write poetry. She enjoys playing with words and tries to put them in an interesting order. Her poetry has been published by *The Pygmy Giant*, *Message in a Bottle* and she has been runner-up in the Mountaineering Council of Scotland poetry competition.

**Nancy Flynn** grew up on the Susquehanna River in northeastern Pennsylvania, spent many years on a downtown creek in Ithaca, New York, and now lives near the mighty Columbia in Portland, Oregon. She attended Oberlin College, Cornell University, and has an M.A. in English from SUNY at Binghamton. Her writing

has received an Oregon Literary Fellowship and the James Jones First Novel Fellowship. Poetry chapbooks include *The Hours of Us* (2007) and *Eternity a Coal's Throw* (2012); her book-length collection, *Every Door Recklessly Ajar*, was published by Cayuga Lake Books in June 2015. Her website is [www.nancyflynn.com](http://www.nancyflynn.com).

**Vernon Frazer** is a poet and author. His most recent books of poetry include *T(exto)-V(visual) Poetry* and *Unsettled Music*. Enigmatic Ink has published Frazer's new novel, *Field Reporting*. Frazer's web site is <http://www.vernonfrazer.net>. *Bellicose Warbling*, the blog that updates his web page, can be read at <http://bellicosewarbling.blogspot.com/> His work, including the long poem *IMPROVISATIONS*, may also be viewed at [Scribd.com](http://Scribd.com). In addition to writing poetry and fiction, Frazer also performs his poetry, incorporating text and recitation with animation and musical accompaniment on YouTube. Frazer is married.

**Linda Gamble** is a retired reading specialist from New Jersey. She has previously published poems in Edison Literary Review, US1 Worksheets, Mused, A Kind of Hurricane, A Long Story Short, Camel Saloon and Jellyfish Whispers.

**Sue Mayfield Geiger** is a freelance writer living on the Texas Gulf Coast.

**Phil Ginsburg** is a performance poet/playwright. His two poetry chapbooks "Psychotropic Poems" and "The Choreography of Corn" are available at Poor Richards Bookstore in Colorado Springs, CO. His poetry work can be discovered at [indiefeedpp.libsyn.com](http://indiefeedpp.libsyn.com). His short play "Anonymous, Anonymous" was also performed in 2014 at the Confetti Stage Short Play Fest in Albany, NY. Another short play, "Another Day in Polka-Topia," was the winner of the 2011 Alan Minieri Playwright Award at the American Globe Theater in NYC. He lives in Colorado Springs and is active in the poetry and theater community there.

**Jessica Gleason** writes because Bukowski no longer can. Gleason has two published books, "Madison Murphy, Wisconsin Weirdo" and "Sundown on This Town." Her work can also be found in Nefarious

Ballerina, Fickle Muses, Postcard Shorts, Misfits Miscellany, Citizens for Decent Literature and Verse Wisconsin. If you want to read more of her work, google her. She also, occasionally, likes to sleep in a Star Trek uniform and has mastered The Song of Time on her Ocarina.

**Patricia L. Goodman** is a widowed mother and grandmother, a graduate of Wells College with a degree in Biology and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. Her career involved breeding and training horses with her orthodontist husband on their farm in Chadds Ford, PA. She has had poems published in the likes of *Aries*, *The Broadkill Review*, *Sugar Mule*, *Requiem Magazine*, *Jellyfish Whispers*, *Fox Chase Review*; *Mistletoe Madness*, *Storm Cycle*, *Poised in Flight* (all from Kind of a Hurricane Press) *On Our Own* (Silver Boomer Books) and *The Widow's Handbook*. Her first book, *Closer to the Ground* was a finalist in the 2014 Dogfish Head Poetry Competition and she has twice won the Delaware Press Association Communications Award in poetry. She lives on the banks of the Red Clay Creek in Delaware, where she is surrounded by the natural world she loves.

**Taylor Graham** is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in the Sierra Nevada. She's included in the anthologies *Villanelles* (Everyman's Library, 2012) and *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Santa Clara University, 2004). Her book *The Downstairs Dance Floor* was awarded the Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize. Her latest book is *What the Wind Says* (Lummox Press, 2013), poems about living and working with her canine search partners over the past 40 years.

**Allison Grayhurst** is a full member of the League of Canadian Poets. She has over 600 poems published in more than 300 international journals, magazines, and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcupine Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published ten other books of poetry and four collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of

*Somewhere Falling* she had a poetry book published, *Common Dream*, and four chapbooks published by The Plowman. Her poetry chapbook *The River is Blind* was recently published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press December 2012. She lives in Toronto with family. She also sculpts, working with clay.

**John Grey** is an Australian born poet. Recently published in *The Lyric*, *Vallum* and the science fiction anthology, "The Kennedy Curse" with work upcoming in *Bryant Literary Magazine*, *Natural Bridge*, *Southern California Review* and the *Oyez Review*.

**Carl James Grindley** grew up on an island on Canada's pacific coast but now lives and works in the south Bronx. His last book of poetry, *Lora and The Dark Lady*, was published in 2013 by *Ravenna Press*.

**Cristine A. Gruber** has had worked featured in numerous magazines, including: *North American Review*, *Writer's Digest*, *Writers' Journal*, *Ascent Aspirations*, *California Quarterly*, *Dead Snakes Online Journal*, *The Endicott Review*, *Garbanzo Literary Journal*, *The Homestead Review*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Kind of a Hurricane Press: Something's Brewing Anthology*, *Miller's Pond Poetry Magazine*, *The Penwood Review*, *Poem*, *Thema*, *The Tule Review*, and *Westward Quarterly*. Her first full-length collection of poetry, *Lifeline*, was released by *Infinity Publishing* and is available from *Amazon.com*

**Ahab Hamza** is a university student born in Birkenhead on 27th November 1993. He has been featured in the several publications including *The Recusant's "The Robin Hood Book"* anthology and the Spring 2012 issue of *Inclement Magazine*. Most recently he has been featured in *Kind of a Hurricane Press's Pyrokinection*, the "What's Your Sign" anthology and *Forward Poetry's "Love is in the Air"* anthology of 2014. He was also shortlisted for the 2012 *erbacce* prize for poetry.

**Patricia Hanahoe-Dosch** has been published in *The Atticus Review*, *War, Art and Literature*, *Confrontation*, *The Red River Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Marco Polo Arts Magazine*, *Red Ochre Lit*, *Nervous Breakdown*, *Quantum Poetry Magazine*, *The Paterson*

*Literary Review*, *Abalone Moon*, *Apt*, *Switched-On Gutenberg*, *Paterson: The Poets' City* (an anthology edited by Marie Mazziotti Gillan), and *MALALA: Poems for Malala Yousafzai* (a Good Works anthology by FutureCycle Press to raise money for the Malala Fund), among others. Articles of hers have appeared in *Travel Belles*, *On a Junket*, and *Wholistic Living News*. Her story, "Sighting Bia," was selected as a finalist for A Room of Her Own Foundation's 2012 Orlando Prize for Flash Fiction. My story, "Serendip," was published in *In Posse Review*.

**Margery Hauser** is a New York City poet whose work has appeared in *Point Mass*, *Poetica Magazine*, *Umbrella*, *The Jewish Women's Literary Annual*, *Mobius*, and other journals, both print and online. She is the author of *Fairyland Mail* (NoNet Press, 2013) and a member of the Parkside Poets Collective.

**Nancy J. Hayden** is a writer, artist, and organic farmer living in northern Vermont. She is also fascinated with World War I. The story in this anthology was inspired by one of the letters her great uncle Harry sent to his family while he was in France during WWI. He had a real sweet tooth. Nancy had four fiction and three nonfiction pieces published or accepted in 2014 including the WWI stories "Unknown Soldier" in the anthology, *Kneeling in the Silver Light, Stories from the Great War* (released in September, 2014, Alchemy Press), and "No Man's Land" in the upcoming 2015 anthology *Enter at Your Own Risk: Dreamscapes Into Darkness* by Firbolg Publishing. She is currently working on an historical novel and a dark fantasy short story collection set during WWI. She earned an MFA in creative writing from the Stonecoast Writer's Program at the University of Southern Maine in 2012. She also has degrees in English, studio art, ecology and environmental engineering. Her website is [www.northwindarts.com](http://www.northwindarts.com) with a link to her WWI Collage Blog that presents her art, stories and research related to WWI.

**Damien Healy** is from Dublin in Ireland but now lives in Osaka, Japan. He teaches English and writes textbooks for the Japanese tertiary market. He doesn't have much free time to read or write poetry, especially with a two year old son, but on those happy occasions when life is not so hectic he can be found reading many wonderful poetry journals from the four corners of the world. He was nominated for the Pushcart Prize 2013 and has been published in Jellyfish Whispers, Napalm and Novocain, The mind[less] Muse, Poetry 24, In other words Merida, The Ofi Press Mexico, Poetry Scotland's Open Mouse, Spinozablue and The Weekenders.

**Heather Heyns** is a freelancer writer from Southern California. Her work can be found in Howl Literary Magazine and upcoming issues of Literary Orphans, Thick Jam, and Yellow Mama.

**Christopher Hivner** writes from a small town in Pennsylvania surrounded by books and the echoes of music. He recently won 1st place in Eye on Life Magazine's poetry contest for the second consecutive year. A chapbook of poems, "The Silence Brushes My Cheek Like Glass" was published by Scars Publications.

**Harmony Hodges** lives in the Pacific Northwest and writes poetry and fiction. More of her work can be found in several poetry anthologies on Amazon, edited by A.J. Huffman.

**Trish Hopkinson** has always loved words—in fact, her mother tells everyone she was born with a pen in her hand. She has two chapbooks *Emissions* and *Pieced Into Treetops* and has been published in several anthologies and journals, including *The Found Poetry Review*, *Chagrin River Review*, and *Reconnaissance Magazine*. Trish is co-founder of a local poetry group, Rock Canyon Poets. She is a project manager by profession and resides in Utah with her handsome husband and their two outstanding children. You can follow her poetry adventures at <http://trishhopkinson.com/>.

**Liz Hufford** takes regular doses of the Sonoran desert and the tall pines of Arizona to avoid what Richard Louv has labeled "nature-deficit disorder." She has published poems, articles, essays, and short stories.

Recent publications include the poem "Living with Scorpions" (2014) and the short story "No Man" (2013).

**Wendy Elizabeth Ingersoll** won the 2010 National Federation of Press Women Contest with her book, *Grace Only Follows*, and was a finalist for Drake University's 2012 Emerging Writer Prize. Her poems have appeared in Naugatuck River Review, Passager, Caesura, Controlled Burn, Broadkill Review, and been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She is a retired piano teacher.

**Diane Jackman** has had her poetry appear in magazines and anthologies, including *The Rialto*, *Outposts and Words-Myth* and a short story in "Story" ( Happenstance Press). She was winner of the Liverpool Poetry Festival competition 2006. She wrote the libretto for "Pinocchio", for the Kings' Singers/LSO performed at The Barbican, has published seven children's books and many stories. She lives in Norfolk.

**Miguel Jacq** is a French-Australian poet. He lives in Melbourne, Australia where he runs (some say ruins) an I.T business. His work has been published by The Blue Hour Press, Dagda Publishing, Deep Water Literary Journal, Kind Of A Hurricane Press, The Poetry Jar, Vox Poetica and Visible Ink. In 2013, he was shortlisted for the Australian Science Poetry Prize, and published two poetry collections 'Black Coat City' and 'Magnetics'. He is co-editor of the online literary journal, 'The Blue Hour Magazine'.

**David James** has produced more than thirty of his one-act plays from New York to California. He teaches for Oakland Community College. His third book, *My Torn Dance Card*, is forthcoming from FCNI Press in 2015.

**Bill Jansen** lives in Forest Grove, Oregon, two blocks from the building where he was born in 1946. Recent work appeared in *Gap-Toothed Madness* and *Asinine Poetry*. In addition to a self published collection titled *Soft Thorns*, about 40 poems have been published in various ezines and journals.

**Ivan Jenson** is a pop artist painter and contemporary poet whose artwork was featured in *Art in America*, *Art News*, and *Interview Magazine* while selling at auction at Christie's. Jenson was commissioned by Absolut Vodka to make a painting titled "Absolut Jenson" for the brand's national ad campaign, and his "Marlboro Man" was collected by the Philip Morris corporate collection. Jenson wrote two novels, *Dead Artist* and *Seeing Soriah*, both of which illustrate the creative and often dramatic lives of artists. Jenson turned to poetry as an outlet for artistic expression, and he is now a prolific writer who is widely published (with over 450 poems published in the US, UK and Europe) in a variety of literary media. Jenson's poems were recently published by Hen House Press in a book titled *Media Child and Other Poems*, which can be acquired on Amazon. Two new novels by Ivan Jenson entitled, *Marketing Mia* and *Erotic Rights*, have now been published hardcover and are available for purchase at bookstores worldwide. Ivan Jenson's website is: [www.IvanJenson.com](http://www.IvanJenson.com)

**Sonja Johanson** attended College of the Atlantic, in Bar Harbor, ME. She has recent work appearing in *The Albatross*, *Off the Coast*, and *Out of Sequence: The Sonnets Remixed*, and was a participating writer in the Found Poetry Review's 2014 Oulipost Project. Sonja divides her time between work in Massachusetts and her home in the mountains of western Maine.

**Michael Lee Johnson** lived ten years in Canada during the Vietnam era. Today he is a poet, freelance writer, amateur photographer, small business owner in Itasca, Illinois. He has been published in more than 850 small press magazines in twenty-seven countries, and he edits nine poetry sites. Author's website <http://poetryman.mysite.com/>. Michael is the author of *The Lost American: From Exile to Freedom* (136 page book) ISBN: 978-0-595-46091-5, several chapbooks of poetry, including *From Which Place the Morning Rises* and *Challenge of Night and Day*, and *Chicago Poems*. He also has over 73 poetry videos on YouTube as of 2015: <https://www.youtube.com/user/poetrymanusa/videos>

**Ken L. Jones** has been a professional writer for the past thirty plus years. He has published in practically every medium that a writer can

appear in. Among his earliest and most noteworthy accomplishment was as a cartoonist of note whose scripts appeared in the titles of such major publishers as Disney Comics and Harvey Comics where he was a lead writer for The New Kids On The Block family of titles. In the last few years he has shifted his emphasis to writing speculative fiction and horror short stories as well as very well received poems of horror which have appeared many times in anthologies and online and which also resulted in his first solo book of poetry *Bad Harvest and Other Poems* which was released by Panic Press. He also recently had a poem published in *Poised In Flight from Kind Of A Hurricane* Press. In addition to all this he currently is constantly turning in new horror poems to George Wilhite's Long Intervals of Horrible Sanity blog which features regularly updated selections of his latest visions of terror. You can find it at the following link <http://georgewilhite.blogspot.com/p/poetry-by-ken-l-jones.html>. In spare moments he is also preparing several books of his non-horror poetry work for possible future publication.

**Larry Jones** lives in Utah. He has poetry at The Camel Saloon, Dead Snakes and Clutching at Straws.

**B.T. Joy** is a free verse poet whose work has appeared in journals, magazines, e-zines and podcasts worldwide. He has also practiced as a haiga artist and has had work featured with World Haiku Association, Haiga Online and Daily Haiga. He currently works as a high school English teacher. He can be reached through his website <http://btjooo5uk.wix.com/btjoypoet> or on tumblr <http://btjooo5uk.tumblr.com/>

**Amanda Kabak** holds an MFA Pacific University, and her stories have been found in *Midwestern Gothic*, *The Quotable*, *Perceptions Magazine*, and other print and online periodicals. Amanda has been the winner of the Betty Gabehart prize, issued through the Kentucky Women Writer's Conference, a finalist in december magazine's Curt Johnson prose contest, and a finalist in Iron Horse Literary Review's chapbook contest. She is a

denizen of the Windy City, and when she's not writing fiction, she compose scientific software aimed at changing the way cities work.

**Babo Kamel** has had her poetry appear in *The Greensboro Review*, *Alligator Juniper*, *California Quarterly*, *The Grolier Poetry Prize*, and *Contemporary Verse 2* among others. She was a winner of *The Charlotte Newberger Poetry Prize*, which was published in *Lilith Magazine*. She has poems forthcoming with *Purple Passion Press*. Originally from Montreal, Quebec, she now resides in Venice, Florida.

**Clyde Kessler** from Radford, Virginia is a regional editor of *Virginia Birds*, a publication of the Virginia Society of Ornithology. He is also a founding member of *Blue Ridge Discovery Center*, an environmental education organization with programs in North Carolina and Virginia. His poetry has been published in many magazines.

**Marla Kessler** is embarking on her passion for fiction after a successful career in consulting and economics, where she published business articles. Marla has already written two novels (unpublished), but she is looking to refine her style and find her true voice through short fiction. Her first award was for *Lipstick*, a 400 word piece of flash fiction that reflects her desire to take readers on an emotional journey while leaving them with something to think about later. Her writing style is faced-paced and usually centers around strong women who need to find strength within themselves. She has been publishing a blog –[www.inmarlaswords.com](http://www.inmarlaswords.com) – to help her readers and fellow writers understand her writing process but more interestingly, the inspiration behind it. While she is working to become a professional writer, Marla still channels her creativity through her consulting and marketing responsibilities at work as well through the creative imaginations of her twin boys.

**Steve Klepetar** has received several nominations for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. His most recent collections include *Speaking to the Field Mice* (Sweatshoppe Publications, 2013), *My Son Writes a Report on the Warsaw Ghetto* (Flutter Press, 2013) and *Return of the Bride of Frankenstein* (forthcoming from Kind of a Hurricane Press).

**Irene Koronas** has a fine arts degree from Mass College of Art Boston. She is a multi media artist working with paint, collage, mono-printing, artists books, poetry and photography. She is currently the poetry editor for Wilderness House Literary Review. Her poetry has appeared in journals and magazines, on line zines and Clarion 13. She has seven chap-books: work among friends, where words drip; perception; tongue on everyday; species; flat house; and, to speak the meaning of being. her work is in 8 anthologies, she has two full length books, 'self portrait drawn from many' ibbettson street press; "pentakomon cyprus," Cervena Barva Press. "Emily Dickinson," Propaganda Press; "Zero Boundaries" Cervena Barva Press. The release of "Turtle Grass" a full length book of poems is expected March 2014, Muddy River Books.

**John Kross** is an aspiring poet living and working In Dallas, TX. His poems have recently appeared in *Napalm and Novocain*, *The Mind[less] Muse*, *Pyrokinecton* and the 2012 edition of *Storm Cycle*. You can read more of John's work and interact with him as the poet "V" at Hello Poetry. [www.hellopoetry.com/v/](http://www.hellopoetry.com/v/)

**Martha Landman** was born in South Africa, and currently writes in North Queensland, Australia. Her latest work has appeared in *egg poetry*, *Beakful* and *Jellyfish Whispers*.

**Ron. Lavalette** is a cranky poet from Barton VT. He has been widely published in both ink and pixel form. A reasonable sample of his published work can be found at Eggs Over Tokyo (<http://eggsovertokyo.blogspot.com>).

**Lyn Lifshin** has published over 130 books and chapbooks including 3 from Black Sparrow Press: *Cold Comfort*, *Before It's Light* and *Another Woman Who Looks Like Me*. Before *Secretariat: The Red Freak*, *The Miracle*, Lifshin published her prize winning book about the short lived beautiful race horse Ruffian, *The Licorice Daughter: My Year With Ruffian* and *Barbaro: Beyond Brokenness*. Recent books include *Ballroom*, *All the Poets Who Have Touched Me*, *Living and Dead*. *All True*, *Especially The Lies*, *Light At the End: The Jesus*

*Poems, Katrina, Mirrors, Persphone, Lost In The Fog, Knife Edge & Absinthe: The Tango Poems.* NYQ books published *A Girl Goes into The Woods*. Also just out: *For the Roses* poems after Joni Mitchell and *Hitchcock Hotel* from Danse Macabre. *Secretariat: The Red Freak, The Miracle.* And *Tangled as the Alphabet*-- *The Istanbul Poems* from NightBallet Press Just released as well *Malala*, the dvd of *Lyn Lifshin: Not Made of Glass.* *The Marilyn Poems* was just released from Rubber Boots Press. An update to her Gale Research Autobiography is out: *Lips, Blues, Blue Lace: On The Outside*. Also just out is a dvd of the documentary film about her: *Lyn Lifshin: Not Made Of Glass*. Just out: *Femme Eterna Eneđuanna, Schererzade and Nefertiti* and *Moving Through Stained Glass: the Maple Poems* and *Dega's Little Dancer*.

**Duane Locke** lives in Tampa, Florida near anhinga, gallinules, raccoons, alligators, etc. He has published 6,763 poems, including 31 books of poems. His latest book publications: April 2012, *Duane Locke, The First Decade, 1968-1978* (Bitter Oleander Press). This book is a republication of his first eleven books, contains 333 pages. Available at [www.bitteroleander.com](http://www.bitteroleander.com) or on Amazon.

**Jack e Lorts** is a retired educator living in a small town in eastern Oregon. He has published widely, if infrequently, over the past 40+ years, in such magazines as *Arizona Quarterly*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *English Journal*, *Agnostic Lobster*, *Quantum Tao*, *High Desert Journal* and elsewhere. Author of several chapbooks, his most recent is *Dear Gilbert Sorrentino and Other Poems*, from Finishing Line Press. Active in local, state and national Democratic politics, he is currently Mayor of Fossil, OR (population 479).

**Laura Lovic-Lindsay** left Penn State with an English degree in hand in 1993, but only began writing in earnest a few years ago. She writes in darkly forested Western Pennsylvania where she resides with her two children and a long-lived hermit crab.

**Chad W. Lutz** was born in 1986 in Akron, Ohio, and raised in the neighboring suburb of Stow. His works have been featured in *Diverse Voices Quarterly*, *The Dying Goose*, *Haunted Waters Press*, and

prominently on AltOhio.com, of which he serves managing editor. Chad currently works in North Canton writing web content for an online job resource website. An avid athlete, Chad runs competitively for a Northeast Ohio running club and swims in his spare time. He aspires to run the Olympic marathon at the 2016 games.

**Iain Macdonald** was born and raised in Glasgow, Scotland, and currently lives in Arcata, California. He has earned his bread and beer in various ways, from flower picker to factory hand, merchant marine officer to high school teacher. His chapbooks, *Plotting the Course* and *Transit Report*, are published by March Street Press. A third chapbook, *The Wrecker's Yard*, has been accepted for publication by Kattywompus Press.

**Stacy Lynn Mar** is a 30-something American poet. Inspired by the works of Sharon Olds and Anne Sexton, her work is primarily confessional. She holds three graduate degrees in psychology and attended Lindsey Wilson College of Human Sciences as well as Ellis College of NYIT for a BA in English. Stacy divides her time between her young daughter, her forays into writing, a genuine love of books, film, coffee, vintage things, and her life partner. She is founder and masthead of a new literary ezine for women, Pink. Girl. Ink, and also has a book review blog. She invites you to visit her personal blog [www.warningthestars.blogspot.com](http://www.warningthestars.blogspot.com)

**Jacqueline Markowski** is currently working on a compilation of short stories and a collection of poetry. Her poetry and short stories have appeared in numerous publications including *Cochlea/The Neovictorian*, *Permafrost Literary Journal*, *The Camel Saloon*, *Pyrokinecton* and *Jellyfish Whispers*. Her work has been anthologized in "Backlit Barbell," "Storm Cycle" and "Point Mass" (Kind of a Hurricane Press). She is a Pushcart prize nominee and was awarded first place in poetry at The Sandhills Writers Conference.

**Denny E. Marshall** has had art and poetry published, some recently. He does have a personal website with previously published works. The web address is [www.dennymarshall.com](http://www.dennymarshall.com).

**Grace Maselli** is at work on a collection of essays and poems. She studied for seven years in New York City at The Writers Studio founded by American poet and author, Philip Schultz. Her work has appeared in *Cleaver Magazine*, *Poydras Review*, *Streetlight Magazine* and *The Penmen Review*. Her poem, *What the Hair Is Going On?* was recently published as a mini chapbook by Phafours Press, Ottawa, Canada. She lives in North Tampa, FL, with a husband, two kids, two dogs, and a Coronet guinea pig.

**Anna McCluskey** is a fresh new voice in the poetry world. She studied creative writing at Saint Louis University, and currently lives in Portland, OR.

**Bradley McIlwain** lives in Ontario, Canada where he is inspired by the songs in nature, and examining our relationships within it. His poems have appeared in the *New Verse News*, *The Open Mouse*, *Wilderness Interface Zone*, and anthologies including *Something's Brewing*, Kind of a Hurricane Press (2014), *The 5-2 Crime Poetry Weekly Vol. 2* (2013) and in *Love Notes: A Collection of Romantic Poetry* from Vagabondage Press (2012). His micro-chapbook *Philosophers Walk* was published in 2014 by the Origami Poems Project, and is available for a free download at: <http://www.origamipoems.com/poets/215-bradley-mcilwain>

**Joan McNerney** has had her poetry included in numerous literary magazines such as Seven Circle Press, Dinner with the Muse, Blueline, Spectrum, three Bright Spring Press Anthologies and several Kind of A Hurricane Publications. She has been nominated three times for Best of the Net. Poet and Geek recognized her work as their best poem of 2013. Four of her books have been published by fine small literary presses and she has three e-book titles.

**Bruce McRae** is a Pushcart nominee and a Canadian musician with over 800 publications, including [Poetry.com](http://Poetry.com) and The North American Review. His first book, 'The So-Called Sonnets' is available from the

Silenced Press website or via Amazon books. To hear his music and view more poems visit his website: [www.bpmcrae.com](http://www.bpmcrae.com), or “TheBruceMcRaeChannel” on Youtube.

**Jim Meirose** has had his work appear in numerous journals, including the Fiddlehead, Witness, Alaska Quarterly review, and Xavier Review. Two collections of his work and three novels have been published. A new novel, "Mount Everest", will come out in 2015 from Montag Press. Reach Jim at [www.jimmeirose.com](http://www.jimmeirose.com)

**Karla Linn Merrifield** is a nine-time Pushcart-Prize nominee and National Park Artist-in-Residence. She has had over 500 poems appear in dozens of publications with twelve books to her credit, the newest of which, from FootHills Publishing, is *Bunchberries, More Poems of Canada*, a sequel to her award-winning *Godwit: Poems of Canada* (FootHills). She is assistant editor/ poetry book reviewer for *The Centrifugal Eye*. Visit her blog, *Vagabond Poet*, at <http://karlalinn.blogspot.com>.

**Les Merton** has always been interested in writing; he had his first short story published in the Manchester Evening News in 1968. He started to write more prolifically in 1995 and is the author of 20 books. His poetry has been published in over 120 UK magazines and in 15 different countries. In 2002 he became the founder editor of Poetry Cornwall / Bardhonyeth Kernow which is still going.

**Jane Miller** is a writer of poetry and short fiction from Delaware. Her work has appeared or forthcoming in *In Gilded Cage, Connected: What Remains as We all Change, Wanderings*, and *Halfway Down the Stairs*. She was awarded a 2014 Individual Artist Fellowship as an emerging artist in poetry from the Delaware Division of the Arts.

**James Mirarchi** grew up in Queens, New York. In addition to his poetry collections, *Venison*, *Dervish*, and *Shards*, he has written and directed short films which have played festivals. His poems have appeared in several independent literary journals. Links to his work can be found at: [www.thehydratedpoet.blogspot.com/](http://www.thehydratedpoet.blogspot.com/)

**Mark J. Mitchell** studied writing at UC Santa Cruz under Raymond Carver, George Hitchcock and Barbara Hull. His work has appeared in various periodicals over the last thirty five years, as well as the anthologies, It has also been nominated for both Pushcart Prizes and The Best of the Net. Good Poems, American Places, Hunger Enough, Retail Woes and Line Drives. A length collection, Lent 1999, was just published by Leaf Garden Press. His chapbook, Three Visitors has been published by Negative Capability Press. Artifacts and Relics, another chapbook, was just released from Folded Word and his novel, Knight Prisoner, was published by Vagabondage Press and a another novel, A Book of Lost Songs is coming soon from Wild Child Publishing. He lives in San Francisco with his wife, the documentarian and filmmaker Joan Juster.

**Ralph Monday** is an Associate Professor of English at Roane State Community College in Harriman, TN., where he teaches composition, literature, and creative writing courses. He has had hundreds of poems published in over 50 journals including Agenda, The New Plains Review, New Liberties Review, Fiction Week Literary Review and many others. His poetry has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and Houghton Mifflin's "Best of" Anthologies, as well as other awards. A chapbook, *All American Girl and Other Poems*, was published in July 2014. A book *Empty Houses and American Renditions* was published May 2015 by Aldrich Press. A Kindle chapbook *Narcissus the Sorcerer* was published June 2015 by Odin Hill Press. When not gardening, painting, or writing he listens to the coyotes and owls calling in the woods behind his house.

**Jude Neale** was shortlisted for the Gregory O'Donoghue International Poetry Prize (Ireland), The International Poetic Republic Poetry Prize (U.K), The Mary Chalmers Smith Poetry Prize (UK), The Wenlock International Poetry Prize(UK), the RCLA short story and poem competition and she was nominated for the Canadian ReLit Award and the Pat Lowther Award for her book *Only the Fallen Can See*.

**Emily Pittman Newberry** is a poet, speaker, writer and performance poet. After living a life in hiding she finally came out as the transgendered woman she lives as today. Her writing and

performances explore the challenges of living as spiritual beings in a human world, of the paradox of life. Emily wrote songs and poetry during the mass movements of the 1960's and did street theater. One Spirit Press has published two books of her poetry; *Butterfly A Rose*, in 2010 and the chapbook *Nature Speaking, Naturally* with artist Adelaide Beeman White, in 2012. She lives in Portland Oregon. In 2014 her collaboration with Shu-Ju Wang, a limited edition artist's book titled *Water* was published. Her web site is [www.butterflyarose.com](http://www.butterflyarose.com).

**Mary Newell** is a writer and educator and lives in the lower Hudson Valley. She has taught literature and writing at the college level. She received a doctorate from Fordham University in American Literature and the Environment, as well as MAs from Teachers College and Columbia University. Her publications include poems published or forthcoming in *About Place*, *First Literary Review East*, *Jivin' Ladybug*, and *Howling Dog Press*, as well as essays and reviews. Her poem, "The Traffic in Old Ladies" will appear as an honorable mention in the *Best of 2014 Anthology of Kind of a Hurricane Press*.

**BZ Niditch** is a poet, playwright, and fiction writer. His work is widely published in journals and magazines throughout the world, including: *Columbia: A Magazine of Poetry and Art*; *The Literary Review*; *Denver Quarterly*; *Hawaii Review*; *Le Guepard* (France); *Kadmos* (France); *Prism International*; *Jejune* (Czech Republic); *Leopold Bloom* (Hungary); *Antioch Review*; and *Prairie Schooner*, among others. His latest poetry collections are *Lorca at Seville* and *Captive Cities*. He lives in Brookline, Massachusetts.

**ayaz daryl nielsen** is husband, father, veteran, x-roughneck (as on oil rigs), x-hospice nurse, editor of print publication *bear creek haiku* (23+ years/115+ issues). His poetry's homes include *Lilliput Review*, *Yellow Mama*, *Verse Wisconsin*, *Shamrock* and *Shemom*. He has earned cherished awards, and participated in anthologies. His poetry ensembles include *Concentric Penumbra's of the Heart* and *Tumbleweeds Still*

*Tumbling* and has released a selection from 36 poets titled *The Bear Creek Anthology*. His beloved wife/poet Judith Partin-Nielsen, assistant Frosty, and! [bearcreekhaiku.blogspot.com](http://bearcreekhaiku.blogspot.com) translate as *joie de vivre*.

**Cristina M. R. Norcross** is the author of 5 poetry collections including, *Land & Sea: Poetry Inspired by Art* (2007), *The Red Drum* (2008, 2013), *Unsung Love Songs* (2010), *The Lava Storyteller* (2013) and *Living Nature's Moments: A Conversation Between Poetry and Photography* (2014) with co-author, Patricia Bashford. Her works appear in print and online in North American and international journals, such as *The Toronto Quarterly*, *Red Cedar*, *Verse Wisconsin*, *The Moon Magazine*, *Your Daily Poem*, *Lime Hawk*, and *The Nervous Breakdown*. Featured in the BVAG show, *ARTiculate* (2011, 2012), Cristina's work also appears in the anthologies, *Contemporary Women's Literature* (2007), *Verse & Vision* (2011, 2012), *Sounds of Solace* (2013), *A Touch of Saccharine* (2014) and the *Ariel Anthology* (2014). She was the co-editor for the project *One Vision: A Fusion of Art & Poetry in Lake Country* (2009-11) and is currently one of the co-organizers of Random Acts of Poetry & Art Day. Cristina is also a contributing member of the Art Abandonment group. Cristina is the founding editor of, *Blue Heron Review* (<http://www.blueheronreview.com>), an online poetry journal. Find out more about this author at: [www.FirkinFiction.com](http://www.FirkinFiction.com). Cristina's poem, "The Red Drum," inspired a short film by Marie Craven. Available to watch on Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com/115796426>

**Agholor Leonard Obiaderi** lives in Nigeria. He loves poetry and crime novels though he has no criminal friends. He has been featured as poet of the week in *Poetry Super-Highway* and *Wild Violet Literary Magazine*. His poems have been published in *Storm Cycle Anthology of Kind of a Hurricane Press*.

**Vincent O'Connor** has been a published writer since fourth grade, when his poem about protozoa was first published. Over the years he has published poetry in various print and online publications, as well as magazine articles, training material for various organizations,

technical manuals for software companies, and a play, "Nearly Departed."

**Mary Orován** is the author of "Green Rain" (Poets Wear Prada, 2008) available on Amazon.com. She has current or recent poems on line at 2River.org, Winter issue, and First Literary Review [www.rulrul.4mg.com](http://www.rulrul.4mg.com). Print journals include, "San Pedro River Review", "Poetry East", and many other publications. She's been writing poetry for about 12 years.

**Scott Thomas Outlar** hails from the heart of Atlantis where he kneels atop intricately designed rugs woven from prediluvian cloth, praying to the Holy Spirit Vibration for courage, grace, humility and discernment during this epic time of history at the edge of a new epoch. When not caught up in such passionate fervor, he spends his time writing such things as poetry, essays and rants. His work can be seen at Dissident Voice, Common Line Journal, Oracular Tree, Daily Anarchist, and Ascent Aspirations.

**Coco Owen** is a stay-at-home poet in Los Angeles. She has published poems in the *Antioch Review*, *1913*, *CutBank*, *The Journal*, *Rio Grande Review* and the *Feminist Wire*, among other venues. She has been a finalist in several recent book contests and has a mini chapbook with Binge Press. Owen serves on the board of Les Figues Press in Los Angeles. Find more of her work at: [www.cocoowenphd.com](http://www.cocoowenphd.com).

**Mangal Patel** is a Director of Information Technology (IT) and a Governor of a school. She is married, has twins and lives in London, UK. Relatively new to writing, her published stories include *Revolving Lives* (anthology Boscombe Revolution Issue 2, Hesterglock Press), *Dramatic Encounters* (The Casket), *Lightening Force* (Wordland3), and *Thunder Smoke* (The Little Gold Pencil). Publications in Kind Of A Hurricane anthologies include: "Time's Up" in *Tic Toc* (also selected to be in the 2014 Best Of anthology, *Storm Cycle*), "Mischief Moments" in *Just a Touch of Saccharine*, "Gilt Edged Trappings" in *Life Is*

*A Rollercoaster* and soon to be published “Happily Ever After” in *Twice Upon A Time*.

**Simon Perchik** is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The Nation*, *Poetry*, *The New Yorker*, and elsewhere. His most recent collection is *Almost Rain*, published by River Otter Press (2013). For more information, free e-books and his essay titled “Magic, Illusion and Other Realities” please visit his website at [www.simonperchik.com](http://www.simonperchik.com)

**Richard King Perkins II** is a state-sponsored advocate for residents in long-term care facilities. He lives in Crystal Lake, IL with his wife Vickie, and daughter, Sage. He is a three-time Pushcart nominee and a Best of the Net nominee whose work has appeared in hundreds of publications including *The Louisiana Review*, *Bluestem*, *Emrys Journal*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *The Red Cedar Review* and *The William and Mary Review*. He has poems forthcoming in *Sobotka Literary Magazine*, *The Alembic*, *Old Red Kimono* and *Milkfist*. He was a recent finalist in *The Rash Awards*, *Sharkpack Alchemy*, *Writer’s Digest* and *Bacopa Literary Review* poetry contests.

**Kushal Poddar** is a native of Kolkata, India. He writes poetry, scripts and prose and is published world wide. He authored "All Our Fictional Dreams," published in several anthologies in the Continent and in America. The forthcoming book is "A Place for Your Ghost Animals." Find more at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Kushal-The-Poet/166552613396144>

**Ben Rasnic** is a native of Jonesville, a small rural town in Southwest Virginia with a population <1000. A Pushcart Prize nominee in 2011, Rasnic still considers as his greatest literary achievement, electing to publish two short poems by Yusef Komunyakaa while serving as editor of his college literary magazine, *Jimson Weed*, in 1978—16 years before Komunyakaa received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. He is the author of two volumes of poetry, “*Artifacts and Legends*” (2012) and “*Puppet*” (2013), both available on amazon.com.. Ben currently resides in Bowie, Maryland.

**Jendi Reiter** is the author of the poetry collections *Bullies in Love* (Little Red Tree Publishing, 2015), *Barbie at 50* (Cervena Barva Press, 2010), *Swallow* (Amsterdam Press, 2009), and *A Talent for Sadness* (Turning Point Books, 2003). Awards include a 2010 Massachusetts Cultural Council Artists' Grant for Poetry, the 2013 Little Red Tree International Poetry Prize, the 2012 Betsy Colquitt Award for Poetry from Descant magazine, the 2011 James Knudsen Editor's Prize in Fiction from Bayou Magazine, the 2011 OSA Enizagam Award for Fiction, the 2010 Anderbo Poetry Prize, and second prize in the 2010 Iowa Review Awards for Fiction. She is the editor of WinningWriters.com, an online resource site for creative writers. Visit her blog at [www.jendireiter.com](http://www.jendireiter.com) and follow her on Twitter @JendiReiter.

**henry 7. reneau, jr.** writes words in fire to wake the world ablaze & illuminated by courage that empathizes with all the awful moments: a freight train bearing down with warning that blazes from the heart, like a chambered bullet exploding inadvertently.

**Brad Rose** was born and raised in southern California, and lives in Boston. He is recipient of Camroc Press Review's, Editor's Favorite Poetry Award, a Pushcart nominee in fiction, and the 2014 winner of unFold Magazine's "FIVE (5) Contest" for his found poem "Signs of Reincarnation at Le Parker Meridien Hotel, NY, NY." Brad's poetry and fiction have appeared in *The Los Angeles Times*, *Posit*, *The Baltimore Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Off the Coast*, *Third Wednesday*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *The Potomac*, *Santa Fe Literary Review*, *The Common Line Journal*, *The Molotov Cocktail*; *Sleetmagazine*, *Monkeybicycle*, *Camroc Press Review*, *MadHat Lit*, *Burning Word* and other publications. His book of poetry and micro fiction, *Pink X-Ray*, is forthcoming from Big Table Publishing in Spring, 2015. Links to Brad's poetry and fiction can be found at: <http://bradrosepoetry.blogspot.com/> His chapbook of miniature fiction, "Coyotes Circle the Party Store," can be read at: <https://sites.google.com/site/bradroserrhpchapbook/> Audio

recordings of a selection of Brad's published poetry can be heard at:<https://soundcloud.com/bradrose1>

**Sy Roth** comes riding in and then canters out. Oftentimes, the head is bowed by reality; other times, he is proud to have said something noteworthy. Retired after forty-two years as teacher/school administrator, he now resides in Mount Sinai, far from Moses and the tablets. This has led him to find words for solace. He spends his time writing and playing his guitar. He has published in many online publications such as BlogNostics, Every Day Poets, The Weekender, The Squawk Back, Dead Snakes, Bitchin' Kitsch, Scapegoat Review, The Artistic Muse, Inclement, Napalm and Novocain, Euphemism, Humanimalz Literary Journal, Ascent Aspirations, Fowl Feathered Review, Vayavya, Wilderness House Journal, Aberration Labyrinth, Mindless(Muse), Em Dash, Subliminal Interiors, South Townsville Micropoetry Journal, The Penwood Review, The Rampallian, Vox Poetica, Clutching at Straws, Downer Magazine, Full of Crow, Abisinth Literary Review, Every Day Poems, Avalon Literary Review, Napalm and Novocaine, Wilderness House Literary Review, St. Elsewhere Journal, The Neglected Ratio, The Weekenders and Kerouac's Dog. One of his poems, *Forsaken Man*, was selected for Best of 2012 poems in *Storm Cycle*. Also selected Poet of the Month in Poetry Super Highway, September 2012. His work was also read at Palimpsest Poetry Festival in December 2012. He was named Poet of the Month for the month of February in BlogNostics.

**Walter Ruhlmann** works as an English teacher, edits *mgversion2* and *Beakful*, and runs *mgv2* publishing. His latest collections are *The Loss* through Flutter Press, *Twelve Times Thirteen* through Kind of a Hurricane Press, 2014, and *Crossing Puddles* through Robocup Press, 2015. His blogs <http://thenightorchid.blogspot.fr> and <http://nightorchidwork.blogspot.fr>

**Fain Rutherford** has worked as a soldier, lawyer, university lecturer, rock-climbing guide, survival instructor and at-home-dad. He currently resides in the desert of central Washington State. His recent poems appear or are scheduled to appear in *Right Hand Pointing*,

Pyrokinecton, Poetry Quarterly, Jellyfish Whispers, Halfway Down the Stairs, Furious Gazelle, Front Porch Review, Eunoia Review, Connotation Press, and Apeiron Review.

**Richard Schnap** is a poet, songwriter and collagist living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His poems have most recently appeared locally, nationally and overseas in a variety of print and online publications.

**Leland Seese** lives in Seattle, Washington, with his wife, Lisa Konick, and the younger three of their six foster-adopted and biological children. He earned a B. A. in English Lit/Creative Writing from the University of Washington, and a M. Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary, and was ordained to the ministry. He has served churches in the Detroit, Michigan, area as well as Seattle. After successful treatment for a bout of cancer, he felt compelled to try to say something meaningful about his life through poetry writing. He is grateful for inclusion in this anthology and in Pyrokinecton. His work has also appeared in The East Bay Review, Clerestory Journal, and The Christian Century. Seese can be contacted at [leeseese@gmail.com](mailto:leeseese@gmail.com)

**John W. Sexton** lives in the Republic of Ireland and is the author of five poetry collections, the most recent being *The Offspring of the Moon*, (Salmon Poetry, 2013). He also created and wrote *The Ivory Tower* for RTI radio, which ran to over one hundred half-hour episodes from 1999 to 2002. Two novels based on the characters from this series have been published by the O'Brien Press: *The Johnny Coffin Diaries* and *Johnny Coffin School-Dazed*, which have been translated into both Italian and Serbian. He is a past nominee for The Hennessy Literary Award and his poem "The Green Owl" won the Listowel Poetry Prize 2007. Also in 2007 he was awarded a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry.

**Sunil Sharma** is a Mumbai-based college principal, is also widely-published Indian critic, poet, literary interviewer, editor,

translator, essayist and fiction writer. He has already published three collections of poetry, one collection of short fiction, one novel and co-edited five books so far. His six short stories and the novel *Minotaur* were recently prescribed for the undergraduate classes under the Post-colonial Studies, Clayton University, Georgia, USA. He is a recipient of the UK-based *Destiny Poets'* inaugural Poet of the Year award -- 2012.

**Lance Sheridan** prefers to let his work speak for itself.

**Terri Simon** has degrees from Sarah Lawrence College (Writing/Literature) and Virginia Tech (Computer Science) and works in IT. She lives in Laurel, Maryland with her husband and dogs. She organizes a poetry Meetup, plays hand drums, and has more projects started than she will ever finish. Her work has appeared in "Aberration Labyrinth," "Three Line Poetry," "Black Mirror Magazine," and the anthologies "A Mantle of Stars: A Queen of Heaven Devotional" and "Bright Stars: An Organic Tanka Journal (Volume 1)."

**Bobbi Sinha-Morey** is a poet living in the peaceful city of Brookings, Oregon. Her poetry can be seen in places such as *Pirene's Fountain*, *Bellowing Ark*, *Plainsongs*, *Taproot Literary Review*, and *Orbis*, among others. Her books of poetry, *The Glass Swan* and *Candle Song*, are available at Amazon.com and [www.writewordsinc.com](http://www.writewordsinc.com). Her website is located at <http://bobbisinhamorey.wordpress.com>.

**Judith Skillman** has a new book entitled *House of Burnt Offerings* from Pleasure Boat Studio. The author of fifteen collections of poetry, her work has appeared in *J Journal*, *Tampa Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *FIELD*, *The Iowa Review*, *Poetry*, and other journals. Awards include grants from the Academy of American Poets and Washington State Arts Commission. Skillman taught in the field of humanities for twenty-five years, and has collaboratively translated poems from Italian, Portuguese, and French. Currently she works on manuscript review. Visit [www.judithskillman.com](http://www.judithskillman.com)

**Felino A. Soriano** is a poet documenting coöccurrences. His poetic language stems from exterior motivation of jazz music and the belief in

language's unconstrained devotion to broaden understanding. His work has been nominated for the *Pushcart Prize* and *Best of the Net* anthologies. Recent poetry collections include *Forms, migrating, Of isolated limning, Mathematics, Espials, watching what invents perception*, and *Of these voices*. He lives in California with his wife and family and is a director of supported living and independent living programs providing supports to adults with developmental disabilities. Visit [felinoasoriano.info](http://felinoasoriano.info) for more information.

**Brandon C. Spalletta** is a poet from Herndon, Virginia who lives with his beautiful wife and best friend. Since discovering his passion for words in his early twenties his poetry has appeared in the journals *Pyrokinecton* and *Jellyfish Whispers*, and in the international anthology series *These Human Shores*, and *Prism*.

**Smita Sriwastav** is an M.B.B.S. doctor with a passion for poetry and literature. She has always expressed her innermost thoughts and sentiments through the medium of poetry. A feeling of inner tranquility and bliss captures her soul whenever she pens her verse. Nature has been the most inspiring force in molding the shape of her writings. She has published two books and has published poems in journals like the *Rusty Nail* (Rule of Survival) and *Contemporary Literary Review India* (spring lingers), four and twenty, *Paradise Review*, *Literary Juice*, *Blast Furnace* and many more and one of her poems "Unsaid Goodbyes" was published in an anthology called 'Inspired by Tagore' published by Sampad and British Council. She has written poetry all her life and aims to do so forever.

**Tom Sterner** wrestles with creativity: graphic art, music, photography, & WORD. A native Coloradoan, he lives in Denver. Tom's artwork, music, photography, & written word have been published in magazines & on the internet by various folk, including *Howling Dog Press/Omega*, *Carpe Articulum Literary Review*, *Skyline Literary Review*, *The Storyteller*, & *Flashquake*. Published work includes five novels: *~momma's rain~*, *~spiders 'n snakes~*, *~gordian objective~*, *~after earth~*, *~cranial loop~* & the epic book-length poem *~quodlibet~*. He is

winner of the Marija Cerjak Award for Avant-Garde/Experimental Writing & was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2006 & 2008. email: [wordwulf@gmail.com](mailto:wordwulf@gmail.com) website: <http://wordwulf.com>

**Kevin Strong** is from Winnipeg, Canada. He writes music, scripts, stories and poetry when he is not doing accounting or doting on his wife and 2 children. Kevin takes inspiration from current events, famous poems, novels and even song lyrics. Kevin hopes to someday publish his own poetry book. Kevin's work has been published by Amulet Magazine, Conceit Magazine, Expressions by Skyline, Falling Star Magazine, Joe Brainard's Pyjamas, Kind of a Hurricane Press (Tic Toc Anthology, Life is a Roller Coaster Anthology and Storm Cycle Anthology), languageandculture.net, Lone Stars Magazine, Mystical Muse Magazine, Pink Mouse Pub, Rhubarb Magazine, Sage of Consciousness, The Taylor Trust, Weekly Poem, and Word Slaw.

**David Subacchi** lives in Wrexham (UK) and studied at the University of Liverpool. He was born in Aberystwyth of Italian roots and writes in both English and Welsh. Cestrian Press has published two collections of his poems. "First Cut" (2012) and "Hiding in Shadows" (2014).

**Fanni Sütő** is a 24-year-old writer, poet, dreamer who believes in fairy tales even if they are dark, disenchanted and deconstructed. She writes about everything which comes her way or goes bump in the night. She has been published in Hungary, the US, the UK, and Australia.

**Anne Swannell** lives in Victoria, BC, where she writes, paints, makes mosaics, and is a scenic painter/set-designer for local theatre companies.

**Ag Synclair** is an unapologetic pessimist, rule breaker, and rebel without a clue. When he isn't editing *The Montucky Review* and serving on the editorial staff of *The Bookends Review*, he is drinking from glasses that are perpetually half empty and collaborating with his partner in crime, the artist and poet Heather Brager. Despite being extensively published around the globe, he flies under the radar. Deftly.

**Marianne Szlyk** is the editor of *The Song Is...* and a professor of English at Montgomery College. Recently, she published her first chapbook with Kind of a Hurricane Press: <http://barometricpressures.blogspot.com/2014/10/listening-to-electric-cambodia-looking.html> Her poems have appeared in a variety of online and print venues, including Long Exposure, Bottlec[r]ap, ken\*again, Of/with, bird's thumb, Carcinogenic Poetry, and Black Poppy Review as well as Kind of a Hurricane Press' anthologies from *Of Sun and Sand* on. She hopes that you will consider sending work to *The Song Is...* For more information about the spring/summer contests, see this link: <http://thesongis.blogspot.com/2015/04/contests-for-springsummer.html>

**Grant Tarbard** has worked as a journalist, a contributor to magazines, an editor, a reviewer and an interviewer. He is now the editor of *The Screech Owl* and co-founder of Resurgent Press with Bethany W. Pope. His work can be seen in such magazines as *The Rialto*, *Ink*, *Sweat & Tears*, *Bone Orchard Poetry*, *BLAZE*, *The Journal*, *Southlight*, *Sarasvati*, *Earth Love*, *Mood Swing*, *Puff Puff Prose Poetry & Prose*, *Postcards Poetry and Prose*, *Playerist 2*, *Lake City Lights*, *Medusa's Kitchen*, *The Open Mouse*, *Weyfarers*, *Miracle*, *Poetry Cornwall*, *I-70*, *South Florida Review*, *Stare's Nest*, *Zymbol*, *Synchronized Chaos*, *BLUEPEPPER*, *Every Day Poetry*, *Tribe*, *Verse-Virtual* and *Decanto*.

**Yermiyahu Ahron Taub** is the author of three books of poetry, *Uncle Feygele* (Plain View Press, 2011), *What Stillness Illuminated/Vos shtilkayt hot baloykhtn* (Parlor Press, 2008; Free Verse Editions series), and *The Insatiable Psalm* (Wind River Press, 2005). He was honored by the Museum of Jewish Heritage as one of New York 's best emerging Jewish artists and has been nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize and twice for a Best of the Net award. Please visit his web site at [www.yataub.net](http://www.yataub.net)

**Judith Terzi** has had her poetry appeared widely in journals and anthologies including *Myrrh*, *Mothwing*, *Smoke: Erotic Poems*

(Tupelo), *Raintown Review*, *Times They Were A-Changing: Women Remember the 60s & 70s* (She Writes), *Trivia: Voices of Feminism*, and *Wide Awake: The Poets of Los Angeles and Beyond* (Beyond Baroque). She is the author of *Sharing Tabouli* and *Ghazal for a Chambermaid* (Finishing Line). *If You Spot Your Brother Floating By* was just published by Kattywompus Press.

**Talaia Thomas** lives, works, and writes in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom. Her writing has been published in 4 Legs and a Tail, Catkin On!, and The Transcript.

**Sarah Thursday** is a music obsessed, Long Beach poetry advocate, editor of CadenceCollective.net, and teacher of 4th and 5th graders. She is honored to have forthcoming or been published in The Long Beach Union, The Atticus Review, East Jasmine Review, Ishaan Literary Review, Napalm and Novocain, Mind[less] Muse, Pyrokinecton, Something's Brewing Anthology, and Mayo Review. Her full length collection, All the Tiny Anchors, is in the works. Follow her at SarahThursday.com.

**Paul Tristram** is a Welsh writer who has poems, short stories, sketches and photography published in many publications around the world. He yearns to tattoo porcelain bridesmaids instead of digging empty graves for innocence at midnight. This too may pass, yet.

**David Turnbull** lives in South East London. His short fiction has previously appeared in Salt Publishing's Best British Fantasy 2014. His recent publications include *Girl at the End of the World II* (Fox Spirit) and *Horror Uncut* (Grey Friar Press) *Solstice Shorts* (Arachne Press) and *Sensorama* (Eibonvale Press). He is member of the Clockhouse London group of genre writers. His website can be found at <http://www.tumsh.co.uk/>

**Matthew Valdespino** is a 23 year old graduate of the University of Pennsylvania currently living in Tacoma. After spending the past year working on farms in Lynden, Washington and Central Chile, he has moved into the Seattle-Tacoma area to pursue his interests in Poetry on a more full time basis. His work tends to explore limitations, both of

himself and those around him, the virtue of struggle, and the city of Seattle.

**Jessica Van de Kemp** is a 2014 *Best of the Net* nominee and the author of the poetry chapbook, *Spirit Light*, from *The Steel Chisel*. The recipient of a BlackBerry Scholarship in English Language and Literature and the winner of a TA Award for Excellence in Teaching, Jessica is currently pursuing a PhD in Rhetoric at the University of Waterloo. Website: [jessvdk.wordpress.com](http://jessvdk.wordpress.com) | Twitter: @jess\_vdk

**Michelle Villanueva** is a student finishing up an MFA in Creative Writing - Poetry at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She is the author of one chapbook, *Postcard: Lions* (forthcoming 2015, Etched Press), and her poetry has been published in *Foothill Poetry Journal*, *The Tower Review*, *The Camel Saloon*, and other print and online publications.

**Anne Richmond Wakefield** lives and writes in Austin, Texas. When not painstakingly composing her first novel, she's enjoying the outdoors with her husband, two sons, and decrepit Lab-mix.

**Tamara K. Walker** dreams of irrealities among typewriter ribbons, stuffed animals and duct tape flower barrettes. She lives near Boulder, Colorado with her wife/life partner and blogs irregularly about writing and literature at <http://tamarakwalker.wordpress.com>. She may also be found online at <http://about.me/tamara.kwalker>. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *A cappella Zoo*, *Identity Theory*, *Apocrypha and Abstractions*, *Gay Flash Fiction*, the *Tic Toc* themed poetry anthology released by *Kind of a Hurricane Press*, and a variety of poetry zines including *nin: a journal of erotic poetics*, *LYNX: A Journal for Linking Poets*, *Scifaikuest*, *A Hundred Gourds*, and *Eucalypt*.

**Nadine Waltman-Harmon** is a retired teacher of 42 years, who grew up in northeastern Oklahoma. In the 1960's she taught

African teachers in Tanzania, East Africa Nadine lives in a log house in the Pacific Northwest with her cat, Mama Chai.

**Nells Wasilewski** lives in a small southern town, seventy miles southeast of Nashville, Tennessee with her husband, Walter. She retired from the mortgage industry in 2011 and began pursuing her lifelong dream of writing. Her writing has been greatly influenced by her faith in Jesus Christ, her own experiences and nature. She is currently working on daily devotionals. Her work has appeared in *Haiku Journal*, *Three Line Poetry*, *50 Haikus*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Barefoot Review*, and *Dual Coast Magazine*.

**Mercedes Webb-Pullman** graduated from IIML Victoria University Wellington with MA in Creative Writing in 2011. Her poems and the odd short story have appeared online, in print and in her books *Food 4 Thought*, *Numeralla Dreaming*, *After the Danse*, *Ono*, *Looking for Kerouac*, *Tasseography*, *Bravo Charlie Foxtrot* and *Collected poems 2008 - 2014*. She lives on the Kapiti Coast, New Zealand. [www.benchpress.co.nz](http://www.benchpress.co.nz)

**Diane Webster** spends many nights falling asleep, juggling images to fit into a poem. Her goal is to remain open to poetry ideas in everyday life or nature or an overheard phrase and to write from her perspective at the moment. Her work has appeared in *ken\*again*, *Illya's Honey*, *Red River Review* and other literary magazines.

**Catherine Weiss** is a poet and author living in Northampton, MA. In her spare time she enjoys ping pong, monopoly, and audiobooks. Her website with more info can be found at <http://catherineweiss.com>.

**Jon Wesick** is the host of the Gelato Poetry Series, instigator of the San Diego Poetry Un-Slam, and an editor of the San Diego Poetry Annual. He has published nearly three hundred poems in journals such as the *Atlanta Review*, *Pearl*, and *Slipstream*. He has also published over seventy short stories. Jon has a Ph.D. in physics and is a longtime student of Buddhism and the martial arts. One of his poems won second place in the 2007 African American Writers and Artists contest.

**Joanna M. Weston** is married, has two cats, multiple spiders, a herd of deer, and two derelict hen-houses. Her middle-reader, *Those Blue Shoes*, was published by Clarity House Press; and her collection of poetry, *A Summer Father*, was published by Frontenac House of Calgary. Her ebooks are at <http://www.1960willowtree.wordpress.com/>

**Denise Weuve** has recently appeared in *Bop Dead City*, *Curio Poetry*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, *Gutter Eloquence*, *Red River Review*, and *San Pedro River Review*. She teaches English and Creative Writing in Cerritos, California and collects paper cuts, and other miscellaneous damage to display in glass cases (her blog <http://deniserweuve.wordpress.com/>). Contact her at [Inkdamage@gmail.com](mailto:Inkdamage@gmail.com) or follow her on Facebook or Twitter.

**Kelley White** worked in inner city Philadelphia and now works in rural New Hampshire. Her poems have appeared in journals including *Exquisite Corpse*, *Rattle* and *JAMA*. Her most recent books are *Toxic Environment* (Boston Poet Press) and *Two Birds in Flame* (Beech River Books). She received a 2008 Pennsylvania Council on the Arts grant.

**Emma Whitehall** is a writer and spoken-word performer based in the North East of England. She specialises in Flash Fiction and poetry, focusing around horror and dark fantasy themes. Her work has been featured in literary and genre magazines on both sides of the Atlantic; her paranormal love story "Waiting" has been translated into Spanish, and her short story "Shed" was featured in a charity anthology for the American independent publishing company, Hazardous Press.

**Martin Willitts, Jr.** is a retired Librarian living in Syracuse, NY. His poems have appeared in *Bitter Oleander*, *Blue Fifth*, *Conclave*, *Kind of a Hurricane*, *Comstock*, *Stone Canoe*, and numerous others. Winner of the 2012 *William K. Hathaway Award*; co-winner of the 2013 *Bill Holm Witness Poetry Contest*; winner of the 2013 "Trees" *Poetry Contest*; winner of the 2014 *Broadsided award*. He has 6 full-length collections including contest winner "Searching for What is Not There"

(Hiraeth Press, 2013) and over 20 chapbooks including contest winner "William Blake, Not Blessed Angel But Restless Man" (Red Ochre Press, 2014). He has a forthcoming web book "A is for Aorta" with *A Kind Of Hurricane Press*.

**Deborah L. Wymbbs** prefers to let her work speak for itself.

**Ron Yazinski** is a retired English teacher who, with his wife Jeanne, lives in Winter Garden, Florida. His poems have appeared in many journals, including The Mulberry Poets and Writers Association, Strong Verse, The Bijou Review, The Edison Literary Review, Jones Av., Chantarelle's Notebook, Centrifugal Eye, amphibi.us, Nefarious Ballerina, The Talon, Amarillo Bay, The Write Room, Pulsar, Sunken Lines, Wilderness House, Blast Furnace, and The Houston Literary Review. He is also the author of the chapbook HOUSES: AN AMERICAN ZODIAC, and two volumes of poetry, SOUTH OF SCRANTON and KARAMAZOV POEMS.

**Dana Yost** was an award-winning daily newspaper editor for 29 years. He is the author of four books, and a two-time nominee for a Pushcart Prize in poetry. This is the second consecutive year his work has been selected for *Storm Cycle*. He lives in Forest City, Iowa.

**Mark Young** is the editor of *Otoliths*, lives in a small town in North Queensland in Australia, & has been publishing poetry for more than fifty-five years. His work has been widely anthologized, & his essays & poetry translated into a number of languages. He is the author of over twenty-five books, primarily poetry but also including speculative fiction & art history. A new collection of poems, *Bandicoot habitat*, is due out from gradient books of Finland later this year.

**Changming Yuan** is an 8-time Pushcart nominee and author of *Chansons of a Chinaman* (2009) and *Landscaping* (2013) grew up in rural China, holds a PhD in English, and currently tutors in Vancouver, where he co-edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Qing Yuan and operates PP Press. Since mid-2005, Yuan has published poetry in *Asia Literary Review*, *Best Canadian Poetry*, *BestNewPoemsOnline*, *London Magazine*, *Threepenny Review* and 889 other literary journals/anthologies across 30 countries.

*Jeffrey Zable* is a teacher and conga drummer who plays Afro-Cuban folkloric music for dance classes and Rumbas around the San Francisco Bay Area. He's published five chapbooks including *Zable's Fables* with an introduction by the late great Beat poet Harold Norse. Present or upcoming writing in *Toad Suck Review*, *Clarion*, *Kentucky Review*, *Edge*, *The Alarmist*, *Skidrow Penthouse*, *Uppagus*, *Ishaan Literary Review*, *Clackamas Literary Review*, *Futures Trading*, *Chrome Baby* and many others.

## *About The Editors*

**A.J. Huffman** has published seven solo chapbooks and one joint chapbook through various small presses. Her eighth solo chapbook, *Drippings from a Painted Mind*, won the 2013 Two Wolves Chapbook Contest. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee, and her poetry, fiction, haiku, and photography have appeared in hundreds of national and international journals, including *Labletter*, *The James Dickey Review*, *Bone Orchard*, *EgoPHobia*, *Kritya*, *Offerta Speciale*, in which her work appeared in both English and Italian translation, and *Chrysanthemum*, in which her work appeared in both English and German translation. She is also the founding editor of Kind of a Hurricane Press. [www.kindofahurricane.com](http://www.kindofahurricane.com)

**April Salzano** teaches college writing in Pennsylvania where she lives with her husband and two sons. Most recently, she was nominated for two Pushcart prizes and finished her first collection of poetry. She is working on a memoir on raising a child with autism. Her work has appeared in journals such as *Convergence*, *Ascent Aspirations*, *The Camel Saloon*, *Centrifugal Eye*, *Deadsnakes*, *Visceral Uterus*, *Salome*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Writing Tomorrow* and *Rattle*. The author also serves as co-editor at Kind of a Hurricane Press.